

# Easter Ross Peninsula Paths Project Feasibility Study



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## 1 Executive Summary

Tain and District Development Trust have appointed Alan Jones Associates to investigate the potential to develop a network of paths around the Easter Ross Peninsula for leisure, visitor, and every day journey use.

This Feasibility Study includes the community and stakeholder engagement, alongside the physical route audit undertaken to investigate options for path routes, infrastructure, and investment. Further, the report also identifies policies, plans and strategies that align with the project, and highlight the benefits of, and barriers to active travel, walking and cycling.

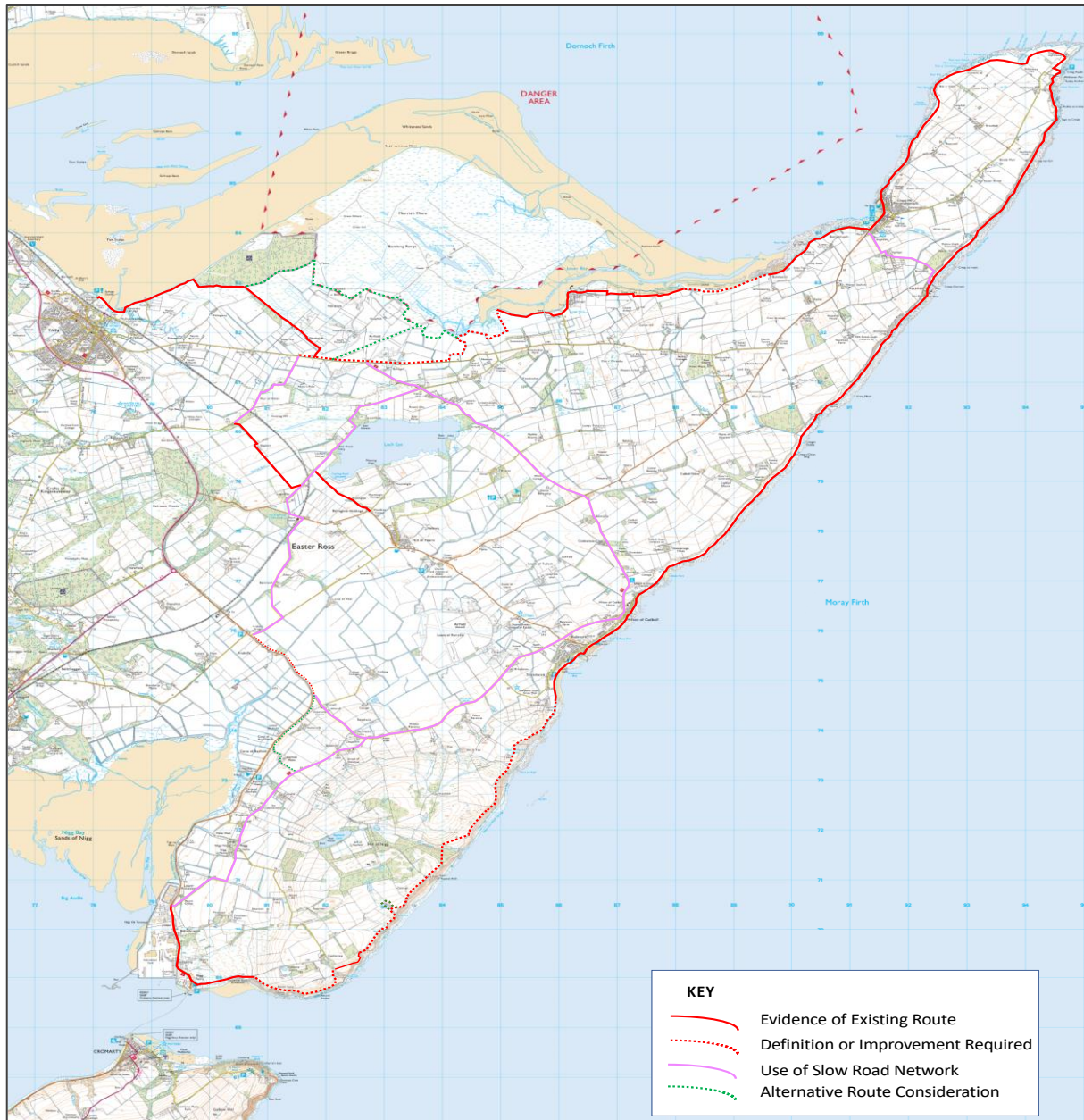
This Study concludes that the creation of a network of paths around the Easter Ross Peninsula is viable and feasible, albeit on a phased or staged approach. As such the following recommendations are made:

- Recommendation 1: It is recommended that TDDT reaffirm community support for the network of peninsula paths. This could be done by an open presentation of results meeting followed by questions and answers.
- Recommendation 2: It is recommended that TDDT agree the packaging / phasing of the sections outlined in this report.
- Recommendation 3: It is recommended that for each individual section, TDDT seek to secure access agreements from the respective landowners for paths and infrastructure on and across their land.
- Recommendation 4: It is recommended that TDDT prepare and submit a pre-planning application to Highland Council with particular emphasis on clarifying the need for some of the key infrastructure implications outlined in this report (roads and bridges).
- Recommendation 5: It is recommended that TDDT prepares appropriate specifications with appropriate technical drawings for the packages identified in Recommendation 2.
- Recommendation 6: It is recommended that TDDT advertises the packages above through Public Contract Scotland to determine the actual costs, and to identify a preferred contractor.
- Recommendation 7: It is recommended that TDDT undertake appropriate fundraising and grant sourcing activities, possibly through the recruitment of a short-term project officer.

### 2.2 Project Overview

The Tain and District Development Trust (TDDT) are seeking to promote sustainable tourism throughout the Easter Ross Peninsula as a means of encouraging socio-economic growth and environmental improvements. TDDT have commissioned a feasibility study and implementation plan for the creation of a network of paths and routes across the Peninsula for walkers, cyclists, and people with disabilities. The Path Network Project aims to assess the feasibility of upgrading existing paths, where necessary creating new paths, and providing greater access for visitors and local people across the Easter Ross Peninsula.

The map below provides an outline of the extent of the potential path network.



## 2.3 Aims & Objectives

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The study objectives are to:

- review what paths are currently available and what their condition is.
- identify improvements needed and cost estimates for these works.
- identify opportunities for additional new routes or paths and costs estimates for these.
- provide an overview of the overall proposed path network with breakdowns to show the main geographical sections and associated works and costs.
- provide prioritised recommendations for themed implementation projects, including short-term "easy wins."

## 2.4 Tain & District Development Trust

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Tain & District Development Trust was established in 2017 following a community-wide consultation that highlighted a desire from local people for a grass-roots approach towards making our community a better place to live, work and play.

The Trust works to facilitate social, economic, and environmental growth on the Easter Ross Peninsula, (Highland Council Ward 7) which includes: Tain, Hill of Fearn, Inver, Portmahomack, Kilmuir and Logie Easter, Milton, Nigg and the Seaboard villages of Hilton, Balintore, and Shandwick.

## 2.5 The Project Area - The Easter Ross Peninsula

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The Easter Ross Peninsula is a small geographical area, measuring approximately 17km from Portmahomack in the east to Tain in the west, and 20km down to Nigg ferry in the south. The main town Tain has a population of around 3,500, with the wider peninsula settlements, including Inver, Portmahomack, Hilton, Balintore, Shandwick, Hill of Fearn and Arabella, increasing this to approximately 9,000. Farming is widespread throughout the peninsula reaching to the northern, eastern, and southern coastlines. The northern coast is dominated by an expansive military outdoor training base between Tain and Inver, and the Nigg area features a significant renewables industry.

Three B roads (B9175, 9166, 9165) link the A9 to Nigg, Balintore and Portmahomack respectively. The B9175 can be particularly busy at times with industrial traffic. The main road between Tain and Portmahomack, while a minor designation, is also relatively busy and fast. A further network of more minor roads criss-crosses the Peninsula, making easy links to all settlements. Some of these are very narrow and quiet.

The coastline between Tain, Portmahomack and Nigg is largely accessible from the coastal settlements and offers good coastal walking in many places. There are some other paths inland or linking to the coast. Signposting and waymarking exists in some places but is patchy. Further evidence of managed public access takes the forms of stiles, gates, bridges, steps, and advisory notices. There is clear evidence of significant public access on the ground through earth or grass natural paths. There are few constructed paths.

The National Cycle Network Route 1 (NCN1) makes use of relatively quiet roads to link Nigg Ferry (from Cromarty) to Tain via the Eastern Seaboard villages. There are some natural obstructions in places through encroaching gorse and bracken and high tide along the northern coast salt marsh areas can remove otherwise accessible areas. The coast adjacent to the military area is not accessible during activities when the red danger flag is flying. Key natural heritage designations are in place, e.g., the Cromarty Firth RAMSAR at Nigg Sands, the Dornoch Firth National Scenic Area on the northern coast, and the Loch Eye RAMSAR. The area is rich in history, wildlife, and landscapes - major attractions for visitors.

## 2.6 Key Settlements

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The proposed path network project encompasses the whole of the Easter Ross Peninsula, with the following key settlements noted:

## **Tain**

Tain is located on the Dornoch Firth in Highland and has a population of just under 4,000. It was a place of pilgrimage in the name of St Duthac. It is today a rural service centre for the surrounding agricultural area. The Glenmorangie distillery and Bannermans Seafoods provide local employment. Tourism is also important.

This type of medium-sized town is extremely mixed in terms of demographics. There is a particularly wide range of people, housing, and activities. The number of older couples with no children are higher than average. There is a mix of professional and non-professional jobs, and part-time and self-employment are both important for a significant proportion of residents. Socioeconomic status is higher than in other kinds of town and there is a mix of professionals and non-professionals, those with higher and lower educational attainment.

## **Hill of Fearn**

The village is nestled between the NC500 route to the North and about two miles to the seaboard villages in the southeast.

Fearn has a post office, which doubles as the village shop and butchers, there is a primary school, and it is home to Fearn Abbey 'the Lamp of the North,' built-in 1238 by the first Earl of Ross.

There is a train station close to the village and a bus stop.

## **Inver**

Located to the East of Tain, the village of Inver is renowned for its breath-taking natural surroundings and historic appeal. Inver offers visitors a glimpse into the rugged beauty of the region. The village boasts traditional stone cottages adorned with vibrant flowers, showcasing its charming architectural character. Inver provides a serene atmosphere, allowing residents and tourists alike to revel in the tranquillity of the area. Outdoor enthusiasts are drawn to Inver for its diverse range of activities, including hiking, fishing, and wildlife observation.

## **Portmahomack**

With a delightful sandy beach facing west of this historic fishing village, Portmahomack is in an idyllic location to watch the sunset.

There is a quiet harbour to the north of the village, designed by Thomas Telford in the 19th Century, where boats can be anchored.

A circular walk around this headland, also known as the Tarbat Peninsula, takes you to the tallest lighthouse on the Scottish mainland at Tarbat Ness. You can also drive here.

## **Balintore**

Balintore It is one of three villages on this northern stretch of the Moray Firth coastline - Hilton, Balintore, and Shandwick are known collectively as the Seaboard Villages. Local employment has long been based on fishing, but this is now only a small part of the local economy.

Balintore has a large harbour, built circa. 1890. With a shop, post office and pharmacy, Balintore holds a small but friendly community. Balintore always had a very busy village hall which was a meeting point for villagers and consisted of many dances, plays, sales and the occasional whist drive. The previous village hall was knocked down and the land was renovated into the hall we know today which includes a café. The Old Scout Hut has also recently been renovated next to the newly installed play park.

## **Rockfield**

The small fishing village faces east and is situated close to Portmahomack, which faces towards the west in an area also known as the Tarbat Peninsula.

The small hamlet, in the parish of Tarbat, is famous for being the home of Ballone Castle, built in the 16th century by the Dunbar family. Once a ruin and now restored as a family home.

## **Nigg**

Nigg is a village and parish in Easter Ross, administered by the Highland Council. It lies on the north shore of the entrance to the Cromarty Firth. A ferry links the villages of Cromarty, on the Black Isle, to Nigg on the Easter Ross Peninsula.

Nigg was the site of a crude oil storage and processing depot for oil piped in from the now abandoned Beatrice oil field in the Moray Firth and of a major multi user energy park including a dry dock operated by Global Energy Group.

Since the purchase of the fabrication yard by Global Energy Group in 2011 and with investment from the Scottish Government the area has begun to see a new influx of workers to the area again with the yard having plenty of work in the renewable energy sector and in oil drilling rig refurbishment. In 2012 Global Energy Group set up a skills academy to create new jobs for local residents and young people and this has resulted in a fall in unemployment in the area and a welcome boost to the local economy.

## **3 Market Assessment - Population & Demographics**

### **3.2 Population Assessment**

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The East Ross Community Partnership notes the following key demographic and socio-economic facts about the area:

- Compared to the Highland averages, Easter Ross residents are more likely to be aged over 44 and they are more likely to have a limiting long-term illness.
- The average house price in Easter Ross is lower than both the Highland and Scottish averages.
- There are, on average, fewer owner occupiers of homes and consequently more residents rent their home.
- Renting a dwelling from the Highland Council or a Social Housing provider is proportionately more common than elsewhere in Highland with fewer people renting from private landlords.
- The percentage of occupied domestic dwellings in Easter Ross is relatively high, with the number of second and holiday homes being correspondingly low.
- In general, the residents of Easter Ross, who have an educational qualification, are as qualified as elsewhere in Highland, except at degree level, where the proportion falls below the Scottish and Highland averages.
- The average number of people without any qualification in Easter Ross is higher than elsewhere in Highland.
- The number of people who are unemployed in Easter Ross is higher than the average with fewer active wage earners.
- A higher proportion of residents are long term unemployed than the Highland average.
- Average household income in Easter Ross is below the Highland average and there are identified areas of concentrated economic deprivation.

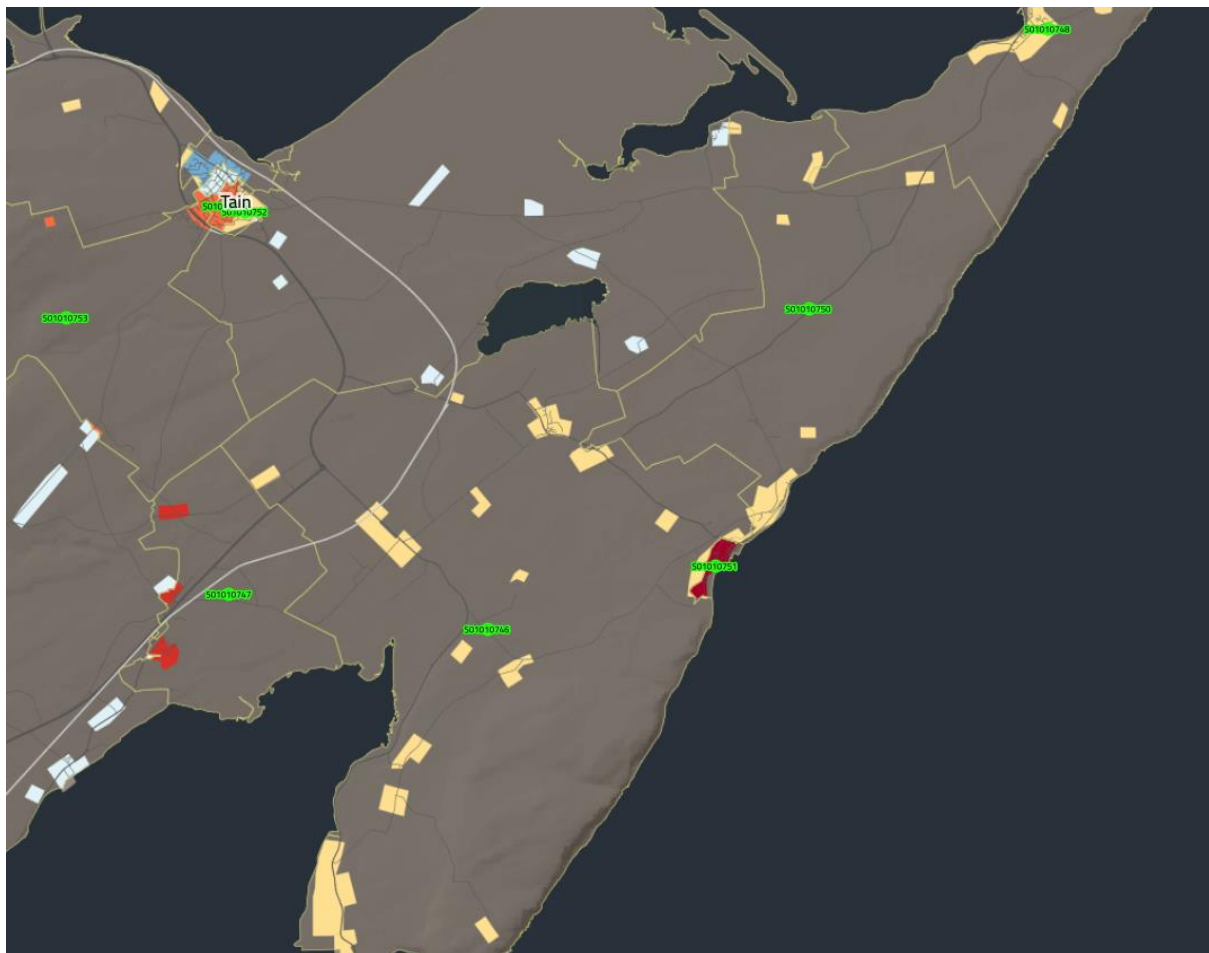
### **3.3 SIMD Assessment**

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Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) is a data tool used to measure and understand levels of deprivation across different areas in Scotland. SIMD works by analysing a variety of indicators that reflect different aspects of deprivation, such as income, employment, education, health, and crime rates. These indicators are combined to create a single deprivation score for each small geographical area in Scotland, known as datazones. The SIMD data is then presented in the form of an index, where areas with higher scores are considered more deprived, and areas with lower scores are deemed less deprived.

The following map and table outline the key datazones in the Easter Ross Peninsula where deprivation, or low-ranking indices are evident.





Data Zone	S01010746 Seaboard	S01010747 Seaboard	S01010748 Seaboard	S01010750 Seaboard	S01010751 Seaboard	S01010752 Tain	S01010753 Tain	S01010754 Tain
Population	1,017	825	623	603	670	787	1,086	626
Rank	3,475 5 <sup>th</sup> Decile	1,369 2 <sup>nd</sup> Decile	3,472 5 <sup>th</sup> Decile	2,890 5 <sup>th</sup> Decile	689 1 <sup>st</sup> Decile	2,818 5 <sup>th</sup> Decile	1,604 3 <sup>rd</sup> Decile	1,926 3 <sup>rd</sup> Decile
Income Domain	3,638 6 <sup>th</sup> Decile	1,718 3 <sup>rd</sup> Decile	4,947 8 <sup>th</sup> Decile	4,094 6 <sup>th</sup> Decile	821 2 <sup>nd</sup> Decile	2,422 4 <sup>th</sup> Decile	1,743 3 <sup>rd</sup> Decile	1,646 3 <sup>rd</sup> Decile
Employment Domain	4,103 6 <sup>th</sup> Decile	1,498 3 <sup>rd</sup> Decile	3,995 6 <sup>th</sup> Decile	3,235 5 <sup>th</sup> Decile	748 2 <sup>nd</sup> Decile	2,877 5 <sup>th</sup> Decile	1,081 2 <sup>nd</sup> Decile	1,197 2 <sup>nd</sup> Decile
Health Domain	4,877 7 <sup>th</sup> Decile	2,919 5 <sup>th</sup> Decile	5,733 9 <sup>th</sup> Decile	3,717 6 <sup>th</sup> Decile	1,869 3 <sup>rd</sup> Decile	3,284 5 <sup>th</sup> Decile	2,178 4 <sup>th</sup> Decile	2,517 4 <sup>th</sup> Decile
Education Domain	3,904 6 <sup>th</sup> Decile	751 2 <sup>nd</sup> Decile	2,035 3 <sup>rd</sup> Decile	3,433 5 <sup>th</sup> Decile	428 1 <sup>st</sup> Decile	1,907 3 <sup>rd</sup> Decile	2,161 4 <sup>th</sup> Decile	3,720 6 <sup>th</sup> Decile
Access Domain	360 1 <sup>st</sup> Decile	666 1 <sup>st</sup> Decile	258 1 <sup>st</sup> Decile	87 1 <sup>st</sup> Decile	441 1 <sup>st</sup> Decile	4,717 7 <sup>th</sup> Decile	2,818 5 <sup>th</sup> Decile	5,456 8 <sup>th</sup> Decile
Crime Domain	4,018 6 <sup>th</sup> Decile	2,394 4 <sup>th</sup> Decile	6,180 9 <sup>th</sup> Decile	6,760 10 <sup>th</sup> Decile	3,910 6 <sup>th</sup> Decile	3,703 6 <sup>th</sup> Decile	1,853 3 <sup>rd</sup> Decile	1,371 2 <sup>nd</sup> Decile
Housing Domain	5,718 9 <sup>th</sup> Decile	4,130 6 <sup>th</sup> Decile	3,446 5 <sup>th</sup> Decile	5,860 9 <sup>th</sup> Decile	2,185 4 <sup>th</sup> Decile	2,846 5 <sup>th</sup> Decile	4,634 7 <sup>th</sup> Decile	2,456 4 <sup>th</sup> Decile

## 4 Market Assessment – Travel & Tourism

### 4.2 Trends in Travel & Tourism

Research into the UK and European destinations marketing trends for 2021/22 shows that the strategies that destinations have prioritised are the following:

- Sustainable and eco-friendly tourism
- Cultural immersion and local experiences
- Adventure and outdoor activities
- Wellness and relaxation

Many destinations have been emphasising their commitment to sustainable practices and eco-tourism. Marketing campaigns highlight efforts to preserve natural resources, protect wildlife, reduce carbon footprint, and promote responsible travel. Sustainable eco-friendly tourism is seen as being critically important for the UK tourism sector. As a country known for its diverse natural landscapes, cultural heritage, and historical sites, Scotland has a responsibility to protect and preserve its assets for future generations.

Developing sustainable practices in tourism ensures the long-term viability of these resources while contributing to the overall well-being of the environment, local communities, and the economy. It is about several key things including environmental preservation, climate change mitigation, cultural heritage preservation, economic development of local communities, enhancing the visitor experience, reputation, and competitiveness.

### 4.3 Sustainable Tourism

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The following key considerations outline the benefits, trends, and opportunities that Sustainable Tourism provide:

1. **Showcase the natural assets of the route:** The marketing needs to highlight the diverse landscapes and natural attractions of the route, such as the National Park, beaches, wildlife reserves.
2. **Highlight sustainability:** Promote local accommodation providers, tour operators and attractions that have adopted sustainable initiatives like energy conservation, waste reduction, and responsible sourcing. Highlight where businesses have certifications or partnerships with environmental organisations to demonstrate credibility.
3. **Ecological education:** Provide guided tours, workshops, or interactive exhibits that educate visitors about the importance of environmental preservation and encourage responsible behaviour.
4. **Engage with local communities:** Encourage tourists to connect with local communities and support sustainable initiatives. Promote authentic cultural experiences, local handicrafts, and locally sourced food and drink.
5. **Promote outdoor activities:** Highlight the range of eco-friendly outdoor activities available on the route. This will include walking, cycling, nature walks etc. Emphasise the health benefits of spending time in nature while respecting the environment and wildlife.
6. **Collaborate with influencers and partners:** Partner with eco-conscious influencers, travel bloggers, and environmental organisations. Encourage them to share their experiences and promote sustainable tourism. Collaborate with local businesses, conservation groups, and government agencies to create joint marketing campaigns and cross-promotion opportunities.
7. **Target niche markets:** Identify specific eco-tourism niches within the UK, such as birdwatching, marine conservation, or sustainable farm visits, and tailor marketing messages to those audiences. Collaborate with specialised tour operators and organisations that cater to these niche markets to reach interested travellers.
8. **Digital and social media marketing:** Utilise digital platforms and social media channels to reach a wider audience. Create engaging content, including blog posts, videos, and social media updates that highlight the Easter Ross Peninsula Path Network as an eco-tourism destination, activities, and success stories. Leverage hashtags related to sustainability, eco-travel, and responsible tourism to increase visibility and engage with environmentally conscious travellers.

### 4.4 Walking and Cycling Tourism / Green Tourism

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An overview of the tourism trends in walking and cycling in Scotland.

- **Growing Interest in Active Tourism:** There has been an increasing interest in active tourism, with more visitors seeking outdoor activities like walking and cycling. Scotland's stunning landscapes, including its mountains, lochs, and coastal areas, make it an attractive destination for outdoor enthusiasts.

- **Long-Distance Walking Trails:** Scotland offers a variety of long-distance walking trails, attracting hikers from around the world. Some popular trails include the nearby John O' Groats Trail, the West Highland Way, Great Glen Way, and Speyside Way. These trails showcase Scotland's natural beauty and provide opportunities for multi-day walking adventures.
- **Cycling Routes:** Scotland offers numerous cycling routes, catering to both casual cyclists and serious enthusiasts. The National Cycle Network provides a vast network of paths and trails throughout the country, including the popular Lochs and Glens Cycle Route and the Coast and Castles Cycle Route.
- **National Cycle Route 1** has a link from Tain to Dover. [Inverness to Tain](#) - Travels along the trail from Inverness to Tain as it passes through the Black Isle and cross both the Moray Firth and then the Cromarty Firth on the [Cromarty Ferry](#).
- **Eco-Friendly and Sustainable Tourism:** There is an increasing emphasis on eco-friendly and sustainable tourism practices in Scotland. Many walking and cycling tour operators prioritize environmental conservation and responsible travel, promoting the protection of Scotland's natural landscapes and minimizing the impact on the environment.
- **Wildlife and Nature Tourism:** Scotland's natural habitats are home to diverse wildlife, including red deer, golden eagles, seals, and puffins. Walking and cycling allow tourists to immerse themselves in these environments and observe wildlife up close. Wildlife spotting tours and nature-focused itineraries are gaining popularity.
- **Cultural and Historical Routes:** In addition to natural attractions, Scotland offers a wealth of cultural and historical sites. Walking and cycling routes often incorporate visits to castles, ancient monuments, and traditional Scottish villages, providing a blend of outdoor activity and cultural exploration.
- **Digital Resources and Apps:** Technology has played a significant role in enhancing the walking and cycling experience in Scotland. There are various apps and digital resources available, offering interactive maps, route suggestions, accommodation information, and local points of interest to assist travellers during their journeys.

## 4.5 Examples of Best Practice

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There are several examples from the UK that are worth considering as exemplars in eco-friendly and sustainable tourism and there are projects/destinations that have initiatives that can be replicated or applied to the Easter Ross Peninsula Path Network:

- a. The Lake District National Park: A stunning national park known for its landscapes and outdoor activities. Website: <https://www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/>
- b. Pembrokeshire Coast National Park: A designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in southwest Wales. Website: <https://www.pembrokeshirecoast.wales/>
- c. RSPB Bempton Cliffs, East Yorkshire: A nature reserve famous for its seabird colonies. Website: <https://www.rspb.org.uk/reserves-and-events/reserves-a-z/bempton-cliffs/>

## 5 Links to Policies and Strategies

In establishing a sustainable feasibility study, it is important how a project links to local, regional, and national policies and strategies. One of the main reasons for highlighting such links is that it demonstrates to potential future funders that the project resonates with key Local Authority, national and Government agency's agendas and plans for infrastructure investment opportunities.

The following policies and strategies have been identified, resonating strongly with the desire for the proposed path network around the Easter Ross peninsula.

### 5.1 Scottish Government's National Performance Framework

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The Scottish Government's targeted its focus on how Government and public services could help in creating a more successful country, providing opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth. The National Performance Framework outlines the following overarching aims and values:

The framework is for all of Scotland and aims to:

- create a more successful country.
- give opportunities to all people living in Scotland.
- increase the wellbeing of people living in Scotland.
- create sustainable and inclusive growth.
- reduce inequalities and give equal importance to economic, environmental, and social progress.

The values guide all stakeholder approach, to:

- treat all our people with kindness, dignity, and compassion.
- respect the rule of law.
- act in an open and transparent way

The National Performance Framework outlines 11 outcomes for the people of Scotland, with the following directly relevant to the provision of walking and wheeling in Easter Ross peninsula area:

- **People live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient, and safe** - By increasing the walking and wheeling facilities available and by identifying unsafe aspects of the mobility infrastructure this project should work towards this outcome.
- **People value, enjoy, protect, and enhance their environment** - The links to the path projects and objectives.
- **People are healthy and active** - Especially given the recent COVID-19 outbreak by its very nature, the proposed paths linking communities promotes active lifestyles, for those who may experience greater barriers to Active Travel. In developing active lifestyles, and increasing the levels of physical activity, participants have a direct positive impact on their physical and mental health. The provision of new walking and wheeling routes will help meet this outcome.

## 5.2 Scottish Government's 2014 Legacy Plan

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This plan sets out the key legacy aims and ambitions and highlights a wide range of initiatives, which will be taken forward with key partners over the next 10 years. The plan focuses on an Active Scotland, Connected Scotland, Flourishing Scotland, and a Sustainable Scotland.

Improving the Nation's health is the overarching theme of the plan, and the Active Scotland component of the plan includes two key initiatives. Both are aimed at increasing the availability and accessibility of physical activity and sport to individuals and communities that will, in turn, contribute to improving the health and fitness of people in Scotland.

## 5.3 Scottish Government Creating Places (2013)

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This policy statement on Architecture & Place for Scotland promotes good design, the principles of context, identity, and character and six qualities of successful places namely: distinctive, safe/pleasant, easy to move around, welcoming, adaptable and resource efficient. These will all be incorporated into the design of the new infrastructure projects, and the considerations as to how they link with existing cycle tracks, transport links etc.

## 5.4 Physical Activity Implementation Plan -A More Active Scotland

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This 10-year plan adapts key elements of the Toronto Charter for Physical Activity (which makes the case for increased action in tackling physical inactivity) to Scotland, and links it directly to the Scottish Government's legacy ambitions from the Commonwealth Games. Underpinning delivery of the overall commitments of the plan will be a series of detailed action plans which define how the plan's commitments will be met.

In addition, the Scottish Government and its partners continue to spread the word about the importance of physical activity, informing people about how and where to get involved through the following websites:

- [www.takelifeon.co.uk](http://www.takelifeon.co.uk) – this gives ideas for a more active lifestyle.

- [www.activescotland.org.uk](http://www.activescotland.org.uk) – this gives information on sports and activities available locally – just enter a postcode or an activity.
- [www.take30.co.uk](http://www.take30.co.uk) – this is Ramblers Scotland’s guide to walking for health and fitness.
- [www.healthyworkinglives.com](http://www.healthyworkinglives.com) – this helps employers promote physical activity in the workplace.

By providing opportunities to increase participation in walking and wheeled activities, the Tain project will contribute towards achieving the outcomes of the National Physical Activity Implementation Plan.

## 5.5 Let’s Make Scotland More Active

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The National Strategy for Physical Activity (2003–2022), most recently reviewed in 2008, aims to change Scotland’s reputation for inactivity. This Strategy sets out the vision that: "People in Scotland will enjoy the benefits of having a physically active life." This requires changes in both policy and culture. However, as the World Health Organisation (WHO) has noted:

"There is insufficient action and limited policy orientation for encouraging the adoption and maintenance of physically active lifestyles within supportive political, social and physical environments... political leaders and decision-makers need to be convinced of the importance of physical activity for health."

The provision of improved walking and wheeling infrastructure directly in response to the community’s explicit needs, will help to support this policy, making it easier for people of all ages in and around the Easter Ross peninsula areas and to safely participate in Active Travel initiatives.

## 5.6 Sport for Life- A Vision for Sport in Scotland

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This is **sportscotland’s** Corporate Plan. They recommend an active Scotland where everyone benefits from sport. In an active Scotland, ways are sought to be physically active every day. This includes the following key areas:

- Keeping moving at home and at work. Taking an active approach to getting around. Choosing to be active in our leisure time.
- More of us will take part in sport because we see it being relevant to our lives.
- Being involved in ways that suit us.
- Meeting fewer barriers.
- Feeling more included.
- We will all experience more of the benefits of sport.
- For some of us, by taking part. For others, through our communities.

The Easter Ross peninsula project strongly resonate with the above vision.

## 5.7 Preventing Overweight and Obesity in Scotland: A Route Map Towards Healthy Weight

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This joint policy directive, proposed by the Scottish Government and CoSLA, aims at helping central and local government decision-makers to deliver long-term solutions to obesity and overweight. With lack of exercise cited as a prominent reason for obesity in Scotland, any expansion or development of facilities that will support a more active lifestyle should be strongly supported.

## 5.8 Start Active, Stay Active

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This UK-wide report, published jointly by the four home countries Chief Medical Officers, includes guidelines on the volume, duration, and frequency of physical activity required at different points in life. With relevance to sports facilities, the report highlights the need for a lifelong approach to fitness and exercise documenting recommendations for each age range. In relation to adults in sport, the report recommends the following:

“Adults should aim to be active daily. Over a week, activity should add up to at least 150 minutes (2.5 hours) of moderate intensity activity in bouts of 10 minutes or more – one way to approach this is to do 30 minutes physical activities on at least 5 days a week.”

By providing new infrastructure, shaped by community consultation, participants would be more likely to increase the frequency of usage, thus bringing their levels of activity in line with the recommendation of the Start Active, Stay Active report.

## 5.9 Take Life On

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This Scottish Government Health and Wellbeing campaign promotes healthy, active lifestyles through various online, media and event marketing. The focus is on encouraging people to find activities near them, understand the health implications of inactivity and obesity, and to ultimately reduce the resultant strain on the NHS in Scotland. Therefore, it is clear, that by developing any new walking and wheeling infrastructure will create the opportunities to encourage residents (and visitors) to remain active and healthy in line with the Take Life On strategy.

## 5.10 The National Walking Strategy

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The [National Walking Strategy](#), published in 2014, has as its vision: “A Scotland where everyone benefits from walking as part of their everyday journeys, enjoys walking in the outdoors and where places are well designed to encourage walking.” It is underpinned by three strategic objectives:

- Create a culture of walking where everyone walks more often as part of their everyday travel and for recreation and wellbeing.
- Better quality walking environments with attractive, well designed, and managed built and natural spaces for everyone.
- Enable easy, convenient, and safe independent mobility for everyone.

## 5.11 The Cycling Action Plan for Scotland (CAPS)

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The first [Cycling Action Plan for Scotland \(CAPS\)](#) was published in 2010 and then refreshed in 2013 and 2017. The vision set by CAPS is for “10% of everyday journeys to be made by bike, by 2020”. The recent Cycling Scotland progress report recommended that this vision remains beyond 2020.

## 5.12 The Climate Change Plan

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The [Climate Change Plan](#) sets out the Scottish Government’s proposals and policies for meeting its climate change targets. It sets out how Scotland can deliver its target of 66% emissions reductions, relative to the baseline, for the period 2018–2032.

The Plan is comprised of three parts, with Part One of most relevance to walking and cycling as it sets out the context for the Scottish Government’s climate change proposals and policies. It shows the emissions reductions pathway to 2032 and the crucial roles that will be played by Local Authorities and the wider public sector (and the planning system), communities and individuals; and describes the wider impacts of climate change policies along with the changes in behaviour required to reach decarbonisation goals.

## 5.13 The Road Safety Framework

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The [Road Safety Framework](#) sets out the current framework for improving road safety in Scotland until 2020. It describes the road safety vision for Scotland, aims and commitments, and the Scottish targets for reductions in road deaths and serious injuries by 2020.

The framework sets out several targets, as well as commitments, priorities, and issues to address. Vulnerable road users are a focus for the framework and will continue to be so when the framework is refreshed to focus beyond 2020.

## 5.14 National Transport Strategy

The National Transport Strategy (NTS) 2 is currently in development and out for public consultation now. The NTS sets out its vision as having a sustainable, inclusive, and accessible transport system, helping deliver a healthier, fairer, and more prosperous Scotland for visitors, communities, and businesses.

The NTS sets out four priority themes and associated outcomes. These are:

<b>Promotes Equality</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will provide fair access to services we need.</li> <li>Will be easy to use for all.</li> <li>Will be affordable to use for all</li> </ul>	<b>Helps Our Economy Prosper</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Will get us where we need to get to</li> <li>Will be reliable, efficient, and high quality.</li> <li>Will use beneficial innovation.</li> </ul>
<b>Takes Climate Action</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Will adapt to the effects of climate change.</li> <li>Will help deliver our net-zero target.</li> <li>Will promote greener, cleaner choices</li> </ul>	<b>Improves Our Health and Wellbeing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Will be safe and secure for all.</li> <li>Will enable us to make healthy travel choices.</li> <li>Will help make our communities great places to live</li> </ul>

The above policies and strategies highlight how the proposed Easter Ross peninsula project resonates with local, regional, and national physical activity and walking, cycling and transport strategies.

## 6 The Rationale for Investment and Development

### 6.1 Slow Tourism

The development of walking trails, paths and cycling routes is well recognised in the Highland Council’s Local Plans, as well as wider policies and strategies throughout Scotland. Long term development plans include an increase in “slow tourism” to counter the “fast tourism” of car tourers, and NC500 traffic. Walking tourism is the ultimate slow tourism. The increase of people visiting to walk in the area will ensure that tourists spend more time in and around the peninsula and are dependent on local shops and services for many of their touring needs.

### 6.2 Economic Impact

From the overall project, existing local businesses, including accommodation, shops and restaurants should hope to experiencing an increase in custom from walkers and cyclists. Furthermore, some new local businesses may be developed to serve the increased demand from visitors to the area. A network of paths will provide a vantage point from which to observe the regional coastal, rural, and industrial landscapes, and in doing raise the profile of the area for local visitors, who all too often pass by on the main A9 road on the NC500 route.

### 6.3 Community Benefit

The network of paths will pass through several villages along its route. There is a clear opportunity for the path development to positively impact on the communities, providing a modest and manageable increase in visitor numbers, a focus on green and slow tourism, and ultimately growing the local economies. Anecdotally, the North Coast 500, albeit significant in term of economic impact, has largely benefited the West Coast of the route, with many East Coast communities holding less-positive views on its impact. The development of a slow tourism

product could counter this, with the importance of “community buy in” key to this work, and evident in this report.

## 6.4 Health and Wellbeing

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Investment in paths and active travel infrastructure promotes community cohesion and brings sustainable long-term economic benefits to a largely rural area. Walking and cycling are activities that are relatively accessible to most people, regardless of gender or economic circumstances. Thus, they lend themselves to gender equality and reduction of inequalities in general. Spending time in the outdoors also provides time for contemplation and mindfulness, which contributes to positive mental health and wellbeing.

Active travel also provides a healthier option for all path users, benefiting from the exercise associated with walking or cycling rather than taking the car. The development of improved path networks will reduce the barriers to choosing such options for regular journeys, commuting, and trips for leisure.

## 6.5 Promotion

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Developing a path network, under the marketing and promotional banner of The Easter Ross Peninsula undoubtedly provides the opportunity to provide visitors with an exciting and attractive tourism product. Through investment there is an opportunity to develop this further, providing a better connected, improved walking and cycling experience. In delivering this new path network, the Trust can then increase the promotion of the area, extending the reach and audience, in order to meet the ambition of increasing the number of people participating in “slow tourism” in and around local communities.

## 7 Key Travel Generators

Key origins and destinations within the study area that generate trips and for which safe provision by all modes should be made are mostly to Tain as the main town serving the peninsula.

Trips to Tain are for:

- Shopping
- Doctor/dentist
- Primary and secondary school
- Leisure activities and socialising
- Meeting friends and family
- Going to work

## 8 Benefits of Active Travel

Being more physically active can benefit everyone and can lower the chances of developing diabetes, heart disease and other preventable conditions<sup>1</sup>. Active Travel gives people an opportunity to be physically active as part of their daily routine and incorporating physical activity into everyday tasks reduces the need to find extra time, money, or motivation for exercise. It can also make it cheaper to travel by saving on fuel, vehicle running costs and parking charges.

Making short journeys using Active Travel helps to reduce the number of vehicles on the road and improves air quality. It can also be quicker in urban areas as journey times are often shorter when walking or cycling as users can take advantage of routes not accessible to motor vehicles.

Investment in Active Travel can also deliver economic benefits. In a time of restricted public spending, Active Travel is affordable and delivers value for money in achieving health, transport, and wider policy objectives. Studies on the economic benefits of walking and cycling interventions revealed an average return of £13 for every £1 invested and in the UK, returns as high as £19 for every £1 invested<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Public Health England (2016) Working Together to Promote Active Travel <https://www.gov.uk/government/>

<sup>2</sup> Active Living Research (2015) Designed to Move: Active Cities. <http://www.designedtomove.org/resources/active-cities>



## 9 Barriers to Active Travel

The main reasons for not making short journeys using Active Travel are a perceived lack of suitable continuous routes between homes and community services, workplaces or schools, and not enough promotion of existing routes. Other issues include a lack of facilities such as lockers and secure bicycle parking, obstacles in cycle lanes and in footways, and perception of safety when walking and cycling. Another barrier to Active Travel is the convenience of using a car, especially to carry heavy or bulky loads, and the need to make linked trips such as a school drop-off on the way to work.

Key to promoting Active Travel is the premise that the benefits of walking and cycling can be enjoyed by all. While acknowledging that geographic and regional factors will influence the availability of walking and cycling, a key focus of the new path network will be to ensure that walking and cycling are viable choices for all. As well as infrastructure, this means making bikes and other non-motorised mobility accessible to all, providing facilities at workplaces and in communities (such as bike storage, changing) and continuing to drive education and behaviour change programmes through literature, training, and opportunities to try walking and cycling.

Analysis highlights that gender, age, health status and socio-economic circumstance influence levels of walking and cycling. In addition, those with mobility issues also face additional barriers to walking and cycling. Therefore, activity needs to be focused on all these issues to improve availability.

### Emotional and Motivational Barriers

- **Proportion of people citing road safety reasons/driver behaviour as a barrier to cycling** - Perception of safety is a key driver of whether people choose to cycle and impacts on whether they allow their children to cycle. It is a routinely cited barrier as to why people do not cycle more often and therefore important to try to affect and report on.
- **Attitudes towards/propensity to walking, cycling and other active modes** - Establishing walking and cycling as the main mode of travel for shorter everyday journeys requires a shift in attitudes and culture, leading to a change in how people choose to travel and mutual respect and understanding between people using different modes of transport. Positive attitudes alone do not result in action but changing perceptions and motivating people to view walking and cycling as an everyday safe, healthy, and environmentally friendly choice, are necessary to drive behaviour change.
- **Perceptions of Safety of Walking and Cycling** - Perception of safety for both walking and cycling can act as a barrier to participation, regardless of the statistical data which shows actual rates of accidents/incidents. Capturing attitudinal data on how safe walking and cycling are as transport modes will help understanding in and developing and delivering behaviour change programmes.
- **Casualties by mode of transport and distance travelled (number and proportion)** - The perceived road safety risk for walkers and cyclists by looking at actual rates of casualty by these modes.
- **Perception of Community Involvement in Walking and Cycling Initiatives** - For Active Travel infrastructure to be fully used and for behaviour change projects to be successful, there needs to be a sense of community ownership of local projects. It is vital that communities are in favour of walking and cycling initiatives and therefore important to capture the level of involvement of community organisations. It is also important to collect information on what communities think of proposals for infrastructure projects in their areas and what they think of them once completed.

### Physical Barriers

- **Level of inclusion of Active Travel in Local Development Plans** - This indicator will provide a measure of whether walking and cycling features as a consideration at a Local Authority level and gives some sense to the extent to which Active Travel is a priority.
- **Level of public sector spend on walking and cycling** - There is recognition that a broad range of support is required to deliver Active Travel policy and key to this is the work that is undertaken at a Local Authority level. Capturing spend data at a Local Authority level on walking and cycling is suggested as a proxy measure to monitor levels of support locally.
- **Provision of traffic free walking and cycling facilities** - Having appropriate infrastructure in place to enable safe access to walking and cycling is a crucial element of the overall approach to increasing use

of active travel modes. Understanding the volume of traffic-free walking and cycling facilitates and routes is therefore useful to understand.

- **Distance to Traffic-Free Cycling Infrastructure** - Having local access to appropriate infrastructure to enable safe access to walking and cycling is a crucial element of the overall approach to increasing use of active travel modes. Understanding where these facilities are located and their proximity to different populations and areas will be useful.
- **Quality of walking and cycling infrastructure** - Having appropriate infrastructure in place to enable safe access to walking and cycling is a crucial element of the overall approach to increasing use of active modes. Understanding the quality of that infrastructure is also therefore useful to capture.
- **Household access to a bike** - There are obvious costs attached to using cycling as a mode of transport, either through ownership or rental, as well as bike security, maintenance, and storage. Access to a bike is patterned by level of income and deprivation level and this indicator will provide analysis of bike accessibility with a focus on income and deprivation as a factor.

## 10 Landowner Considerations

The following table lists the identified landowners initially provided by Bidwells, subsequently updated. Due to the number of landowners, detailed engagement was not feasible within the scope of this work and will be an important consideration for Tain and District Development Trust as they move the project forward on a landowner-by-landowner basis. This is further considered as part of the Project Implementation Plan.

Landowner Register No.	Address	Owner	Comments
ROS10255	HUNTINGHILL, TAIN	GREGOR MACLEOD and VIOLET JANET MACLEOD spouses, Knockbreck Gardens, Tain, IV19	
ROS10483	BOGBAIN WOOD, TAIN IV191NA	DOUGLAS SUTHERLAND VICKERS and JUNE ANNE MCARTHUR VICKERS Spouses 94 Wavendon Avenue, Chiswick, London,	
ROS10835	INVER, TAIN	COLIN MACKAY South Balkeith, Tain.	
ROS11064	CARSE OF BAYFIELD, NIGG, TAIN IV191QW	COLIN ROY CAMPBELL and KIRSTY CAMPBELL both Glencalder, Nigg, Tain, Ross-Shire	
ROS12000	SHORESIDE, LOWER PITCALNIE, NIGG, TAIN IV191QX		Residential property. Unlikely to allow path through garden.
ROS12037	CALLANISH, ST. CATHERINES CROSS, FEARN, TAIN IV201RS		Residential property. Unlikely to allow path through garden.
ROS12210	NIGG, TAIN	ROBERT STEPHEN MACKENZIE 1 Cullisse Cottages, Nigg, Tain, IV19 1QN.	
ROS12247	8 ARABELLA, TAIN	STUART SUTHERLAND	
ROS1265	UNKNOWN		Off the immediate path route. Can obtain landowner details if required.
ROS12710	8 ARABELLA, TAIN	STUART SUTHERLAND	Add on to title ROS12247
ROS12904	BALINROICH FARM, FEARN, TAIN	JOHN SCOTT?	
ROS13442	4, ARABELLA NIGG STATION, TAIN IV191QL 28, ARABELLA NIGG	JAMES JACK Newmore Castle, Invergordon.	
ROS13737	BALINROICH FARM, FEARN, TAIN, IV201RR	DOUGLAS MUIR GALLOWAY RUSSELL and HILARIE MARION	

		MAUREEN RUSSELL spouses, Mouteagle House, Fearn, IV20 1RP as Partners of the Firm of D & H RUSSELL Mouteagle	
ROS13755	BALINROICH FARM, FEARN, TAIN, IV201RR	KENNETH CHARLES MACKENZIE and ELIZABETH ROBERTSON MACKENZIE spouses, Cullisse Farm, Nigg Station, Tain, IV19 1QN	
ROS14528	THE OLD STEADING, FEARN, TAIN IV201RS		Residential property. Unlikely to allow path through garden.
ROS15542	BALINROICH FARM, FEARN, TAIN, IV201RR	JAMES CRAIGEN ROSS and HELEN JOAN ISOBEL ROSS spouses, Dalraig, North Kessock, IV1 3XB and MACKAY DEVELOPMENTS LIMITED	
ROS15545	SHANDWICK MAINS, KILDARY, INVERGORDON IV180NZ	JAMES JACK Newmore Castle, Invergordon.	
ROS15940	NIGG, TAIN		
ROS16131	THE MARCHES, ST. CATHERINES CROSS, FEARN, TAIN IV201RS		Residential property. Unlikely to allow path through garden.
ROS16139	LOT 1 AND LOT 2, BAYFIELD FARM, NIGG, TAIN	CAMPBELL AGRI SERVICES LIMITED	
ROS16396	BALALDIE FARM, FEARN, TAIN IV201TN	John Gordon (Black Isle)	Off the immediate path route. Can obtain landowner details if required.
ROS1681	BALNAGORE, FEARN, TAIN	DAVID PETER GILL Rosskeen Farm, Invergordon, IV18 0PL.	
ROS1685	NIGG MAINS FARM, NIGG, TAIN IV191QR	LIN MACGILLIVRAY Redlands, Nigg Mains, Nigg, LYNDA HARDIMENT Suite 1a Willow House, Stoneyfield Business Park, Inverness, IV2 7PA, ALAN GRAY MCDONALD 8 Ardross Terrace, Inverness, as Executors-nominate of JOHN MACGILLIVARY Redlands, Nigg Mains, Tain.	
ROS18411	EASTER ARBOLL, PORTMAHOMACK, TAIN IV201SL	Doug Gill	Off the immediate path route. Can obtain landowner details if required.
ROS18691	FEARN AERODROME, FEARNE, TAIN	JOHN SCOTT	
ROS18952	ARABELLA ESTATE, TAIN	SCOTTISH MINISTERS.	
ROS18976	HILTON	Hugh Mackenzie	
ROS19275	CULLISSE FARM, NIGG, TAIN	ROBERT STEPHEN MACKENZIE 1 Cullisse Cottages, Nigg, Tain, IV19 1QN.	
ROS19319	LOWER BAYFIELD, NIGG	TOBY CHARLES BUTCHER	Residential property. Unlikely to allow path through garden.
ROS1953	TARREL FARM, PORTMAHOMACK, TAIN IV201SL		Off the immediate path route. Can obtain

			landowner details if required.
ROS19605	THE HIDEAWAY, PORTMAHOMACK, TAIN IV201RG	RAYMOND CHARLES DONALD and LINDA JANE DONALD spouses, Backhill Of Bruntyards, Montbletton, Banff, AB45 3QT	Residential property. Unlikely to allow path through garden.
ROS19835	ANKERVILLE FARM, NIGG, TAIN IV191QW	IAN ROSS Ankerville Farm Nigg Station, Tain, IV19 1QW, MARGARET ELIZABETH SCOTT ROSS and Said IAN ROSS both Ankerville Farm, Tain, IV19 1QW to the extent of a 25% and further 50% pro indiviso share respectively.	
ROS20692	MORANGIE, TAIN	SCOTTISH MINISTERS.	Forestry
ROS21045	SHANDWICK MAINS, TAIN IV191QJ		Off the immediate path route. Can obtain landowner details if required.
ROS21273	BALAPHUILE FARM HOUSE, PITCALNIE, TAIN IV201XJ		Residential property. Unlikely to allow path through garden.
ROS22324	LOCHEYE HOUSE, FEARN, TAIN IV201RS		Residential property. Unlikely to allow path through garden.
ROS22779	LOWER SEAFIELD, PORTMAHOMACK, TAIN IV201RG	CATHERINE ANNE VASS Lower Seafield, Portmahomack, Tain, IV20 1RG.	Residential property. Unlikely to allow path through garden.
ROS22788	LOWER BAYFIELD, NIGG, TAIN		Residential property. Unlikely to allow path through garden.
ROS24288	NIGG, TAIN NO ADDRESS		Off the immediate path route. Can obtain landowner details if required.
ROS2579	LOWER PITCALNIE, NIGG, TAIN IV191QX	RICHARD JAMES CROSS and SABINE MARIA CROSS spouses, Lower Pitcalnie, Nigg, Tain, IV19 1QX	
ROS3408	LOWER ARBOLL, PORTMAHOMACK, TAIN IV201SQ		Off the immediate path route. Can obtain landowner details if required.
ROS5257	MOUNTEAGLE HOUSE, FEARN, TAIN IV201RP	DOUGLAS MUIR GALLOWAY RUSSELL and HILARIE MARION MAUREEN RUSSELL spouses, Watergate Farm, Cleish, Kinross- Shire	
ROS669	NORTH TARREL, PORTMAHOMACK, TAIN IV201SL		Off the immediate path route. Can obtain landowner details if required.
ROS6733	4 PITCALNIE HOLDINGS, PITCALNIE, TAIN IV191PG	ALEXANDER CAMPBELL and DONNA ROSS CAMPBELL, spouses, 4 Pitcalnie Holdings, Nigg, IV19 1QP	Residential property. Unlikely to allow path through garden.
ROS7552	SHANDWICK HOUSE, KILDARY, INVERGORDON IV180NZ		Residential property. Unlikely to allow path through garden.

ROS8529	THE PLAIDS KIRKSHEAF ROAD, TAIN IV191PB		Residential property. Unlikely to allow path through garden.
ROS8534	PITCALNIE and 1 other Owner		Very small parcel of land.
ROS8825	CROFT 9 ARABELLA, TAIN		off route
ROS9445	BALNAGORE HOUSE, FEARN, TAIN IV201RP		Residential property. Unlikely to allow path through garden.
ROS9915	LARKFIELD CROFT, FEARN, TAIN		Off route
<b>Other Identified Landowners</b>			
	Lachie Stewart	Bankhead	Lachie Stewart at Anta, Fearn
	David Scott		David Scott
	Rod Mackenzie	Hilton, Bindal	Rod Mackenzie
	Kenny Mackenzie		Kenny Mackenzie
	MacDonald and Muir Ltd	Glenmorangie	MacDonald and Muir Ltd
	Peter Mackenzie		Peter Mackenzie
	Highland Council	Land behind Lidl	Highland Council
	Stone	Land adjoining Glenmorangie	Stone
	David Whiteford	Castle Craig Farm	David Whiteford

*\*Where contact details are available, these have been removed for this report, and are being held by the Development Trust.*

## 11 Community & Stakeholder Engagement

### 11.2 Overview & Methodology

Understanding the level of community support, and their feedback around routes, infrastructure and potential investment is key to understanding the relevant direction, and funding priorities for this project. In delivering this work, a suite of community and stakeholder engagement was undertaken, namely:

- A wide-reaching online community and stakeholder survey – with over 350 responses locally.
- Two community face-to-face drop-in sessions – providing the opportunity for the public to attend, learn about the project, and discuss routes, networks and their experience of walking and cycling around the peninsula.
- Discussions with local organisations, businesses, and other key stakeholders – resulting in letters of support.

### 11.3 Community Engagement Events

Two Community Drop in events were held at the Duthac Centre in Tain on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2023. These open sessions provided information around the Trust and the project and engaged attendees in conversation around a map of existing and potential path networks in the area. From the attendance registers, the following numbers are noted:

Thursday 4 <sup>th</sup> May	27
Saturday 13 <sup>th</sup> May	9
<b>Total Attendees*</b>	<b>36</b>

*\*others may have attended the event but failed to register their details on the attendance sheets.*

Feedback from the attendees has been divided into general feedback (below), and location specific feedback (mapped subsequently):

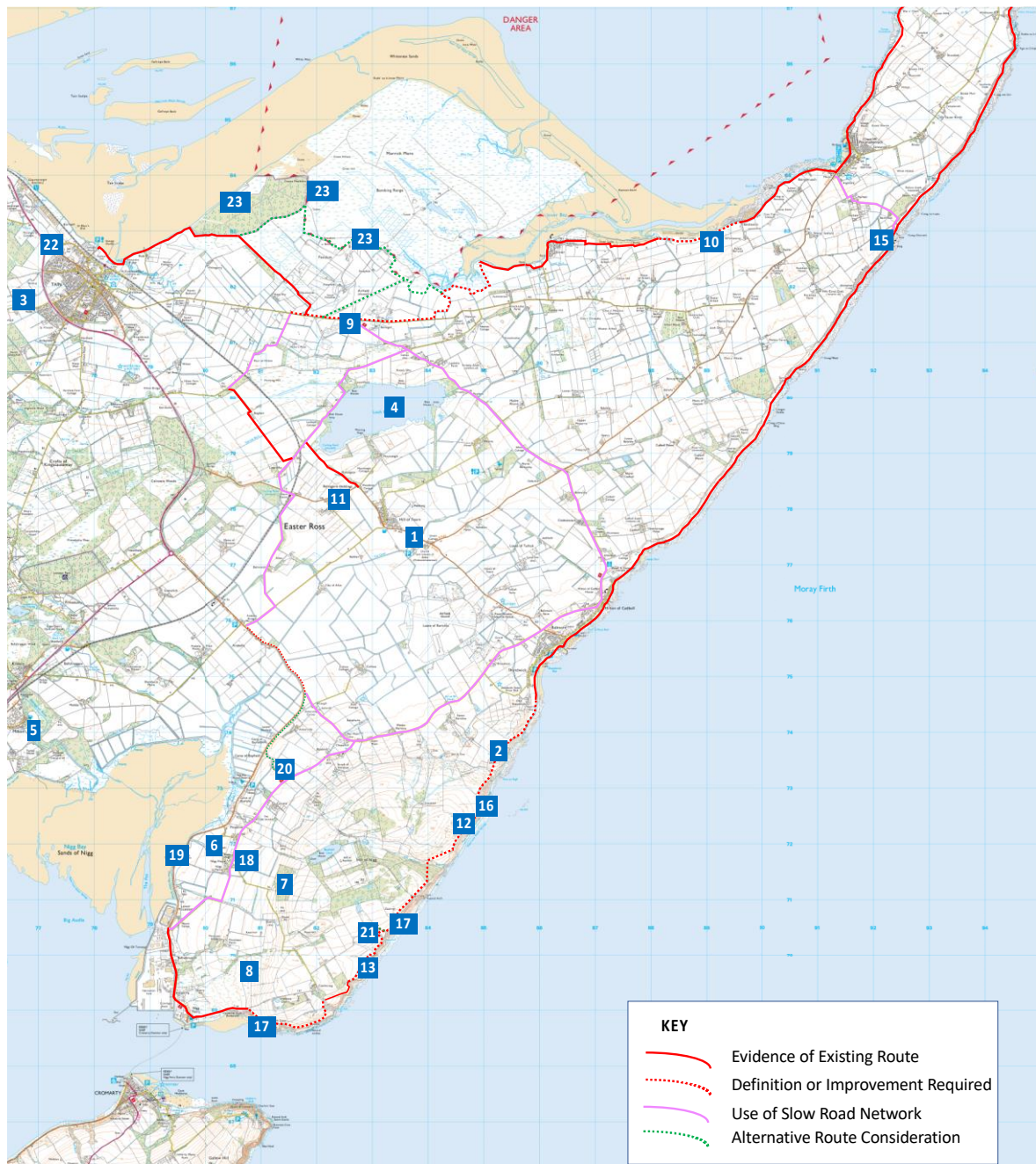
## General Feedback

- Incorporate history and interpretation perhaps using QR boards to ensure this can be kept up to date at low cost.
- Consider including the Bishops Walk to join the route to the quieter road, this will also allow access two local historical sites.
- There needs to be adequate provision of seating on the paths.
- People are generally unaware of the impact dogs can have on livestock and crops. There have been cases where lamb carcasses have been rejected following testing as a result of contact with dog waste. Additionally, it has sometimes been harder to sell hay bales when people know that the fields are openly accessed by dog walkers.
- In promoting a network of routes there should be consideration of how to identify which are suitable for bikes, buggies, wheelchairs etc.
- Some of the quiet roads identified have poor road surfaces and are therefore less suitable for an enjoyable cycle.
- There is a missed opportunity to promote local woodland trails including those at Tarlogie.
- Good quality consistent signage will be key.
- Potential to coordinate walks with local boat trips.
- This pathway project should be used to increase tourism through better promotion and branding. Too often the peninsula is bypassed by tourists travelling on NC500 or John O’Groats trail. Perhaps brand this ER100 (recognition of Easter Ross and distance of around 100km for the circuit).
- NCN1 needs to be better sign posted.

## Location Specific / Map Based Feedback

1. It would be good to see a direct route from Fearn to the Seaboard villages. There was historically a route from Tain to the coast using the route of what is now the railway to Fearn, then onwards. This route has historic links to the monks and local Fearn Abbey (which is due to close).
2. The path at the “Well of Health” is no longer fit for purpose but would not take much to bring it back to use. There is evident impact from wild camping here, and regular feedback from locals that it needs improved. Seating here would also be beneficial.
3. The Moss Road Circular path (Council managed) needs improved, it is currently too muddy underfoot and overgrown.
4. It would be good to be able to walk around Loch Eye.
5. The bridge across the river at Milton is derelict. There is possibly reluctance from landowners to ensure this route is accessible.
6. A better path would benefit the nature reserve and access to other local sites including the Nigg Stone. This could link with the Bishop’s Walk.
7. There is a path here which is believed to be part of the Core Path network – could be included in the overall project.
8. It would be good to add a circular route to Castle Craig
9. Improvement here is key to allow locals to cycle between settlements – including trips to school for young people. Without this link, it is not currently safe.
10. A number of people noted that this route is clear, but perhaps better signage is required. It was further noted that high tide causes people to walk further into the dunes, which is not easy walking. A potential solution for this could be using QR codes on interpretive boards and accessible through relevant websites, with tidal information. This would enable people to check tide levels before they walk. It could also include a range of other interpretive information.
11. There are concerns around the speed of traffic and lines of sight – around the bridge, and down to Fearn Station. Traffic should be limited to 40mph.
12. There is new deer fencing on this path that now blocks the route, the stiles have not been reinstated, and access is now limited.
13. There should be caution on local nesting birds – a fantastic asset for responsible walkers, but also vital to ensure there is no negative impact.
14. The existing access tracks here could be useful to develop a network.
15. As above.
16. Issues with access to the exiting path

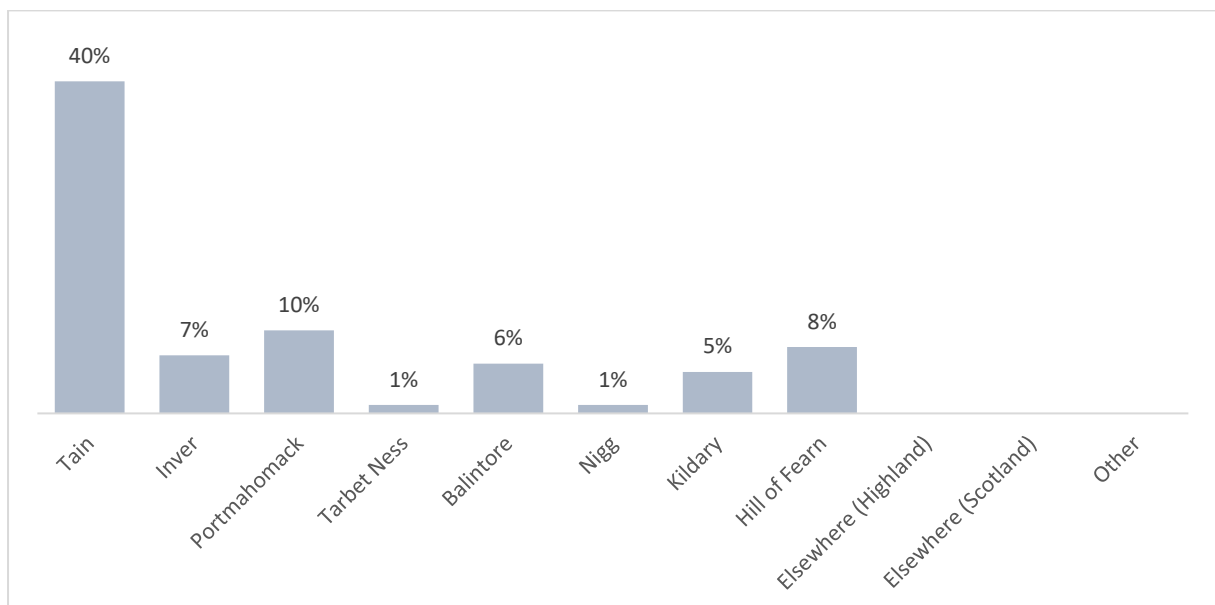
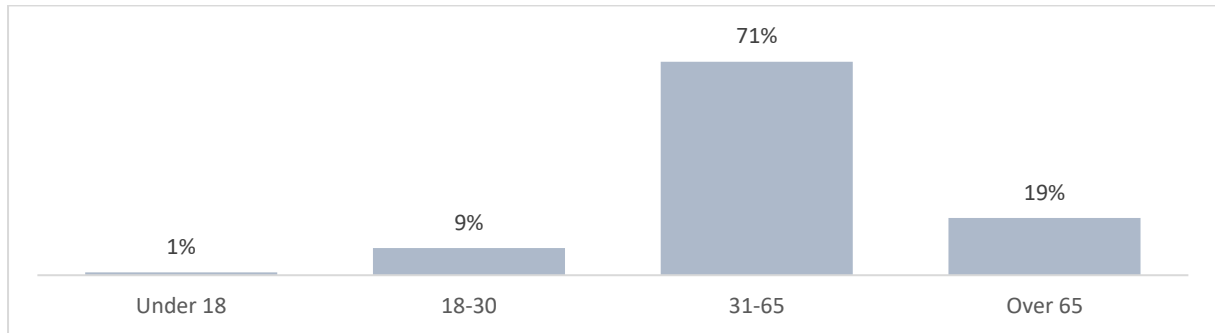
17. Potential to continue the path along the cliff top (farmer in attendance and agreeable to this). It would then follow the original route offering the same fantastic views of the Moray Firth along that full coast. Need to be aware of WW2 historic relics.
18. Nigg church is historically significant and should be promoted as part of using this slow/quiet road.
19. Fast road and not one to be promoted as part of the route. Better to use the quieter road past Nigg church, as drawn on the map. However, the RSPB bird hide is a fantastic facility, so need to ensure it continues to be promoted.
20. There is a small existing path running from NCN1 across to B9175. Could this be considered as an alternative to going all the way to Chapelhill and doubling back to B9175?
21. Path currently difficult to find and overgrown.
22. Tain to Morangie – currently there is no reasonable walking path (people must walk on the busy road). Note: Morangie has a Planning Application currently lodged with Highland Council for a new hard-core path running from Morangie to Tain.
23. Could the path be routed alongside the bombing range (just behind the fence) along the beach; through the forest; and back alongside the range?



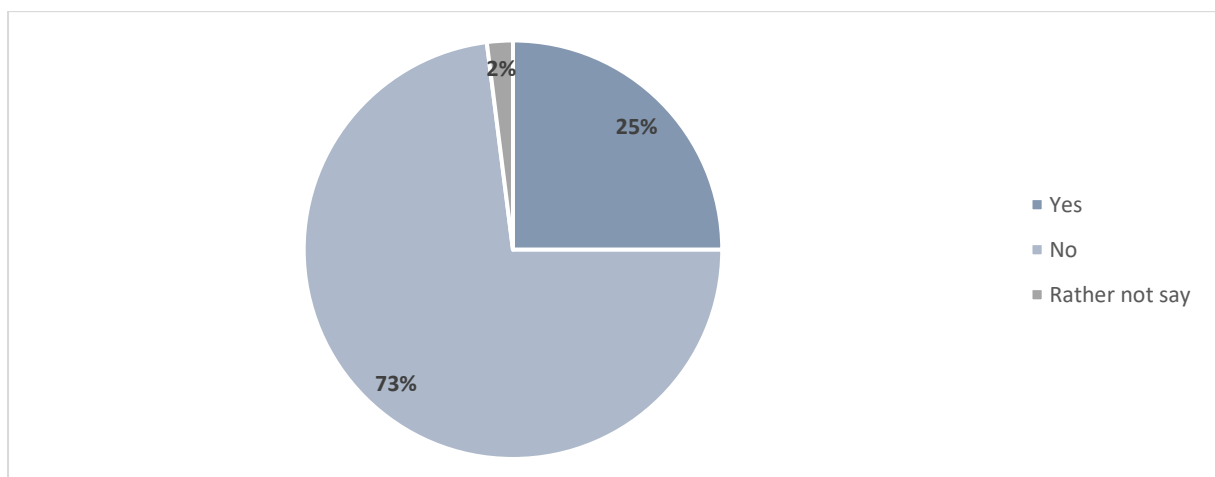
## 11.4 Community Engagement Survey

The Community Survey was distributed through key mailing lists, social media channels, and via promotion at the Drop In events. The survey ran for 6 weeks and received 357 responses. The results of the survey are summarised below.

The following graphs show the age and geographic spread of respondents:

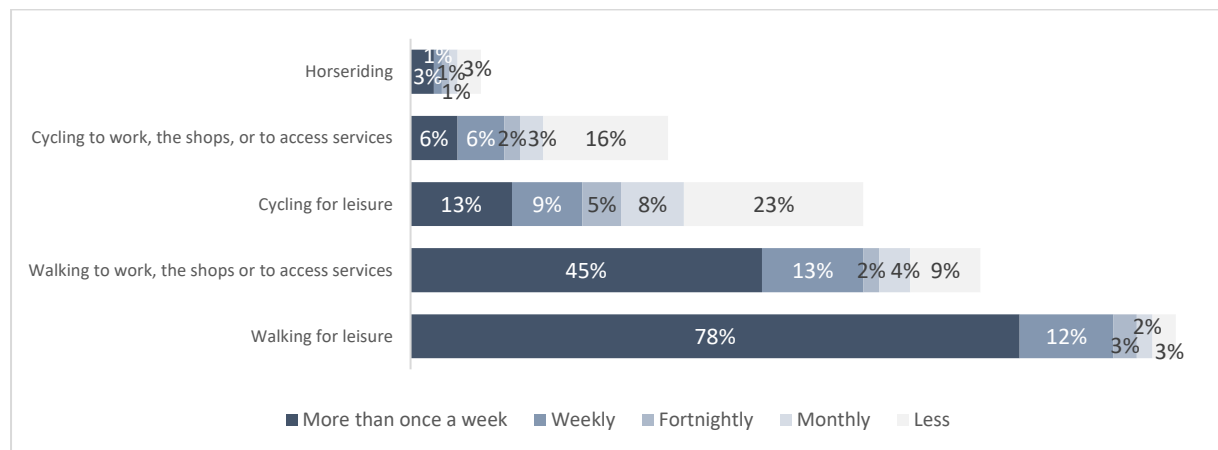


Respondents were asked whether they or anyone in their household considered themselves as having a disability, as shown below, 25% did.

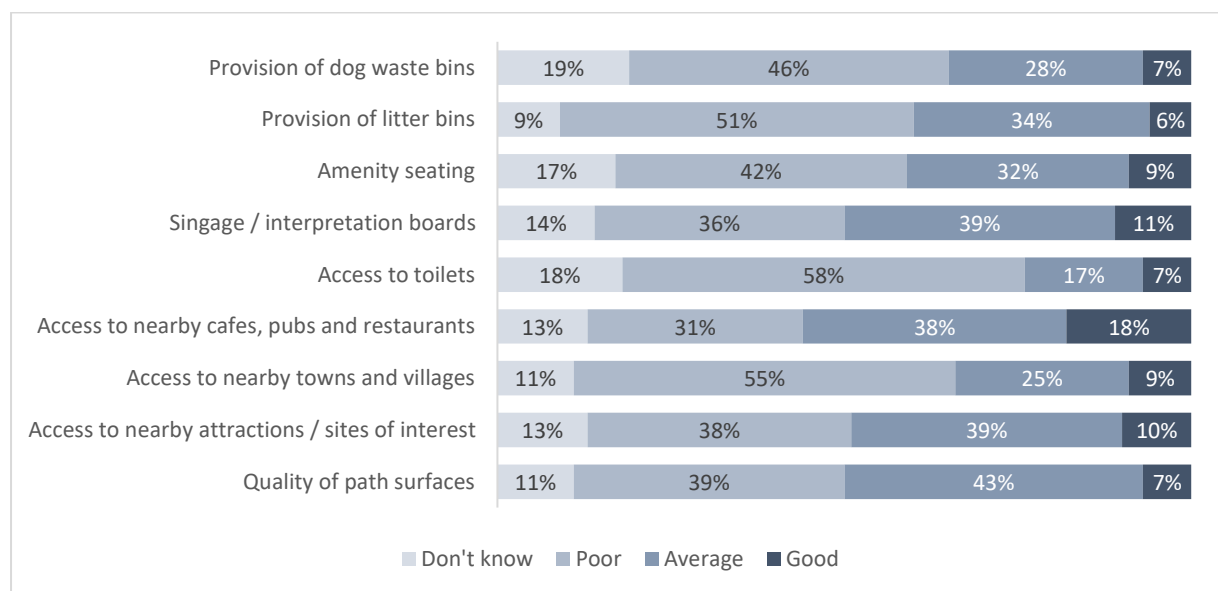




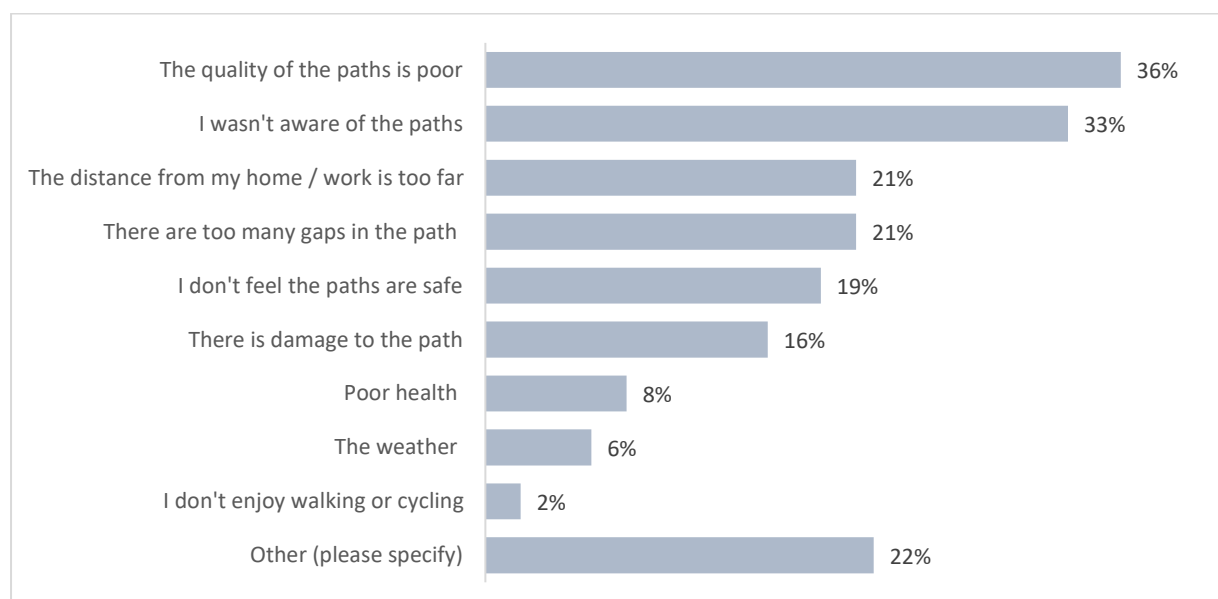
Respondents were asked how often they took part in walking, cycling and horse riding, with the results shown below:



Thinking about the existing paths on the Easter Ross Peninsula, respondents were asked to rate a number of aspects, with the results shown below:



Respondents were also asked to note any barriers that prevent them or their families for making any / more use of the paths in the area. The results are shown below:

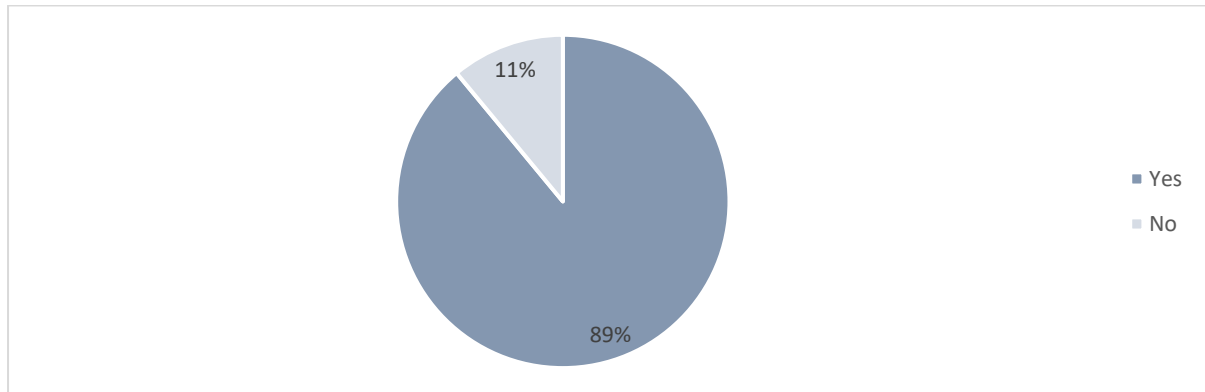


For those that selected other, feedback included issues with dog waste, path maintenance, connectivity, road use, and accessibility.

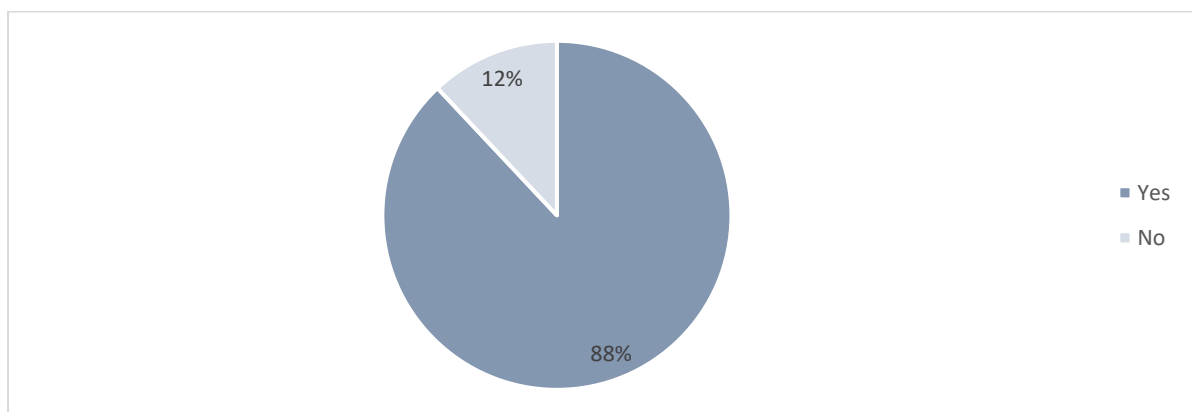
Respondents were asked whether they could identify any location specific issues with the current paths. 52% of respondents provided further comment, and these are noted in full in Appendix One.

Respondents were then asked a number of questions around their support for, and perception of the benefits around developing paths in the area.

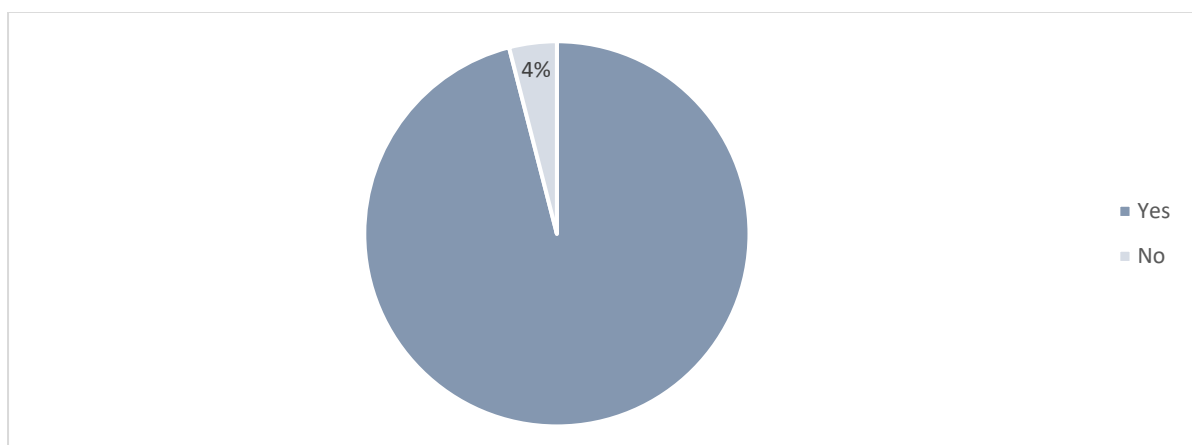
**“Do you think creating and promoting a path network throughout the peninsula will increase the number of visitors to the area?”**



**“Do you think creating and promoting a path network throughout the peninsula will have a positive economic impact in the local area?”**



**“Do you support the future development of the Easter Ross Path Network in the Peninsula.”**



Respondents were given the opportunity to provide further comments on their support (or lack of support) for the project. These comments have been included in **Appendix Two**.

## 11.5 Further Support & Feedback

A number of letters of support have been provided from key local stakeholders. These have been included in Appendix Three.

## 12 Path Audit

### 12.1 Methodology Overview

RT McCraw Services, in conjunction with Alan Jones Associates has been appointed to undertake the path feasibility and condition visual audit and provide recommendations on path network development and improvements. The audit was designed to capture baseline data on the nature and condition of existing and proposed paths and related infrastructure, to prioritise work to improve safety and accessibility through paths, fencing, bridges, and gates etc, and to provide indicative costings for prioritised capital and maintenance works. The audit also considered potential constraints including land management, statutory designations and the feasibility and sustainability of project implementation.

The audit used established Upland Path Advisory Group guidance, and included the following audit components:

- Context based survey, or "green" survey, provides a desk-based evaluation of the context within which each route lies, including landownership and natural heritage designations etc.
- Condition survey, or "amber" survey provides an objective assessment of the physical condition of the paths, based on a "walk over" assessment and index-based measurements.
- Maps of the network sections and locations of existing infrastructure, issues and works, generated by GPS device, and illustrated by photographs.

For audit purposes, the network was divided into 6 sections as listed in the table below. To simplify data collection and analysis, each section was further divided into sub-sections of several kilometres ranging roughly from 5-10km, depending on geographical markers, e.g., headland or terrain change. The longer subsections usually had significant lengths of homogenous terrain, e.g., public road, naturally extending the subsection. Subsections were further divided into much shorter coded audit lengths of several 100 metres to a kilometre and more - the limiting factors being significant changes in path characteristics, such as surface, slope, drainage, and width. Overall, there were 11 subsections and 41 audit lengths.

Section	Section name	Description
1A	Tain to Inver	Largely off-road path
1B	Inver to Portmahomack	Largely off-road path
2A	Portmahomack to Tarbatness	Largely off-road path
2B	Tarbatness to Rockfield	Off-road path
2C	Rockfield to Balintore	Largely off-road path
3A	Balintore to Kings Cave	Largely off-road path
3B	Kings Cave to Nigg Ferry	Largely off-road path
4A	Nigg ferry to Arabella via Nigg and Pitcalnie	Public road and alternative access track
4B	Arabella to Balnagall via Fearn station and Loandhu	Public road
5A	Hill of Fearn to Northwolds via Loandhu and BogbAin	Off-road path and public road
6A	Remaining quiet roads: NCN1 Nigg - Balintore - Balnagall Kildary to Hill of Fearn via Arabella Nigg to Castlecraigs	Public roads

	Tain - Northwolds - Tarrel Shandwick - Balintore - Hilton Other short links, e.g., to Inver, Rockfield, Hill of Fearn to Rhynie	
Others	Nigg to B9175 ( Bishop's Walk)	Public path
	Nigg ferry to Nigg via Castle Craigs	Private road

To complement the network of existing and proposed paths, feasibility work was undertaken to identify other potential paths and routes which would help to improve the connectivity of the network. This included the minor roads network, additional public paths, and other opportunities such as useful farm tracks.

## 13 Route Summary

A summary of each key part of the route is noted below:

### Sections 1-3 : Tain to Nigg Ferry via coastal path

The northern and eastern peninsula coastlines offer almost continuous walking from Tain to Nigg Ferry. Some of this route is easy to moderate, some of it much rougher, and there are some sections which have no discernible path and are difficult to follow. Signage and waymarking is patchy. Stiles or gates are usually present where required to cross fences, though improvements are needed elsewhere, or replacements of existing structures are needed. The main issues are:

#### Tain to Portmahomack

- No signage or waymarking between Tain shore carpark and Northwolds access to main road (Tain to Portmahomack).
- Accessibility along the Tain foreshore will vary with tidal conditions.
- There is no pavement along the busy Tain to Portmahomack road between Northwolds and Balnagall and onwards to a suitable exit point for Inver.
- There is no clearly defined route between the road and Inver with constraints including the military base, ploughed fields, and salt marsh. Alternatives have been proposed for this route, though not fully defined, or costed)
- The section from east of Inver where the stream is bridged to Balnabruach is not fully defined.
- Overall, there is insufficient signage and waymarking.
- Foreshore access east and west of Inver will be affected by tidal conditions.
- Cycling parts of this route is possible, though pushing would be necessary in places.

#### Portmahomack to Rockfield

- The route to Tarbatness, mainly a narrow grassy path, is quite well defined and accessible, though can be rough and wet in some places.
- Path improvements to Tarbatness may be constrained by tidal erosion, bedrock, and cattle grazing.
- The route between Tarbatness and Rockfield is better defined, more accessible, and cycling is possible most of the way.
- Signage and waymarking could be improved, and two small streams need bridged.

#### Rockfield to Balintore

- A grassy path exists all the way becoming a wider smoother grassy track north of Hilton.
- At Hilton, the path continues between the foreshore and houses to the harbour at Balintore.
- No path improvements are needed.
- The public road between Hilton and Balintore would be better for cycling.
- Signage and waymarking could be improved.
- Cycling is possible all the way.

#### Balintore to Nigg Ferry

- From the harbour, the path continues above the foreshore to the south end of Old Shandwick
- The public road between Balintore and Shandwick would be better for cycling.

- This is the roughest part of the route from Portmahomack. It is hillier, the path is less defined in places and there are five main locations where gorse, bracken and steep terrain create constraints.
- The path has clearly had significant investment in the past with some signage, many way markers (2 blue streaks on white background), many stiles and some gates.
- The path needs considerable improvements: to remove encroaching vegetation, to define the route in places, to make steep ground more accessible, to improve signage and waymarking, and to bridge three small streams, one large gorge and two small gullies.
- The route is largely off-road, though joins a tarmac private road beyond Castle Craigs
- Overall, it is considered to be too rough for cycling.

#### **Section 4 : Nigg Ferry to Balnagall**

##### Nigg Ferry to Arabella

- There is no off-road route connecting these two locations.
- From south to north, the creation of a path on the coastal side of the B9175 would be constrained by tidal erosion and wet salt marsh area, private residences at Bayfield, farm steadings and livestock, the wide coastal inlet at Sands of Nigg and three wide and deep field drains.
- In addition, the Cromarty Firth SPA designation may limit path building options due to the threat of bird disturbance, for example in the vicinity of the RSPB bird-hide at Bayfield.
- Dialogue with farmers, residents and wildlife conservation interests would be necessary to identify any opportunities for off-road path creation.
- The B9175 offers direct cycling between Nigg Ferry and Arabella but this road can be busy and fast with industrial and local traffic, and visitor traffic when the ferry is in operation from Spring to Autumn.
- The NCN1 route through Nigg and Pitcalnie to Chapelhill, then onwards to Ankerville Corner by the adjoining public road, offers a quieter and safer alternative, with only 2km use of the B9175 to Arabella needed. There is an option to use a short access road between Pitcalnie and Chapelhill linking to the B9175, thus avoiding the need to go on to Chapelhill corner.
- While this may be a satisfactory solution for cyclists, the use of these public roads may not be considered the most attractive option to walkers.
- The B9175 road is wide with plenty of verge space for path or pavement creation, and this could be considered in places, e.g., from the Nigg ferry to Mount Canisp, if a coastal off-road path is not feasible, and/or from Ankerville to Arabella
- The Bishop's Walk from Nigg Church to the B9175 is a very attractive walk but does not help with strategic route planning.

##### Arabella to Balnagall via Loandhu

- There is no off-road route connecting these two locations (though see Monk's Road and Bogbain option below\*)
- This route is on two very quiet public roads, as far as Fearn Station to the south and past Loch Eye to the north, linked by 400m on the busier B9165.
- Combined with the NCN1 based cycling options from Nigg Ferry to Arabella, this would create a largely safe and attractive south to north route towards Tain, especially for cyclists.
- The two very quiet public roads are also considered to be attractive for walking.
- Safety could be improved by the provision of "Walking and Cycling Friendly Roads" signage.
- Roadside signage would be necessary at the various road junctions.
- The onward link to Tain would be via the Northwolds track, preceded by approximately 800m on the Tain to Portmahomack road on which there is currently no pavement (i.e., linking to Tain to Inver route)

#### **Section 5 : Hill of Fearn to Northwolds via Loandhu and Bogbain\***

- This route combines the Monk's Road and Bogbain Farm paths between Hill of Fearn and Northwolds on the Tain to Portmahomack Road, with sections of minor public roads.
- There is no pavement on the 400m link to Northwolds needed on the Tain to Portmahomack road.
- The Monk's Road comprises 500m of private tarmac road to three houses, then continues as a rough gorse-edged path for 900m to Loandhu - the path is known locally to be owned by the resident in the larger of the three houses who has previously voluntarily improved the path (according to local Loandhu residents)
- The Monk's Road is signed from the B9165.

- Improvements are needed to remove encroaching gorse, drain a significant wet section, and for signage and waymarking.
- Privacy screening may be needed to separate the path from the driveway of the last house.
- The Bogbain Farm path was not surveyed but has been included on the advice of local residents in Loandhu, who think it is an extension of the Monk's Road. The path is signed from Loandhu, and a basic inspection showed that the initial section from the road needed vegetation management and possibly path improvements.
- Together, these paths could offer a better route, especially for walkers, between Hill of Fearn and Tain

#### **Section 6: Other Quiet roads**

- The most useful roads for inclusion in the network are the existing NCN 1 route, with additional link to Arabella; Arabella to Fearn Station; Loandhu to Balnagall; and Bogbain Farm to Northwolds. But the other sections of quiet road surveyed all have a role to play in making the network more extensive and connected and linking in key settlements.

## 14 Detailed Route Assessment

Detailed assessments of each of the sections of the rout(s) are provided in the following tables, noting the potential use, existing condition constraints and recommendations for development:

Section 1A		Route Name	Tain to Inver via Northwolds (with alternative sections considered across the airfield and along the MoD fence line)		Distance	10km
Location	Tain shore carpark NH 78115 82646 to Inver school 85894 82313	Landowners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highland Council</li> <li>Forestry and Land Scotland (Cnocan Mhealbhain) Northwolds Trekking Centre</li> <li>Peter MacKenzie (Summerton)</li> <li>Ministry of Defence (MoD)</li> </ul>	Designations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moray Firth SPA Naturescot code 10490</li> <li>Dornoch Firth NSA Naturescot code 9122</li> </ul>	
Land Management Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public roads and carpark Forestry</li> <li>Horse-riding Farming</li> <li>MoD land</li> </ul>					
Use	The section between car park and suspension bridge and along the foreshore as far as the forest is quite busy with locals and visitors. No-one was seen on the forest track. There was a trekking group on the Northwolds track. Not surprisingly perhaps, no walkers were seen on the busy public road past Balnagall. No-one was seen on the final section to Inver, though there was evidence of footfall in various places.					
Previous Path Management	There is a self-closing gate on the Northwolds track at the boundary with FLS land, though it is unclear whether this is for public use or for trekking purposes. There is also a stile on the Northwolds track.					
Opportunities & Constraints	There is an opportunity to engage FLS in path improvement discussions for the sandy track in Cnocan Mhealbhain, and there should be dialogue with Northwolds regarding the current position with public access and any potential impacts from promoting public access. There is no evidence of public access management on Peter MacKenzie's land. Dialogue is needed on defining the best route amidst farming operations and on approvals for gates and signage.					
Condition	The route is a mixture of surfaces and conditions, ranging from tarmac and concrete to sandy foreshore and saltmarsh. A 2.4km length of the busy Tain to Portmahomack road, without pavement, does not allow for safe continuous access. The farmland section beyond					

	<p>the road towards Inver is field margin and rough earth track. There is no signage and waymarking and there are fences without gates or stiles. In its present state, this route is neither suitable nor safe for public access promotion. The alternative section running by the MoD fence line is flat, grassy, sandy land. The small wooden bridge at Inver foreshore near school should be checked by engineer or equivalent.</p>
<p>Recommendations</p>	<p>Upgrade the sandy track in Cnocan Mhealbhain to shared use aggregate path - NH 800 829 to 80606 82901, 600m x 2m approx. FLS may have public access improvement plans. The remaining 300m path linking the sandy track to the foreshore is in good condition, though narrow. This could also be widened and upgraded (not costed).</p> <p>There are two potential options for the 2.4km section of public road: 1) Create a 2m wide pavement for walking and cycling on north side of road, liaising with Highland Council as necessary (costed) 2) Create an off-road route on the north side of the road through MOD and farmland (not costed). These would link the Northwolds track, NH 81766 81468 to a new road exit point east of Balnagall, NH 84125 81407 (or as otherwise agreed).</p> <p>Connect the Northwolds track (just before it accesses the main road) to the old airfield strip and from there follow the airstrip route to the MotoX site (Summertown)</p> <p>Negotiate and define route off-road between the public road exit and Inver, and sign and waymark accordingly.</p> <p>Install 5 signposts with 2 signs each at:  Tain carpark – NH 78115 82646  Suspension bridge, south bank – NH 78532 82396 Northwolds road junction – NH 81766 81468 Road exit east of Balnagall – NH 84125 81407  Gate between farm track and saltmarsh edge – NH 84753 81943 West access to Inver near school – NH 85894 82313</p> <p>Install 12-way markers posts:  Start Cnocan Mhealbhain forest at foreshore – NH 79722 83062 Boundary Cnocan Mhealbhain and Northwolds track – NH80606 82901  Track crossroads – NH 814 822  At cottages and gate -NH 816 819  Track split before public road – NH 818 817  Corner of drainage ditch after exit from public road NH 842816  3 others to fit with route alignment, between farm track and saltmarsh edge.  4 others to fit with route alignment between saltmarsh edge and Inver <u>Install 3 self-closing gates and remove one existing stile *</u>:  Northwolds track * - NH 81395 82153  Road exit east of Balnagall – NH 84125 81407  Gate between farm track and saltmarsh edge NH 84753 81943</p>



	Instruct safety check on 3m bridge at Inver foreshore – NH 85758 82386 Undertake specification surveys as needed to progress works.
Maintenance	0.5 days per year to walk section, note issues, replace way markers, and clear any encroaching vegetation.



Tain shore parkland



Sand and saltmarsh



Sandy track



Northwolds track



Field margin east of Balnagall



Sand and saltmarsh west of Inver

Section 1B		Route Name	Inver to Portmahomack via Balnabruach	Distance	7.0km
<b>Location</b>	Inver school NH 85894 82313 to Portmahomack carpark 91454 84224	<b>Landowners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highland Council</li> <li>Colin Mackay, Inver (ROS10835)</li> <li>Hideaway, Portmahomack (ROS19605)</li> <li>Lower Seafield, Portmahomack (ROS22779)</li> </ul>	<b>Designations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moray Firth SPA Naturescot code 10490</li> <li>Dornoch Firth NSA Naturescot code 9122</li> </ul>
<b>Land Management Priorities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public roads and carpark</li> <li>Farming</li> </ul>				
<b>Use</b>	Clear evidence of footfall on grassland east of Inver to coastal inlet, and several people walking on foreshore.				
<b>Previous Path Management</b>	Route clearly managed between Inver and coastal inlet with stile, gates, and several HC way-markers. Inver signed from Balnabruach and other core path signs in Inver. Beyond bridge at coastal inlet, there are no signs of management.				
<b>Opportunities &amp; Constraints</b>	Depending on eventual route alignment between coastal inlet and Balnabruach, may be option to define route above the foreshore on farmland, though sheep grazing could be a constraint.				
<b>Condition</b>	The section through Inver comprises public road then good aggregate track at east end. East of Inver, the path weaves through a well-drained sandy grassland area and is defined by the coastal inlet. Beyond the bridge, a grassy trod leads through the dunes to the foreshore. The remainder of the route to Balnabruach is sandy foreshore and saltmarsh track which offered easy walking (and cycling) at low tide, though is not waymarked.				
<b>Recommendations</b>	<p>Negotiate and define route off-road between coastal inlet, NH 88141 82878 and Balnabruach road end, NH 90683 83997</p> <p><u>Install 2 signposts with 2 signs each:</u> End of track east end Inver at gate to field – NH 86817 82744 Portmahomack carpark – NH 91454 84224</p> <p><u>Install 6-way markers posts:</u> Locate as needed once route defined.</p> <p><u>Install 1 self-closing gates, and remove stile:</u> At double stile with HC way markers – NH 87661 82809</p> <p>Attach branded way markers (stickers or screw fixed) to street furniture in Inver and Balnabruach</p>				

Maintenance	0.5 days per year to walk section, note issues, replace way markers, and clear any encroaching vegetation.
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Quiet roads Inver



East of Inver



Good low tide access



Stream at coastal inlet



West of Balnabruach



Quiet Road Balnabruach

Section 2A		Route Name	Portmahomack to Tarbatness		Distance	6.3km
<b>Location</b>	Portmahomack carpark NH 91454 84224 to Tarbatness lighthouse 94707 87673	<b>Landowners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highland Council</li> <li>Hilton Farm, Hugh MacKenzie (ROS189786)</li> </ul>		<b>Designations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dornoch Firth and Loch Fleet Ramsar Naturescot code 8420</li> <li>Moray Firth SPA Naturescot code 10490</li> <li>Dornoch Firth NSA Naturescot code 9122</li> </ul>
<b>Land Management Priorities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public roads and carpark</li> <li>Farming</li> </ul>					
<b>Use</b>	People were seen on the path during the survey, both at Portmahomack and Tarbatness ends, though the latter was much busier, probably due to visitors to lighthouse making use of carpark nearby. There was evidence of footfall on the ground throughout the route.					
<b>Previous Path Management</b>	There is clear evidence of path management with 6 stiles, 4 gates, one core path sign (Tarbatness 5km) and 2 SOAC notices.					
<b>Opportunities &amp; Constraints</b>	While there is a rough grassy path in most places throughout the route, there are locations where the path is less well defined due to rougher terrain, cattle poaching and encroaching vegetation. Better waymarking would help define a clear route. It could be challenging to build a path due to bedrock and sea erosion in places, and a path could spoil the wild character of the route. Dialogue is needed on defining the best route amidst farming operations and on approvals for waymarking and stile replacements with self-closing gate.					
<b>Condition</b>	The path largely offers rough walking, sometimes above foreshore, sometimes above crags. There are rougher and less distinct patches due to saltmarsh and cattle poaching. Several fences can all be crossed by stiles and gates, and these also help to define the route in part. A series of way marker posts would help guide people along the route and help to define it more clearly on the ground.					
<b>Recommendations</b>	<p>Through discussion with landowners, particularly in relation to cattle grazing, clarify the best route alignment and then waymark properly.</p> <p><u>Install 12-way markers posts</u> at intermediate points between gates and stiles. Waymarking could be further strengthened by extra way marker discs screw fixed to gates and stiles.</p> <p><u>Install signpost with 2 signs</u> (Proteasomes and Rockfield) - NH 94707 87673 <u>Replace 5 stiles with self-closing gates, and remove stiles:</u></p> <p>NH 91914 85364  NH 92366 86274  NH 92427 86873  NH 92641 87113  NH 94190 87668</p>					

	<p>Cut back 350m2 of gorse:  2A2 - 50m2, NH 91747 85134  2A3 - 100m2, 2A4 - 200m2, NH 92802 87191 to 93309 87399</p>
<b>Maintenance</b>	0.5 days per year to walk section, note issues, replace way markers, and clear any encroaching vegetation.



North from Portmahomack



Gorse and shingle



Fence Line



Saltmarsh Cattle



Gorse, rocks, cattle poaching



Approach to lighthouse.

Section 2B		Route Name	Tarbatness to Rockfield		Distance	7.1km
Location	Tarbatness lighthouse NH 94707 87673 to Rockfield village south end 92241 82622	Landowners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highland Council</li> <li>Lachie Stewart, Ballone Castle area</li> <li>Bindal Farm?</li> </ul>		Designations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dornoch Firth and Loch Fleet Ramsar, Naturescot code 8420</li> <li>Moray Firth SPA, Naturescot code 10490</li> </ul>
Land Management Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public roads and carpark</li> <li>Farming</li> </ul>					
Use	People were only seen on the path south of the lighthouse and immediately south of the jetty, probably due to visitors making use of carpark nearby. There was however evidence of footfall on the ground throughout the route.					
Previous Path Management	There is clear evidence of path management with 3 stiles, 3 gates, one core path sign (Rockfield 5km) and 2 Highland Council way marker posts.					
Opportunities & Constraints	The route is largely on grassland above the foreshore, mostly away from wave action, and there appears to be no livestock grazing. Path creation (not costed), if required, may therefore be feasible.					
Condition	The path is defined throughout and offers easy to moderate walking with a few rougher patches in places. Cycling would be possible for an experienced off-road cyclist, though pushing might be necessary in places. Several fences can all be crossed by stiles and gates, and these also help to define the route. A few additional way marker posts would help guide people along the route.					
Recommendations	<p><u>Install 3-way marker posts:</u>  NH 94267 85964  NH 93187 84017  NH 92457 83112</p> <p>Waymarking could be further strengthened by extra way marker discs screw fixed to gates and stiles. <u>Install signposts with 2 signs:</u>  NH 92377 82955 Rockfield village north end NH 92241 82622 Rockfield village south end</p> <p><u>Replace 3 stiles with self-closing gates, and remove gates:</u>  NH 94267 85964  NH 93932 85088  NH 92457 83112</p> <p><u>Install 2 small bridges at 2 burns:</u></p>					

	NH 93264 84096 - 4m bridge NH 93119 83867 - 3m bridge
<b>Maintenance</b>	0.5 days per year to walk section, note issues, replace way markers, and clear any encroaching vegetation.



Tarbat Ness



South from jetty road



Waymarking above rocks



Smoother ground



Bridge needed



Core Path signage.

<b>Section 3A</b>		<b>Route Name</b>	Balintore to King's Cave		<b>Distance</b>	5.8km
<b>Location</b>	Balintore harbour NH 86326 75554 to King's Cave area (south of big gully) 83990 71296	<b>Landowners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highland Council</li> <li>David Scott, Easter Rarichie</li> <li>David Scott, King's Cave</li> </ul>		<b>Designations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moray Firth SPA Naturescot code 10490</li> </ul>
<b>Land Management Priorities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public roads and car parks</li> <li>Farming</li> </ul>					
<b>Use</b>	People were seen on the path during the survey, though in greater numbers at the Shandwick bay end. There was evidence of footfall on the ground mostly throughout the route, though there were locations with encroaching vegetation which appeared more sparsely used and people appeared to be using alternatives, e.g., diverting around the small gully. Local knowledge indicated that the way markers were possibly 20 years old, part of a package of historic investment alongside stiles.					
<b>Previous Path Management</b>	There is clear evidence of path management with 14 branded way markers posts (2 stylised blue birds on white background) 15 stiles, and 3 core path signs for local access routes at Shandwick and North Sutor.					
<b>Opportunities &amp; Constraints</b>	Farm access tracks - Easter and Wester Rarichie and the track to King's Cave may be important in providing access to remote coastline for necessary works (see below).					
<b>Condition</b>	The path from Balintore to Shandwick and further south above the foreshore is in reasonable condition. But, after the route climbs up onto the crags south of Shandwick, the route is less well defined in places as it passes through steep ground, gullies, bracken, and gorse. There is plenty waymarking, but some of this appears out of date and pointing in the wrong direction. Without good strength and agility, parts of the route would be inaccessible to some people.					
<b>Recommendations</b>	<p><u>Install 4 flights of steps.</u> 300m at steep hill out of Shandwick bay- NH 85552 73981 25m + 25m at small gully - NH 85044 73324 * 50m at big gully - NH 84131 71616</p> <p>* At small gully, discuss alternative route on farm track which avoids gully. A family were seen doing this during the survey. This could save approximately £12K on costs.</p> <p><u>Install 3 bridges.</u> 3m + 3m, small gully - NH 85044 73324 4m, big gully - NH 84131 71616</p> <p><u>Install 16 waymarking posts.</u></p>					



	<p>Locations to be determined but should be evenly spaced along the off-road remote section from Shandwick to King's Cave to give re-assurance to users. Waymarking could be further strengthened by extra way marker discs screw fixed to gates and stiles. <u>Install signpost with 2 signs - 0.3K (Rockfield and Nigg ferry) - NH 86326 75554</u></p> <p><u>Replace 9 stiles with self-closing gates and remove stiles.</u> NH 85767 74118, 85688 73964, 8552273876, 85272 73712, 85072 73450, 85065 73350, 84852 72889, 84272 71637, 83990 71296</p> <p><u>Install 2 self-closing gates:</u> NH 85031 73304, 84272 71637</p> <p><u>Gorse (650) and bracken cutting (100) 750m.</u> above crags - NH 85507 73853 small gully - NH 85044 73324 (50m) deer fence - NH 84918 72731 to 84272 71637 (400m)</p> <p><u>Remove 9 old way markers.</u> NH 85783 74154, 85272 73712, 85163 73591, 85072 73450, 85065 73357, 84164 71631, 84852 72889, 83990 71296</p>
<b>Maintenance</b>	0.5 days per year to walk section, note issues, replace way markers, and clear any encroaching vegetation.



Above foreshore Sandwick



Steps needed south of Sandwick



Typical waymarking.



Steep climb at small gully



Big gully



South of gully

<b>Section 3B</b>		Route Name	King's Cave to Nigg ferry		Distance	6.8km
Location	King's Cave area (south of big gully) NH 83990 71296 to Nigg ferry 79639 68785	Landowners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highland Council</li> <li>David Scott, King's Cave</li> <li>David and Stephen Whiteford, Castlecraig</li> <li>Robert MacKenzie, Nigg ferry to Dunskeath, ROS12210</li> </ul>		Designations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moray Firth SPA Naturescot code 10490</li> </ul>
<b>Land Management Priorities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Farming</li> <li>Public Road &amp; Carparking</li> </ul>					
<b>Use</b>	There were no people seen on the path during the survey, though there was evidence of footfall on the ground in some places, perhaps a consequence of the route being hard to follow, especially from the King's Cave area.					
<b>Previous Path Management</b>	There is clear evidence of path management with 6 branded way markers posts (2 stylised blue birds on white background) 6 stiles, and 2 core path signs for local access at North Sutor.					
<b>Opportunities &amp; Constraints</b>	Farm access tracks - the King's Cave and Castle Craigs access tracks may be important in providing access to coastline for necessary works. At a later stage, it may be necessary to further discuss with the landowner incorporating Castle Craigs access tracks as an alternative into the route given the degree of difficulty in crossing the deep gorge (NH 83110 70422) in particular.					
<b>Condition</b>	As far as practicable, the path follows field boundaries above the crags all the way to Castle Craigs Waymarking is dubious and looks out of date. Sections of gorse block the route, especially at the deep gorge, and these will need to be cleared, before the installation of 3 bridges across the deep gorge and 2 smaller gullies. There is good access from Castle Craigs to the North Sutor area via the WW2 station. There are then various grassy trod through spreading gorse (some dead ends) to meet the private tarmac road to Nigg ferry. Waymarking is patchy.					
<b>Recommendations</b>	<p><u>Install 1 bridge, 40m.</u> NH 83110 70422, mid-way up the deep gorge towards the farm track.</p> <p><u>Install 1 bridge, 5m.</u> NH 83055 70329, small gully along from first deep gorge.</p> <p><u>Install 1 bridge, 5m.</u> NH 83084 70130, small gully mid-way along this section.</p> <p><u>Install 1 bridge, 4m –</u></p>					

	<p>NH 82181 69119, start of North Sutor area just after exit from glamping site track.</p> <p><u>Replace 8 stiles with self- closing gates, and remove stiles -</u>  NH 79639 68785, 83394 70623, 83254 70417, 82188 69127, 81345 68746, 80984 68841, 80833 69036, 83084 70130</p> <p><u>Install 2 additional self- closing gates.</u>  NH 83298 70321, 830278 70559</p> <p><u>Install 12 way-marker posts.</u>  NH 79639 68785, 83254 70417, 82188 69127, 82094 69019, 81345 68746, 80984 68841, 80833 69036, 3 in the sections between each of the gorges, 1 at 81905 69646, and 1 other North Sutor area.</p> <p><u>Remove 7 old way-marker posts - 1st 7 locations above.</u></p> <p><u>Remove 600m gorse, 600m.</u>  North Sutor area, south of WW2 station, and enabling access to the large gorge and 2 other gullies.</p>
Maintenance	0.5 days per year to walk section, note issues, replace way-markers, and clear any encroaching vegetation



Rough ground, no gates or signs



Fence Line



Replace bridge.



Former military base



Gorse North Sutor



Private road to Nigg Ferry

<b>Section 4A</b>		Route Name	Nigg ferry to Arabella via public roads		Distance	9.7km
Location	Nigg ferry - Nigg - Pitcalnie - Ankerville Corner - Arabella	Landowners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highland Council</li> </ul>		Designations	NA
Land Management Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Roads</li> </ul>					
Use	Busy B-road as far as turn off for minor road to Nigg village. There were cyclists seen on parts of the route, and walkers on the narrow Nigg village and Loandhu sections.					
Previous Path Management	NCN1 signs on Nigg ferry to Chapel Hill section.					
Opportunities & Constraints	Install Quiet Roads Network signage as part of wider shared roads initiative. This is part of NCN1, but needs a pavement or other alternative for walkers					
Condition	Except for the B9175 and B9166, these roads are all suitable for cycling and walking, though improvements recommended for pavement creation (see below) would make these busier road sections safer.					
Recommendations	Create 1500m x 1m off road aggregate path. Signpost and 2 signs needed at either end. Improve NCN signage. Signpost and 2 signs needed at junction.					

	3 intermediate waymarker posts Create 1700m 1m wide off road aggregate path. Sign post and 2 signs needed at end.
Maintenance	0.5 days per year to walk section, note issues, replace way-markers, and clear any encroaching vegetation



Chapelhill towards Ankerville



B9175 Arabella towards Nigg Ferry

<b>Section 4B</b>		Route Name	Mount Canisp to Arabella via Nigg Sands area (public roads)		Distance	7km
Location	Arabella - Fearn Station – Loandhu - Balnagall	Landowners	• Highland Council		Designations	NA
Land Management Priorities	• Public Roads					
Use	There were cyclists seen on parts of the route, and walkers on the narrow Nigg village and Loandhu sections					
Previous Path Management	NA					
Opportunities & Constraints	Excellent very quiet road between Arabella to Fearn station and Loandhu to Balanagall, with short section of B9165.					
Condition	Except for the B9175 and B9166, these roads are all suitable for cycling and walking, though improvements recommended for pavement creation (see below) would make these busier road sections safer.					
Recommendations	Create 1m wide path for 400m. 4 signposts with 2 signs each needed. 4 intermediate way marker posts					
Maintenance	0.5 days per year to walk section, note issues, replace way-markers, and clear any encroaching vegetation					



North from Arabella



Loandhu Road



Near Balnagall



Main Road Tain to Portmahomack

<b>Section 5A</b>		Route Name	Hill of Fearn to Northwolds via Loandhu (Monk's Road) and Bogbain (Bogbain path not fully surveyed)	Distance	5.9km
Location	Midoxgate access, near Hill of Fearn NH 82654 78461 to Northwolds 81766 81468	Landowners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highland Council</li> <li>Bogbain Farm, Douglas and June Vickers, ROS10483</li> </ul>	Designations	NA
Land Management Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Farming</li> <li>Forestry?</li> <li>Public road</li> </ul>				
Use	Local people were seen walking the minor road between the Monk's Road and the Bogbain path on the Loandhu road. Two knowledgeable local people informed the surveyor that the Monk's Road is a popular walk, and sometimes cycle, and that the Bogbain path is also used.				
Previous Path Management	There are signposts with Scotways signs at the start of both the paths. The local people stated that the owner of the Monk's Road, who lives at Midoxgate, has previously maintained the path.				
Opportunities & Constraints	The landowner at Midoxgate should hopefully support further improvements needed on the Monk's Road. To mitigate a potential increase in use of the path through better promotion and management, it is only reasonable that the final house on the access drive before the path section begins should be screened from the path through fencing or hedging or similar to allow better privacy and security.				
Condition	<p><u>Monk's Road</u> - There is a narrow tarmac driveway to the 3 houses for 500m before the very narrow, partly overgrown (with gorse) grassy path through to Loandhu. The middle section, approximately 200m, is very wet and boggy. There is no signpost at the Loandhu end. Aggregate surfacing would open up the route to more comfortable cycling.</p> <p><u>Bogbain path</u> - While the route was not fully surveyed throughout, a brief inspection at the south end suggested that 700m path creation is needed to link the Loandhu road to the Bogbain farm track, which then continues to the minor public road near Tain. Signage and waymarking improvements are likely to be needed.</p> <p><u>Tain to Portmahomack Road section</u> - There is no pavement on this 400m section to make a safe link to Northwolds.</p>				
Recommendations	<p><u>Monk's Road</u> - Cut gorse along 400m path, create 900 x 1m wide aggregate path, and install 1 signpost and 2 signs at the Loandhu end.</p> <p><u>Bogbain path</u> - Create 700 x 1m wide aggregate path and install 2 signposts with 2 signs each and 3-way marker posts.</p>				



	Road section - Create 400 x 1m aggregate path (costed) or investigate off-road option, linking into section 1A path works, install 1 signpost with 2 signs each.
Maintenance	0.5 days per year to walk section, note issues, replace way markers, and clear any encroaching vegetation.



Sign near Hill of Fearn



Start of Monks' Road



Monk's Road path section.



Monk's Road encroaching gorse



Overgrown start Bogbain path Loandhu



Bogbain path Loandhu

Section 6A		Route Name	Quiet Roads Network	Distance	30Km additional to those included within other route sections (4 and 5) as listed below
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NCN1 Nigg - Balintore - Balnagall</li> <li>• Kildary to Hill of Fearn via Arabella</li> <li>• Nigg to Castlecraigs</li> <li>• Tain - Northwolds - Tarrel</li> <li>• Shandwick - Balintore - Hilton</li> <li>• Other short links, e.g., to Inver, Rockfield, Hill of Fearn to Rhynie</li> </ul>	Landowners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highland Council</li> </ul>	Designations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NA</li> </ul>
Land Management Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Roads</li> </ul>				
Use	Cyclists were a common sight on the minor roads across the Peninsula. Walkers were a less frequent sight, but the narrow Loandhu road seemed to be a popular route for local people.				
Previous Path Management	The NCN 1 route is signed in part, though this could be improved.				
Opportunities & Constraints	These other sections of quiet road all have a role to play in making the network more extensive and connected and linking into key settlements.				
Condition	As public roads, these routes are all suitable for cycling (and walking to some extent), perhaps with the exception of the Tain to Portmahomack which is straight, relatively busy and attracts fast driving - though note it is part of the NCN1 route.				
Recommendations	<p>In discussion with Highland Council and Community Councils, agree roads for inclusion within a Quiet Roads Network. Consider also needs of local horse riders.</p> <p>Install approximately 30 signposts with 2-way signs, with suitable advisory message to all road's users - see photos of examples of existing networks.</p>				
Maintenance	0.5 days per year to cycle sections and note any issues.				



North to Fearn Station from Arabella



National Cycle Route 1 to Balintore from Tain



Towards Loandhu from Balnagall



Towards Balnagall from Loandhu



South to Arabella from Fearn Station



Kildary to Arabella

## 15 Operational Considerations

### 15.2 Management & Maintenance

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For the management and maintenance of footpaths, research has shown that no one delivery model fits best. If financial constraints were not as significant as they currently are, then the local authority would be the most obvious choice as is suggested in legislation, “The local authority shall ensure that there is adequate provision of facilities for the inhabitants of their area for recreational, sporting, cultural and social activities” (Local Government and Scotland Planning Act 1982.)

However, pressure on local authority budgets mean that only statutory requirements are likely to be given priority for funding and, as such, other models of management and maintenance must be considered.

The challenge facing most walking routes, paths and trails is the regular and ongoing maintenance costs and management of works. This is highlighted across the world as a challenge and no one model emerges as the preferred one, given the different circumstances, legal requirements on local authorities/councils/agencies and development groups. In addition, potential funders will need to be assured that there is a robust management and maintenance strategy in place to ensure their respective investments create a sustainable legacy and are not simply one-off grants.

Maintenance is the process of maintaining or preserving the path, or the condition of the path being maintained. Management is the process of dealing with or controlling the use of the path by users. As the path network crosses over land owned by numerous land owners, the funders will need an assurance that public access, management, and maintenance agreements are all in place to ensure legal and financial due diligence is being observed. Scotland benefits from a “Right to Roam” and as such it would be beneficial to ensure effective relationships with landowners, and the support and collaboration to provide infrastructure that provides for users, whilst mitigating against any damage to private land.

Access Agreements will need to be in place between the landowners and the ultimate project / path “owner/operator.”

Consideration will be required around the resourcing and delegation of the following regular and reactive tasks:

- Path surveys and inspections
- Path surface and edges
- Drains and culverts.
- Boundary structures, fences etc
- Bridges
- Site furniture, signage etc
- Trees and shrubs
- Reactive maintenance and repairs

### 15.3 Resource Requirements

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From the audit undertaken, and the assessment of works required, it is proposed that the Path Network (in full) will require approximately 5-6 days per year to check and monitor the route as outlined in the detailed section plans.

### 15.4 Marketing Initiatives and Promotion

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It is recommended that the Easter Ross Peninsula (and Tain & District Development Trust) continue to develop and increase their public presence through their website and social media channels. The website should be used to both attract and inform future walkers and cyclists using images showing key content, events, and activities.

Using existing local channels, prints and resources will support a wide reach and attract a larger share of community support – and possible users. There are a range of tools and techniques that can be deployed to

ensure that information is presented in a clear, concise, consistent, and appropriate manner to all existing and potential walkers.

The following table offers a summary of the approaches that may be used:

<b>Public Relations</b>	Links with local media should be built on and further developed. Community interest stories and the project’s vision for improving the path and positively impacting local businesses.
<b>Website, Facebook &amp; Other social media</b>	<p>An improved website could promote every aspect of the path network. The path network; key activities; new and improved infrastructure, and further future activities. In future this could be linked to an online booking facility or other revenue generating activities.</p> <p>Other online tools such as Facebook and Twitter could be used in promoting the path network and helping build a body of interest.</p> <p>Social media should also be the primary channel to promote the events, improvements, and community activity.</p>
<b>Advertising</b>	Though potentially expensive, this may be an option to raise awareness and profile of the path network. An appropriate advertising budget could be created for this purpose should it be felt appropriate – such activity would be dependent on identifying key markets and channels – these may include outdoor magazines, key forums, maps etc.

## 15.5 Marketing Strategy

The following is a proposed marketing action plan for the path network. Within this plan the following areas will be addressed:

- Communications Strategy: Establish and maintain consistency of the path network profile and messaging.
- Brand: Establish/maintain consistency for the Project
- Image: Assessing services for customers (users and visitors)
- Customer Satisfaction: Meeting the needs of locals, visitors, tourists, partners, and passers-by.

<b>Communication Strategy</b>			
<b>Task</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
Development of an improved path network website to focus on improvements, plans, ambitions, and local communities.	Ongoing	£1,000	Tain and District Development Trust
Update site with latest information, events and links to other local places and attractions, building a suggested itinerary for potential visitors to each area.	Ongoing	Free	Tain and District Development Trust
Ensure regular social media activity to highlight, activities, local attractions, businesses, and key highlights of the path network.	Weekly	Free	Tain and District Development Trust
Continue to actively use and promote the newsletter and mailing list – increasing the number of respondents signed up for information.	Ongoing	Free	Tain and District Development Trust
Press Releases: At key stages in the project’s development and delivery.	Ongoing	Free	Tain and District Development Trust

### **Brand & Image Strategy**

Task	Timeframe	Cost	Responsibility
Incorporate brand values into all communications, website, social media, and printed material.	Ongoing	Free	Tain and District Development Trust
Ensure a consistent brand messaging – considering the tone, colour scheme, media use, fonts etc.	Ongoing	Free	Tain and District Development Trust
Seek regular visitors feedback as to whether their expectations are being adequately met, surveys, questionnaires etc.	Ongoing	Free	Tain and District Development Trust

Customer Satisfaction			
Task	Timeframe	Cost	Responsibility
Establish a system to record all customer feedback	Ongoing	Free	Tain and District Development Trust
Ensure a process and / or agenda item to raise feedback and discussion from all users, key stakeholder, and locals on a regular basis	Ongoing	Free	Tain and District Development Trust

## 16 Outline Capital Costs Assessment

The following table outlines the cost estimates for each of the sections, all costs are listed inclusive of VAT (20%), Professional Fees (10%) and a Contingency (20%).

Route Section	Cost Element	Total Cost
Section 1A – Tain to Inver	Signage	£936
Section 1A – Tain to Inver	Way Markers	£468
Section 1A – Tain to Inver	Path Creation	£30,420
Section 1A – Tain to Inver	Signage	£936
	Way Markers x 4	£936
	Self-Closing Gate	£905
Section 1A – Tain to Inver	Misc. Works	£585
Section 1A – Tain to Inver	Signage	£468
	Way Markers x 3	£702
	Self-Closing Gate x 2	£1,622
Section 1A – Tain to Inver	Signage	£468
	Way Markers x 4	£936
	Bridge Assessment	£624
<b>SECTION 1A TOTAL</b>		<b>£40,006</b>
Section 1B – Inver to Portmahomack	Signage	£468
Section 1B – Inver to Portmahomack	Self-Closing Gate	£905
Section 1B – Inver to Portmahomack	Way Markers x 4	£936
Section 1B – Inver to Portmahomack	Way Markers x 2	£468
Section 1B – Inver to Portmahomack	Signage	£468
<b>SECTION 1B TOTAL</b>		<b>£3,245</b>
Section 2A – Portmahomack to Tarbatness	NA	£0
Section 2A – Portmahomack to Tarbatness	Gorse Cutting 100m2	£1,560
	Way Markers x 4	£936
	Self-Closing Gate x 2	£1,654
Section 2A – Portmahomack to Tarbatness	Gorse Cutting 200m2	£3,120
	Way Markers x 4	£936
	Self-Closing Gate x 2	£1,654
Section 2A – Portmahomack to Tarbatness	Gorse Cutting 400m2	£6,240
	Way Markers x 4	£936
	Self-Closing Gate x 2	£1,654
	Signage x 2	£936

<b>SECTION 2A TOTAL</b>		<b>£19,625</b>
Section 2B – Tarbatness to Rockfield	Way Markers x 2	£468
Section 2B – Tarbatness to Rockfield	Way Markers x 3	£702
	Bridge 4m span	£4,680
	Bridge 3m span	£3,510
	Self-Closing Gate x 3	£2,714
Section 2B – Tarbatness to Rockfield	Signage x 2	£936
<b>SECTION 2B TOTAL</b>		<b>£13,010</b>
Section 2C – Rockfield to Balintore	Way Markers x 6	£1,404
	Self-Closing Gate	£905
Section 2C – Rockfield to Balintore	Way Markers x 4	£936
	Self-Closing Gate	£905
Section 2C – Rockfield to Balintore	Branded Stickers	£234
<b>SECTION 2C TOTAL</b>		<b>£4,384</b>
Section 3A – Balintore to King’s Cave	Branded Stickers	£234
	Signage	£468
Section 3A – Balintore to King’s Cave	Vegetation Clearance (Est)	£780
	Self-Closing Gate	£905
	Way Markers x 3	£702
Section 3A – Balintore to King’s Cave	Steps (300m)	£93,600
	Vegetation Clearance	£12,480
	Self-Closing Gate x 2	£1,654
	Way Markers	£234
Section 3A – Balintore to King’s Cave	Vegetation Clearance	£6,240
	Way Markers x 3	£702
	Self-Closing Gate x 2	£1,654
Section 3A – Balintore to King’s Cave	Gorse Cutting 100m2	£1,560
	25m Steps x 2	£15,600
	3m Bridge x 2	£7,020
	Self-Closing Gate	£26,239
Section 3A – Balintore to King’s Cave	Vegetation Clearance	£12,480
	Steps (50m)	£15,600
	Bridge 4m span	£4,680
	Way Markers x 4	£936
	Self-Closing Gate x 2	£1,654
<b>SECTION 3A TOTAL</b>		<b>£205,421</b>
Section 3B – King’s Cave to Nigg ferry	Self-Closing Gate x 4	£3,245
	Way Markers x 4	£936
Section 3B – King’s Cave to Nigg ferry	Way Markers x 3	£936
Section 3B – King’s Cave to Nigg ferry	Bridge (35m span x 2m wide)	£305,760
	Gorse Cutting	£15,600
	Bridge (5m span)	£5,460
	Fencing (100m)	£2,340
	Way Markers x 4	£936
	Self-Closing Gate	£905
Section 3B – King’s Cave to Nigg ferry	Signage	£468
<b>SECTION 3B TOTAL</b>		<b>£336,586</b>
Section 4A – Nigg ferry to Arabella via public roads	Path Creation 1,500m2	£75,465
	Signage x 2	£936
Section 4A – Nigg ferry to Arabella via public roads	Signage	£468
	Way Markers x 3	£702
Section 4A – Nigg ferry to Arabella via public roads	Path Creation 1,700m2	£85,527
	Signage	£468
<b>SECTION 4A TOTAL</b>		<b>£163,566</b>
Section 4B – Arabella to Balnagall via Fearn station and Loandhu	Path Creation 400m2	£20,124
	Signage	£936
	Way Markers x 4	£936
<b>SECTION 4B TOTAL</b>		<b>£21,996</b>

Section 5A – Hill of Fearn to Northwolds via Loandhu and Bogbain	Gorse Cutting 800m2	£12,480
	Drainage 200m	£7,800
	Signage	£468
Section 5A – Hill of Fearn to Northwolds via Loandhu and Bogbain	Path Creation 700m2	£35,217
	Signage x 3	£1,404
	Way Markers x 3	£702
Section 5A – Hill of Fearn to Northwolds via Loandhu and Bogbain	Path Creation 400m2	£20,124
<b>SECTION 5A TOTAL</b>		<b>£78,195</b>
Section 6A Quiet roads network	Signage x 30	<b>£14,040</b>
<b>SECTION 6A TOTAL</b>		<b>£14,040</b>
<b>TOTAL PROJECT COST</b>		<b>£900,073</b>

## 17 Potential Sources of Funding

### 17.1 Major Funders

#### Highland Council Coastal Communities Fund

The Coastal Communities Fund (CCF) was introduced as a UK-wide programme created and funded by the UK Government with the aim of encouraging the economic development of UK coastal communities by awarding funding to create sustainable economic growth and jobs.

The Highland Coastal Communities Fund is designed to support economic regeneration and sustainable development around coastal areas in Highland. The fund is derived from revenue generated by Scottish Government Crown Estate marine assets. Each year, local authorities are allocated a proportion of the profits.

The overall allocation available to Highland during 2022 was £3,201,134 with most funds being devolved to local Area Committee's for decision making.

There is a two-stage process involved in applying for Highland Coastal Communities Funding:

1. Expression of interest giving outline information on key facts and figures about your project. You will then receive feedback on this to inform a possible full application.
2. Full application - this will be considered by local Councillors at Area Committee.

#### Scottish Government - Place Based Investment Programme

The Place Based Investment Programme aims to bring the Place Principle to life. The Programme will link and align all place-based funding initiatives to create a coherent approach to building resilient communities, addressing inequalities, and supporting an inclusive, well-being economy in local settings. In practice this means that consideration will be given to how place-based investments align with other planned investments in the locality in order to streamline delivery and increase impact.

The Programme aims to:

- ensure that investments in a place are relevant to that place and for the benefit of all the people in that place.
- support the delivery of 20-minute neighbourhoods.
- provide a consistent framework for looking at investments in a place and explore with those communities how greater collaboration can improve the circumstances of peoples' lives.
- support the ambitions of existing place-based plans and strategies, such as the Infrastructure Investment Plan and the emerging National Planning Framework<sup>4</sup>, making sure that money spent in places has the greatest collective benefit possible.
- accelerate ambitions for Community Wealth Building, community-led Regeneration, and the cities and town centres agendas.
- provide a coherent local framework across urban and rural areas for realising ambitions for inclusion, climate change, and wellbeing.

#### Scottish Government – Regeneration Capital Fund



The Regeneration Capital Grant Fund, delivered in partnership with COSLA and local government, supports locally developed place-based regeneration projects that involve local communities, helping to support and create jobs and build sustainable communities. Applications to the fund are made on an annual basis through the local authority and, where justified, can potentially cover more than one financial year (subject to available budget).

Applications are not restricted in geography, size, or type of project. It will be for applicant organisations to demonstrate that projects fit with the aims and objectives of the fund and can demonstrate clear regeneration outcomes. The priorities of this funding stream are listed as follows:

- projects that primarily focus on areas that suffer from high levels of deprivation and disadvantage.
- projects that demonstrate clear community involvement
- projects that will deliver large scale transformational change with strong regeneration outcomes.
- projects and programmes that can encourage additional investment and address market failure.

### **Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund**

The Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund was established by the Scottish Government and the Fund is managed by VisitScotland on their behalf.

This fund, provided by the Scottish Government, supports sustainable, well planned, inspiring, and collaborative infrastructure projects that focus on *“improving the visitor experience and enable more visitors to enjoy Scotland’s rural communities.”*

Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund awards are available from £75,000 up to a maximum of £375,000 for larger, multi-site projects. The fund can provide applicants with support up to 70% of approved project activity.

Applications must be submitted by a Local Authority or National Park Authority in Scotland, with a collaborative approach demonstrated. The fund also requires evidence of strong buy-in and project support from local communities and tourism groups, as has been done through this feasibility study.

Successful applications must demonstrate the following:

- **An existing or anticipated Visitor Pressure Point** – As a result of previous increases in visitor numbers, there is a visitor and/or community pressure point, which is likely to continue and needs to be addressed. This includes anticipated visitor pressure point arising from changes in the market. The applicant should provide evidence of the increase in visitor numbers or anticipated impact of visitor number and/or evidence of the impact of visitors on the local area. The applicant should provide a strategic context for the project and evidence to support this.
- **Provision of a quality visitor experience** – Through the provision of high-quality visitor facilities and infrastructure, leading to a positive impact on the local landscape and visitor economy. Applicants should demonstrate the commitment to place principles and a quality design, which can accommodate visitors with a wide variety of access needs and complies with and where possible exceeds the requirements of the Equality Act.
- **A Responsible Tourism approach** – Applicants are expected to take a responsible tourism approach to the planning, design, and management of the infrastructure provision.
- **A carbon conscious approach** – Applicants should provide details on how their project will contribute to the reduction/mitigation of climate change and support the transition to a low carbon society i.e., using low carbon materials, energy efficiency, promotion of low carbon transport, renewable energy and waste management in construction and maintenance of the facilities. Applicants should demonstrate their commitment to carbon consciousness, where a location reuses, repurposes, and considers whole life costs retrofitting existing structures and considering the embodied carbon in place.
- **Community capacity building** – Creating more resilient communities more able to cope with peak tourism demands and the creation of new local business opportunities.
- **Effective partnerships and collaboration** – You must evidence engagement with local community groups, destination organisations and tourism businesses, demonstrating how partnership working can increase awareness, advocacy, and the quality of the final project.
- **Project viability and deliverability** – Applicants must provide evidence of:
  - Proven experience of project management and financial administration.
  - A clear timetable for permissions, procurement, site start date and expected time of completion.

- A clear delivery plan demonstrating value for money and measurable outputs.
- Detailed costs and a budget forecast for the period of the project.

<https://www.visitscotland.org/supporting-your-business/funding/rural-tourism-infrastructure-fund>

### Sustrans Places for Everyone

Sustrans Scotland provides advice, support, and funding for the creation of infrastructure that makes it easier for people to walk and cycle for everyday journeys.

The aim of Places for Everyone is to create safe, attractive, healthier places by increasing the number of trips made by walking, cycling, and wheeling for everyday journeys.

The scheme is funded by the Scottish Government through Transport Scotland and is administered by Sustrans. In order to ensure all projects receiving funding make the largest possible impact, six design principles have been developed.

These are the minimum criteria for a successful Places for Everyone bid.

- Develop ideas collaboratively and in partnership with communities.
- Facilitate independent walking, cycling, and wheeling for everyone, including an unaccompanied 12-year-old.
- Design places that provide enjoyment, comfort, and protection.
- Ensure access for all and equality of opportunity in public space.
- Ensure all proposals are developed in a way that is context-specific and evidence-led.
- Reallocate road space, and restrict motor traffic permeability to prioritise people walking, cycling, and wheeling over private motor vehicles.

The Places for Everyone funding stream may fund up to 70% of eligible capital costs but will require the applicant to develop the project through all Sustrans Design stages in partnership with a Sustrans Case Officer.

### Scottish Landfill Communities Fund

The Scottish Landfill Communities Fund (SLCF) is a tax credit scheme, linked to Scottish Landfill Tax that encourages landfill site operators to provide contributions to Approved Bodies, who can then pass the funds onto community and environmental projects.

Funding must be passed from a landfill operator via Approved Bodies to a project such as the Easter Ross Peninsula Path project.

There are several approved bodies that have been identified as suitable and relevant for the project. These are listed below. It should be noted that as a rule these funders look to fund a specific aspect of the project and not a proportion of the overall cost, additionally they will not be able to fund the same aspects of the project should applications to multiple bodies be considered.

Approved Body	Notes
FCC Communities Ltd	The FCC Scottish Action Fund offers funding of between £2,000 and £40,000 to projects from FCC Environment through the Scottish Landfill Communities Fund.  Further information is available at <a href="http://www.wren.org.uk/apply/fcc-scottish-action-fund">http://www.wren.org.uk/apply/fcc-scottish-action-fund</a>
Valencia Communities Fund	Valencia Communities Fund is an independent, not-for-profit organisation which provides funding for community, heritage and biodiversity projects around the UK through the Landfill Communities Fund and Scottish Landfill Communities Fund.  Funding up to £25,000(if total aspect of project does not exceed £100,000) Further information is available at <a href="https://www.valenciacommunitiesfund.co.uk">https://www.valenciacommunitiesfund.co.uk</a>
Suez Trust	SUEZ Communities Trust will consider projects which focus on physical improvement at an identified site. Funding is typically awarded for the purchase of materials/equipment and the appointment of a contractor to undertake the improvement work. A request for funding for multiple sites or for salaries, running costs, project management or design fees will not be considered.

	<p>Funding up to £50,000</p> <p>Further information is available at <a href="http://www.suezcommunitiestrust.org.uk/scotland">http://www.suezcommunitiestrust.org.uk/scotland</a></p>
EB Scotland	<p>EB Scotland considers various criteria when deciding whether to fund a project;</p> <p>Community Need: It is important to demonstrate wide community support and appropriate consultation.</p> <p>Value for Money: It is important to demonstrate anticipated costs are reasonable and represent good value, usually through a tender or quotation exercise.</p> <p>Viability: EBS carefully vets all applicants as to their suitability to carry out proposed projects. This not only ensures compliance, but also that the necessary skills and experience are available to projects. It is also important that other funding, planning consents and any contingencies have been considered.</p> <p>Sustainability: It is important that maintenance plans and budgets are demonstrated.</p> <p>Added Value: It should be illustrated how SLCF funds lever in other sources of funding, utilise volunteers, enhance disabled access, meet biodiversity targets, and attract local authority support as appropriate.</p> <p>Funding up to £25,000</p> <p><a href="https://ebscotland.co.uk">https://ebscotland.co.uk</a></p>

**Contributing Third Party Payment (CTP)** - When a Landfill Operator (LO) contributes to an Environmental Body (EB), it can only claim tax relief on 89% of the contribution it makes and is left with a 11% funding shortfall. Some Landfill Operators will absorb this cost, or a portion of it, themselves. Sometimes they will require the applicant to find a separate third party – a Contributing Third Party (CTP) to make the 11% payment or a portion of it.

**Who Can Be a Contributing Third Party?** - Almost anyone can be a Contributing Third Party, providing they do not gain a unique benefit from the project put forward for funding. Below is a list of examples of organisations that may be Contributing Third Parties:

- Private Companies
- Public Sector organisations - Local Authorities, County Councils
- Charities
- Voluntary organisations
- Private donors
- Monies from fundraising

**Who is Excluded from Being a Contributing Third Party?**

- Any individual or organisation directly connected to the landfill operator, or a contractor of the project.
- Any individual or organisation who gains a unique benefit from the project.

### **The Ian Findlay Fund**

The Ian Findlay Path Fund supports the improvement of local paths within and between communities, making it easier for people to choose active travel and public transport for everyday journeys.

The new grant fund is supported by Transport Scotland to improve paths, to make active travel easier and more attractive. This will encourage people to leave their cars at home for short journeys which will in turn benefit air quality, reduce CO<sup>2</sup> emissions and improve our physical health and mental wellbeing.

The fund supports projects that will improve usability and accessibility of paths for more people. This will reduce inequalities and improve access to greenspace and its benefits to mental health.

The fund supports path management projects that:

- Demonstrate that they will make it easier for people to choose active travel and public transport to reduce dependency on car usage.
- Improve accessibility and resilience of existing paths between homes, community facilities, active travel routes and public transport facilities.
- Remove barriers to make existing paths more accessible to more people.
- Link paths to community destinations such as homes and public transport connections
- Improve and create routes to aid the development of 20-minute neighbourhoods.

Funding of a sum between £10,000 - £100,000 is available, with 30% match funding required (15% can be in kind).

<https://www.pathsforall.org.uk/ian-findlay-path-fund>

### **SSE Renewables Sustainable Development Fund**

The Sustainable Development Fund is in addition to local community funds and supports strategic projects in the regions where SSE is operating. It allows the benefits from renewable energy developments to be accessible to a wider area and is directed to projects that can achieve significant impact in local communities. SSE expects the fund could be worth over £57 million over the next 25 years. The community fund can support projects which:

- Creating opportunities – increase opportunities for education and employment.
- Empowering communities – build resilience and protect vulnerable residents.
- Building sustainable places – stimulate meaningful community regeneration.

Projects in the following areas can apply:

- Dumfries and Galloway
- **Highlands**
- North Lincolnshire
- Perth and Kinross
- Scottish Borders
- South Lanarkshire

## **17.2 Smaller Funders**

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### **Ward Discretionary Budgets**

Each of the Highland Council wards receives a discretionary budget and it will be for each ward to consider when they wish to commit funds.

Any reasonable applications, normally from community groups and organisations will be considered. Some projects will be given priority, including those which attract funding from other sources. Assistance cannot be used to support projects which require an ongoing commitment.

Further details and information can be obtained through relevant ward managers.

### **Common Good Funds**

Millions of pounds in rent payments collected from businesses on Common Good Land (the historic burghs of Scotland) make up the Common Good Funds which are used for projects that benefit communities. The Highland Council administer several Common Good funds including Tain.

Application to these funds can be supported through the local ward manager.

### **Beinn Tharsuinn Wind Farm Funding**

Beinn Tharsuinn Windfarm Community Limited is a Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee. The purpose of the company is to distribute community benefit funding to eligible community projects in ten beneficiary Community Council areas near Beinn Tharsuinn windfarm including Tain.

## 18 Conclusion & Recommendations

This Feasibility Study concludes that the creation of a network of paths around the Easter Ross Peninsula is viable and feasible, albeit on a phased or staged approach. As such the following recommendations are made:

- Recommendation 1: It is recommended that TDDT reaffirm community support for the network of peninsula paths. This could be done by an open presentation of results meeting followed by questions and answers.
- Recommendation 2: It is recommended that TDDT agree the packaging / phasing of the sections outlined in this report.
- Recommendation 3: It is recommended that for each individual section, TDDT seek to secure access agreements from the respective landowners for paths and infrastructure on and across their land.
- Recommendation 4: It is recommended that TDDT prepare and submit a pre-planning application to Highland Council with particular emphasis on clarifying the need for some of the key infrastructure implications outlined in this report (roads and bridges).
- Recommendation 5: It is recommended that TDDT prepares appropriate specifications with appropriate technical drawings for the packages identified in Recommendation 2.
- Recommendation 6: It is recommended that TDDT advertises the packages above through Public Contract Scotland to determine the actual costs, and to identify a preferred contractor.
- Recommendation 7: It is recommended that TDDT undertake appropriate fundraising and grant sourcing activities, possibly through the recruitment of a short-term project officer.

### 19.1 Appendix 1: Survey Comments Around Issues & Locations

- Tain links circular- access from the small car park to Alexandra bridge wet and very muddy path for a few metres, also standing water under the railway bridge between the golf course and Kirk sheaf farm
- 2. John o groats trail from Tain to Meikle ferry via Tarlogie is a nice walk spoilt by the lack of footpath from Lidl to the verge of the A9. I would also like to see the distillery install a path along the A9 within the field border from Lidl to the distillery to encourage visitors to walk/cycle there
- 3. Asda to Tain pottery - again lack of a pedestrian footpath along a short section of the A9 makes this dangerous to access on foot although it is a tourist attraction within walking distance of the town.
- 4. Moss road circular is a beautiful local circuit but is very poorly signposted. I had lived here for years before I discovered its delights.
- 5. Walking from Edderton old church back to Tain is a nice walk over Tain hill if only the bus stopped at Edderton old church on request, currently you must walk along the main road from Edderton to the old church to access this.
- 6. If the buses stopped near Meikle Ferry the cafe would be a nice walk one way and the bus back or vice versa in fact a bus stop there would surely be desirable for the caravan park visitors/residents and cafe customers anyway.
- A better and more complete network of paths that link together.
- A more regular maintenance plan for overgrown areas and signage and areas that have been eroded around Balintore & Nigg
- Add more paths in Fearn we must walk on verges and roads.
- All the above
- Balintore near the hall, behind tennis court. Path too overgrown to safely push a wheelchair, use a rollator or to cycle.
- Better signage, better paths, and more info
- better surfaces and clearer signposting
- Better surfaces more dog bins more seating
- Clear signage about available paths and where they may lead to
- Coastal path through Balintore/Shandwick through to Nigg
- Cycle path required between East Tarrel and Portmahomack. Increasing numbers of cyclist on this stretch of road. Some tight blind corners not helped but overgrown bushes at road sides etc. accident waiting to happen. Not only cyclists but we are noticing a lot more pedestrians also making the walk on this route, East Tarrel - port A path way is achievable in most if not all the Mile and half route. And I feel something which should be seriously considered having first hand seeing the volume of traffic daily on this route.
- Dogs' dirt wherever you go.
- Down Craighill terrace the paths are uneven I have fallen a few times.
- Drainage and a proper surface would be good for wheelchairs.
- Drainage on Rockfield Farm to Rockfield footpath.
- Drainage on Rockfield-to-Rockfield Farm path. Keeping whins growth back.
- Feel like there should be proper cycle/walking paths between all the villages and Tain. Would make it way safer than people walking and cycling on the main road and for me personally I would cycle and walk way more than I do now.
- Fence penetration. Signage missing or illegal. Path maintenance.
- Few paths are not great for prams, can be too narrow or tree roots sticking up.
- For me the lack of interval seating is a barrier to walking around the Tain or other towns. I am unable to comment on the condition of any paths due to having not walked any for some time.
- From the fire station to the high street. Then all roads up to Track and health centre
- Generally, need better surfaces and signage.
- Horse riding friendly gates
- I would like to walk to Milton community centre from station road. A path from the bus stop across from station road across the grass would be useful instead of having to walk around on main unpaved road. would be safer. I have walking breathing problems and use elbow crutches to walk. The short cut would be helpful to many.
- Improvement in surfaces that reduce access and improvement in signage.
- Inver coastal path, no gate access so cannot be used by pushchair or wheelchair users as the section of beach which has the ramp for boat launching is too soft and wet even when the tide is out.
- It is more roads and not paths that can be used, and the roads are not in good condition and drivers go too fast and do not leave safe space when passing.

- Large pool on forestry track Lamington entrance
- Low hanging branches.
- Maintenance of pathways is wholly undertaken by local residents, with the Highland Council offering nothing more than misleading signage.
- More like the paths we would like to use - core path from Hilton to the old church at Fearn - waist high grass in summer.
- Most existing paths are overgrown and/or needing to be resurfaced.
- Most small paths in Tain. Burgage Drive, Craighill Terrace, paths through town are very narrow and not in good condition.
- New path/cycle path from Fearn Station to village and from village to the Fearn Abbey. This would greatly help us get out as a family and lower the use of our car as it would for many in our village.
- Our paths could always be improved in terms of accessibility and safety. I would love to do more walking in this area and if the paths were clearly identified in marketing materials and maintained well, I would gladly make a day trip or weekend visit to come along, explore the paths & surrounding towns/villages.
- Overall signage required to encourage cyclists & walkers. Directions through village highlighting walking/cycling routes. 'Cycle/walking' friendly roads to increase awareness of motorists that they are using 'shared' routes!
- Overgrown Gorse bushes from Portmahomack to Tarbetness. Very poor signage from Port to Tarbetness too especially past the holiday pods at Port to direct you onto the correct track/path to the shoreline for Tarbetness .
- Overgrowth. Tried to walk the path signposted at Rockfield but had to turn round as it was too overgrown with spikey bushes.
- Path between Asda and housing often has broken glass on it.
- Path between Portmahomack and the lighthouse could do with improvement. Muddy in places
- Path between Tain golf club and the suspension bridge needs re surfaced.
- Path from car park at swing park down to Alexander bridge in Tain is very poor. It gets flooded all the time and is uneven. Lack of signage at that car C park
- Path from golf course to Alexandra bridge is terrible, it is so uneven, the path is broken badly.
- Path quality. However, very nice new path in Milton community woods!
- Path should be wider.
- Path surface - for example pavement dug up for new lampposts last year and re surfaced very badly.
- Path surfaced and more dog waste bins.
- Path surfaces, wider paths for cyclists
- Paths are all core paths and farmland.
- Paths around Tain are overgrown, and signage is poor.
- Paths cleared and fencing redone.
- Paths could do with an upgrade, re visited and some signage updated, for example the Tarbet Ness Circuit Portmahomack
- Paths in Fearn are narrow and too few, must resort to walking on road as foliage from garden encroaching onto what paths there is.
- Paths should be clearly marked and time to walk as well as distance given. More toilets and clean dog and litter bins could be provided. Path network should be extended and information available on Walk highlands.
- Please make them accessible by wheelchair, pushchair, and bicycle with smoother surfaces
- Promotion of paths and promotion of the Easter Ross Peninsula in general e.g., NC500 and the recent John O'Groats way just go straight passed. The area needs more promotion if Tourism growth is to be realised.
- Rain water drainage, overgrown grasses and weeds, dog fouling
- Rosehaugh Estate, the whole of the A832
- Shandwick to Nigg coastal walk , very over grown , farmers moved signage.
- Signage (x8)
- Gates/stiles
- Signage and paths and dog bins where people walk.
- Signage around Kildary, Milton and to Tarbet very few signs. Often paths stop or are broken. Although there are ways to walk for miles from here, unless you know where you are going, you would never find them. For example, you can walk on paths from Tarbet through Milton woods to Balnagowan quarry, through another wood and into west point of Aldi area and keep going to top of Tain hill and then down to Edderton and beyond. Now that is a fantastic route all on paths with only 3 road crossings.

But without extensive local knowledge you would be unaware and most of my neighbours have never found these routes.

- Signage is an issue, in Inver, we have walks however there is no signage pointing how to get to the start of the walks. A map has been created and placed in the village notice boards, to help with this, however, does not solve it completely. There is an issue with a section of housing on Shore street... someone without speaking to the home owners (some years ago), created walk through their gardens... as you can imagine, this causes upset, as some people don't seem to recognise this as gardens and allow their dogs, to run loose around this space and do their business - a space where small children can be playing, people have to be reminded to pick it up and to place their dogs on a lead – sadly people can be unpleasant when asked. Another issue is the walk, towards Tain – we have the bombing range and when the red flags are up, you do not go over there – I would suggest there would need to be warnings, in case visitors wandered into the wrong areas – and maybe a warning about tides. Another issue is the grass over the sea wall in Inver, we noted last year that the wall was starting to look worn, and holes and rocks were being exposed, at the top, this is due to increased foot fall and rabbits burrowing – the council did come and fill the holes up, but they are starting to appear again. A reminder that the grass on the sea wall in Inver is just that, grass, there are hollow gaps underneath... some residences are trying to fill these up as they are concerned that someone will fall and hurt themselves. Rabbit holes along the whole walk is an issue once you get out of the village itself.
- Signage is poor except for short routes around specific parking lots.
- Signage of acceptable behaviours but please like at Scotsburn farm.
- Signage with information around Tain of our amazingly interesting buildings, history, viewpoints etc
- Signs are blocked or hidden by very overgrown branches, and this means lots of areas in Tain you need to walk on kerb or in road. Paths are narrow and so over grown in private house areas that they have trees etc growing over their walls etc onto public paths. which makes it dangerous and impossible to pass. Wheelchair users and blind people cannot get through these areas. To Links Golf course end especially. Glenmorangie hotel /Home Bargains end to Tain centre. Asda to Town centre by tennis courts area is bad for overgrown overhanging trees etc.
- Small trees have been planted on the sea wall on shore path behind no 1 Shore Street, Inver.
- Some parts of the route from Hilton to Tarbatness are sometimes impassable - very boggy or over grown, can be rocky/uneven underfoot.
- Some paths are not connected particularly well, and getting to paths often involves a car journey.
- Some paths around Kildary are little used so now overgrown, hard to follow, difficult for those less abled.
- Some paths overgrown with whins. No one maintaining.
- Specific dangers and signage for it
- Steps at the bottom of Chapel place going down to shops I must go the longer way as there is no railings to hold onto while going down the stairs.
- Stiles needing some repair/improvement. Paths are not pram/wheelchair accessible. Paths also need some repair from rabbit hole damage.
- Surface (x12)
- Surface needs work and better signage would be nice.
- Surface on Many paths are so poor.
- Surfacing, lack of dog poop bins, signage, horse poop
- Tain beach, Aldie burn
- Tain circular. Corner to top at Tarlogie forest overgrown especially for the bikes. Lack of dog bins all sites, lack of benches and toilet all sites
- Tain foreshore
- Tain links path, several dangerous issues approaching and on bridge over the Tain river. Bridle path needs updating.
- The old railway line between Avoch and Fortrose has been kept up by volunteers, but it does need more work.
- The paths are awful. I broke my ankle last year on a damaged paving slab on the Mansefield estate.
- The paths are not clearly known.
- The paths I use to get to the shops in Tain are very rough, some even have potholes that seem dangerous especially if on steep hilly areas. These uneven surfaces exacerbate pain issues too.
- The road is often the main route with no areas for cyclists, runners, pedestrians. It is dangerous and a separate path would make access easier/safer for the area.
- The surfaces of our pavements are terrible - I struggle and I am not a pensioner, I know my mother-in-law who is a pensioner prefers to walk on the road as it is easier for her than the pavements.



- The Tain Links paths needs signage/maps telling people where they can walk. It also needs related along the beach side.
- Too much dog dirt and dogs off leads
- Uneven surfaces on paths especially if you use mobility aids, lack of path to Fearn Abbey. Hill of Fearn
- Very few pedestrian paths in Portmahomack. Mostly walk on the road
- walking out with the town - only 1 underpass, no fencing alongside A9, only route out of Tain towards Portmahomack is through farm - 'rickety steps are not clear.
- We do not have any paths. Twice councillors have not replied to emails on this subject.
- Weed growth.
- Would be nice to have a trail between Inver and Tain without using busy roads and crossing the ex-airfield.
- Yes, the path itself is not clear at times, (signage) especially for non-locals, the banks are worn and not everyone can climb over a style.

## 19.2 Appendix 2: Survey Comments Around Project Support

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### Unsupportive Comments

- Leave paths as they are, and nature intended. Too much interference by humans in the natural landscapes.
- I am a landowner on the Tarbat Peninsula, (not the Easter Ross Peninsula) we have people walking through our land on a regular basis, which we have always supported. The 95% of these walkers are very good and respectful, there is about 5% of these people that spoil it, rubbish discarded, gates left the opposite way to how they found them, walking over sown crops, and doing damage, uncontrollable dogs not on leads, and my biggest pet hate is this bagging up the dog shit, and then tying it to the fence, or left on the verge, or tied to a gate, and never getting picked up, it is just disgusting and infuriating.
- I think the code needs to be explained better. Farm yards have no access for example.
- I would have like to write sort of support. I think if the infrastructure was in place and issues, of maintaining the paths, signage, with the local community in mind not just businesses... yes businesses will hopefully see and increase, however I would not want it to have negative affect of the local communities - who should always be considered. Where they must deal with increased traffic, damage to the land/roads - remember Inver is part of an SSSI. Roads are already in a state, parking is an issue in some locations. What is the benefit to the communities? I know from the recent years increase of visitors to the village, we have increased litter, dog fouling, dogs running loose though the village and onto roads and wear and tear on our sea wall.
- Not in favour of anything that increases visitor traffic to the area.
- The existing paths are more than sufficient.
- Where ever you create a path for public walking dog walkers will destroy it.
- Will bring in minimal money to the area and need constant funding for repairs and maintenance. Just walk on a beach

### Supportive Comments

- A network of paths will make walking and cycling safer for all people who participate in these activities. It will promote more outdoor activities for those who are perhaps afraid of walking or cycling on roads. Better for children and families to get out more together and have less car journeys.
- A network of safe, well maintained and clearly signposted paths would encourage pedestrians and cyclists and reduce car usage.
- A path network would be amazing!! To be able to cycle from Tain to any of the villages safely would be immensely beneficial to everyone's health and wellbeing and connection.
- Access to the distillery is poor. People walk on A9. It is not safe in and around town for disabled kids.
- Another place to visit and walk with the dog and meet friends.
- Anything that improves the local area is worth doing.
- Anything that would encourage people to get out and about must be good.
- As a local it is sad, I did not know about these paths so I am guessing visitors will not know about them either. I love being outside and would love different paths etc to visit.
- as previously mentioned, I believe the paths project could increase visitors to the area and help keep them in the area longer than usual.
- Better paths and cycle paths promote an active lifestyle and generate pride in our local area.

- Decent paths are welcome anywhere. I would be more likely to visit on a day trip if there was a good path network and might visit a cafe or shops at the same time.
- Development/creation of paths needs to take care that existing natural habitat is not destroyed. The Community payback scheme people did some fantastic work in the Seaboard villages a few years ago with path upkeep/seating maintenance etc - maybe could help with this?
- Excellent initiative but must focus on assisting communities currently overlooked by other streams of funding (windfarms etc)
- Fantastic area for low-level and coastal walks
- Fearn is unconnected to surrounding towns and villages it is disgraceful and dangerous to locals they do not all drive and walking is a hazard.
- Getting folks out and about cannot be a bad idea, roads are poor and dangerous for walking or cycling.
- Getting safely outside in the fresh air, meeting likeminded people is good for physical and mental health.
- Good for everybody. Increased health benefits for locals. Increased activity and interest for visitors.
- Good for health
- Good for people's health; good way to see the area; would encourage visitors.
- Great asset for visitors and the local community.
- Great for tourists and residents
- I absolutely support this project as I do a lot of walking due to a medical problem, and sometimes find the local walks need more attention so I don't feel I have to drive to find a decent walking route.
- I am all for better paths (I visit often and one of my favourite activities is walking). I think improved walkways would be great for the community if the pathways are improved and there are better amenities such as litter bins, maybe some seating, etc. so that people do not litter and ruin the beautiful area.
- I do not drive and rely heavily on public transport which has become so expensive so would prefer to walk where I can but there are no paths in or out of Barbaraville and the road is too dangerous.
- I enjoy cycling and would go further afield far more often if there was a cycle path. I have an elderly relative who uses a rollator or wheelchair. Improved access would improve opportunities to get out more.
- I feel what is on offer so far is a great attraction to the area. As a horse rider I would welcome more paths to be created to ensure safe predominately off-road riding.
- I have a tourist accommodation business. Most of our visitors are always looking for a decent walk in the area. We have some amazing walks around here and there are probably loads more I do not know about!
- I live here and want to benefit from more walking options.
- I love and enjoy exploring where I live both walking and cycling.
- I regularly run around the coast, have even taken my bike the whole way around. It would be good if there was a path as there are sections that are not rideable where you need to get off and push or carry the bike. It is such a beautiful route, off road makes it very attractive and I think so many locals including tourists would use it.
- I support any added input to highlighting the wealth of history, wildlife, and scenery around our peninsula .
- I support any path network that does not detract from the natural and rugged beauty of the peninsula. Basic services like public toilets for example, vital to visitors and locals alike, remain closed across the area, or local communities are expected to fund and service them in order to keep them open. Walkers and cyclists require these facilities to not only be available but to be maintained and developed alongside any development of path networks etc.
- I support it because I think the health benefits are important and it might help local businesses too.
- I support it. The path network seems like it could be better connected to me. I have walked up from Nigg to Balintore, to Portmahomack then onto Tain over a few separate days. There is great scenery but the paths away from the coast are very poor.
- I support the project but any improvements to path networks need to have improvements to parking infrastructure and clear advice on responsible use of network re impact on environment and wildlife.
- I support this project as I feel it would connect people and help them feel motivated to go out for daily walks/cycles and provide some fresh new scenery. I know people who do not like to cycle on the roads so this would benefit those too.
- I support this project as walking is great for mental health.
- I think a good cycle path around the peninsula would be great, going on these roads are too dangerous.
- I think it will encourage people to explore the local area. Walking, cycling, and outdoor exercise promotes mental well-being.

- I think it would encourage people to walk a lot more in Tain and bring more business to local shops/cafes as people are able to easily access them. Currently I know a lot of people who are out off by the lack of decent paths for wheelchairs/buggies/people unstable on their feet.
- I think it is a great idea, would make it safer to go on walks with prams or kids on bikes not using busy roads.
- I think the area is beautiful and should be enjoyed by more people.
- I use the coastal path a lot and would love to see it made easier and accessible.
- I wanted safe paths to walk on when pregnant and now need the same with small children.
- I would support more paths and cycle paths, if only for the safety of our children.
- I would love to get out for more walks in the area, especially ones suitable for pushchair and small children or a cycle path suitable for children who are learning to cycle and not safe to be on the main road yet. We live in a beautiful area, and it would be so enjoyable to get out more easily.
- I would love to have access to the villages via a path network like Invergordon, Alness and Evanton have.
- I would love to walk them myself.
- I would walk further and more often if some of the paths and older route right of ways were in better condition.
- I would cycle more (with bike trailer/child) if more routes/paths I felt safe to do so.
- If it were there, I would use it.
- If safer travel between places do not need to drive so much
- Improving access and networks that allow for cycling or walking commuting and leisure activity is important for health and getting the best out of the local area, particularly in places where public transport is poor, so people only have access to things nearby.
- Improving off road paths would increase safe physical activity and active leisure, increasing health and wellbeing of residents and increasing amenities for tourists.
- Increase the MTB cycling network and create a vision to become an MTB centre/hub. More visitors increase the economic growth of the area and improves life chances for residents.
- It is important for my mental health and general fitness to be able to walk around the area.
- It is so beneficial for health and well-being.
- It will be good for all the communities giving them more opportunities.
- It would be amazing for locals and visitors to cycle round and enjoy so much more on our doorsteps rather than having to drive. Would be great to have cycle paths like Aviemore.
- It would be wonderful for the villages in the peninsula to be connected by paths that are safe to use away from cars. Out with each village the speed of the cars makes using the roads too dangerous, Balintore to Fearn/Portmahomack/Nigg/Tain - all cyclable, all too dangerous, especially with kids. The single-track roads are just as bad as the main roads and the potholes are terrible sometimes. We have a poor bus service so being able to cycle would open the whole place up - great for our young people and visitors to the area. My very elderly father-in-law was a plumber in this area 50s/60s. Him and his boss cycled between jobs with his plumber's bag on the front of his bike - fit as a fiddle. Not feasible today.
- It would mean people would cycle to work more and get the tourist cyclist off the main roads. I could easily cycle or walk to Tain and Invergordon, but I do not as the roads are potholes and there is no way I would risk cycling on the A9.
- It is a beautiful area the more people know about it the better protected it will be.
- Lack of parking in places like Rockfield. Fear of wild camping. Clashes with farm animals. Illegal signage at east end of port.
- Living in the area with a young family, having safe places to cycle and or walk with them would be great and something they have always lacked.
- Making walking more accessible to all can only be a good thing.
- More info on routes for walking would draw in people from other areas or tourists.
- My only concern is overcrowding and the damage to the roads encouraging camper vans and the likes here. But again, economic development here is important.
- Need to look at erosion on existing paths at Hilton to Rockfield walk. So many people up there now and the impact is evident. Lovely walks but needs proper support.
- Not aware of many signposted paths near Tain. Tend to walk on beaches and golf courses. More signposted walks would be welcomed.
- Only if project makes public aware to only walk in areas that have been agreed be owners and follow outdoor rules.

- Our bit is beautiful and lots of people come to enjoy the beauty of it, but it is mostly by coach or caravan. If paths were available and well maintained a lot more would come, just to have a wander around and see the beautiful scenery of it.
- People are unaware about where is acceptable to walk lack of direction and mobility causes trips and falls resulting in pressure on local emergency services.
- Project ok if made for the local people first and foremost and not another way of bringing in more visitors who do not respect local population and paths become must do on a tick list. Care must be taken to plan properly for ongoing maintenance of paths, litter bins should be supplied which are regularly emptied as no matter how you educate folk, they still will not take litter home. Are you going to rely on volunteers to do this or find funding to do this? Care must be taken that path system does not pass close to houses and all the negatives that go with that. Tourism is already having some very negative effects locally which should be at forefront when planning to avoid this happening. Publicity a must so people locally know details of what is planned before implementing any plan. Remember not everyone uses social media for information.
- Roads unsafe to walk on with traffic.
- Safety is paramount and not being able to walk where you live safely is terrible. Trying to dodge cars.
- Safety of ever-increasing cyclist and pedestrians on this route. Particularly east Tarrel to Portmahomack
- Sensitivity to environmental damage should be considered.
- Specific crossing points would be safer. Specially at Glenmorangie end of Tain. Tactile paving and drop kerbs etc would be of benefit to pedestrians. Lots of paths narrow but not safe. Clearer signs and speed signs especially.
- The area is missing out on Tourism passing along the A9.
- The project sound great and better connectivity between our town and villages to enable active transport could make a huge difference to our communities. As public transport has been deteriorating steadily, providing an alternative to cars has never been more important.
- There are no longer any buses from/to Portmahomack and that is a huge barrier.
- There are few wooded walks round Tain. Must take car up Tain hill to get to woods.
- There are many local people who would also benefit from the paths network.
- There are natural walking routes beyond the village but patchy signage. People at present tend to find routes by accident, asking locals, or good preparation via ordnance survey maps! There are some walking brochures available but again need proper promotion and increased availability. Same for cycling routes possibly as an add on to Sustrans links.
- There is a lack of community spirit nowadays, people must drive between villages or even out of the peninsula, path network would allow people to meet, use more amenities like the train station or even move between villages on foot or by bike, roads are narrow and dangerous to walk on at times.
- Thinks it is a great idea.
- To encourage physical exercise/ support mental health/ family relationships/ cheap options for days out etc
- Undecided would need to see what the plans are.
- Untapped potential for the local economy. Walking holidays, day trippers etc looking for exploration. Good for local folk too.
- Walking has proven physical, mental, and environmental benefits and E. Ross peninsula has great potential for walking, but off-road paths are too few and far between
- Walking is so good for your physical and mental health and should be available to everyone. Wheelchair users should be considered close to villages.
- Walking provides many benefits to the local population such as improving mental and physical wellbeing.
- We have been left behind other parts of Scotland.
- We need more paths in the area especially paths for disabled persons. Accessibility for all including pushchairs.
- We need safe accessible paths to walk with children and dogs, ideally with bins and benches for those tired legs and to enjoy the views.
- whilst supporting development in general, any pathways must consider of the needs and provisions for residents. Already degradation of the of the seawall in Inver is apparent and is inappropriate for the numbers currently using it. Currently the pathway in sections is routed through residents' property, signage directing visitors through the designated coastal path would aid those with mobility issues, cyclists, and walkers.
- Why is this all about attracting visitors and economic benefits? What about the locals, and improving conditions for us?
- Will help to get between villages when you do my have a regular bus service or a car.

- Will support as enjoy my walks up the cliffs but find it very soul destroyed when spend most of the time looking for path or clearing it.
- Would be good to connect the Seaboard Villages with areas like Inver/Portmahomack/Tain as a walking route free from car and farm traffic.
- Would like to see some of these paths restored. Lot of people unaware they were even there. Lot of farms have blocked access as well. New housing also had impact.
- You need to create a an attraction.one suggestion I have is to make a dark sky centre for astronomy , A field where astronomers can observe dark sky , It would benefit the area economically . Combined with a history and genealogy centre with courses in summer. Also, art and sketching . You need activities locals and visitors can sample. Just a suggestion

## 19.3 Appendix 3: Letters of support

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Association of Northern Trails (SC049061)  
32 Heathfield Road  
Thurso  
KW14 7DT

22<sup>nd</sup> November 2022

To whom it may concern,

The Association of Northern Trails (SC049061) wish to offer their support for the Tain and District Development Trust (TDDT) in their ambitions to construct a complete network of paths and cycle ways across Easter Ross Peninsula. Their project will address a significant gap in the walking and wheeling provision in the area and will help to connect all villages and rural areas to the main market town of Tain. All of this will increase access to services and transport links across the area and will ensure that active travel in Easter Ross is made much safer, healthier, economically beneficial, and more environmentally friendly.

The construction of pathways will make active trips practical and safer: the Tain to Inver Road is a fast road with blind bends and no verge. Children living in rural areas will be able to walk to Inver school and those attending school in Tain will have safe access to the town, with or without adult supervision.

The construction of pathways will furthermore increase health and fitness of all participants. The TDDT's vision is for communities and local groups to utilise this pathway to increase involvement in active pursuits is commendable and shows their consideration for the promotion of good mental and physical well-being in the area. The improved infrastructure will lend itself in the long term to setting up and growing cycle and e-bike hire services, as well as provision of guided walks.

The economic well-being of the area will also improve with the construction of such pathways: locals, visitors and tourists will be able explore and enjoy the historical and natural attractions the area has to offer in more depth. Indeed, anecdotal evidence from the Inver Inn has indicated that customers would like a safe route to walk or cycle from Tain, as the majority currently drive, with a small number walking or cycling by the Fendom (main road) which is unsafe.

All of this is underpinned by movements towards 'green' travel and ensuring that Easter Ross plays its part in global concerns over climate change. With the provision of pathways, locals and visitors will be encouraged to participate in environmentally friendly means of travel and exploration.

The Association of Northern Trails share the Trust's aims and ambitions to encourage tourist exploration of the area, whilst promoting well-being and green modes of travel – and so we wish them all the very best in their future endeavors.

Kind regards,



John o'Groats Trail Development Manager  
Manager@jogt.org.uk



**Jamie Stone MP**  
Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross

22<sup>nd</sup> November, 2022

Tain & District Development Trust  
Tower Street  
Tain  
IV19 1DY

Our Ref: JS13726

To Whom It May Concern

By this letter and, as the elected Member of Parliament for the Easter Ross Peninsula for many years, I am very familiar with the area and its needs and wholeheartedly support the proposal to develop the pathways project.

As we know the benefit of pathways is they are intergenerational spaces that encourage movement and active living by pedestrians and cyclists to move around in a cost-effective way. The creation of pathways are a major step in the direction the Scottish and UK governments both support, that together, walking and cycling generate economic, social, environmental and health benefits.

The pathways project proposed by Tain & District Development Trust is of the highest quality and with their vast knowledge and experience, I have no doubts that they are best-placed to bring this project to fruition.

Yours faithfully

Jamie Stone MP

Westminster Office: House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA Tel: 0207 219 1654  
Constituency Office: Hillview, Market Street, Tain IV19 1AR Tel: 01862 892726  
Email: jamie.stone.mp@parliament.uk

20 November 2022

To Whom it may concern

I am delighted to endorse this vision of TDDT to establish a network of paths and cycleways across the peninsula.

A pathway for example linking Tain with Inver would have untold benefits for the community, as it would provide a safe route for exercise, whether the trip be for business, recreation or as a school route. Active travel to work also reduces our carbon footprint, promoting best practice in working towards net zero status.

We are extremely fortunate to live in an area of outstanding natural beauty and to have our communities connected with accessible pathways would bring mental and physical health and wellbeing benefits to locals and visitors alike.

It would have the added advantage of attracting visitors to the area, bringing a much-needed boost to the economy.

I very much look forward to using this exciting development.

Joanie Whiteford

Lord Lieutenant Ross & Cromarty





21 November 2022

To whom it may concern

**Tain & District Development Trust - Pathways Project**

I write on behalf of Kilmuir & Logie Easter Community Council and wish to note that we are fully supportive of the Trusts Pathways Project, where they aim to join up existing pathways in the area to create a circular route around the Easter Ross Peninsula.

As a community-led organisation, the Tain & District Development Trust play an important role within our community, aiming to develop and improve the area for residents and tourists alike.

We believe that this initiative would have a positive impact on our area, and we ask that you consider their application favourably.

Yours faithfully

***M. Macleod***

Marion Macleod  
Secretary  
Kilmuir & Logie Easter Community Council



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

**Maree Todd MSP**  
**Caithness, Sutherland & Ross**

To whom it may concern,

I am writing this letter of support for the Pathway Projects application for 'Places for Everyone' funding.

The Pathway will benefit the local communities by enabling those who wish to walk, cycle or wheel to travel safely between the villages that the pathway will connect. A safe pathway is sorely needed as both the A9 and the local B roads are notoriously dangerous and prevent many people from being able to enjoy the local area without using a vehicle.

I wish the Pathways Project the best of luck with their application and if successful will very much look forward to using the pathway myself.

Yours Faithfully,

**Maree Todd MSP**

**Caithness, Sutherland & Ross**