

# **Lochalsh Collaborates**

## **BUILDING A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR LOCHALSH**

# **Lochalsh Community Survey**

**Summary Report of the top 10  
priorities  
December 2021**

Created by

The Lochalsh Collaboration  
The Voice of Lochalsh

Led by Kyle & Lochalsh Community Trust  
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A photograph of a mountain landscape. In the foreground, there is a grassy slope. A path or streambed runs down a valley between two mountain ridges. The ridges are covered in green vegetation, with some rocky outcrops visible. The sky is a clear, pale blue.

**"Our community has  
priorities with success  
gave us clear direction  
community and**





has expressed its  
uch clarity that it  
ection to write our  
action plan."



# Summary Report of the Top 10 Priorities

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## 1 The Lochalsh Community Survey Background

Lochalsh Collaboration was set up in 2019 to explore a vision for Lochalsh and identify what needs to change. Membership of Lochalsh Collaboration is open to the seven community councils, four community trusts and any constituted organisation in Lochalsh. The project is supported by a Scottish Government Investing in Communities grant over 2½ years and a Community Development Officer, employed by Kyle & Lochalsh Community Trust. Advice and support are given by the Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) and Skye & Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Organisations (SLCVO).

A 34-question survey designed by members of Lochalsh Collaboration was delivered to every household in Lochalsh, with an option to complete it online. The questions covered: age, gender, where you live, balance of ages, support during Covid, involvement in community life, social + leisure facilities and activities, land + sea, decision-making, what is good and what needs to change about where you live, childcare and children's activities, health, social care, housing and household income, employment, business.

580 responses were received, the majority of which were paper returns.

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## 2 Summary of 10 key priorities

This summary report only contains the top ten key priorities. It does not include the aspects of life that respondents are happy with, which are principally:

- Community spirit, neighbourliness, and support during Covid
- Landscape and environment and outdoor access
- Local retail, hospitality, and businesses
- Some parts of the health care service (see section below)

Responses indicate that there are a number of additional issues that need action. To see these, to understand the data fully, and to see the responses on the full range of questions, please refer to the full report. The data below includes:

- The top ten issues of greatest priority, based on the survey responses
- Single-answer questions are shown as percentages
- In questions which allowed multiple answers, the data is shown as the number of respondents that chose individual topics
- The number of comments on each of the key topics

The themes are reported in this summary based on the strength of opinion expressed in the statistical analysis, along with the quantity and strength of comments on the topic. This is a factual report of what the community said in response to the survey questions. Some topics emerged as of key importance to the community which had not been focussed on in the survey questions... They are therefore reported on here.

The clear and often strong opinions of the community reflected in the survey report will now be used to write a Community Action Plan for Lochalsh. The community action plan will create a vision for Lochalsh:

- What are the key priorities?
- What action needs to be taken?
- Who will take that action, and when?

The top 10 priorities based on survey responses. These are clickable topics to take you to that section:

1. [Housing](#)
2. [Sustainable transport](#)
3. [The next generation – Under 30s & Children](#)
4. [Local food and access to land](#)
5. [Tourism](#)
6. [Social and leisure facilities and activities](#)
7. [Social care – older people and disabilities](#)
8. [Health and mental health](#)
9. [Road infrastructure and safety](#)
10. [Work, income and business](#)

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## Housing

The responses show that housing is of key concern to the community of Lochalsh: the comments in relation to housing were the most consistently powerful testimonies of any topic in the survey and appeared in ten out of the thirteen free text boxes at the end of question sections – considerably more

often than any other topic. Many comments and the frequency with which housing is mentioned show clearly that respondents see housing as integral to many other aspects of life for individuals and the community.

Many comments acknowledged the detrimental impact the lack of affordable housing is having on the ability of communities to keep or attract young people and families. For more information on this, see the section on Under 30s:

- 7% or 39 respondents are in temporary or insecure housing: 27 live with parents or relatives, five are living in a temporary dwelling or caravan on their own land and three on someone else's land, two are temporarily staying with family or friends including couch surfing, one is in temporary accommodation and one is registered homeless. In addition, six are in tied houses (i.e. dependent on their estate-owner for their housing)
- If these figures were to be replicated for the adult population in Lochalsh, this suggests that 163 adults in Lochalsh might be living in temporary or insecure housing
- 79% of respondents reported difficulty in finding a house in the place in Lochalsh they wanted to live
- 162 people knew of a family member who would like to live in Lochalsh but cannot, due to housing shortages or the cost of housing
- Of those who would like to live in Lochalsh if they could find housing, 73 were age 16-29 and 86 were 30-49, with a very small number in the older age groups

There were 491 comments in total on housing:

- 95 very powerful testimonies and comments in the section on housing
- 396 in comment boxes in eight other parts of the survey
- Many comments linked the adverse impact of tourism on availability and affordability of housing, (127) and the impact of the seasonal, low-paid tourism jobs on the affordability or accessibility of housing to local people (183). See the section on tourism for more information

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## Sustainable transport

"Everything is stymied by needing to ask for a lift or wait to drive and buy/borrow a car, or wait for really poor public transport."

"Improved transport links to reduce reliance on car - cycle lanes etc."

More and better sustainable travel options using public or community transport, and foot and cycle paths were of key concern to respondents:

- 63% were negative about existing local travel connections and availability of public transport with only 14% positive. This was the



highest negativity rate for the question about 'Social & Leisure Facilities + Activities'

- In a multiple-answer question, 300 people backed sustainable transport (e.g. electric community minibus, ebikes or car share scheme) – it was the 2nd most important action to improve the area's sustainability
- Improved foot and cycle paths, particularly to connect settlements, attracted the largest number of comments on a single topic in the survey
- There were 328 comments on sustainable transport: 174 on the need for better public transport and 154 on the need for increased foot and cycle paths – principally to link settlements
- A number of comments specifically proposed a Lochalsh-wide paths network.
- There were 41 comments about public transport in the section on 'Social and Leisure Facilities + Activities' with many making the comment that this was crucial to allow full use of them.
- 44 people listed the existing footpaths as among the three best things about their community council area

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## Under 30s – Young people & Children

"As a young person, I want to live here but do not think it will be feasible once I leave my parents' home due to lack of housing and limited jobs."

"If we are to have a future we need young folk, and if we don't address this there is little point in having conversations about what needs improved".

The need to support, provide facilities and activities, employment and housing and care for the mental health of young people emerged as key issues – of importance to every age group of respondents. It is clear that young people experience many aspects of life in Lochalsh very differently to other age groups. They are considerably more dissatisfied than other age groups with many of the services, facilities, activities, support, and life opportunities that they are offered. There were a total of 337 comments on the topic of young people:

- 7% of respondents were in the Under 30 age group
- 41 young people took part in a separate Young People's survey – the findings are very similar to this survey's results on the key issues of housing, work, training, social and leisure activities, and facilities.

## The value placed on young people by all age groups

- 86% of all ages of respondents think that there is a need to keep or attract more young people
- 76% of all respondents are concerned that their community is increasingly elderly

- Only 19% feel that their community is well-balanced by age
- There were 241 comments about the need to support young people better so that they can continue to live and work in the community

### Impact of Covid on under 30s

- Under 30s were only 50% positive and 18% negative about the support they received during Covid, in comparison to 76%–84% positive and 1%–7% for older age groups
- 70% of under 30s reported that their mental health had declined during Covid – in comparison to the average of 33% for all respondents

### Under 30s, social, leisure facilities & activities

- Under 30s were considerably more dissatisfied with social and leisure facilities than other age groups, particularly Gaelic (89% negative, 10% positive), learning opportunities (72% negative, 8% positive), cultural, arts and crafts and sports (64–66% negative and 2–8% positive)
- There were 34 comments from all ages of respondents on the lack of activities and facilities, particularly sport, for young people
- There were 12 comments from all ages on the need for more training opportunities for young people locally.
- There were 30 comments from all ages about the need for public or community transport to allow young people to take part in activities

### Housing and under 30s

- Only 1% of under 30s own their own home
- 48% of under 30s respondents live with their parents or friends
- No under-30s are crofters living in croft houses
- Young people or young couples reported that the housing situation is likely to result in them leaving the area
- There were 129 comments from all ages of respondents about the need for affordable housing for young people and families

### Under 30s, income & business

- The employment sectors that the greatest number of young people reported working in were: tourism, hospitality, art/design/crafts, and retail
- Young people make up 7% of existing business owners
- However, 17% of under 30s would like to start a business
- Access to premises, including business starter units was the second most requested business support (after financial support).
- 50% of under 30s were negative and 17% positive about whether their income was sufficient for their household costs, in comparison to an average of 19% negative and 52% positive across all age groups



## Children

“The number of child care providers to my local area are very, very few. The cost of childcare is very expensive. I'd have to drive over 35 miles to get a possible childminder which could facilitate my childcare needs. The lack of children's post school activities is disappointing.”

“...My kids are 2 and 4 and there's almost nothing for them, even pre-Covid, there was very little apart from play groups.”

There were comments about children from all ages of respondents and a total of 304 comments. The comments were about the effect on children and parents of a lack of facilities and activities, the difficulty of accessing them, and the effect on parents' lives and their incomes due to the lack of childcare:

- 64% of all respondents felt that their community needed more children
- There were 205 comments from all ages of respondents on the need for:
  - Better activities, facilities, sports and playparks for children
  - Support and activities for children with disabilities
  - Better transport links to allow children to attend activities
  - Improved support for new parents and expectant parents
  - Increased speed limits and traffic calming in settlements, to protect children
  - Better support for children with disabilities
- Of 99 responses on the question of childcare:
  - 44 respondents use family members because other childcare is not available or is too expensive, and 26 use family members by choice
  - 35 said that the lack of childcare restricts how they work or socialise
  - 29 said that there is no childcare available that meets their needs
  - 12 cannot afford the childcare that is available
  - Only nine respondents felt there was adequate organised childcare
- There was a high level of dissatisfaction with facilities and activities for children, with dissatisfaction particularly high for high school ages:
  - For preschool – 54% negative and only 17% positive
  - For primary school age – 49% negative and only 15% positive
  - For high school age – 70% negative and only 8% positive

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## Local food, food security & access to land

“Access to crofts is a huge issue for younger people. A lot of land is not being used. Smaller scale growing projects would be great for families/people who can't take on a whole croft.”

“I would very much like to see more community allotments and growing opportunities locally. And also to have training opportunities and events to learn more about growing food for all age groups would be ideal.”

Access to land for community and individual growing, promotion of local food and waste food/access to the community fridge were of importance to the community:

- 53 people or almost 10% of respondents are employed in local food production: crofting or agriculture (25); food or drink production (12); aquaculture (11); fishing (5)
- 371 people want more availability and promotion of local food
- 299 respondents want access to land for food growing for communities and 294 for individuals
- The above three actions are the top three steps to improve access to and enjoyment of land in Lochalsh in the 'Land + Sea' section
- There were 150 comments over five sections relating to local food, food growing, crofting and access to crofts or land for growing and composting schemes
- There were 25 comments about the impact of the high price of food on local incomes, and valuing the community fridge in Kyle

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## Tourism

Although there was only one question specifically about tourism – for business owners – this topic emerged as an important issue for the local community, with both positive and negative responses. There were a total of 454 comments:

- 72 of the respondents are directly employed within tourism
- 57 respondents are employed in hospitality
- 55 respondents are in temporary, seasonal, or insecure jobs

### Positive comments

- 66 business owners want there to be more tourism facilities to keep tourists longer in the area
- There were 45 comments on the need for improved facilities for tourists – many of those about the need for more campervan facilities
- 23 comments referred to the positive contribution of tourism to the availability of jobs and business opportunities



## Negative comments

- There were 76 comments about the problem of litter and human waste created by tourists – principally campervans

## Impact on employment, incomes and housing

- 126 comments linked tourism to seasonal, low paid jobs, and some of those comments were on the impact that had on being able to afford to rent or buy homes
- 57 people commented on the way that Covid had highlighted the problem created by over-reliance on tourism for employment
- 105 commented on the detrimental impact on housing availability and affordability due to the number of homes now given over to short-term letting or holiday homes
- 22 wanted better controls on short-term letting, and holiday and second homes

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## Social, leisure facilities & activities

“Tennis and badminton court, better playing fields in Kyle, each community to have up to date accessible notice boards, Kyle hall needs renovated. Balmacara hall brought back into use. Cinema, men’s sheds. Groups for under 30s. Wider range of clubs and activities to learn more.”

Considerable dissatisfaction was expressed about the availability of social and leisure activities in Lochalsh. The only topic to get a majority positive rating was ‘Outdoor access and activities’ with 55% giving it a positive rating. All other topics were considerably less than a 50% positive rating. There was a difference in positivity/negativity rating based on age – see the section on Under 30s and the full report for more details:

- 38% were positive about community spaces and marine recreation and facilities
- 25% were positive about sports facilities and activities
- 21% were positive about opportunities to learn such as evening classes
- 19% were positive about arts and crafts facilities and activities
- 16% were positive about Gaelic facilities and activities
- 14% were positive about cultural and heritage facilities and activities. There were 113 comments on this topic:
  - 67 comments were about the need for more or improved cultural facilities and activities
  - 40 comments were about the need for improved sports facilities, with a central new sport centre or clubhouse at the Reraig shinty pitch frequently mentioned

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## Social care – Older people & Disability

“I’m a carer for my partner and have not received any help or advice.”

“Care for elderly and disabled is inadequate in Lochalsh. A care home is essential as many have to leave the area to get care. Day care is also not good enough.”

There were 112 comments on this topic in the survey, however some powerful testimonies attest to the impact the lack of services is having on some people’s lives. Comments were about home care, day and residential care for the elderly, support for carers and services for learning and physical disability:

- Social care services showed the highest dissatisfaction levels of any topic asked about in the survey, with two of the services getting zero positivity rate and two others 10% or less:
  - Respite care: 86% negative, 0% positive
  - Support for carers: 76% negative, 0% positive
  - Residential care: 80% negative, 7% positive
  - Learning disability services: 80% negative, 10% positive
  - Day care: 72% negative, 18% positive
  - Physical disability: 56% negative, 22% positive
  - Home care services: 45% negative, 36% positive

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## Health & Mental health

“I feel the time people with mental health problems have to wait to see someone is far too long. A minimum of a 6 week wait is a very worrying prospect for a person suffering and their family.”

“We need pain clinics and other outpatient clinics locally. I hope the new hospital in Broadford will have these. It is tough having to get to Inverness when you’re not well.”

While the majority of people reported that they were generally fit and healthy and did not have mental health issues, there were marked differences between age groups. There were 188 comments which were powerful testimonies demonstrating the impact that the lack of health or mental health services or support is having on individuals and families, particularly the elderly, those with mental health issues, and the under 30s.

### Physical health

- 45% of respondents reported that they were fit and healthy with another 35% describing themselves as not as fit and healthy as they would like to be



- 20% said they were living with a long-term health condition, physical disability or learning disability

## Mental health

- 71% had not experienced mental health problems
- However, there was a stark difference between age groups with mental health problems decreasing with age
- Only 8% of 70+ age group had experienced mental health issues
- 62% of Under 30s had experienced mental health issues
- The figures suggest the number of people in Lochalsh who have experienced mental health issues might be as high as 27%

## Impact of Covid on mental health & wellbeing

- 61% said that their mental health had been unaffected during Covid, or had improved
- 33% had experienced a decline in their mental health as a result of Covid
- There was a stark difference between age groups, with 70% of Under 30s reporting a decline in mental health, down to 23% of 70+ age group

## Healthcare services

- The majority of respondents were positive about many health services:
  - 79% were positive about GP services, 71% about optician services
  - 69% about Accident & Emergency services, 59% about dental services
- In contrast there was considerable dissatisfaction with:
  - Only 16% being positive about mental health services
  - Only 25% being positive about elderly care services
  - 41% being positive about Outpatient services
- The positive-negative rates were similar for accessing health services for a family member. 92% were negative about mental health services for a family member with only 8% positive.
- Comments included powerful testimonies on the need for:
  - Pain clinics available locally
  - Outpatient clinics available locally rather than in Inverness
  - Considerably improved access to mental health services and support

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## Road infrastructure and safety

“It is currently not safe for children to be close to the Reraig main road due to speeding traffic, especially timber and goods trucks. Transport Scotland say we need a fatality before they can do anything!! Really ??? On whose hands will be that fatality?!”

“Whilst not a Trust issue, the condition of the road network has a direct influence on every aspect of the areas that you have asked us to comment on. To work, live, holiday in this area, a robust road network in good condition is key. It also creates an image of how much investment there is in an area. This clearly requires attention for all living and visiting Lochalsh.”

There were no specific questions about this topic, however it emerged as a big issue in the ‘3 Best Things’ as well as in the general comments. People want action on this in community council areas and the whole of Lochalsh:

- There were 303 comments on a range of issues in relation to:
  - Road maintenance
  - Speed limits, particularly along the A87 through settlements
  - The need for increased parking particularly in Kyle and Plockton
  - The need for improved laybys on single roads and for tourists
  - The need to reconfigure the Auchtertyre junction
  - The need for a traffic camera on Mam Ratagan (for snow)

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## Work, income & business

“More units should be available to set up business. I am aware of a person unable to carry on with his carpentry business as he cannot find premises in this area.”

“Job opportunities for changing jobs are scarce. I work full time but would like to change my job but I am stuck. Job opportunities for the young are scarce too. Volunteering opportunities are scarce.”

“Lochalsh needs more sustainable employment options and of a more sustainable nature (not all in the tourism/hospitality sector).”

There were 78 comments on the topic of employment opportunities and income, mostly covering the cost of travel to work, low pay and seasonal work, the lack of better employment opportunities, the cost or lack of childcare and

the lack of training opportunities.

### Employment status:

- 155 respondents are in permanent employment
- 65 respondents are self-employed
- 37 need more than one job to provide enough income
- 19 are unable to find work (10), or enough work (9)
- 7 are unable to find the right education or training in the area
- 130 are retired and 43 semi-retired

### Work sectors

The top work sectors are:

- 72 respondents work in tourism, 57 in hospitality
- 63 in education
- 43 in health or social care
- 30 in construction
- 25 in art, design or craft

### Income

- On the question of 'Is your income sufficient to cover household needs?', 52% answered 'Yes' and 19% 'No'. Note, this survey was conducted before the 'cost of living crisis' in 2022.
- Concern about household income decreased successively by each age group:
  - 50% of Under 30s feel negative about their income and 17% positive
  - 25% of 30-49s feel negative and 41% positive
  - 17% of 50-69s feel negative and 59% positive
  - 7% of 70+s feel negative and 65% positive

### Business, retail + hospitality

- There was a total of 197 comments on the topic of business, retail and hospitality in Lochalsh:
  - 41 comments valued the range of retail and hospitality businesses
  - 20 comments wanted increased retail options and no empty shops
  - 66 felt there should be better support for business
  - 58 felt there should be more sustainable and better paid employment options
  - 36 commented on the impact of Covid on business viability and income and the need to reassess the dependency on tourism



### Current & aspiring business owners

- 104 or 18% of respondents currently own a business
- 59% of respondents who currently own a business in Lochalsh are over 50
- 35% of respondents who currently own a business in Lochalsh are 30-49
- 7% of respondents who currently own a business in Lochalsh are under 30
- 65% of aspiring business owners are under 50 (71 people)
- 17% of aspiring business owners are under 30 (12 people)



# Community Survey Summary Report

## BUILDING A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR LOCHALSH



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Kyle & Lochalsh Community Trust  
Creating a better future together



# Lochalsh Collaborates

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