

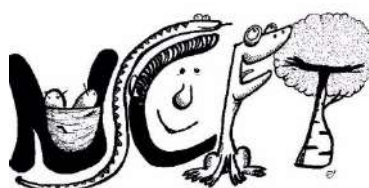
# **North Sutherland Community Forestry Trust**

## **Borgie Breco Log Cabin Feasibility Study & Business Plan**

**13 August 2025**



Jon Hollingdale



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## I Executive Summary

North Sutherland Community Forestry Trust (NSCFT) is a well-established, community-led organisation which owns and manages a suite of assets for community benefit, including a log cabin at Borgie Breco, which provides a venue for music, arts and crafts and other events, private bookings and various community projects and activities. The Trust is investigating the potential of acquiring a second, larger cabin and a small area of surrounding land, which are currently owned by Scottish Ministers and managed by Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS).

NSCFT wishes to expand its community activities at Borgie Breco, offering a wider range of activities and events than can currently be delivered from a single cabin. Ownership of the two cabins and the surrounding land will provide a variety of indoor and outdoor spaces which can be developed into a multifunctional community hub. Acquisition of the FLS cabin<sup>1</sup> will allow NSCFT to offer rooms for hire, both short term, e.g. for training events or exercise classes, or longer term, as workspace for local organisations and businesses, which will generate income to help support the management and maintenance of the site and buildings.

NSCFT commissioned this feasibility study and business plan to assist the project to purchase the FLS cabin and adjacent land to manage and develop for community benefit. A Building Condition Survey was commissioned from an experienced log-builder: this highlighted a number of immediate remedial works required before the building can be used, and recommended some longer term refurbishment works, but did not identify any “deal-breakers” which would militate against community acquisition.

This report summarises the Trust’s work and the background to community involvement, describes the current condition of the building and disposition of the site, itemises necessary repair works and potential redevelopment options and considers a range of possible activities and development projects that the Trust might take forward at the site after acquisition.

The report concludes that bringing the FLS cabin and associated land into community ownership is both feasible and viable, and will help NSCFT deliver community aspirations to maximise the range of benefits derived from the forest for the local community and visitors to the area.

The report fulfils several functions:

- It describes the community’s objectives for the cabins and land and outlines a range of projects and activities which could deliver those objectives.
- It lays out and, where possible, costs the community’s plans, and identifies next steps for delivery.
- It supports NSCFT’s asset transfer request to Forestry and Land Scotland.
- It supports NSCFT’s fundraising for the costs of acquisition and subsequent management and development of the cabin and land.

Community consultation during the development of the project included a community event at the cabins in October 2024 and a survey circulated in January 2025; these demonstrated considerable enthusiasm for the acquisition and identified numerous potential uses for the cabin and land. A further open event is planned to seek community approval of the Trust’s plans.

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<sup>1</sup> For clarity the two cabins are referred to throughout as the NSCFT cabin and the FLS cabin

## **1.1 Key elements of the plan**

NSCFT will acquire the FLS cabin at Borgie Breco, along with the solum of the land under the NSCFT cabin and a small area of adjacent land.

The Trust will carry out a programme of immediate repairs and improvements to ensure that cabin is fit for use.

Meeting rooms, office and workshop space will be offered for short and long term hire.

NSCFT will reconfigure its existing activities at Borgie Breco, including making more use of the workshop and freeing up the polycrub for community growing projects.

Experience from managing and running the cabin will inform a more comprehensive refurbishment of the building in the medium term.

NSCFT will seek to develop additional projects at the cabins and adjacent land to support the long-term sustainability of the site.

## **1.2 Key benefits of ownership**

This project aligns with the following key outcomes of the Scottish Land Fund

*Our communities will achieve more sustainable economic, environmental and/or social development through ownership of land and buildings.*

The acquisition of the FLS cabin and the adjacent land will bring valuable but underutilised local assets into community ownership and help make North Sutherland a better place to live and work.

The acquisition will help secure the future for NSCFT's current projects and expanding the range of future activities.

Enhancement of picnic area, and in the longer term, development of the site as a recreational hub, will enhance the tourism offer of the area.

*Our communities will have a stronger role in and control over their own development.*

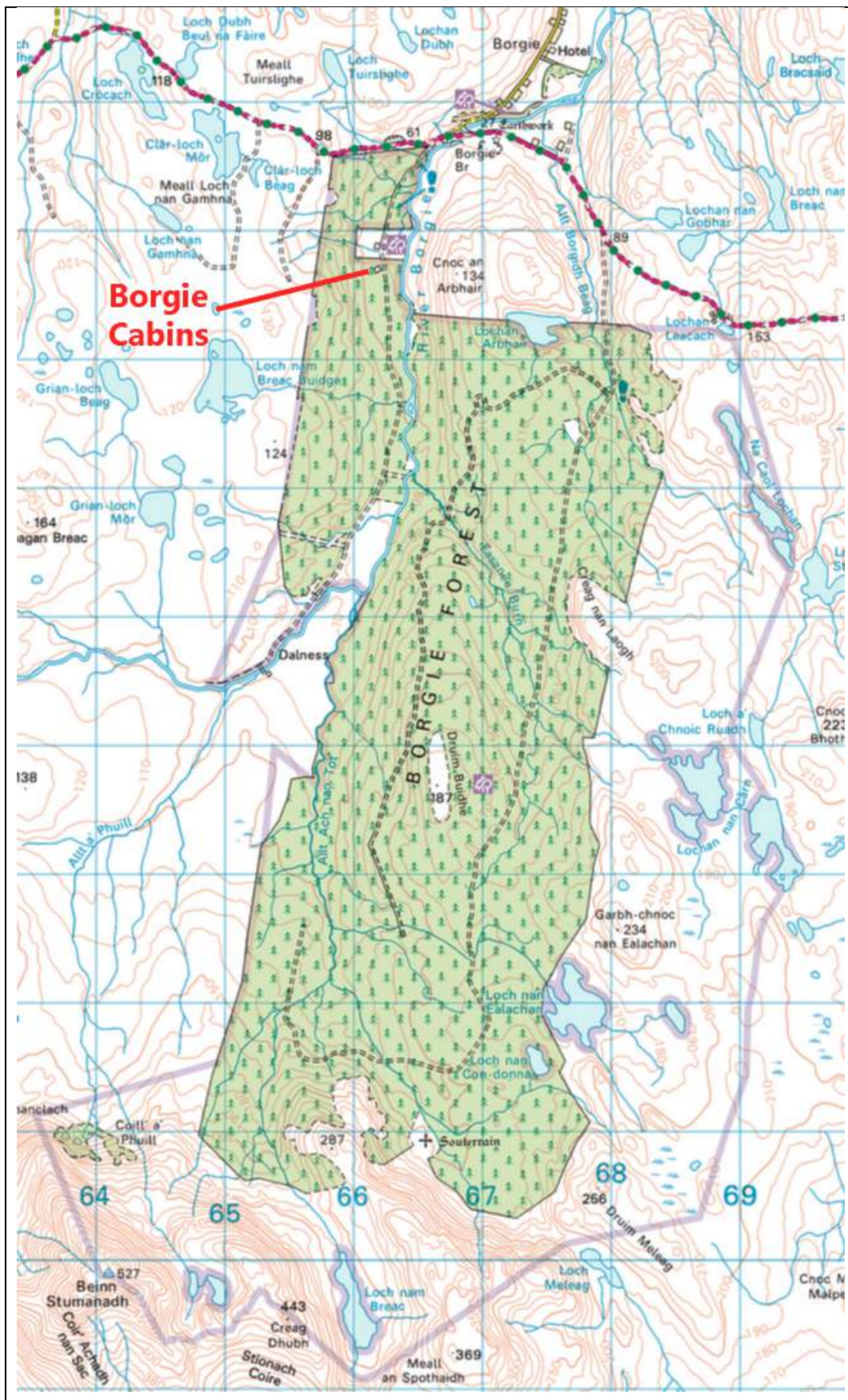
Acquiring the FLS cabin and the solum of the land under the NSCFT cabin will give the community full control over its assets and enable the future development of the site.

Ownership of the cabins will build community capacity and resilience, and broaden community use of the cabins through school visits, activities and events.

*Our communities own well managed, financially sustainable land and buildings.*

Community ownership, management and development of the cabins and land will support the local economy by providing employment and contract opportunities.

Income from hire of rooms at the cabins will contribute to the Trust's management costs.



Map 1: Location map

## 2 Introduction

### 2.1 North Sutherland Community Forestry Trust

North Sutherland Community Forestry Trust (NSCFT) is a company limited by guarantee, (SC161610)<sup>2</sup> and charity (SC034731)<sup>3</sup> with a membership of 153 drawn from the local community. The NSCFT community area is defined by the four community council areas of Tongue; Bettyhill, Strathnaver and Altnaharra; Strathy and Armadale; and Melvich.

North Sutherland Community Forestry Trust owns and manages 37ha of woodland at Forsinain forest and the adjacent Forsinain drying sheds, which have been fitted out as a wood processing facility, and is in the process of acquiring the site of the Rosal clearance village in Strathnaver. NSCFT has a management agreement with FLS over Borgie Forest, a management contract with the RSPB for harvesting work in the Dyke and Forsinain forests, and has delivered or co-delivered a range of other activities with and for schools, local community and the general public.

### 2.2 Borgie Breco cabins

NSCFT owns a log cabin at Borgie Breco, and is investigating the potential of acquiring a second, larger cabin and a small area of surrounding land. The site and building are currently owned by Scottish Ministers and managed by Forestry and Land Scotland. The cabins were built in c. 2004, using locally sourced Sitka spruce logs. The larger of the two was designed as a local office and works depot for the then Forest Enterprise Scotland, to replace the dilapidated Bettyhill depot buildings, however, it has been largely unused by FLS for many years. For several years, until October 2024, FLS provided a Permit of Occupation to a local artist who used the building as a workshop and studio.

The NSCFT cabin underwent significant refurbishment in 2022 and provides a venue for music, arts and crafts, 'Dark Skies' events, forest studies, private local bookings and other community activities. The surrounding land was originally used for storage of vehicles and equipment, but now holds the NSCFT polycrubb and storage container and a small picnic area with paths and benches, while the adjacent forest features a riverside walk and a Gaelic tree alphabet.

NSCFT is seeking to expand its community activities at Borgie Breco, offering a wider range of activities and events than can be delivered from the smaller cabin alone. Ownership of the two cabins and the surrounding land will provide a variety of indoor and outdoor spaces which can be developed into a multifunctional community hub. Acquisition of the FLS cabin will also allow NSCFT to offer rooms for hire, both short term, e.g. for training events or exercise classes, or longer term, as workspace for local organisations and businesses, which will generate income to help support the management and maintenance of the site and buildings.

Bringing the larger cabin and associated land into community ownership will help NSCFT deliver community aspirations to maximise the range of benefits derived from the forest for the local community and visitors to the area, including:

- supporting local economic development – by offering rooms and workspace for hire and rent;
- developing educational activities in partnership with local schools and the wider community – hosting Forest school activities and a children's nursery and play area;
- creating a space to showcase local arts and crafts – providing studio spaces and exhibition areas for local and resident artists;
- providing a venue for outdoor activities and field studies – working in collaboration with North Sutherland Wildlife Group, Plantlife and Species on the Edge to deliver community events;

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<sup>2</sup> <https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/SC161610>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.oscr.org.uk/about-charities/search-the-register/charity-details?number=34731>

- supporting mental health and wellbeing through community-run activity, including the Branching Out initiative;
- preserving and nurturing traditional skills – continuing the boat-building project and establishing a community woodworking space;
- fostering greater awareness and recreational use of Borgie Forest – developing a barbecue area.

Longer term aspirations include developing the area as a hub for sporting activities such as trail running and mountain biking and establishing a visitor centre with sensory garden, café and produce from the polycrub.

## **2.3 Feasibility Study remit and outline**

NSCFT has commissioned Jon Hollingdale to produce a comprehensive feasibility study and business plan for community ownership and management of the FLS cabin and surrounding land at Borgie Breco to support an application for acquisition of the site through FLS's Community Asset Transfer Scheme.

The initial draft report

- summarised the main findings of the Building Condition Survey, including the likely costs of any remedial works required following acquisition;
- advised on potential sources of funding to meet refurbishment costs;
- identified and evaluated the potential of the cabin and the associated land to deliver the range of projects and activities proposed by NSCFT;
- assessed the potential opportunities for long and short term hire of rooms to generate income streams that could enhance sustainability;
- presented the evidence of community support for the acquisition;
- identified any ongoing staffing requirements to operate, manage and maintain the building in good condition;
- advised the likely on-going management and maintenance costs and how these might be funded;
- identified any significant risks and suggested possible mitigations.

This Final Report incorporates feedback on the draft report from NSCFT and includes more detailed income and expenditure figures for five years, with indicative income and expenditure costings for the following twenty years.

The feasibility study and business plan are intended to:

- form the basis for NSCFT's application to the Forestry and Land Scotland Community Asset Transfer Scheme;
- support NSCFT's fundraising for the costs of acquisition and subsequent management and development of the cabin and associated land.

A two-page summary of the Final Report has been prepared for the purpose of informing the public and members of the Trust.

## 3 Community & Policy Background

### 3.1 National and regional policy

Community ownership and management of the cabin and land is supported by various national and regional policies.

#### 3.1.1 Community Ownership and the National Performance Framework

Community ownership of land and built assets has been encouraged in Scotland by a range of policy initiatives and legislation, and is recognised in the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework,<sup>4</sup> which includes "Increasing the number of land and built assets in community ownership" as an indicator to measure progress against the national outcome "We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe".

Legislation including the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003<sup>5</sup>, the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015<sup>6</sup> and the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016<sup>7</sup> has introduced a suite of community rights to buy land and other assets; these have been underpinned by the Scottish Land Fund, which has an annual budget of £10 million to provide technical assistance to community bodies and support capital costs (and some revenue costs) of community acquisitions.

Part 5 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 gives eligible community bodies the right to make requests in relation to purchase, lease or other rights over land owned or managed by Scottish public authorities. Forestry and Land Scotland has developed the Community Asset Transfer Scheme (CATS)<sup>8</sup> to meet its obligations under the Act.

As of 2 May 2025, twenty seven asset transfer requests for a wide range of woodland and buildings have been completed, one has been refused and two have been withdrawn by the community.<sup>9</sup> A further seven asset transfer requests have been agreed by FLS; the respective community bodies are at various stages of fundraising and conveyancing.

#### 3.1.2 Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019–2029

Scotland's Forestry Strategy<sup>10</sup> presents a long-term framework for the expansion and sustainable management of Scotland's forests and woodland. There are three objectives for the current period:

- Increase the contribution of forests and woodlands to Scotland's sustainable and inclusive economic growth.
- Improve the resilience of Scotland's forests and woodlands and increase their contribution to a healthy and high quality environment.
- Increase the use of Scotland's forest and woodland resources to enable more people to improve their health, well-being and life chances.

The Strategy has 6 priorities, including:

- Enhancing the environmental benefits provided by forests and woodlands, which includes identifying and managing the cultural and historic value associated with forests and woodlands.
- Engaging more people, communities and businesses in the creation, management and use of forests and woodlands, which includes increasing the use of forests and woodlands to improve

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<sup>4</sup> <https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2003/2/contents>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2015/6/contents>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2016/18/contents>

<sup>8</sup> <https://forestryandland.gov.scot/what-we-do/communities/community-asset-transfer-scheme>

<sup>9</sup> <https://forestryandland.gov.scot/what-we-do/communities/community-empowerment-cats/previous-asset-transfer-requests>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.forestry.gov.scot/forestry-strategy>

people's health and well-being, and supporting the provision of appropriate education and skills training to encourage wider participation in forest- and woodland-related employment.

### **3.1.3 Highland-wide Local Development Plan**

Borgie is covered by the Highland-wide Local Development Plan (LDP)<sup>11</sup> and the Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan<sup>12</sup> (adopted 2018). The latter plan highlights the unique landscape of the area, recognising that the location presents many challenges including providing opportunities for education, training and employment for local people to stay in the area.

The Vision outcomes of the Caithness and Sutherland LDP are “growing communities”, “employment”, “connectivity and transport”, and “environment and heritage” and there is a commitment to “take a flexible approach to support communities that are either dispersed or clustered together in settlements offering varying services and facilities. This includes enabling community-led sustainable growth and development as well as growth through inward investment, a particular focus being the Area for Flexible Community-led Development in the north-west.”<sup>13</sup>

### **3.1.4 Highland Forest and Woodland Strategy**

The Highland Forest and Woodland Strategy,<sup>14</sup> published in 2018, is built around eight key themes that cross cut with those of the Scottish Forestry Strategy and respond more specifically to the issues and opportunities for the future of forests and woodlands in Highland. These themes include:

- Encouraging community engagement and empowerment
- Integrating with development and tourism
- Strengthening connections with health, access and recreation and learning.

Relevant policies under these themes include:

#### **Theme 4 – Community Empowerment**

- Continue to support asset transfer, community woodland ownership and management within Highland;
- Support accessible access and recreational facilities, local employment, rural skills and community energy projects.

#### **Theme 6 - Development and Tourism**

- Support sensitive development in woodlands in accordance with Scottish Planning Policy and Highland-wide Local Development Plan and Supplementary Guidance on Trees, Woodland and Development.
- Support opportunities for linking accessible and active outdoor access/recreation and tourism in and between Highland forests and woodlands, including hutting developments, mountain biking, walking and activities such as orienteering and eco- tourism.

#### **Theme 7 - Health and Wellbeing**

- Support and extend the benefits of joint health initiatives such as “Branching Out” and the “Green Exercise Partnership” across Highland.
- Promote the role of woodlands in providing a resource for physical activity close to where people live and work.

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<sup>11</sup> [https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/178/local\\_and\\_statutory\\_development\\_plans/199/highland-wide\\_local\\_development\\_plan](https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/178/local_and_statutory_development_plans/199/highland-wide_local_development_plan)

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/19712/casplan\\_adopted](https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/19712/casplan_adopted)

<sup>13</sup> Borgie Breco falls within this area

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/download/69/trees\\_woodland\\_and\\_forestry](https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/download/69/trees_woodland_and_forestry)

- Encourage and promote the use of Highland forests and woodlands for outdoor learning through Forest School and Highland OWL (Outdoor Woodland Learning).<sup>15</sup>

### 3.2 Regional demographics

Initial data from the 2022 census demonstrates a small population increase<sup>16</sup> in the Highland Council area between 2011 and 2021, however, this masks several important regional trends, including:

- significant population growth in Inverness and the surrounding Inner Moray Firth area;
- broadly stable population totals but ageing populations e.g. on Skye;
- significant population loss in e.g. rural Caithness and Sutherland.

There has been a very substantial increase in the share of population aged 65+, which has grown from 18.5% to 23.7% - a real-terms increase of almost 30% (from 42,944 to 55,789). This rapidly ageing population has important long term consequences, with the population of Sutherland projected to decline by 15% by 2040.<sup>17</sup>

### 3.3 North Sutherland

North Sutherland is very sparsely populated; only the northern regions of Sweden and Finland are less densely populated in Europe. The population of Sutherland (area 5,250km<sup>2</sup>) is 12,650, the majority of whom live in settlements along the east Sutherland coast; much of the north and west of the county has a population density below 1 person per square kilometre.

The average age of the population is older than the national or regional average but this is by no means a retirement community: there is a large working age population, many with practical skills and experience of land management.

#### 3.3.1 Community Council area profiles

Borgie Breco falls within the Tongue Community Council area (the River Borgie forms the boundary with the Bettyhill, Strathnaver and Altnaharra Community Council area). Highland Council has produced profiles for community council areas based on the 2011 census<sup>18</sup>. All figures in the tables in this section are drawn from this source. These figures are now >10 years old and it likely that some demographic factors (age, low density) may have become more pronounced.

	Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Population	Pop/km <sup>2</sup>
Tongue	412	535	1.3
Bettyhill, Strathnaver and Altnaharra	596	436	0.7
Highland	25,659	232,132	9.0
Scotland	77,925	5,295,403	68.0

**Table 1: Area, population and density cf. Highland and Scotland**

The Bettyhill, Strathnaver and Altnaharra Community Council area is one of 11 Highland Community Council areas with a population density below 1 person per square kilometre, whilst the Tongue area has a slightly higher density, but still well below that for Highland or Scotland. The four community council areas that collectively make up NSCFT's community area have a population of 1,520 across a total area of 1,492km<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.owlscotland.org/local-groups/north-highland-owl-group>

<sup>16</sup> 1.4%, cf. 2.7% for Scotland.

<sup>17</sup> [https://www.highland.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/4905/highland\\_council](https://www.highland.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/4905/highland_council)

<sup>18</sup> [https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/11093/profiles\\_for\\_community\\_council\\_areas](https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/11093/profiles_for_community_council_areas)

### 3.3.2 Age profile

Both Tongue and Bettyhill, Strathnaver and Altnaharra CC areas have a notably older population than either Highland Council or Scotland. However, this is by no means unusual in rural communities in Highland, where 5 Community Councils have >30% of their population in the 65 and over bracket. Tongue's population is almost exactly balanced by sex, but B, S & A has a slight preponderance of males, in contrast to both the Highland Council area or Scotland (again this is not unusual – a third of Highland Community Council areas have more males).

	Tongue		B, S & A		Highland	Scotland
Under 16	66	12.4%	62	14.2%	17.8%	17.3%
16 to 64	330	61.6%	279	63.9%	63.6%	65.9%
65 and over	139	26.0%	96	22.0%	18.5%	16.8%
Males	267	49.9%	223	51.1%	48.9%	48.5%
Females	268	50.1%	213	48.9%	51.1%	51.5%

**Table 2: Age and sex of residents**

### 3.3.2 Economic activity

Whilst the higher proportion of over 65s is reflected in the higher % of retired, overall levels of economic activity in both CC areas are comparable with the rest of the region and country, with 69.1% and 70% classed as economically active. Both areas have relatively high proportions of self-employed; this is particularly marked in the Tongue area where >20% are self-employed.

	Tongue		B, S & A		Highland	Scotland
Employees - part-time	53	13.3%	52	15.7%	15.2%	13.3%
Employees - full-time	119	29.9%	112	33.6%	39.5%	39.6%
Self-employed	82	20.8%	45	13.5%	11.0%	7.5%
Unemployed	19	4.8%	17	5.1%	4.0%	4.8%
Full-time student - employed	1	0.3%	6	1.8%	1.5%	2.9%
Full-time student - unemployed	0	0.0%	1	0.3%	0.3%	0.8%
Total	274	69.1%	233	70.0%	71.5%	69.0%

**Table 3: Breakdown of economically active persons**

	Tongue		B, S & A		Highland	Scotland
Retired	73	18.5%	64	19.3%	16.0%	14.9%
Student	14	3.4%	10	2.9%	3.2%	5.5%
Looking after home or family	15	3.8%	10	3.0%	3.8%	3.6%
Long-term sick or disabled	13	3.4%	11	3.4%	3.9%	5.1%
Other	7	1.8%	5	1.5%	1.7%	1.9%
Total	122	30.9%	100	30.0%	28.5%	31.0%

**Table 4: Breakdown of economically inactive persons**

### 3.3.3 Employment patterns

Employment patterns show a wider than average distribution in both CC areas, with higher than average levels of people working either part-time (1-15 hours) or very long (>49) hours.

	Tongue		B, S & A		Highland	Scotland
Part-time 1 to 15 hours	27	10.7%	23	10.7%	7.2%	7.0%
Part-time 16 to 30 hours	56	21.9%	46	21.3%	21.4%	21.0%
Full-time 31 to 37 hours	50	19.8%	36	16.6%	17.8%	21.2%
Full-time 38 to 48 hours	75	29.4%	64	29.9%	37.9%	39.1%
Full-time 49 hours or more	46	18.2%	46	21.5%	15.8%	11.7%
Total	255	100%	215	100%	100%	100%

**Table 5: Working hours**

### 3.3.4 Employment by sector

Construction is the most important employment sector in the Tongue area, followed by health and social work, accommodation and food services and education. Health and social work is the most important employment sector for B, S & A area, as it is across Scotland, followed by education and construction.

As might be expected both CC areas have a much higher % of those working in “Agriculture, forestry and fishing” than Highland or Scotland, nonetheless this only ranks as the fourth most important sector in B, S & A, and the fifth most important in Tongue.<sup>19</sup>

	Tongue		B, S & A		H'land	S'land
A Agriculture forestry and fishing	20	7.8%	19	8.9%	4.3%	2.0%
B Mining and quarrying	3	1.1%	2	1.1%	1.2%	1.4%
C Manufacturing	9	3.3%	6	2.8%	5.7%	7.7%
D Electricity gas steam and air conditioning	1	0.4%	5	2.1%	0.8%	0.8%
E Water supply/sewage waste management	7	2.7%	6	2.9%	1.3%	0.8%
F Construction	38	15.0%	25	11.4%	9.8%	8.0%
G Wholesale and retail trade	19	7.3%	12	5.8%	14.9%	15.0%
H Transport and storage	18	7.0%	7	3.2%	5.0%	5.0%
I Accommodation and food service activities	28	11.1%	18	8.5%	9.1%	6.3%
J Information and communication	7	2.7%	4	1.7%	2.4%	2.7%
K Financial and insurance activities	5	1.8%	1	0.7%	1.3%	4.5%
L Real estate activities	6	2.3%	7	3.1%	1.3%	1.2%
M Professional scientific and technical activities	7	2.6%	9	4.3%	4.5%	5.2%
N Administrative and support service activities	10	4.0%	4	2.0%	4.0%	4.3%
O Public administration and defence	11	4.5%	19	9.0%	6.6%	7.0%
P Education	25	10.0%	25	11.5%	7.6%	8.4%
Q Human health and social work activities	28	10.8%	33	15.3%	15.2%	15.0%
R S T U Other	14	5.4%	12	5.7%	4.9%	4.9%
Total	255	100%	215	100%	100%	100%

**Table 6: Employment sectors**

### 3.3.5 Employment by occupational type

Both CC areas have a higher proportion of people in skilled trades and caring occupations, and a lower proportion in sales, customer service and administrative occupations, than Highland or

<sup>19</sup> This may reflect the use of external contract labour for many forestry and other land management operations.

Scotland. Although the population is very dispersed there is a wide range of skills and experience available within the community.

	Tongue		B, S & A		H'land	S'land
Managers directors and senior officials	27	10.7%	23	10.6%	9.7%	8.4%
Professional occupations	34	13.2%	34	15.9%	14.6%	16.8%
Associate professional & technical occupations	24	9.2%	21	9.7%	11.0%	12.6%
Administrative and secretarial occupations	19	7.3%	16	7.3%	9.7%	11.4%
Skilled trades occupations	63	24.7%	47	22.0%	16.9%	12.5%
Caring leisure and other service occupations	35	13.6%	31	14.3%	10.3%	9.7%
Sales and customer service occupations	5	1.9%	6	2.7%	8.2%	9.3%
Process plant and machine operatives	26	10.1%	19	8.9%	8.2%	7.7%
Elementary occupations	24	9.3%	19	8.7%	11.4%	11.6%
Total	255	100%	215	100%	100%	100%

**Table 7: Occupational types**

### 3.3.6 Land use

Crofting agriculture, forestry and game management are the primary land uses in North Sutherland. Agriculture is primarily sheep and cattle husbandry, with very occasional arable cropping: predominantly for stock feed or potatoes. Stock numbers have fallen considerably across North Sutherland in last two decades, but the decline has been uneven, with some areas losing more animals than others.

### 3.3.7 Windfarms

Caithness and Sutherland have seen very substantial windfarm development in recent decades, with many more sites currently in planning. The cost of grid connection and the presence of the Kyle of Tongue and North-west Sutherland National Scenic Areas has constrained development to the west of Strathnaver.

Currently the nearest windfarms are the Bettyhill windfarm (in service since 2013, 2 turbines, 6MW), and the 33 turbine site at Strathy North, operated by SSE Renewables, which entered commercial operation in June 2015 and has a total generation capacity of 67.65MW. The Creag Riabhach wind farm, southwest of Altnaharra, is operated by ERG and has 22 turbines with a capacity of 79.2MW.<sup>20</sup>

As the map below shows, several additional developments have been approved:

- Bettyhill Phase 2: 10 turbines, 48MW
- Strathy Wood: 13 turbines, 62.4MW
- Strathy South: 39 turbines, 218.4MW

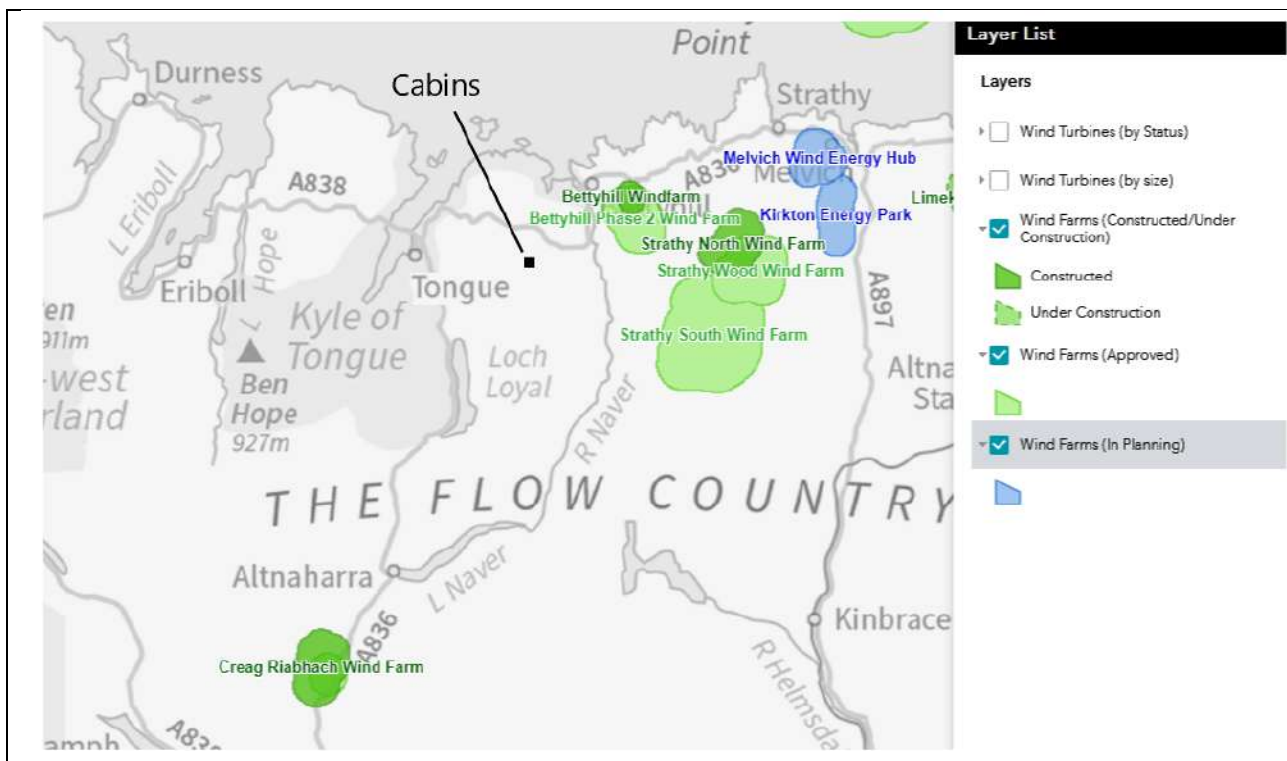
Whilst the proliferation of windfarms has been controversial in some quarters the associated community benefit funds delivered by some windfarm developments have proved valuable for many community projects. Funding from the Creag Riabhach windfarm will be disbursed by the North and West Sutherland Trust, which can distribute funding in 5 community council areas, including Tongue.

The Strathy North Community Benefit Fund<sup>21</sup> provides around £225,000 per year for community and charitable projects but unfortunately the cabins are just outwith the eligible area (the Community Council areas of Bettyhill, Strathnaver and Altnaharra, Melvich, and Strathy and

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.erguk.energy/creag-riabhach/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.sserenewables.com/communities/community-fund-locations/great-britain/strathy-north/>

Armadale). SSE does have a Sustainable Development Fund with wider eligibility: this is currently closed in the Highlands but is due to reopen in autumn 2025.<sup>22</sup>



**Map 2: Windfarm developments in the North Sutherland area**<sup>23</sup>

### 3.3.8 Tourism

Tourism has been an important component of the local economy for many years, however, absolute visitor numbers have historically been low compared to Skye or Lochaber, and provision of accommodation and tourist services were correspondingly limited. This has changed somewhat in recent years following the launch in 2015 of the North Coast 500 route<sup>24</sup> which includes the A838/A836 north coast road from Durness through Tongue and Bettyhill to Thurso and the very substantial growth in domestic tourism as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst increased traffic has undoubtedly provided some economic benefits, there have also been some very well documented disbenefits.<sup>25</sup>

The history and culture of the area is a significant strand of the North Sutherland tourism “offer”, with the Rosal clearance village, the Strathnaver museum, based in the former Parish Church of Columba in Bettyhill, and the Strathnaver Trail, which starts at the museum and links and interprets 29 archaeological sites, being key features.

### 3.3.9 Tourist accommodation

There are various tourist accommodation providers, predominantly along the north coast road. Many are only open for part of the year. Hotels include the Altnaharra Hotel, the Bettyhill Hotel, the Farr Bay Inn (Bettyhill), the Borgie Lodge Hotel, the Melvich Hotel, the Strathly Inn, the Tongue Hotel and the Ben Loyal Hotel (Tongue).

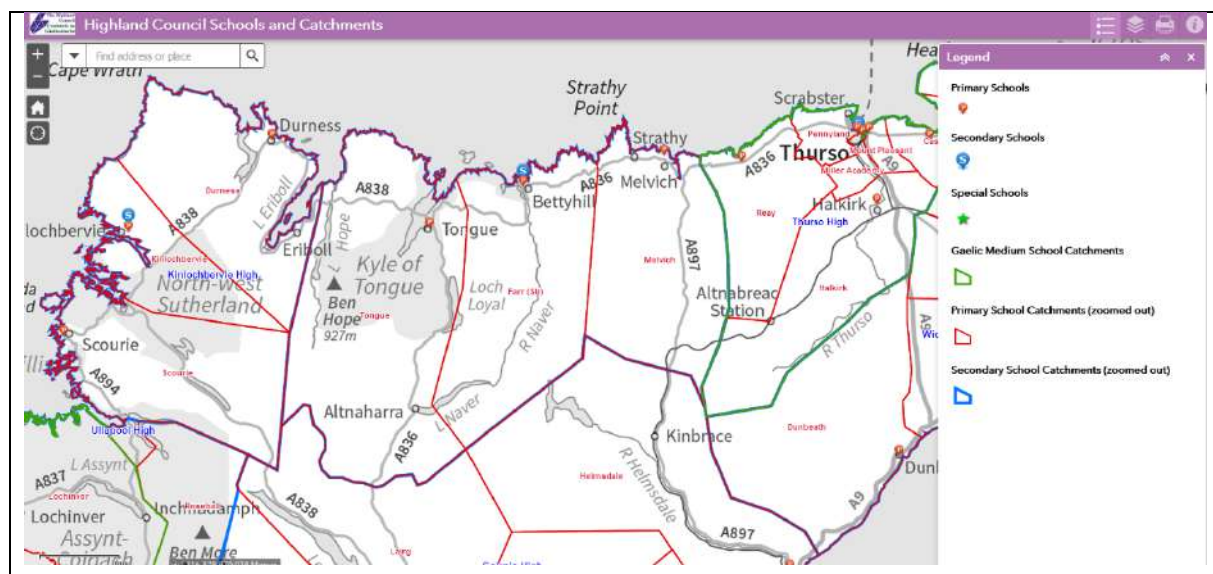
<sup>22</sup> [Sustainable development fund | SSE Renewables](#)

<sup>23</sup> Data from <https://highland.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=5ec04b13a9b049f798cadbd5055f1787>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.northcoast500.com/>

<sup>25</sup> See e.g. <https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/inverness/2356148/highland-communities-in-despair-as-dirty-camping-spirals-out-of-control/>  
<https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/18604246.villages-around-nc500-being-ruined-litter-vandalism/>

The Kyle of Tongue Hostel and Holiday park includes a 36 bed hostel, a new, fully equipped campsite and caravan park for tents, motorhomes and caravans plus a couple of self-catering options. There are various B&B / Guesthouses along the north coast road, and glamping pods at the Ben Loyal Hotel, camping and pod facilities at Halladale Inn, Melvich and a caravan and campsite at Craighdu, Bettyhill.



### Map 3: School catchments in North Sutherland<sup>26</sup>

Bettyhill and Tongue are local centres with shops and other services. Medical services are available at the Tongue Health Centre and the Armadale medical practice (Bettyhill). The North Coast Leisure Centre, Bettyhill, includes a swimming pool.<sup>29</sup>

The (relatively) nearby Munros of Ben Hope and Ben Klibreck, and the lower (but by no means lesser) Ben Loyal attract hill walkers to North Sutherland, but numbers are generally low compared to the Cairngorms or Ben Nevis. The two recognised long distance trails in the north of Scotland, the John O'Groats Trail<sup>30</sup> and the Cape Wrath Trail,<sup>31</sup> largely stick to the east and west coasts respectively.

<sup>26</sup> From <https://highland.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=531a30ee33564231866ff94e96607f26>

North Sutherland has significant potential for development of outdoor recreation, with iconic mountains, rugged coastline and a considerable inland network of estate and forestry roads, however it is largely undeveloped; the Borgie Breco cabins could provide an attractive hub for such activity. Often only relatively limited work is required to link up roads to create through-routes or circular trails, as has happened at Borgie Glen.<sup>36</sup>

### 3.3.12 Transport

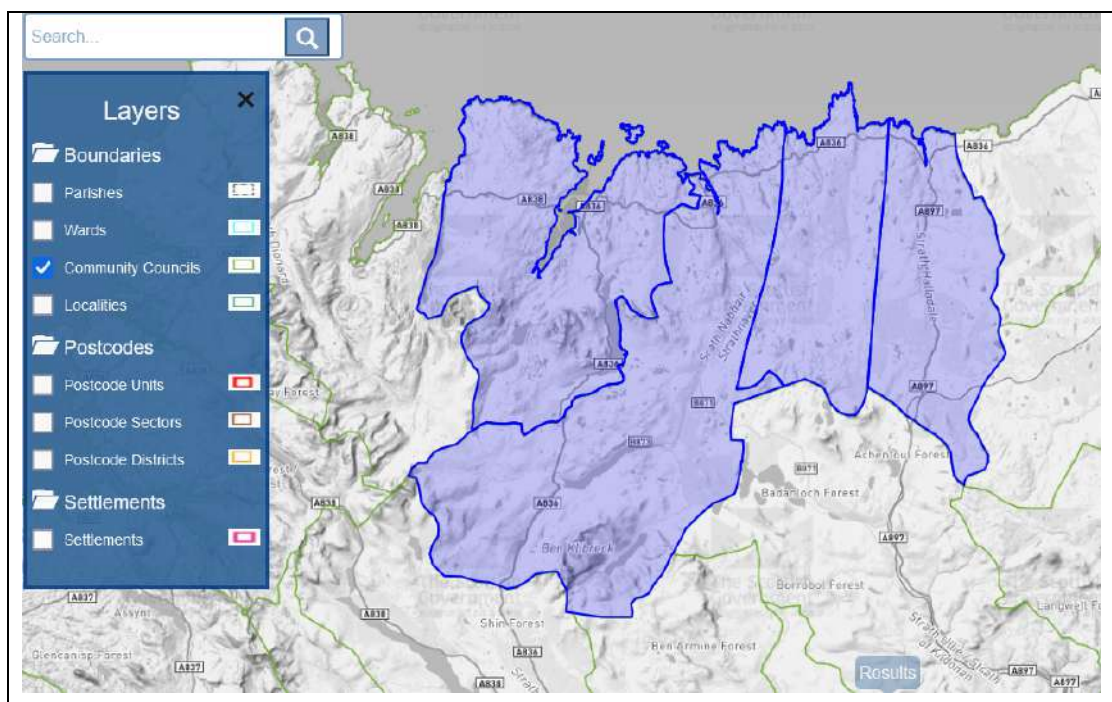
Public transport is very limited / non-existent and the area is very car-dependent: the average number of cars or vans per household is 1.38, compared to 1.23 for Highland and 1.04 for Scotland.<sup>37</sup>

### 3.4 North Sutherland Community Forestry Trust

North Sutherland Community Forestry Trust is a company limited by guarantee (SC161610) and charity (SC03473) initially established in 1995 as Northern Development Forestry Ltd. The current name was adopted in 2000 and the company has had charitable status since 2002.

### 3.4.1 Community area, membership & directors

The NSCFT community area is defined by the four community council areas of Tongue; Bettyhill, Strathnaver and Altnaharra; Strathy and Armadale; and Melvich. NSCFT has a membership of 153 and is managed by a board of 8 directors.<sup>38</sup>



**Map 4: NSCFT Community area<sup>39</sup>**

Ordinary Membership is open to individuals aged 16 and over who:

- are resident in the Community;
- are entitled to vote at a local government election in a polling district that includes the Community or part of it; and
- who support the purposes;

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.trailforks.com/trails/borgie-glen-forest-road-trail/>

<sup>37</sup> Figures from Highland Council community council profile

<sup>38</sup> See brief biographical profiles in Appendix I.

<sup>39</sup> <https://crtb.sedsh.gov.uk/crtb/>

Individuals and organisations which support the purposes but are not entitled to vote at a local government election in a polling district that includes the Community or part of it may become Associate members: these cannot stand for election to the Board or vote at General Meetings. Individuals aged 12-15 who support the purposes may become Junior members: they cannot become Directors or vote at General Meetings.

NSCFT can have up to 12 directors, of whom up to 9 (who must be Ordinary Members) can be elected by the membership. Up to four directors may be appointed by the four community councils covered by the Trust and up to a further 3 directors may be co-opted so as to ensure a spread of skills and experience within the Board, however the combined total of Appointed and Co-opted directors must not be larger than the number of elected directors.

### **3.4.2 Company purposes**

NSCFT's purposes, as formally defined by its constitution, are:

- To provide or advance the accessibility of recreational facilities, and/or organising recreational activities, which will be available to members of the community and public at large with the object of improving the conditions of life of the community;
- Advancement of citizenship or community development, including rural or urban regeneration. To promote for the public benefit rural regeneration, following principles of sustainable development, where "sustainable development" means development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, in areas of social and economic deprivation within the community;
- To advance educational opportunities in the community, relating to environment, culture, heritage and/or history, including the relief of unemployment in such ways as may be thought fit, including assistance to find employment; the advancement of education, training or retraining, particularly amongst unemployed people, and providing unemployed people with work experience, the creation of training and employment opportunities by provision of workspace, buildings and/or land for use on favourable terms;
- To advance environmental protection or improvement including preservation, sustainable development and conservation of the natural environment, the maintenance, improvement or provision of environmental amenities for the community and the preservation of buildings or sites of architectural, historic or other importance to the community, in particular woodlands and forests.

### **3.4.3 Community assets and activity**

In addition to the log cabin at Borgie Breco, the Trust owns and manages the following assets:

- Forsinain drying sheds: NSCFT's largest project has been the purchase in 2003 of the former drying sheds at Forsinain, and their fitting out as a wood processing facility. The facility has a variety of processing equipment; NSCFT has also acquired machinery to facilitate extraction and transport of felled timber.
- Forsinain forest: NSCFT acquired 37ha of Forsinain forest in 2018 from Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS). The wood is ~1km north of the drying sheds.
- Rosal Clearance village (acquisition in progress)

NSCFT has carried out work in forests in other ownerships:

- On 12 May 2005 NSCFT and FCS signed a joint Management Agreement for the Naver Forest, comprising lands at Borgie, Dyke, Forsinain, Rimsdale, Rosal and Syre extending to c. 9,810 hectares. Under the 25-year agreement FCS agreed to consult with the Trust over current and future management of the forest, the Trust have first option to carry out work in areas of the forests where there are agreed management plans, and FCS and the Trust will seek to work

together to encourage joint projects, enhance local economic benefits, promote recreation, and increase non-timber benefits, etc.

- NSCFT has a longstanding management contract with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) for the removal of tree crops (predominantly lodgepole pine) as part of RSPB's peatland restoration work in the Dyke and Forsinain forests (which RSPB purchased from FCS).

NSCFT has also delivered or co-delivered a range of other activities, including a Gaelic alphabet spiral trail at Borgie Breco and berry growing trials at Borgie Glen, as well as numerous and varied events with and for schools, local community and the general public.

#### **3.4.4 Staffing and communication**

NSCFT employs a part-time administrator on a self-employed basis for 10 hours per week. This post is funded from general Trust funds, supplemented where possible by contributions from specific projects. Approximately 30% of the administrator's time is spent on the management of the Borgie Breco cabin. The Trust has a small office in the Naver Telecentre, Bettyhill.

NSCFT maintains a website<sup>40</sup> and a public Facebook page.<sup>41</sup> A monthly newsletter is circulated to members with updates on projects and advance notice of future activities and events.

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<sup>40</sup> <http://nscft.org/>

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/NSCFT/>

## 4 Borgie Forest

Borgie Forest lies to the south of the A836 north coast road, approximately midway between Tongue and Bettyhill. Map 1 shows the location of the forest and the log cabins.

The FLS holding at Borgie extends to ~3,130ha,<sup>42</sup> of which approximately half is forest (including land awaiting restock), the remainder includes a large area of open moorland on the eastern side of the forest, and hill ground to the south, rising to the summit of Beinn Stumanadh, at 527m. The forest extent is greatly reduced from that shown on Map 1, reflecting very significant deforestation for peatland restoration.

The great majority of the holding is in the Borgie Glen block on the east side of the north-flowing River Borgie; the Borgie Breco block on the west side which holds the log cabins covers a little under 300ha. The two blocks have separate access roads from the A836 and there is no direct vehicle route between them.

### 4.1 Ownership and management history

The site is currently owned by Scottish Ministers and managed by Forestry and Land Scotland. Borgie was one of the first Forestry Commission plantations in Scotland, and some of the original 1920s planting can still be seen.

Planting has been dominated by Sitka spruce and lodgepole pine, both as pure crops and in mixture, with broadleaves very under-represented. Windblow and Dothistroma Needle Blight have necessitated large scale felling, with restock focussing on Sitka spruce on better soils, broadleaves in riparian corridors and bog restoration on deep peats.

#### 4.1.1 Land Registration with Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate

The site is not registered with the Scottish Government Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate.

#### 4.1.2 Neighbouring land ownership

The neighbouring land is held in three large landholdings: Tongue Estate (Earl of Sutherland) to the west and north; Syre Estate (Scottish Ministers) to the south; and Achnabourin (BM Riverside, Belgium) to the east.

Croft 9, a small area (~9ha) of agricultural land and associated croft house within the Borgie Breco block, lies just to the north of the site of the log cabins.

## 4.2 The cabin site

The cabins are located in a small clearing ~1200m south of the forest entrance from the A836, and are accessed by a well maintained forest road.

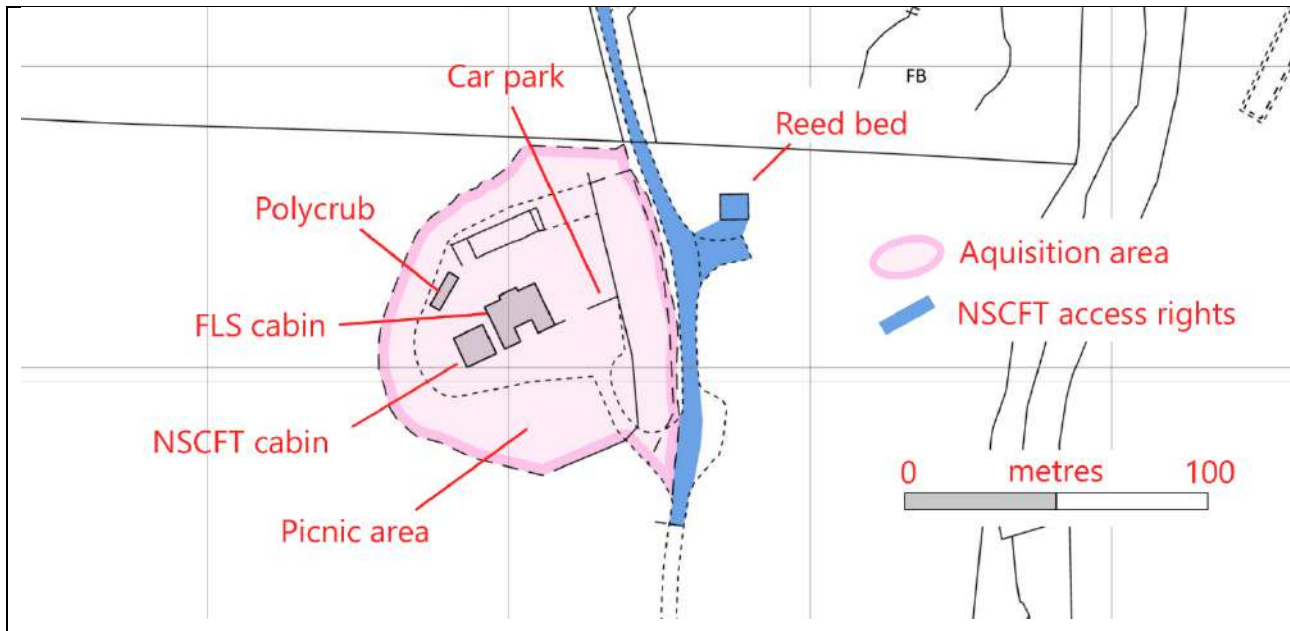
The two cabins sit close together in the centre of the plot, with the NSCFT cabin to the west of the FLS building. The cabins are surrounded by a flat area of compacted stone, with a small car park area to the east, which is laid out in bays.

The NSCFT polycrub (12m \* 4m, erected in 2022) and shipping container, and a small wooden shed of uncertain use, sit to the northwest of the cabins. To the south of the cabins there is a small amenity and picnic area, with paths, small sculptures and a couple of picnic benches. Scrub and small trees have been removed to the west and north of the cabins to open out the site a little.

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<sup>42</sup> <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=b6bc492ca9174a8295f39e76d1c9e97d>

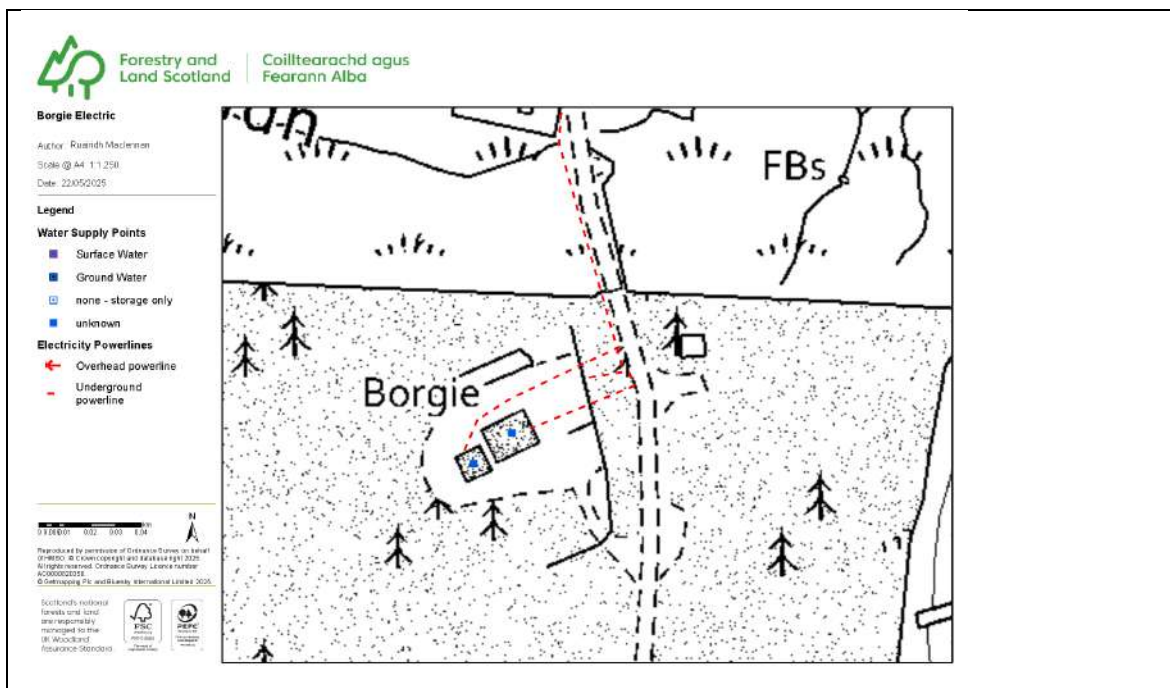
The site occupies a little under 1ha; some boundaries are not clearly demarcated. There is stock fencing behind the carpark, a short length of fence in the south-eastern corner, and a low bund to the north and west of the cabin. FLS has recently informed NSCFT of its intention to erect a deer fence along the western and southern boundaries of the site, as part of operations to complete a ring-fenced area incorporating most of the southern portion of Borgie Breco (the cabins will be outside the ring-fence).



**Map 5: Cabin site**

#### 4.2.1 Services

Electricity and water services are underground, running alongside the access road and then cutting across the carpark



**Map 6: Log cabin electricity supply**

Wastewater from the cabins is piped to a septic tank on the east side of the site, and thence under the forest road to a reed-bed, although the reeds have not been planted.

#### **4.2.2 Topography**

The cabin site is just to the west of the forest road, and sits at an elevation of ~45m above sea level. The site is almost flat, with drainage eastwards to the River Borgie, which is ~160m away. There is a raised bund along the northern and western boundaries of the site.

The land to the west rises steeply to a moorland plateau at >100m above sea level. In addition to the topographic shelter, the site benefits from being enclosed by a stand of Sitka spruce

#### **4.2.3 Climate**

Despite the northerly latitude, the site is relatively mild and sheltered. It is approximately midway between two weather stations: the Strathly East Climate Station<sup>43</sup> on the coast ~20km northeast of Borgie, averages 985mm annual rainfall, 42 days of air frost, whilst the Altnaharra #2 Climate station,<sup>44</sup> which is ~24km to the south-south-west and notably more inland, averages 1,186mm rainfall and 82 days of air frost.

Forest Research's Environmental Site Classification for Forestry decision support tool<sup>45</sup> indicates that the site has a cool, sheltered and moist climate, and records a DAMS score (a measure of exposure) of 12, which is relatively low.

#### **4.2.4 Fauna and flora**

No formal surveys have been undertaken and no information on protected species or habitats has been provided.

Deer are present in the forest, and will be an issue if NSCFT wish to take forward outdoor growing projects.

There are small areas of gorse on the eastern edge of the site, which would rapidly colonise the site if not controlled.

None of the site or the immediately adjacent woodland is identified as ancient woodland or of long-established plantation origin by the Ancient Woodland Inventory.<sup>46</sup> None of the site is recorded as native woodland by the Native Woodland Survey<sup>47</sup> (there are two areas of birchwood either side of the forest road north of Croft 9).

#### **4.2.5 Environmental designations**

There are no environmental designations on the site itself, however the site is close to the River Borgie Special Area of Conservation (SAC): the qualifying interests are Freshwater pearl mussels, Atlantic salmon and Otters.<sup>48</sup> Careful management of runoff from construction and wastewater will be necessary.

The West Borgie Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) abuts the western edge of the forest, approx. 500m to the east. This SSSI is part of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC and Special Protection Area (SPA). Operations at the cabins are unlikely to impact the peatland SSSIs.

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<sup>43</sup> <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/climate/maps-and-data/location-specific-long-term-averages/gfmjjhwwd>

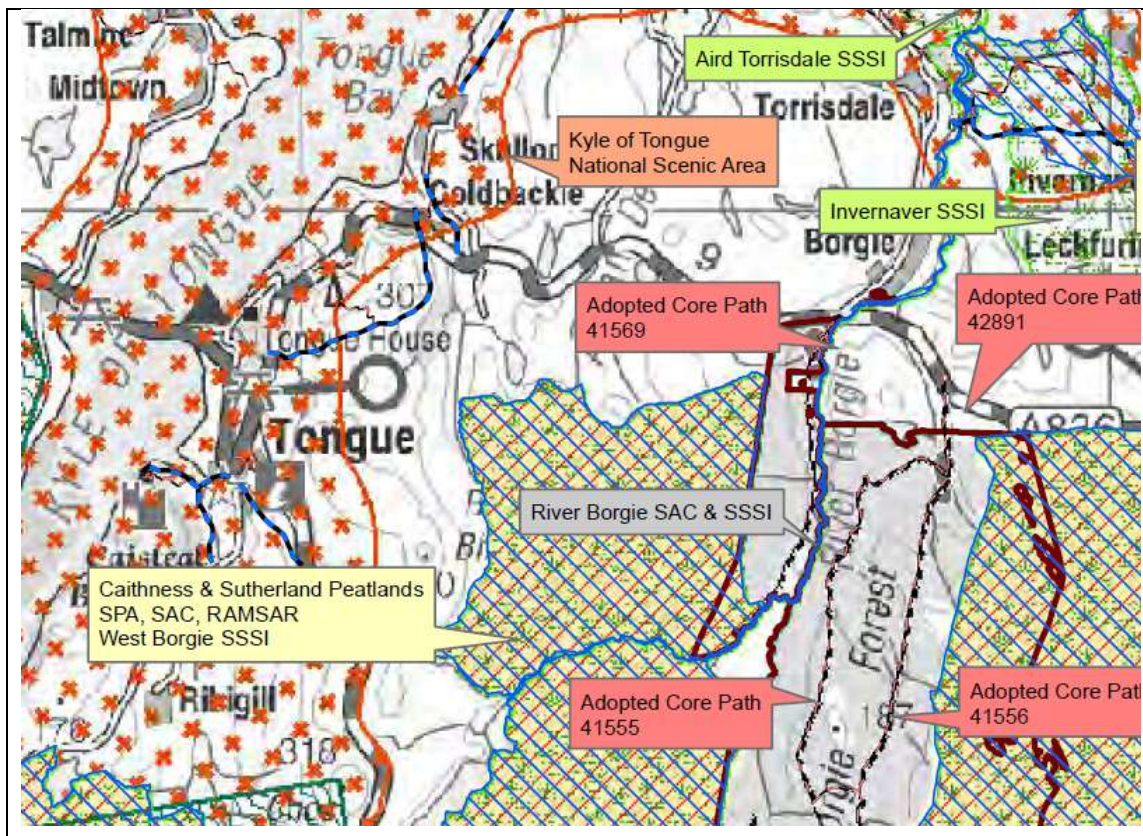
<sup>44</sup> <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/climate/maps-and-data/location-specific-long-term-averages/gfkgdgn0j>

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.forestdss.org.uk/geoforestdss/>

<sup>46</sup> <https://map.environment.gov.scot/sewebmap/>

<sup>47</sup> <https://scottishforestry.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=0d6125cfe892439ab0e5d0b74d9acc18>

<sup>48</sup> <https://sitelink.nature.scot/site/8356>

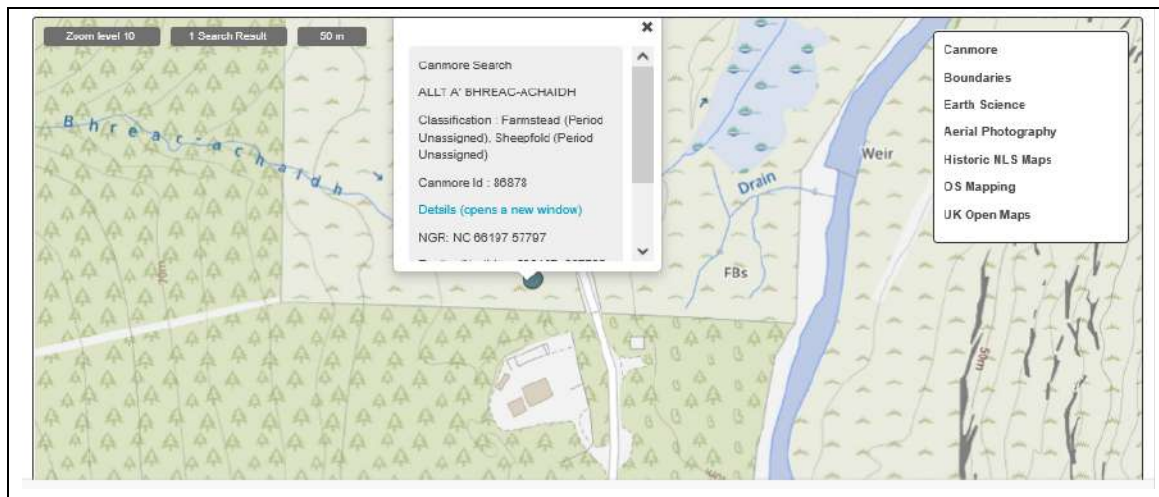


Map 7: Environmental features & core paths (from FLS Land Management Plan)

#### 4.2.6 Historic environment

Canmore, the National Record of the Historic Environment, does not contain any records of historic environment sites at or by the cabins.

There is a record of a farmstead and sheepfold, on the adjacent land of croft number 9.<sup>49</sup>



Map 8: Canmore records of historic sites

### 4.3 The FLS Cabin

<sup>49</sup> <https://canmore.org.uk/site/86878/allt-a-bhreac-achaidh>

The log cabins were built in c. 2004<sup>50</sup> by a team led by the experienced log builder Alan Mackintosh. A number of similar cabins were constructed around the Highlands, with notable examples at Dunnet and Evanton, although the majority are unserviced.

#### **4.3.1 Construction**

The cabin is of round log construction using locally sourced Sitka Spruce logs. The logs were hand scribed and the joints packed with sheep's wool. The external walls do not have any additional insulation.

The cabin sits on a mass poured concrete base with up to 1.5m of concrete below the log walls which also form structural partitions in places. Two courses of rendered blockwork raise the bottom log of each wall clear of the ground.

The concrete floor is exposed in the workshop area, but has a thin layer of insulation (~2" polystyrene) elsewhere.

The roof structure employs lightweight timber web trusses throughout with timber board sarking and a turf covered roof on plastic draining membrane<sup>51</sup>

The structure is open to the sarking in the workshop interior but has been closed off with a plasterboard ceiling below the trusses in all the other spaces, which have stone wool insulation loose laid over the trusses.

#### **4.3.2 Internal layout**

The internal layout of the FLS cabin is shown in the plan below.

##### **Workshop**

The northern portion of the cabin is occupied by a large workshop area, measuring 17m \* 4.3m, with a central alcove 7.1m wide and 1.5m deep on the northern side which runs the full length of the building, with double doors at each end and a smaller external door in the northwest corner. It has a concrete floor and no ceiling, with exposed joists. There are no windows.

The workshop has doors to the staff room (see below) and three subsidiary rooms, which (counting from the west) are:

- Equipment Store: 4.2m \* 2.5m
- WC: 2.3m \* 1.4m
- Storeroom: 2.3m \* 2.1m plus Drying room 2.1m \* 0.9m

##### **Meeting Room**

The western arm of the building is occupied by the Meeting Room. This is the largest of the three rooms, extending to 6.5m \* 4.4m, and has two external doors and a door to the Hall. It has the best natural light of any of the rooms and is well suited to short term hires for small exercise classes, training events and workshops, talks, etc.

##### **Staff Room**

The Staff Room is one of two similar rooms in the eastern arm of the building. At 4.6m \* 4.4m it is marginally larger than the Office. It has four doors: one external, the others leading to the garage/workshop, the Office and the Kitchen. Its central position means it currently serves as a

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<sup>50</sup> Planning permission was given 20 February 2004, with the building warrant granted 22 June 2004. Additional work was carried out in 2006.

<sup>51</sup> The Building Condition Survey suggests this is Isolair Platon, and that it is not thought that there is a secondary membrane beneath.

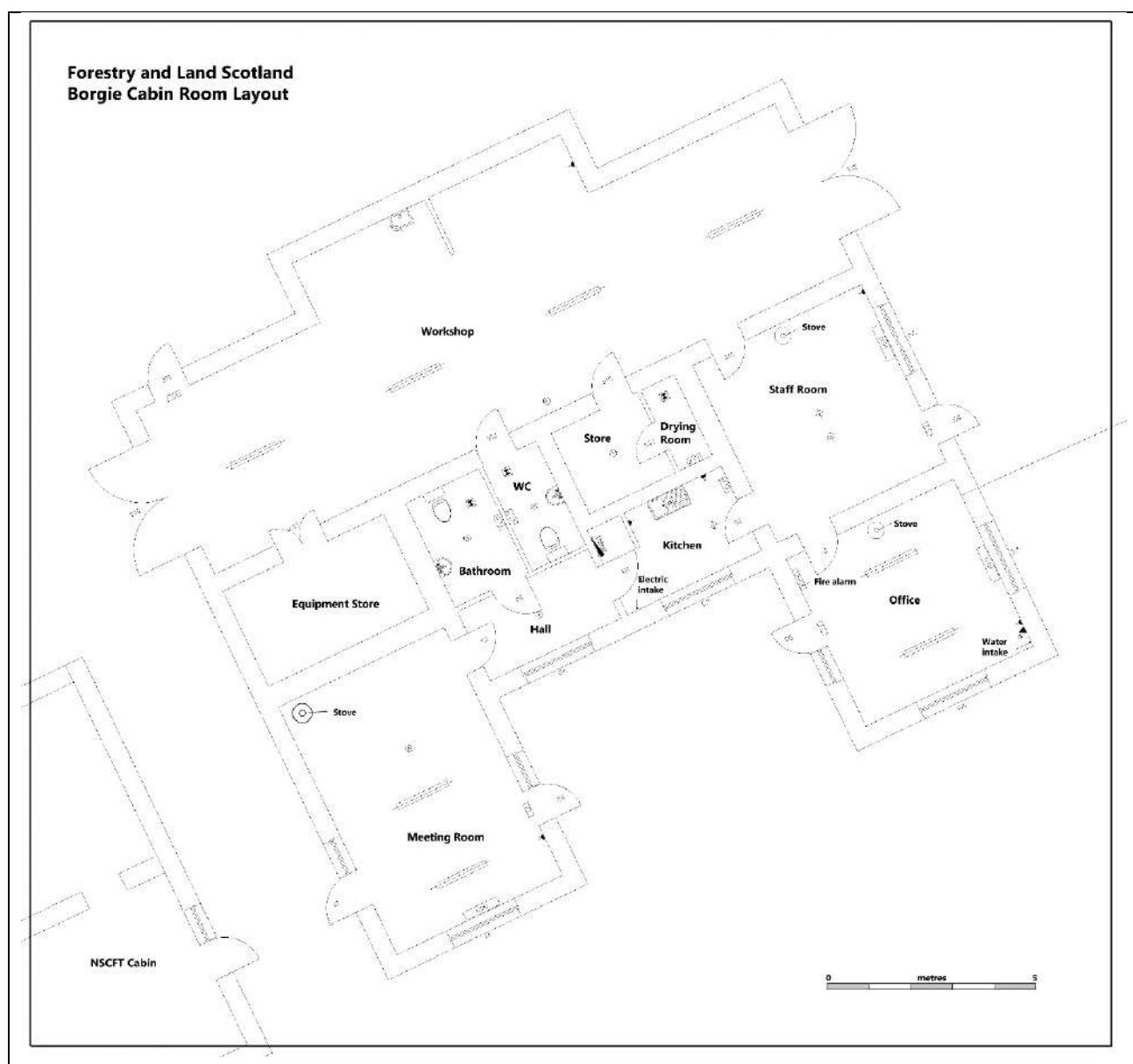
through route to the kitchen and bathroom from the workshop and the office, which may limit the potential for hire.

### **The Office**

The Office is in the south-eastern corner of the building and extends to 4.4m \* 4.4m. It has an external door, and a door to the Staff Room.

### **The Hall and The Kitchen**

The Hall (3.4m \* 1.8m) and Kitchen (3.5m \* 2.2m) occupy the central portion of the cabin, with south-facing windows giving plenty of natural light. The Hall gives access to a large toilet/bathroom (2.3m \* 1.9m).



**Map 9: FLS cabin layout**

### **4.3.3 Site clearance**

FLS have agreed that clearance of old vehicles etc. from the cabin site is their responsibility and will take place before the transfer is concluded.

#### 4.4 The NSCFT Cabin

The NSCFT cabin is also of round log construction, with a turf roof, but has a much simpler design than the FLS cabin. It was built at the same time, but underwent significant renovation in 2022.

Electricity, water and wastewater servicing arrangement are as noted above for the FLS cabin. Woodfuel is supplied from the Trust's sawmill at Forsinain.

The majority of the building is occupied by a single, open plan lounge, with upper windows giving a very light and airy feel. The remainder of the cabin comprises a bathroom with accessible toilet and shower, kitchen with cooker, dishwasher, washing machine, etc., and a small dorm room with 2 bunks (of 2 beds each)



**Image 1: Montage of picture from NSCFT website**

The cabin is used by NSCFT-led groups, such as the Borgie Forest Friends and the Branching Out group, for training courses and events, and is available for private hire. Overnight use of the cabin is bookable on a case by case basis: the cabin is not intended for use as general tourist accommodation, but can be used where accommodation is needed as part of an event, or for local community bookings for special occasions or get-togethers.

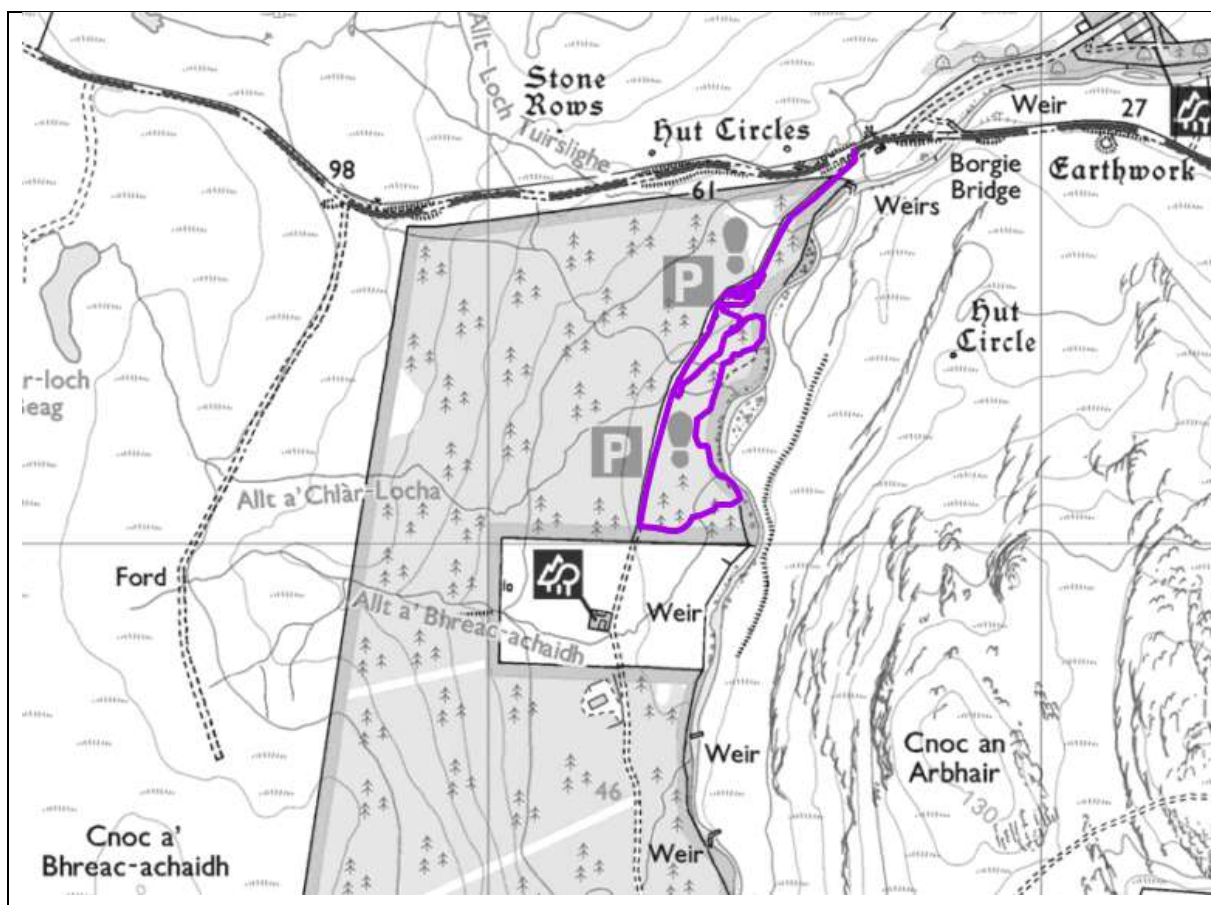
Bookings can be made through the NSCFT website.<sup>52</sup> Hire rates are shown in the table below:

Duration	Local Charity / NSCFT members	Private use / non-members
Full day (9am – 9pm)	£40	£80
Overnight use surcharge	£30	£30

**Table 8: NSCFT cabin hire rates**

#### 4.5 Access and public recreation

In addition to the cabins, Borgie Breco holds the Gaelic alphabet tree spiral established by NSCFT in 2000, and a waymarked walk beside the River Borgie: two car parks with interpretation serve these features.



**Map 10: Core paths**

Highland Council core path SU04.01 includes the Borgie River walk and extends to 1.95km

There is also a car park at Borgie Glen, where a waymarked path leads to “The Unknown”, a sculpture by Kenny Hunter installed in 2014.

#### 4.6 FLS Land Management Plan

Borgie Forest is covered by Forestry and Land Scotland’s North Sutherland Management Plan (LMP).<sup>53</sup> This is a merged plan covering over 14,200 ha and incorporating 3 areas (Borgie, Strathnaver

<sup>52</sup> <https://nscft.org/borgie-cabin/>

<sup>53</sup> <https://forestryandland.gov.scot/what-we-do/planning/active/north-sutherland>

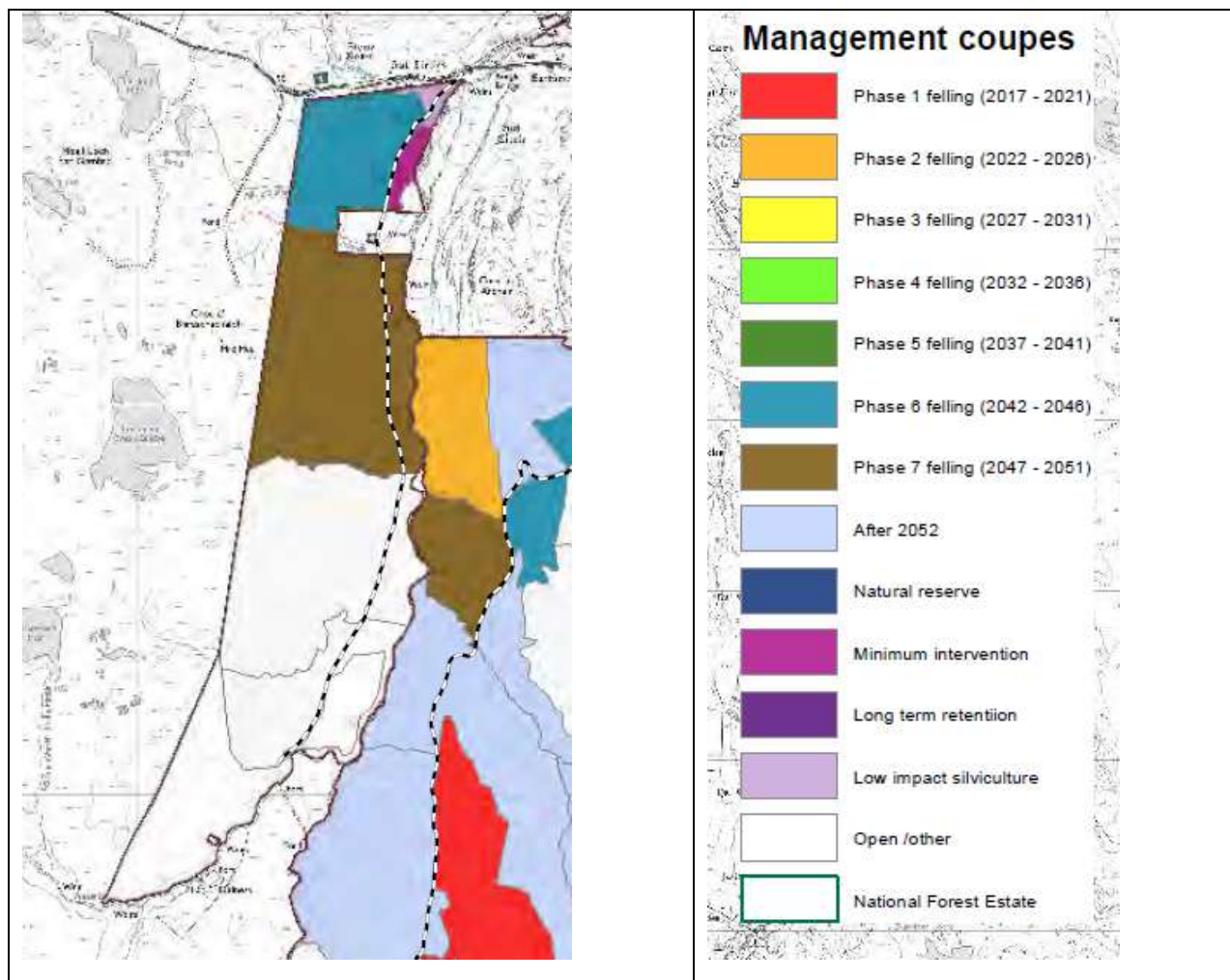
& Dalchork) which previously had their own forest design plans. The North Sutherland LMP was approved by the FCS Highland and Islands Conservancy on the 16th of June 2016.

The plan notes the relatively high profile of recreation, and highlights the Borgie log cabin, walks and car parks as important attractions.

#### 4.6.1 Felling plans

The southern part of Borgie Breco was felled 15-20 years ago and has been restocked, primarily with Sitka Spruce.

The FLS land management plan proposes felling the remaining mature stands in Borgie Breco in two phases: the northern part west of the forest road in 2042-2046, the larger, southern portion, including the stands surrounding the cabins, in 2047-2051.

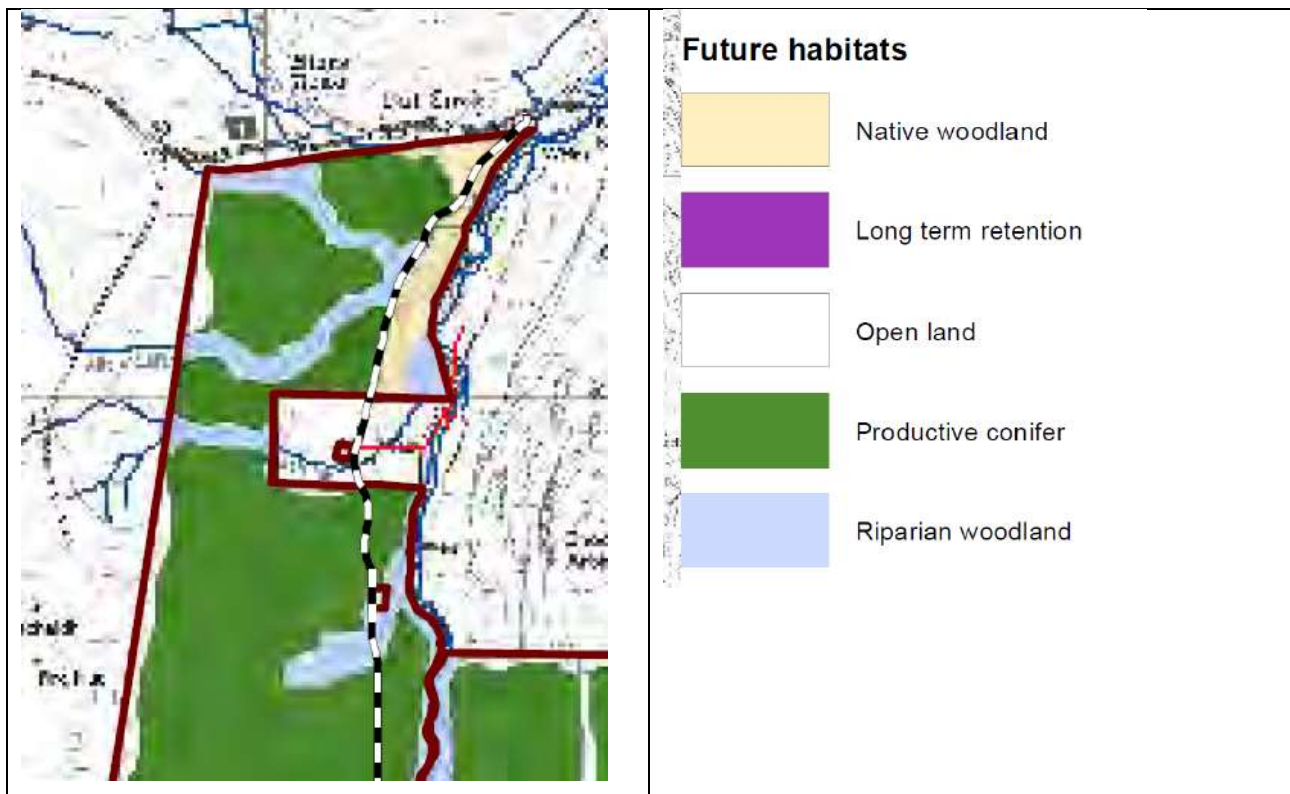


**Map 11: Management coupes map from FLS LMP**

Whilst such plans are subject to amendment, and disease or windblow may necessitate earlier harvesting, this does suggest that the cabin site will continue to benefit from the shelter of the surrounding forest for a considerable period of time.

#### 4.6.2 Restocking plans

The FLS LMP currently proposes to restock the felling areas with productive conifers, predominantly Sitka spruce, with corridors for riparian woodland alongside major burns (see Map 12 below).



**Map 12: Future habitats and species map from FLS LMP**

#### **4.6.3 Review of Land Management Plan**

FLS is currently reviewing its Land Management Plans, and intends to produce a separate plan for Borgie.<sup>54</sup>

The presentation of existing plans is slightly different from that in the published LMP, in that all of the mature conifer stands in Borgie Breco are now scheduled for harvesting in 2045-2049, with the southern block to be restocked with Sitka spruce and the northern portion with mixed conifers (with broadleaf riparian corridors as per the current plan); these relatively minor changes should not have a significant impact on NSCFT's plans.

<sup>54</sup> <https://forestryandland.gov.scot/what-we-do/planning/consultations/borgie-land-management-plan>

## **5 Building Condition and Repair Work**

Sections 5.1-5.4 of this chapter reproduce the findings and recommendations of a Building Condition Survey commissioned by NSCFT.

### **5.1 Building Condition Survey**

The cabin was surveyed “non-intrusively” on 18th February 2025 by Bernard Planterose of North Woods Construction Lt. Additional information was provided by Steve Jack of FLS who attended the survey and was the co-builder of the building. Photos referred to in the text are reproduced in Appendix 5.

#### **5.1.1 Substructure**

From what can be seen, there is no settling, cracking or decay in any of this structure. The concrete floor cannot be seen in the ‘domestic’ areas of the building but it is sound in the workshop and does not show signs of dampness.

#### **5.1.2 Log walls**

The log walls are in sound condition throughout and have been regularly treated externally with a proprietary external timber treatment mix of Stockholm tar and turps. Internally they had an intumescent coating applied at time of construction. There is no visible sign of significant shrinkage or settling and all window and door frames appear undistorted signifying construction that accounted appropriately for settling of logs.

#### **5.1.3 Windows and doors**

The windows and exterior doors were made locally and specifically for the building and are mostly still in good condition internally and externally. They have double glazed units and false astragals planted on the inside. The timber is unknown and could be tropical. The workshop doors in plywood are in slightly less good condition with a small amount of decay at the very bottoms. The Bell Ingram survey of 2024 identified that some windows and doors were neither wind nor watertight but as the weather had been very dry in the period preceding this survey and there was no wind on the day of the survey, this was not verified. No obvious water damage was apparent internally.

#### **5.1.4 Roof**

The roof construction is apparently unventilated which is not a problem in the workshop but could become one in the context of human occupation of the other spaces. It was not determined from this non-intrusive survey if the ceilings have any vapour-control layer between the plasterboard and the loft spaces. But it will certainly not be continuous or wholly effective in the context of this era and type of construction and has been penetrated in any case by light fittings. The timber trusses are all in good condition from what could be seen although the space above the closed ceilings was only viewed (and photographed) from an inspection hole. These spaces all appear in good dry condition from the photographs. Leak(s) identified in the Bell Ingram survey of 2024 were not identified.

The turf roof coverings have disintegrated in places to expose the underlying plastic draining membrane and shrunk at edges in particular. Timber bargeboards and fascias are all in place but encrusted with lichens and approaching end of service life.

### **5.1.5 Heat conservation**

Although glazing is double, it will have relatively low U value compared with more modern units. Frames are unbroken thermally so that there will be significant heat loss through the doors and windows. Floors are only very lightly insulated. Walls are uninsulated but their thickness will ensure a reasonable thermal insulation and some heat 'storage' capacity. The ceilings have about 200mm of insulation which is quite good for the date of construction. The overall thermal performance will be well below current Building Standards requirements if this same building was to be built again.

### **5.1.6 Ventilation**

There is no passive or active ventilation mechanism except one vent by one wood burning stove. There may be a hidden vent in the wall by the other stove. The building feels remarkably dry however for its time without occupancy. There is a slight smell of dampness in the stores unsurprisingly as no ventilation or heating,

### **5.1.7 Flues**

The main concerns re. water leakage - current and potential future - are around flue penetrations. One has been clearly leaking and has been addressed but there is visible damage internally (photos 1 & 6). One flue is uncapped and can let water in currently (photo 8).

## **5.2 Potential improvements**

The survey report suggests a number of potential improvements:

- The ceiling insulation in the rooms could easily be added to with another layer over existing in the loft.
- Modern stoves with higher outputs and efficiency ratings and direct air supplies to the external environment would be the most straightforward and low carbon space heating strategy given the access to local firewood.
- Floors could be lifted and insulated with thicker rigid insulation with a better U value than the polystyrene used. Given the form of construction, door heights could probably be lifted to accommodate higher floor levels required by say 100mm polyisocyanurate (PIR) insulation.
- Walls could be retro-insulated on inside with loss of aesthetic and considerable expense.
- Ceilings could be reconstructed with taped airtight layer, wiring service void on inside and deeper insulation above. Not a very big job with significant thermal advantages.
- In the event of increased human occupation, a ventilation strategy would need to be developed to deal with the risks of condensation. Heat recovery mechanical extractor fans in all rooms would be ideal - especially in kitchen and washrooms/WCs.
- Windows and doors could be completely replaced with modern units, triple glazed ideally.
- It would be possible to install underfloor heating throughout running off an air source heat pump augmented by solar photovoltaic (PV) heating water in underfloor pipes and also domestic hot water for sinks and wash hand basins. This would in theory be the lowest carbon solution but in practice might not be on account of the very low energy input of supplying firewood to stoves.

## **5.3 Compliance with Building Standards**

The Survey report makes a number of observations with respect to compliance with Building Standards:

- Fire detection/alarms system along with escape route signage and fire extinguisher and maintenance schedules need brought up to Building Standards for a public building.

- Fire escape compliance needs considered and may require addition of self-closing doors on escape routes for instance or even 30/60-minute fire doors etc. Internal doors do not currently all open in direction of escape. See above for need of Fire Risk Assessment and Strategy which covers everything from fire-fighting water to staff training and practice.
- Flues are non-compliant with respect to 'easily ignitable' turf roofs. Should be minimum 1800mm above surface according to Building Standards 3.20.17 Table 3.16. This would require stays back to the solid roof surface.
- Fire proofing behind stoves and flues needs careful assessment in respect of Building Standards and does not look to be fully compliant. In one space the plywood floor has been exposed leaving inadequate non-compliant hearth dimensions for a solid fuel stove.
- Carbon monoxide/dioxide monitors/alarms need installed in rooms with solid fuel appliances.
- Provided no change of use and no fundamental change to the heating system type is implemented, then the thermal performance would not be an issue with Building Standards. If heating systems are to be changed then this would require an application for Building Warrant.

## 5.4 Repairs needed

The survey identified a number of required repairs, which were categorised as either "immediate" or "mid-term".

### 5.4.1 Immediate

- New end stop to gutter on west roof (photo 2)
- All flue penetrations need to be repaired externally (refer photo 16). Ideally the penetrations would be stripped back and re-built with Seldek-type flashings (rubber and aluminium) dressed correctly around the draining membrane using waterproof tapes and mastics.
- Addition of turfs to missing and thin areas (photo 7)
- Complete new compliant fire detection and warning system, escape signage, self-closing doors possibly. In short a fire risk assessment, fire detection and escape strategy needs to be written and implemented for any future increase of public use.
- Professional testing/certification and all necessary repairs and refurbishment of electrical system (photo 3).
- A modern steel electrical conduit system could replace the timber skirting one as part of the rewire (photo 4).
- Addition of mechanical ventilators assuming significant year round occupancy.
- Artificial lighting needs considerable upgrade with low energy appliances, task lighting in the kitchen and sympathetic lighting throughout in respect of the usage envisioned for each space. Ceiling down-lighting could be achieved in combination with the reconstruction of ceilings as recommended for air tightness, condensation control and improvements to ventilation and fire detection (see below).
- Re-cover exposed plywood floor with non-combustible material around one solid fuel stove as this represents a fire risk (photo 1).
- Capping or replacement of missing flue (above kiln) (photo 8)

### 5.4.2 Mid-term

- Replacement of all bargeboards/fascias, consideration of addition of metal bargeboards to give timber a longer life (unless can afford Accoya<sup>55</sup> for instance).
- Replacement of all rainwater system - change to steel or aluminium. Polyvinyl chloride (PVC) system beginning to show signs of ultraviolet degradation (whitening).

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<sup>55</sup> Accoya is treated softwood with enhance properties of durability and stability.

- Replacement of ceilings with addition of service void - ideally done in combination however with electrical rewiring and addition of fire alarm system and mechanical extractors (which are in the immediate category above).
- Replacement of internal doors and their hardware (dark stained plywood is very dated and grim and the handles are relatively low quality). Might also need to replace with fire doors to achieve compliance with fire escape Building Standards (see below).
- Bottoms of workshop doors and door frames showing signs of rot and will need replaced or patched in 5-10-year period (photo 5).
- Kitchen needs complete refurbishment/rebuild in context of much greater occupancy levels (photo 19)

## **5.5 Analysis**

The key outcome of the building condition survey was that it revealed no “deal-breakers”: significant structural or other issues that would militate against a community acquisition. Whilst a considerable number of issues were identified, NSCFT regard them all as manageable, and largely matched the Trust’s expectations based on prior knowledge of the building.

NSCFT will take on board and address all of the issues noted in the survey report. The Trust’s proposed approach is to group the necessary repairs and remedial into three work packages:

- works which NSCFT will request that FLS address prior to acquisition,
- works that NSCFT will deal with on taking ownership (funding for which will be sought alongside capital funding for acquisition), and
- works that will be addressed on a longer timescale post acquisition, with additional funding sought for a specific redevelopment project.

### **5.5.1 Pre-acquisition**

NSCFT will request that FLS carry out these works prior to community acquisition.

- Professional testing/certification and all necessary repairs and refurbishment of electrical system.
- Repair of all flue penetrations and capping or replacement of the missing flue, and fitting extensions and stays to ensure that flues are compliant with relevant British Standards.

### **5.5.2 Immediate post-acquisition: internal**

These items of work would be carried out by NSCFT in the first year of ownership as they are necessary to bring the building up to an acceptable standard for hire of rooms etc.

- Complete new compliant fire detection and warning system, escape signage, self-closing doors possibly. In short a fire risk assessment, fire detection and escape strategy needs to be written and implemented for any future increase of public use.
- Re-cover exposed plywood floor with non-combustible material around one solid fuel stove

### **5.5.3 Immediate post-acquisition: external**

These items are relatively straightforward and could be carried out almost immediately. Given NSCFT access to sawn timber from the mill at Forsinain it seems likely that wooden bargeboards will be preferred, despite their potentially shorter working life.

- New end stop to gutter on west roof,
- Addition of turfs to missing and thin areas,
- Replacement of all bargeboards/fascias,
- Replacement of all rainwater systems.

Some work elements may be undertaken by volunteers and Directors, but most is likely to be contracted.

#### **5.5.4 Medium term**

In the short term, both cabins can be served by the kitchen in NSCFT's building, with some basic tea/coffee making facilities in the FLS cabin, but as the level of activity grows it will be necessary for the bigger cabin to have a fully operational kitchen.

These items need to be carried out as a coherent package of works, centred around the reconfiguration of the internal walls and the redevelopment of a suitable kitchen space.

- Refurbishment and rebuild of kitchen space,
- Upgrading of artificial lighting,
- Additional ventilation,
- Replacement of internal doors, workshop doors and ceilings.

Further design work, informed by post-acquisition use of the cabin, is required before these works can be fully itemised and costed. Some reconfiguration and installation work may be carried out by volunteers, but there are likely to be substantial costs involved, which will be the subject of specific funding application(s).

## **6 Potential Site Development Activities**

NSCFT is seeking to acquire the FLS cabin and the adjacent land because it wishes to expand its operations at Borgie Breco, offering a wider range of activities and events than can be delivered from the smaller cabin alone. Ownership of the two cabins and the surrounding land will provide a variety of indoor and outdoor spaces which can be developed into a multifunctional community hub.

Acquiring the large indoor workshop space will enable NSCFT to reconfigure and expand its practical projects (such as the boat building project) which will in turn free up the polycrub for new projects, e.g. developing community growing.

Ownership of the FLS cabin will allow NSCFT to offer a selection of rooms for hire, both short term, e.g. for exercise classes, or longer term, as workspaces for local organisations and businesses, to generate income to help support the management and maintenance of the cabin.

Purchase of the adjacent land will provide scope for additional activities, including outdoor growing and accommodation provision. In the longer term the cabins can be developed as a base for larger scale access projects utilising the wider forest.

The site is easily accessible from the A836 north coast road and conveniently placed for the local centres of Tongue and Bettyhill. Bringing the larger cabin and associated land into community ownership will help NSCFT deliver community aspirations to maximise the range of benefits derived from the forest for the local community and visitors to the area.

### **6.1 NSCFT led activities**

In recent years NSCFT, working on its own and in partnership with other local organisations, has delivered a wide range of events and projects at Borgie Breco, but has now outgrown the capacity of the smaller cabin. Acquiring the FLS cabin and the adjacent land will enable these existing programmes to continue and flourish, whilst enabling the Trust to develop additional activities and projects. Critically, it will be possible for more than one activity to take place at the same time.

#### **6.1.1 Branching Out**

Branching Out is a woodland-based programme designed to enhance users' mental health and well-being, getting participants of the house, socialising (if desired), and taking part in activities either alone or as part of a group. Under NSCFT's current programme there are sessions running from 1-5pm every second Tuesday: the programme is fully funded and is free to attend.

A single session will have a range of activities available, e.g. tattie planting, clothes repairing, plenty of crafting, as well as a meal; and is a chance for participants to spend some time in the forest doing something they enjoy, learning a new skill or just having some good company for a little while.

Sessions are well attended – averaging 10 participants.

#### **6.1.2 Borgie Forest Friends**

Borgie Forest Friends is a group of volunteers who meet monthly to maintain Borgie Forest and the NSCFT cabin. Regular tasks include weeding around the cabin, tidying up the existing paths at Borgie Breco, work on the polycrub as well as cleaning and maintenance of the cabin: providing a range of task ensures that there is something for everyone to do.

Workdays are occasionally held in conjunction with other groups: in January the Friends hosted a work party from Dunnet Community Forest whilst installing some new signage at Borgie Glen and Borgie Breco.

The Friends meet on the last Sunday of each month between 10am and 2pm, and lunch is provided courtesy of NSCFT. Average attendance is 5.



Image 2: Flyer for Borgie Forest Friends end-of-year event

### 6.1.3 Boatbuilding and other woodskills projects

NSCFT has been working in partnership with Strathnaver Museum on a boatbuilding project to construct North Sutherland's first community boat: the boat was launched in September 2024 at Bettyhill, but is currently stored in the polycrubb, where much of the work was carried out.

Acquiring the FLS cabin will enable future such projects – including additional boats - to be delivered in the workshop, which is a much more appropriate space, thus freeing up the polycrubb for a range of community growing projects.

Ownership of the workshop will facilitate the establishment of a community woodworking space. NSCFT has a range of woodworking tools which will be available to hire by individuals and organisations, subject to demonstration of competence and appropriate insurance. In the longer term NSCFT will explore the potential for hosting a Men's Shed<sup>56</sup> at the cabin.

### 6.1.4 Training and community events

Acquiring the FLS cabin will facilitate hosting a wider range of training and community events. NSCFT already organises some training events at the smaller cabin, most recently a two-day Emergency Outdoor First Aid course run by the British Association of Ski Patrollers, which was free to attend and covered smaller outdoor-related injuries as well as major dramatic injuries, and included essential first aid information on heart attacks, strokes, burns and fractures

NSCFT also uses the cabin to host community events, such as the Borgie Breco Halloween Party in October 2024, which offered lots of Halloween fun for children as well as bat box making for the

<sup>56</sup> Despite the name, Men's Sheds can be open to all.

adults, with catering provided by The Store's burger van. This event was also an opportunity for NSCFT to give tours of both cabins and solicit opinions on their future use and development.

NSCFT will be organising two events later this year to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Gaelic Alphabet Spiral: these will feature local storyteller Alexandria Patience alongside local musician, teacher and nature expert Hilary Wilson.

Acquiring the FLS cabin will give greater scope for event hosting, and also allow doubling up – with more than one event taking place at a time: currently the NSCFT cabin is only available when not in use by one of the regular projects such as Branching Out or Borgie Forest Friends.

Ownership of the FLS cabin will enable NSCFT to create a space to showcase local arts and crafts; providing workshop and studio spaces and exhibition areas for local and resident artists.

## **6.2 Other projects and community activities.**

Acquiring the FLS cabin and the surrounding land gives scope to deliver additional projects and community activities, and will also increase opportunities to host events led by other local groups.

### **6.2.1 Education and nature studies**

NSCFT will work to develop educational activities at the cabin in partnership with local schools (Farr High School and Tongue and Farr Primaries) and the wider community; establishing a forest school and/or nursery.

The Trust will also work in collaboration with North Sutherland Wildlife Group, Plantlife and Species on the Edge, to develop broader field studies capacity, with access to the forest, the river and the surrounding moorland.

### **6.2.2 Outdoor events**

The location of the cabins is ideal for Dark Skies events but also well suited to hosting foraging and green woodworking events and a range of health and wellbeing activities.

The NSCFT cabin is already used by other local community groups: e.g. in April 2025 the Tongue Walking Group hosted a walk and workshop at Borgie to mark the 25th anniversary of the Gaelic Alphabet Spiral. The walk followed the circuit by the river followed by the alphabet walk, and then went to the cabin for lunch, and an afternoon workshop, which was an opportunity for participants to create an artwork based on individual trees and some of the folklore associated with them.

## **6.3 Associated land**

Acquiring the adjacent land gives NSCFT additional scope and flexibility for development of the site, e.g. developing outdoor growing, increasing accommodation capacity at the site and enhancing recreation provision.

### **6.3.1 Outdoor growing**

The community consultation exercises showed widespread support for a range of community growing initiatives for participants of all ages, including producing fruits and vegetables, flowers and trees and supporting both healthy eating and mental health through participation and engagement.

As noted previously the acquisition of the FLS cabin will free up the polycrub for community growing projects. The scope and scale of these could be expanded through developing part of the site by establishing raised beds. Any such development would have to be protected from deer: it would be possible to deer fence the entire site, but this would necessitate installing a deer grid or a gate that was closed overnight, so it would be simpler to create a small deer enclosure. This might take

advantage of the deer fence that FLS are planning to erect along the southern and western boundaries of the site.

Raised beds are typically 1.2m wide for easy access from both sides, between 3m and 5m long and between 0.3 and 0.5m high for drainage and accessibility. An enclosure of ~100m<sup>2</sup> (i.e. 16m\*6m) could be created in the northern part of the site (to maximise sunlight), to the northwest of the polycrub.

### **6.3.2 Accommodation**

The NSCFT cabin has a small room with 4 beds (2 \* 2 bunks) available, e.g. for those delivering or attending training courses or staying for overnight hires.

However, it would be helpful to increase accommodation capacity at the site, e.g. through provision of glamping pods, which would give greater privacy as well as increased bed space, and would facilitate longer / larger training events.

There is also wider potential to develop more general tourist accommodation at the cabins, renting pods when not in use for events, and developing a small grass area for tents.

### **6.3.3 Recreation**

The cabin site includes a small recreation area with paths, small sculptures and a couple of picnic tables. This area will be maintained and enhanced, with new tables as required. A barbeque area could be added, with appropriate fire control measures in place.

A more substantial project might be the development of a forest play area, this could potentially use local timber from the Trust's mill at Forsinain, and be constructed with volunteer involvement, but it would have to meet all relevant construction standards for insurance purposes.

## **6.4 Longer term projects**

NSCFT's longer term aspirations include developing the area as a hub for sporting activities such as trail running and mountain biking, especially if access across the River Borgie and into Borgie Glen can be secured; and establishing a visitor centre with sensory garden, café and selling produce from the polycrub.

## **6.5 Income generation**

Acquisition of the FLS cabin will allow NSCFT to offer rooms for hire, both short term, e.g. for exercise classes, or longer term, as office or workshop space for local businesses, which will generate income to help support the management and maintenance of the cabin.

Room hire can commence once immediate repairs have been made and the building has been brought up an appropriate standard for fire safety, but the full potential of the building won't be achieved until the kitchen facilities have been upgraded as part of a reconfiguration and refit of the central area.

The various rooms and spaces are likely to have very different hire "profiles".

The workshop will be used for some of the week by NSCFT projects, but will be available for daily hire at other times.

The meeting room, which is the largest and lightest of the three smaller rooms, seems most suitable and attractive for short-term hires, especially for meetings and exercise classes or workshops with relatively small numbers.

The office, which like the meeting room is not needed for through access to the kitchen and bathroom, could be used for meetings but would also be available as office space for longer term

rental: potentially as a base for project staff. The room is large enough for two occupants, so could accommodate two hirers simultaneously, although could also be available for sole occupancy.

The layout of the staff room, which is needed as a through route to the kitchen and bathroom makes it less attractive to hire as a controlled space, but it could be developed as a more informal meeting space, with tables, chairs and access to coffee and tea making facilities in the kitchen.

Access to the workshop and staff room should allow NSCFT projects such as Branching Out and Borgie Forest Friends to relocate to the FLS cabin if necessary to facilitate additional hires of the NSCFT cabin.

### 6.5.1 Rental rates

Indicative hire rates are given in table 9 below.<sup>57</sup>

The meeting room will be available for hourly, half-day and full day bookings.

The office will initially be offered for longer term hire, by the month, but when empty would be available for hourly, half-day and full day bookings. The monthly rates in the table below are for part occupancy (i.e. 1 of 2 desks).

The workshop would be available for half-day and full day bookings when not in use for NSCFT projects

Room	Hirer	Hour	Half-day	Day	Month
Meeting Room	Charity/local group	7	15	30	
	Business	12	25	50	
Office	Charity/local group	6	12	25	100
	Business	10	20	40	150
Workshop	Charity/local group		25	40	
	Business		50	80	

**Table 9: Proposed room hire rates**

<sup>57</sup> Appendix 3 compiles hire rates for various local halls and venues.

## **7 Management and Maintenance**

This chapter outlines the additional ongoing management and maintenance works necessitated by acquiring the FLS cabin; these are not anticipated to be extensive or expensive and in many cases will only require an extension of current provision.<sup>58</sup>

### **7.1 Site management and maintenance**

General management and maintenance of the site, including the picnic area, will, as at present, be carried out by the Borgie Forest Friends.

Ongoing building maintenance will be carried out by Directors and Borgie Forest Friends.

#### **7.1.1 Access road**

The log cabins are accessed via a forest road which is currently in good condition. FLS have confirmed that they will retain ownership of the track, but NSCFT will have unrestricted rights of access along it. It is likely that FLS will carry out any necessary road maintenance, although responsibility rests with all users (FLS, NSCFT, Croft 9 & the river owners) on a proportional use basis. Historically FLS have never made a claim to anyone to contribute to the cost of repairs, but it will be a possibility in the future especially if NSCFT usage increases significantly (although the additional traffic will predominantly be cars and minibuses rather than large or heavy vehicles).

### **7.2 Staffing**

Taking on the FLS cabin will bring additional administrative demands on the Trust, in terms of managing bookings etc. The simplest way to deliver this would be to extend the hours of the current administrator: the NSCFT cabin is estimated to take 2-3hrs a week of staff time, so an additional 3hrs a week is estimated for administration of the new cabin.

NSCFT has a contract cleaner for the current cabin, and is likely to use a similar arrangement for the new cabin.

#### **7.2.1 Managing contract work**

As noted previously some of the repair works will be undertaken by Directors and appropriately supervised and trained volunteers, but other elements will require external contractors. Management of the tender process and the delivery of contracts will be undertaken by NSCFT Board members.

#### **7.2.2 Waste, septic tank and reed-bed**

Waste bins are emptied every fortnight (annual charge £130.39). It is not anticipated that additional waste collections will be required.

The septic tank is within the area to be acquired by NSCFT, which will take on the responsibility for maintaining and emptying it. It currently costs £320 to empty annually, it is anticipated that an additional emptying will be required due to increased use of the cabins.

The reed-bed is on land which will remain in FLS ownership, but NSCFT will have management rights, including to plant the reeds.

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<sup>58</sup> NB this section does not include specific development projects which are dealt with separately and will have their own budgets.

## 8 Legal and Fiscal Compliance Requirements

Owning and managing the log cabin will bring a raft of statutory and fiscal requirements: insurances, licences, equipment checks, safeguarding and equalities policies, etc.<sup>59</sup> NSCFT has many of these in place already, for the operation of the existing community cabin and the Trust's other activities, however, the acquisition of the FLS cabin, and the intended expansion of community activities at the site, will provide an opportunity to review, and where appropriate extend, this provision to ensure that NSCFT has everything in place.

### 8.1 Insurance

Acquiring and maintaining suitable insurances is important to protect the Trust's people, property and reputation. There are a number of specific insurances required: NSCFT will have some or all already, the existing policies will be reviewed and amended / extended as appropriate.

**Employers' liability insurance** is a legal requirement for all organisations that employ staff to insure against any claims by workers for injury or disease. A valid certificate of insurance must be displayed.<sup>60</sup> Employers' liability insurance policies will cover claims brought by permanent employees, contract, casual and seasonal employees, and labour-only subcontractors. Most, but not all, policies also cover claims brought by temporary staff, including students and people on work placements; and volunteers, advisers, marshals for sporting events, etc. NSCFT will review its current policy to ensure that appropriate cover is in place.

**Public liability insurance** covers property damage, personal injury or death caused to third parties for incidents that occur in connection with an organisation's activities, and is necessary if members of the public visit the premises, or you arrange off-site events which members of the public attend. NSCFT's existing policy will be updated to cover the additional assets.

**Property and equipment insurance** will be required for the building and contents. NSCFT's existing policy will be updated to cover the additional assets.

**Events insurance** will be required for any specific events that NSCFT intend to hold in or around the cabins that are not covered by the other insurances.

**Hirer's public liability insurance.** This is not compulsory but could make the hiring rooms in the cabin a more attractive option for individuals or groups and widen the potential pool of hirers. If NSCFT were to hire a room to anyone who doesn't have public liability insurance, hirers' liability covers the Trust against costs relating to accidental damage or injury to third-parties, caused by the hiring individual or group during the period of hire. Alternately, NSCFT would have to require individuals or organisations which were hiring rooms to have their own insurance cover in place for their activities.

### 8.2 Inclusion and Accessibility

NSCFT is a service provider under the 2010 Equality Act.<sup>61</sup> No-one using the cabins should be discriminated against on the grounds of:

- age
- gender reassignment
- being married or in a civil partnership

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<sup>59</sup> SCVO has detailed guidance on many of the issues covered in this chapter <https://scvo.scot/support/village-community-halls/facilities-management/legal>

<sup>60</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/employers-liability-insurance>

<sup>61</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

- being pregnant or on maternity leave
- disability
- race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- religion or belief
- sex or sexual orientation.

NSCFT already has an appropriate policy in place.

### 8.3 Equipment and facilities checks

Regular checks and inspections of building fittings and equipment are necessary and in some cases required by law. A non-exhaustive list might include:

- Burglar alarms and control panel
- Electrical fixed wiring
- Portable appliance (PAT) testing
- Emergency and exit lights
- Kitchen equipment
- Fire alarms
- Portable firefighting equipment
- Stoves and other heating equipment

The Community Ownership Support Service has produced checklists for managing community facilities which may be helpful as a basis for drawing up a specific schedule for the cabins.<sup>62</sup>

### 8.4 Safeguarding

The Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007<sup>63</sup> imposed a legal responsibility on all organisations to ensure that any individual who will be in regulated work with children or protected adults is not listed on the Children's List and/or Adult's List, which bars them from working with children and/or protected adults, and introduced the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme managed by Disclosure Scotland.

The Disclosure (Scotland) Act 2020,<sup>64</sup> which came into force on 1 April 2025, amended the PVG scheme to simplify the levels of disclosure and made it mandatory for those who want to work with children, young people or vulnerable adults to become members of the scheme, membership of which must now be renewed every five years.

The 2020 Act also extends the scope of the list of activities covered, which now includes "Holding a position of responsibility in an organisation which has as one of its main purposes the provision of benefits for or to children (regardless of whether the organisation has an additional purpose of providing benefits for or to another group of persons)" and "Holding a position of responsibility in an organisation which has one of its main purposes the provision of benefits for or to protected adults (regardless of whether the organisation has an additional purpose of providing benefits for or to another group of persons)".

The Disclosure Scotland guidance<sup>65</sup> states that "This activity is intended to include individuals who are, for example, trustees of a children's charity or the Commissioner for Children and Young People in Scotland." it also notes that "It can also include directors, committee or board members

<sup>62</sup> <https://dtascommunityownership.org.uk/facilities-management/general-facilities-management/>

<sup>63</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2007/14/contents>

<sup>64</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2020/13/contents>

<sup>65</sup> <https://www.mygov.scot/pvg-scheme-regulated-roles-guidance>

of organisations that provide benefits for or to children, where they have contact with children.”<sup>66</sup> However, it appears that some Scottish Government agencies<sup>67</sup> are taking a blanket approach that all committee members of funded organisations should be members of the PVG scheme as a condition of funding, whether or not they have contact with children.

NSCFT will review its safeguarding policies and process to ensure that they reflect both the new legal requirements and any additional services offered through the expansion of activities arising from the acquisition of the FLS cabin.

NSCFT will ensure that any hirers of rooms that intend to provide activities for children or vulnerable adults have such policies in place. This stipulation will be included in any hiring agreement.

## **8.5 Fire safety**

The cabin, its contents and activities must comply with the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 and The Fire Safety (Scotland) Regulations 2006. Required safety measures include:

- Fire warning mechanisms (e.g. a fire alarm and smoke detectors)
- Fire-fighting equipment (e.g. fire extinguishers)
- Escape / evacuation plan
- Staff training and instruction
- Emergency procedures.

To comply with the legislation, NSCFT must:

- Carry out a fire risk assessment. This could be delivered by an appropriately qualified person or company.
- Identify and implement any fire safety measures arising from the risk assessment.
- Repeat risk assessments and review the Trust’s approach on a regular basis.
- Keep appropriate records, e.g. of staff training, maintenance of equipment, fire drills, etc.

The Scottish Government has produced practical advice and guidance on fire safety for non-residential properties<sup>68</sup> and carrying out a fire safety risk assessment.<sup>69</sup>

All new buildings must be designed to mandatory standards set out in the Building (Scotland) Regulations 2004. Similarly, buildings which undergo extension, structural alteration or change of use should also meet the standards (and be subject to building warrant approval, where required).<sup>70</sup>

Any new furniture and fittings for the cabin should comply with the Furniture and Furnishing (Fire) (safety) regulations.<sup>71</sup>

## **8.6 Non-domestic rates**

Non-domestic rates are payable by all businesses, charities and public sector organisations if they are the owner, tenant or occupier of a non-domestic property. This includes most types of business premises, including shops, offices, pubs and hotels, warehouses, factories and public parks. However, there are some exemptions, notably for agricultural and forestry land and buildings.

There are several options for rates relief, including charity relief, rural relief and the small business bonus scheme.

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<sup>66</sup> There are parallel sections for protected adults.

<sup>67</sup> E.g. SportScotland

<sup>68</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/practical-fire-safety-guidance-existing-non-residential-premises-2/>

<sup>69</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/fire-safety-risk-assessment-forms-and-guidance/>

<sup>70</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/building-standards-technical-handbook-2020-non-domestic/>

<sup>71</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukSI/1988/1324/contents/made>

### 8.6.1 Charity relief

Registered charities can apply for 80% rates relief if their property is mostly used for charitable purposes. This could be by the charity occupying the premises, or by other charities. Local authorities can offer up to 20% additional relief on top of the 80% and can also choose to offer up to 100% relief on properties used by other not-for-profit organisations.

The Highland Council website<sup>72</sup> outlines their eligibility criteria and terms and conditions as follows:

*“If your organisation is a registered charity, listed on the register maintained by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) and the property occupied by your organisation is used wholly or mainly for charitable purposes, you may be entitled to 80 percent mandatory rates relief.*

*We will determine whether a property is being used wholly or mainly for charitable purposes and have discretionary powers to top this relief up to 100 percent.*

#### **Who may apply?**

- 1. Organisations already eligible for mandatory relief.*
- 2. Organisations determined by the Council to be of a "Quasi-Charitable" nature.*

#### **What conditions are there?**

- (a) The premises must not be used to carry out an operation of a commercial nature, including alcohol sales, where proceeds from the operation represent a significant proportion of the organisation's total turnover from the premises.*
  - (b) The organisation must use the premises for Charitable purposes, i.e. (i) the relief of poverty, (ii) the advancement of religion, (iii) the advancement of education, (iv) other purposes beneficial to the community.*
  - (c) The application must provide sufficient information to allow officers of The Highland Council to determine whether the organisation is of a quasi-charitable nature in terms of Section 4 (5) of the Local Government (Financial Provisions Etc) (Scotland) Act, 1962.*
  - (d) The property should be available for let to non-profit making organisations at a reasonable cost.*
- Entitlement is reviewed periodically, and on any change of occupation and/or use relief may be adjusted.”*

### 8.6.2 Rural Relief

Rural relief offers 100% relief from non-domestic rates if your property is in a designated rural area with a population below 3,000 and it is:

- a small food shop, general store or post office with a rateable value below £8,500
- a small hotel, public house or petrol filling station with a rateable value of up to £12,750
- any other business providing a benefit to the community with a rateable value of up to £17,000

The Highland Council website<sup>73</sup> describes the eligibility for discretionary relief as follows:

*“A property may qualify for discretionary rural relief if:*

- It is within a rural settlement with a population not exceeding 3,000*
- Its rateable value does not exceed £17,000*
- The local authority is satisfied that it is used for purposes which are of benefit to the local community. Examples are chemists, tourist information centres, community radio stations. This list is not exhaustive so please contact the Rates Team for further information.*

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<sup>72</sup> [https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/2/business\\_rates/700/business\\_rates\\_discounts\\_-\\_charitable\\_organisations](https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/2/business_rates/700/business_rates_discounts_-_charitable_organisations)

<sup>73</sup> [https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/2/business\\_rates/406/business\\_rates\\_discounts/8](https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/2/business_rates/406/business_rates_discounts/8)

- *The property is used for one of the qualifying mandatory purposes, but the property exceeds the maximum qualifying threshold of £8,500.”*

### **8.6.3 Small Business Bonus Scheme**

Up to 100% non-domestic rates relief through the Small Business Bonus Scheme is available if all of these criteria are met:

- the combined rateable value of all your business premises is £35,000 or less
- the rateable values of individual premises are £20,000 or less
- the property is actively occupied

However, 100% relief is only available when the total rateable value of properties is £12,000 or less: the relief available reduces rapidly above this threshold.

### **8.6.4 Analysis**

The NSCFT cabin has a rateable value of £2,500 whilst the rateable value of the Forsinain sawmill £14,500. The rateable value of the FLS cabin cannot be found through search facility on the Scottish Assessors Association website,<sup>74</sup> perhaps because it is exempt as a forestry building. Once acquired by NSCFT, however, it will be assessed and added to the valuation roll, with a rateable value likely to be somewhat higher than that of the NSCFT cabin.

Whilst long term tenants may in some circumstances be responsible for non-domestic rates (depending on the terms of the lease), this is unlikely to be the case at the cabins.

NSCFT currently receives 100% charity relief from non-domestic rates in respect of the NSCFT cabin and Forsinain sawmill, and can expect that this will continue once the FLS cabin is added to the valuation roll.

If Highland Council were to reduce or remove discretionary charity relief, NSCFT would continue to be eligible for the 80% mandatory charity relief as long as its properties were mostly used for charitable purposes. The total rateable value of NSCFT's current properties is £17,000, which already considerably exceeds the £12,000 threshold for 100% small business relief and equals the upper limit for rural relief, so there would be no advantage in seeking alternative reliefs.

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<sup>74</sup> <https://www.saa.gov.uk/>

## 9 Analysis of Alternative Acquisition and Tenure Options

The asset transfer provisions cover purchase, lease and requests for other rights over land owned or managed by Scottish public authorities. The most appropriate option for community bodies will generally reflect their objectives and aspirations for the land: some projects demand ownership, others can be delivered effectively under other tenures. Community ownership brings more rights and responsibilities and is often essential to secure support from funders and investors, but in some situations it may be preferable for the community not to take on the potential liabilities of ownership.

Whilst the primary focus of this study is the community acquisition of the cabin and a small area of surrounding land, consideration has also been given as to whether community objectives could be met under alternative models of tenure, such as acquisition of a greater area of forest, or through a lease or management agreement between NSCFT and FLS.

### 9.1 Acquisition of larger area of forest

It would be possible for NSCFT to seek to acquire a larger area of forest, perhaps even the entire ~300ha Borgie Breco block, but doing so would add little value to the current project.

Prices for forest land, whilst slightly reduced from their 2022 peak, are still unsustainably high and generally do not reflect the value of the standing timber: it would be very challenging to raise sufficient funds to achieve a larger acquisition.

### 9.2 Lease

NSCFT could make an Asset Transfer Request to lease the building and land from FLS, but this would be unsatisfactory for both parties, given the substantial repairs required and the longer term refurbishment needs of the cabin such as a new kitchen.

FLS would likely be unwilling to make the necessary investment unless a substantial rental income was guaranteed, but paying such rent would be a burden on NSCFT, who would not have control of the building and land to develop as the community considered appropriate.

### 9.3 Premises Licence

Some of the activities that the Trust might deliver at the cabins will require a premises licence from the Highland Council.<sup>75</sup> Licensable activities include:

- selling alcohol
- serving alcohol (even if it's free)
- serving hot food and drinks between 11pm and 5am
- providing entertainment (theatre, film, indoor or outdoor sporting, live music, dance performance, nightclub)

A licence is required even if the activities are for charity, although the licence may be free.

There are specific additional requirements for certain activities, such as showing films: detailed advice is available from Cinema for All,<sup>76</sup> the national support and development organisation for community-led cinema and Regional Screen Scotland.<sup>77</sup>

Similarly, there are complex rules around gaming, bingo and lotteries, e.g. a raffle that takes place outside an event and is open to the general public, must be registered with the Local Authority as a

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<sup>75</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/find-licences/premises-licence-scotland/highland>

<sup>76</sup> <https://cinemaforall.org.uk/about-us/>

<sup>77</sup> <https://www.regionalscreenscotland.org/faq/>

small society lottery. The Gambling Commission provides useful guidance on the types of lotteries that can be run without a licence<sup>78</sup> and how to run a game of bingo legally,<sup>79</sup> whilst The Institute of Fundraising has produced guidance on raffles and lotteries.<sup>80</sup>

### **9.3.1 Music licensing**

If NSCFT or people using the cabins use music for the benefit of customers, visitors or staff, permission from the relevant copyright owners is needed in the form of a licence. This includes playing live, recorded or broadcast music at public events, background music in shops, street performances, festivals, in day centres or for dancing or exercise classes. Licences are even required for offices and other workplaces.

The two main licencing bodies, the Performing Right Society for Music (PRS) and Phonographic Performance Limited UK (PPL) joined forces in 2018 as PPL PRS Ltd so businesses and organisations playing or performing music in public can now obtain a single Music Licence. There is a range of tariffs covering different uses of music and different venues: PPL PRS Ltd offer a specific Community Building Music Licence.<sup>81</sup>

## **9.4 Management agreement**

Likewise, NSCFT could make an Asset Transfer Request to occupy the building and land under a management agreement with FLS, but as with a lease this would be unsatisfactory for both parties, for much the same reasons.

## **9.5 Analysis**

Owning the cabins and the adjacent land is the most effective option for NSCFT to secure investment for the refurbishment of the FLS cabin and take forward the development of the site for community benefit.

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<sup>78</sup> <https://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/public-and-players/guide/page/types-of-lottery-you-can-run-without-a-licence>

<sup>79</sup> <https://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/licensees-and-businesses/guide/how-to-run-a-game-of-bingo>

<sup>80</sup> <https://ciof.org.uk/events-and-training/resources/lotteries>

<sup>81</sup> <https://pplprs.co.uk/themusiclicence/sectors/community/>

## 10 Community Acquisition

Community acquisition of the building and adjacent land will take place via FLS's Community Asset Transfer Scheme,<sup>82</sup> which follows the provisions of part 5 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.<sup>83</sup> Asset Transfer Requests (ATR) to Forestry and Land Scotland are assessed by an independent evaluation panel against published criteria. The panel has seven members,<sup>84</sup> chosen for their expertise across the economic, environmental and social sectors. Forestry and Land Scotland considers this assessment when making its decision on the request.

The assessment process includes a period of public consultation (managed by FLS) and can take up to six months, though is often completed slightly quicker than this. Once an application is approved the community body has six months to negotiate any terms and conditions and to submit an offer and then a further six months to complete the transfer.<sup>85</sup> These timescales are subject to amendment by mutual agreement.

### 10.1 Borgia Breco cabin acquisition process

FLS notified the community of their intention to dispose of their cabin in January 2020, and apparently received considerable interest from various organisations and businesses. As there was community interest, FLS advised that they would not bring the cabin to market unless the community did not proceed.

The COVID-19 pandemic effectively stalled community progress on the acquisition of the cabin, and since 2022 NSCFT has been working on the asset transfer request for the Rosal Clearance Village. With acquisition of Rosal nearing completion, and increasing use of and demand for the NSCFT cabin apparent, attention has now turned back to the FLS cabin.

FLS wrote to NSCFT in July 2024, expressing their continued desire for a "clear exit plan" for the site, and requesting a statement of intent from NSCFT with respect to purchasing the cabin, covering:

- Overview of current use of site: NSCFT cabin, polycrubb, etc.
- Intention to make an asset transfer request for the whole site, including the FLS Log Cabin
- Overview of any initial proposals for use of the FLS Log Cabin
- Timescale for making an asset transfer request

Andy Rockall from the Community Woodlands Association facilitated a project development session with Directors in August 2024 which helped identify and prioritise potential activities and projects,<sup>86</sup> and NSCFT duly confirmed their intention to proceed with an Asset Transfer request.

The FLS CATS Manager and a member of the FLS CATS Evaluation Panel visited the cabin on 17 October 2024.

#### 10.1.1 Community consultation

The Trust hosted an open event at the cabins on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2024 to gather ideas and feedback for the cabins and the land around them. The event was promoted as a Halloween party to encourage families along and bat box making was also organised in the Polycrubb to attract a broader

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<sup>82</sup> <https://forestryandland.gov.scot/what-we-do/communities/community-asset-transfer-scheme>

<sup>83</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/policies/community-empowerment/asset-transfer/>

<sup>84</sup> <https://forestryandland.gov.scot/what-we-do/communities/community-asset-transfer-scheme/asset-transfer-request-evaluation>

<sup>85</sup> FLS's guidance, which lays out these steps in detail, is currently being revised. <https://forestryandland.gov.scot/what-we-do/communities/community-asset-transfer-scheme/submit-an-asset-transfer-request> However, the basic requirements are set out in the Community Empowerment Act and Scottish Government guidance.

<sup>86</sup> Full details in Appendix 2 section A2.1

group. The event was attended by around 40 individuals with many from the local communities of Borgie, Skerray and Tongue. Attendees were asked to share their thoughts on what they would like to see happen with the cabins as well as the land. In addition, the event also inspired some informal discussion.<sup>87</sup>

A wide range of educational, entertainment and well-being activities was suggested for the cabins, and for the land, with camping, sports and music events and community growing all making use of the wider setting. Whilst most activities were likely to be NSCFT-led, there was also a recognition of the potential for rental of accommodation and office space, and for e.g. exercise classes.

A questionnaire, available in paper and online formats, was circulated during December 2024 and January 2025 to gather feedback on both current use of the cabin and forest as well as thoughts and ideas for the future uses of the cabins and land. The questionnaire was promoted via social media including local Facebook pages, at events the Trust attended, and copies were also made available at Bettyhill Library and Service Point. NSCFT received 58 responses.<sup>88</sup>

The questionnaire built on the inputs from the Halloween event and asked more focussed questions. Most of the respondents were occasional or monthly visitors, attending events in the forest. There was positive support for developing a wide range of events in the forest, with Hire of space for community use (98%), Music events (84%) and Hire of space for personal use (80%) the three most highly rated. There was also very strong support for repurposing the polycrue for a range of community growing projects.

Twenty respondents (34%) indicated that they would be interested in hiring space within the cabin, predominantly for running a wide range of events and classes, from various arts and crafts to exercise, health and wellbeing.

NSCFT is planning a further event in August 2025 to seek community approval of the acquisition proposal. This will be organised as an Open Day at the cabins with various activities happening, a walk with a wildlife expert, demonstration of community growing proposals, and possibly some live music; as well as presenting information about the Trust's plans for Borgie and the cabins.

## 10.2 Building and land purchase

Table 10 shows the proposed cost (valuation less discount) and funding model for the acquisition of the cabin and land. The various elements are explained in the subsequent sections below.

Item		£
Acquisition costs	Market valuation	170,000
	less discount	- 45,000
Legal fees		5,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>130,000</b>
Scottish Land Fund	80.8%	105,000
Caithness & North Sutherland Fund	15.4%	20,000
NSCFT own funds	3.8%	5,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>130,000</b>

**Table 10: Acquisition costs and funding**

<sup>87</sup> Full details in Appendix 2 section A2.2

<sup>88</sup> Full details in Appendix 2 section A2.3

### **10.2.1 Valuation**

A formal valuation was jointly instructed by NSCFT and FLS and carried out by Bell Ingram in June 2025. The market value of the site was assessed as £170,000, comprising £140,000 for the FLS cabin and surrounding land, and £30,000 for the solum of the NSCFT cabin (approximately 25% of the total value of the cabin).

Such valuations are typically considered valid for six months, after which time a revaluation may be required. The revaluation is normally a desktop exercise, to reflect market changes in the intervening period.

Legal fees are estimated as £5,000.

### **10.2.2 Calculation of discount**

The Asset Transfer Request (ATR) must state the price that the Community Body is offering to pay for the asset, this can be at market value as assessed by an independent valuer or at a lower amount, with the discount requested being justified in terms of the additional public benefit to be delivered.

These public benefits, and any discount granted, are considered as a specific monetary amount, not as a proportional reduction. For example, if the benefits justify a discount of £10,000, this discount could represent 50% if the market value of the asset was £20,000 or 5% if the asset was valued at £200,000. Thus, any discount granted will be the same regardless of whether there is a revised valuation for the asset.

Community acquisition, management and development of the Borgie cabin will deliver wide-ranging public benefits, although many of these benefits are difficult to quantify or monetise and will only become apparent over a longer term.

NSCFT intends to seek a discount of £45,000, based on the following components

- Employment
- Volunteering
- Branching Out

NSCFT is therefore offering £125,000 for the FLS cabin and surrounding land.

#### **Employment**

Community acquisition of the FLS cabin will create additional employment in administration and cleaning, which will be funded by income generated from hire of rooms.

Direct employment (wages or contract cost) is estimated at 3hrs/week admin @ £20/hour and 2hrs/week cleaning at £14/hour, which is a total of £88 per week, which equates to £4,576 per year

To calculate the overall economic value it is necessary to consider indirect effects arising from purchases of goods and services within the sector, and induced effects from spending by employees.<sup>89</sup> Thus a multiplier of 1.3<sup>90</sup> has been applied, giving a total of £5,948.80 per year.

#### **Volunteering**

Acquisition of the solum of the NSCFT cabin and surrounding land is essential for the continued development of the Borgie Forest Friends, whilst the community purchase of the FLS cabin will provide additional volunteering opportunities.

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<sup>89</sup> See "The Economic Contribution of the Forestry sector in Scotland" for a fuller explanation of the methodology. [economic-contribution-forestry-2015.pdf](#)

<sup>90</sup> This multiplier was used for the Recreation and tourism sector in the Economic Contribution of Forestry report; it is considerably lower than the multipliers used for many other employment subsectors.

Volunteering delivers a range of benefits, to the individual, to the beneficiary/host, and to society at large e.g. through the reduced societal costs arising from improved mental and physical health and social cohesion. Not all of these are easily quantified, but the economic value can be estimated using the National Minimum Wage of £12.21.<sup>91</sup>

NSCFT's conservative estimate is 6 participants for 4 hours per month, which equates to £256.41 per session or £3,076.92 per year.

An apportionment of 25% of this value has been made, reflecting the estimated proportion of the value of the NSCFT cabin represented by the solum being acquired. This provides an annual figure of £769.23.

### **Branching Out**

As with volunteering, acquisition of the solum of the NSCFT cabin and surrounding land is essential for the continued development of the Branching Out programme, whilst the community purchase of the FLS cabin will provide opportunities for additional activities.

The Branching Out programme has been evaluated through two survey-based studies, one for 2011-2012 and one for 2014-2015, which demonstrated clear benefits for participants.<sup>92</sup>

The programme was also demonstrated to be cost effective. The cost per QALY<sup>93</sup> in 2014/15 was £17.3K, compared to the NICE<sup>94</sup> £30K per QALY benchmark. The average economic value of the programme per person was £681 (all figures at 2016 prices).

Using this figure suggests the annual economic value of the Branching Out Programme, with two 12 week programmes per year, each with 10 participants is £13,620.

An apportionment of 25% of this value has been made, reflecting the estimated proportion of the value of the NSCFT cabin represented by the solum being acquired, giving an annual figure of £3,405.

### **Total**

The gross value of public benefits from these three components over the first five years is calculated as £50,615.15, although applying a 3.5% discount rate<sup>95</sup> over years 2-5 reduces this to £47,305.72.

NSCFT will therefore request a discount of £45,000 against the acquisition price.

Component	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
Employment	5,948.80	5,747.63	5,553.27	5,365.48	5,184.04	27,799.21
Volunteers	769.23	743.22	718.08	693.80	670.34	3,594.67
Branching Out	3,405.00	3,289.86	3,178.60	3,071.11	2,967.26	15,911.83
<b>Total</b>						<b>47,305.72</b>

**Table 11: Calculation of NSCFT discount request**

<sup>91</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-national-minimum-wage-in-2024>

<sup>92</sup> See CJC Consulting, 2016. Branching Out Economic Extension: Final Report to Forestry Commission Scotland. Branching Out has generally higher initial attendance and retention rates (as measured by >4 attendances), despite the possible occurrence of adverse weather associated with outdoor activity which might be expected to have a negative impact on attendance. High retention rates are an indicator of satisfaction with the intervention on the part of those participating.

<sup>93</sup> Quality-Adjusted Life Years (QALYs), a standard measure used to assess the cost-effectiveness of treatments across the health care sector

<sup>94</sup> National Institute for Health and Care Excellence <https://www.nice.org.uk/>

<sup>95</sup> This is the HM Treasury standard discount rate <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-green-book-appraisal-and-evaluation-in-central-government>

### **10.2.3 Funding for acquisition**

Subject to a formal approval of the asset transfer request and the level of discount by Forestry and Land Scotland, NSCFT will seek to raise funds to meet the acquisition price and deliver initial development costs.

NSCFT will seek £105,000 of the acquisition cost from the Scottish Land Fund<sup>96</sup> (SLF), which supports urban and rural communities to become more resilient and sustainable through the ownership and management of land and land assets. Grants of between £5,000 and £1 million are available to fund the purchase of land or land assets.

Applicants must demonstrate that their project will help their local community to:

- achieve more sustainable economic, environmental and/or social development through ownership of land and buildings
- have a stronger role in and control over their own development
- own well managed, financially sustainable land and buildings.

Up to 95% of eligible project costs can be supported by SLF, with a minimum of 5% of funding coming from other sources, although requests for a lower intervention rate may be looked on favourably. SLF can also provide some post-acquisition revenue funding.

NSCFT will seek a contribution of £20,000 from the Caithness and North Sutherland Fund,<sup>97</sup> which was established by the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority and Dounreay Site Restoration Ltd to distribute funding to community organisations for projects that will increase the attractiveness of Caithness & North Sutherland as a place to live, work and invest with particular emphasis on achieving environment, social, culture and infrastructure improvements.

There will also be a contribution of £5,000 from NSCFT's own funds.

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<sup>96</sup> <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/scottish-land-fund>

<sup>97</sup> <https://www.cnsf.org.uk/>

## **11 Post-acquisition Development Projects**

Once the acquisition is complete NSCFT will update any necessary staffing contracts, insurance policies, etc., and progress a programme of building repair and refurbishment in order to allow initial hire offers of the Meeting Room, the Office and the Workshop

The Trust will reconfigure its activities, making increased use of the workshop area in the FLS cabin, which will facilitate additional hire opportunities for the NSCFT cabin, and developing community growing projects in the polycrub and new outside raised beds.

Experience of the first two or three years of building occupation will inform the design and delivery of a larger, medium term package of work to be developed as a separately funded project. Similarly, evidence of demand following community acquisition will inform future development projects including increased accommodation provision such as glamping pods.

### **11.1 Operating costs**

#### **11.1.1 Staff and office costs**

Management of the new cabin will take an estimated 3 hours per week, at £20/hour, so additional staffing costs are estimated at £60/week (= £3,120 annually).

Cleaning costs: the FLS cabin will be cleaned once a week: cost estimated at 2hrs per week @ £14/hour = £28/week (= £1,456 annually).

#### **11.1.2 Energy and septic tank**

Annual energy costs for the FLS cabin are estimated as follows: electricity - £1,500 (based on use at the NSCFT cabin), wood £500. £320 has been allowed for an additional emptying of the septic tank.

#### **11.1.3 Compliance**

£750 has been budgeted for additional insurance and licensing costs arising from the acquisition of the FLS cabin. It is not expected that the acquisition of the FLS cabin will have a significant impact on annual accountancy costs, and it is anticipated that NSCFT will continue to benefit from both mandatory and discretionary charity relief from non-domestic rates.

#### **11.1.4 Promotion**

NSCFT will promote the additional available facilities through its website, Facebook page and membership. It is not anticipated that there will be any additional cash cost.

NSCFT will consider whether additional or revised signage is needed at the junction with the A836. Any necessary work, once agreed with FLS, will be undertaken by volunteers and Directors.

#### **11.1.5 Income**

Income from hire of rooms and facilities has been calculated using the indicative hire rates in table 9, with occupancy as follows:

Meeting Room: assumed hired for 1 day, 2 half-days and 2 hours a week (i.e. ~50% occupancy) by an equal mix of charity and business users, generating £5,148 annually.

Office: assumed 1 desk hired on long term contracts for 6 months each (i.e. ~50% occupancy) to charity and business users, generating £1,500 annually.

Workshop: assumed 1 day hire per week by a mix of charity and business users, generating £3,120 annually.

Additional hires of NSCFT cabin made possible by moving NSCFT projects such as Borgie Forest Friends and Branching Out into the FLS cabin: assumed 1 day hire per week by a mix of charity and business users, generating £3,120 annually.

Additionally, some NSCFT-led funded projects which use the FLS cabin may have funding elements which contribute to cabin costs (such as electricity and cleaning), however this has not been included in the income figures in the table below.

The total income from room hire is therefore estimated at £12,888 annually, however, in the financial plan this figure is only achieved in year 4: for the first three years the income is estimated at 60%, 70% and 80% of this total respectively, recognising the need for NSCFT to promote opportunities and build the business, and that the building will be more attractive post-refurbishment.

Item	£
Staffing	3,120
Cleaning	1,456
Insurance & licensing	750
Electricity	1,500
Wood	500
Septic tank	320
<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>7,646</b>
Meeting room	5,148
Office	1,500
Workshop	3,120
NSCFT cabin additional hires	3,120
<b>Income from hire fees</b>	<b>12,888</b>

**Table 12: Annual operating costs and income**

## 11.2 Building repairs and fitting out

Immediate work on the cabin will cover the following elements:

- Fire safety
- Rainwater systems
- Furnishing

The fire risk assessment will be contracted to an external expert (estimated cost £1,000), and any necessary measures that are identified by the assessment will be implemented, for which £3,000 has been allocated. It is expected that some elements, e.g. reversing doors, can be undertaken by volunteers and Directors.

The existing PVC rainwater system will be removed and replaced with a zinc system. New bargeboards and a new gutter stop, as identified in the Building Condition Survey, will be fitted. The estimated cost for the work is £5,500, with installation work to be carried out by external contractors.

Tables and chairs will be purchased to facilitate room hire. The kitchen area will be thoroughly cleaned and tidied, and basic equipment: kettle, crockery etc., acquired to support room hire. A budget of £1,500 has been allocated for this.

Item	£
Fire risk assessment	1,000
Implementing fire risk assessment measures	3,000
Replacement of all rainwater systems, new bargeboards and gutter stop	5,500
Kitchen and room fitting and furnishing	1,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,000</b>

**Table 13: Estimated costs for immediate repairs and refurbishment**

### **11.2.1 Funding for short term building works**

NSCFT intend to submit a funding application to the Caithness and North Sutherland Fund to contribute to these costs as well as the acquisition. There are various other potential funders for the short term building works, including:

- National Lottery Awards for All
- North and West Sutherland Trust (Creag Riabhach Windfarm)

Details of these and other potential funders for community development projects are contained in Appendix 4.

### **11.3 Building repair costs: medium term**

It is recognised that a more comprehensive refurbishment of the FLS cabin is required in the medium term, including refurbishment and rebuild of kitchen space, upgrading of artificial lighting, improving ventilation and replacing internal doors and ceilings. As noted previously, further design work, informed by post-acquisition use of the cabin, is required before these works can be fully itemised and costed. Some reconfiguration and installation work may be carried out by volunteers, but there are likely to be substantial costs involved, likely to be met by specific funding application(s).

NSCFT will also consider whether additional changes are required to enhance the long term sustainability of the cabin, e.g. replacing the turf roof or installing a more efficient heating system. Depending on the scale and scope of works, costs of a future refurbishment project could be anywhere between £30,000 and £100,000.

There are various potential funders for such a project, including

- North and West Sutherland Trust (Creag Riabhach Windfarm)
- Charitable Trusts such as the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
- National Lottery Community Action (as part of a wider project)

However, it is difficult to identify what funding streams will be available in three or four years' time.

### **11.4 Site Development**

Acquisition of the land surrounding the cabins will allow NSCFT to deliver a wider range of outdoor activities and development projects. Some "short-term" projects will be delivered as soon as possible following the acquisition, other "medium-term" projects will require additional feasibility, planning and funding, and may not take place within the first five years of community ownership.

#### **11.4.1 Short-term site development projects**

NSCFT will expand its community growing capacity at the cabins, by both utilising the polycrub and by establishing external raised beds. In the first phase there will be 6 raised beds of ~3m \* 1.2m, with more beds to be added in later phases. Protection from herbivores will be required, and

consideration will be given to deer-fencing a specific area or the entire site. Costs will be dependent on scale but are estimated here at £2,000.

NSCFT will maintain and enhance the picnic area, adding a barbeque pit and additional seating, and replacing the picnic tables as required. Installation work potentially done by volunteers, may need to purchase picnic tables if cannot be produced at sawmill or workshop. Estimated costs are £2,500.

NSCFT will plant the reed bed. Work could potentially be carried out by volunteers but there will likely be costs involved in acquiring the reeds and possibly in redigging / turning over the bed. Estimated costs are £1,000.

Item	£
Raised beds and fencing	2,000
Picnic area enhancement	2,500
Reed bed	1,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,500</b>

**Table 14: Estimated costs for short term development projects**

#### ***11.4.2 Funding for short term development projects***

These activities may be funded individually or bundled together with other activities into a single development project, for which there are various potential funders, including:

- National Lottery Awards for All
- North Highland Initiative
- North and West Sutherland Trust (Creag Riabhach Windfarm)

#### ***11.4.3 Medium-term site development projects***

Medium term projects include the development of a play area and the addition of glamping pods to provide additional accommodation.

Further feasibility, design and planning work is necessary before these works can be fully itemised and costed.

Potential funders include:

- National Lottery Community Action
- Community-Led Local Development Funds
- Charitable Trusts such as the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

## I2 Five-year Financial Plan

	Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Acquisition	130,000					
Fitting out		11,000				
Management costs		7,646	7,646	7,646	7,646	7,646
Short term development projects			5,500			
Refurbishment					50,000	
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>130,000</b>	<b>18,646</b>	<b>13,146</b>	<b>7,646</b>	<b>57,646</b>	<b>7,646</b>
Scottish Land Fund	105,000					
Caithness & N Sutherland Fund	20,000	10,000				
NSCFT	5,000	1,000				
Hire income		7,733	9,022	10,310	12,888	12,888
Awards for All			5,500			
Refurbishment funding					50,000	
<b>Total income</b>	<b>130,000</b>	<b>18,733</b>	<b>14,522</b>	<b>10,310</b>	<b>62,888</b>	<b>12,888</b>
annual surplus/(deficit)	0	87	1,376	2,664	5,242	5,242
cumulative surplus/(deficit)	0	87	1,462	4,127	9,369	14,611

**Table 15: Five-year financial plan**

Year 0 = acquisition

Short term development projects = raised beds and fencing, picnic area enhancement, reed bed, assumed to be funded by National Lottery Awards for All (other funders are available)

Refurbishment: estimate cost £50,000 but range £30-£100k depending on scope, funder(s) to be identified.

Hire income in years 1, 2 and 3 at 60%, 70% and 80% of year 4 and 5 figure, reflecting the need to grow the business, and that the building will be more attractive to hire post-refurbishment.

Any surplus will be reinvested in building maintenance and development.

## 13 Analysis of Major Risks

### 13.1 Table of risks

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Asset Transfer Request refused by FLS	Low	Project cannot proceed	NSCFT ensure high quality application and business plan, strong community support etc.
Funding bid to SLF unsuccessful	Low/Medium	Project v unlikely to proceed	High quality application, strong community support
Community unable to raise match funding for acquisition if required	Low	Project v unlikely to proceed	Robust fundraising plan and implementation
Lack of community involvement / volunteers	Low/ Medium	Delays in implementation, lack of community commitment or buy-in	Active communications and promotion of opportunities. Working with external groups that can help liaise with interested volunteers
Lack of capacity within group / loss of key individuals	Low/ Medium	Delays in implementation, management failures	Robust governance systems, wider networking and support. Keep it fun and interesting for directors.
Funding bids for development projects unsuccessful	Medium	Delays, projects unable to proceed	Good quality applications, flexibility
Limited demand for room hire	Low/ Medium	Reduced income	High quality facilities, active promotion of opportunities, competitive hire rates

**Table 16: Major risks and mitigation**

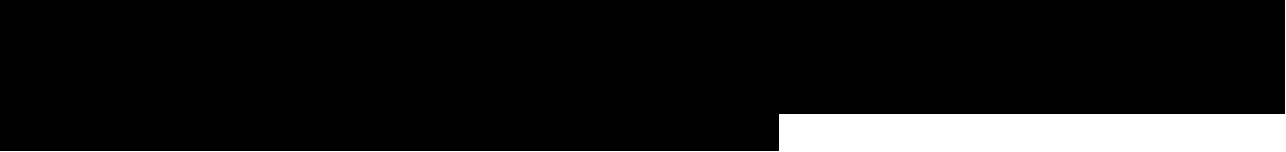
## I4 Abbreviations

AGM	Annual General Meeting
ATR	Asset Transfer Request
B, S & A	Bettyhill, Strathnaver and Altnaharra
CATS	Community Asset Transfer Scheme
CC	Community Council
FCS	Forestry Commission Scotland
FLS	Forestry & Land Scotland
ha	Hectare (=100m x 100m, 10,000 square metres)
NICE	National Institute for Health and Care Excellence
NSCFT	North Sutherland Community Forestry Trust
LDP	Local Development Plan
LMP	Land Management Plan
MW	Megawatt
OSCR	Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator
OWL	Outdoor Woodland Learning
QALY	Quality Adjusted Life Year
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SLF	Scottish Land Fund
SPA	Special Protection Area
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest

## **Appendix I      NSCFT Director Biographies**

### **Anna MacConnell, Armadale (Chair)**

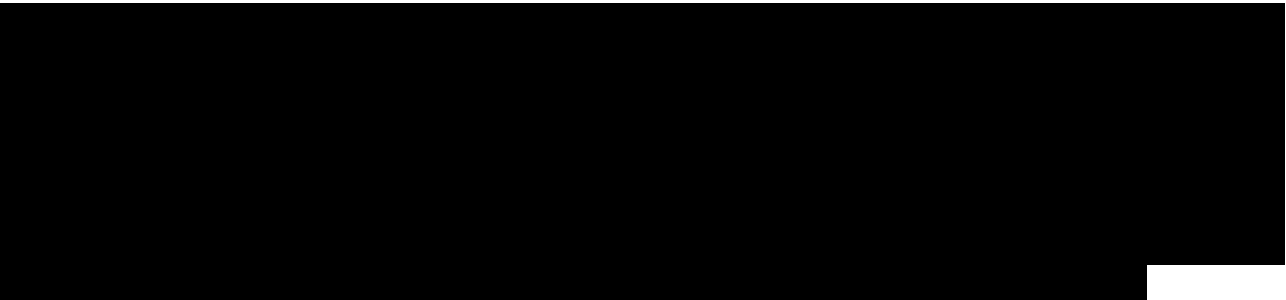
Anna was brought up and schooled in Sutherland. She obtained a degree in English from Stirling



### **Alistair Easthope, Bettyhill, Treasurer**



### **Rosemary Macintosh, Bettyhill, Secretary**



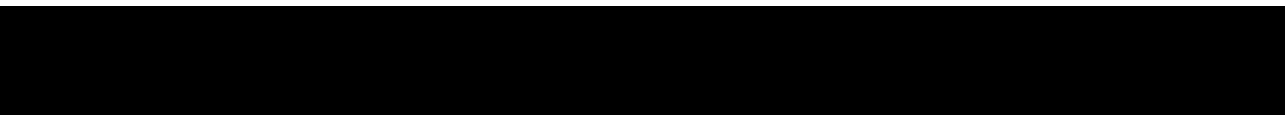
### **Hugh Black, Bettyhill, Vice Chair**



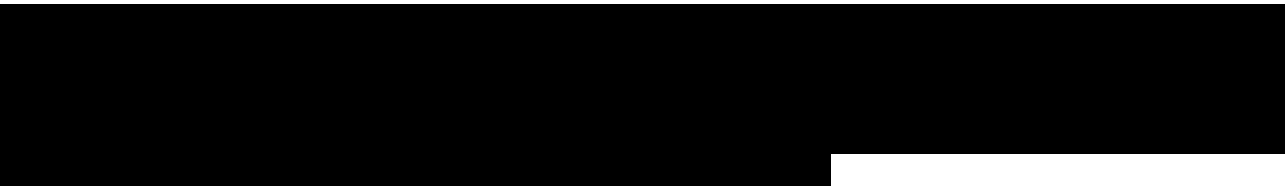
### **Tim Curtis, Bettyhill**



### **Gillian McPherson, Borgie**



### **David Marks, Melness**



**Alexander (Sandy) Murray, Strath Halladale**



**Richard Rowe, Scullomie (Tongue)**



## Appendix 2      NSCFT Borgie cabins and land consultation 2024-25

### A2.1 Initial discussion of NSCFT board – August 2024

In August 2024 some of the Trust's board members met with Andy Rockall from Community Woodlands Association to share some initial ideas around the acquisition and use of the second cabin and solum of land. With Andy facilitating the session, each board member was asked to write down their ideas for what needed to/could be done. This was followed by a session to group the tasks, activities and projects into categories based on whether the board felt each were of high or low importance and whether they were tasks that needed to be done sooner or could be left until further down the line. The following chart shows the results of this session.

<p><b>HIGH IMPORTANCE</b></p> <p><b>Sooner</b></p> <p>Land:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fencing of boundary around land</li> </ul> <p>Cabin:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety checks: fire alarm system, PAT testing, insurance</li> <li>• New roof, doors and windows</li> <li>• Community woodworking space</li> <li>• Boat building</li> <li>• Reconfigure into separate workshops, artists/craftworkers place plus gallery/exhibition space</li> </ul> <p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community consultation over cabin and land</li> <li>• Consideration of staff time and funding managing project</li> <li>• Making existing equipment and tools available for hire to generate income</li> <li>• Septic tank/reed bed</li> </ul>	<p><b>Later</b></p> <p>Land:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growing area (potentially using Polycrub)</li> <li>• Benches, BBQ area, additional accommodation e.g. timber clad portacabins</li> </ul> <p>Cabin:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outside lean-to on north side to protect timber and provide outside workshop space (boat building)</li> <li>• Investigate installing solar panels on roof</li> </ul> <p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open day for people to see everything</li> </ul>
<p><b>LOWER IMPORTANCE</b></p> <p><b>Sooner</b></p> <p>Land:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pond near cabins</li> <li>• Forest kids nursery, play area for children/maximise on space <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Tree/plant nursery/community growing project/small orchard</li> <li>○ Forest school activities</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Christmas trees</li> <li>• Sensory garden</li> </ul>	<p><b>Later</b></p> <p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sweat lodge</li> <li>• Buildings and workshops to feed into Rosal work</li> </ul>

<p>Cabin:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locus for sporting activities/training – trail running, mountain biking etc.</li> <li>• Visitor centre, café (use produce from Polycrub)</li> </ul> <p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School collaborations</li> <li>• Bike hire (long term and cycle trails)</li> </ul>	
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## A2.2 Feedback from community consultation event

On 26<sup>th</sup> October 2024 the Trust hosted an open event at the cabins to begin formally gathering ideas and feedback for the cabins and the land around them. The event was promoted as a Halloween party to encourage families along and bat box making was also organised in the Polycrub to attract a broader group. The event was attended by around 40 individuals with many from the local communities of Borgie, Skerry and Tongue.

Attendees were asked to share their thoughts on what they would like to see happen with the cabins as well as the land. Small pieces of note paper were available and attendees could write down their ideas and post them into a box. In addition, the event also inspired some informal discussion. The following were the comments received.

Cabins:

- Parties
- Hostel
- Community dinner club – bring a plate – once a month
- Ceilidhs
- Wellness/fitness retreat
- Classes – Reiki, yoga, meditation etc.
- Party room
- Carers hangout (while kids play – related to the pump track below)
- More music sessions
- Parent and kids disco night
- Science room
- Play room
- Accommodation for long-term rent
- Office space
- I have enjoyed working with Marta here. Please get her back!
- Food and drinks

Land:

- Camping
- Sporting activities
- Garden area to teach community how to grow their own
- Plant flowers
- Kids bike pump track (2 mentions)

Both:

- Concerts
- Regular forest school
- Kids Nature Club
- Summer Kids Camp – learn about nature, camping, arts and crafts, music etc.
- Kids Club
- Santa's Grotto, Easter Egg Hunt, Halloween parties
- Community DJ/music/rave nights with kids sleeping option possibly

Other general feedback:

- Consider access to each space and the ability to lock off each area if someone is using it for more than a day. There is separate external access to each room from outside. Internal doors could have locks to help with security if equipment is being left. Middle room could be used only for day hire as the workshop and east room at the front both need to use that room to access the kitchen and bathroom.
- So much potential for the space
- Strip out the kitchen and refresh

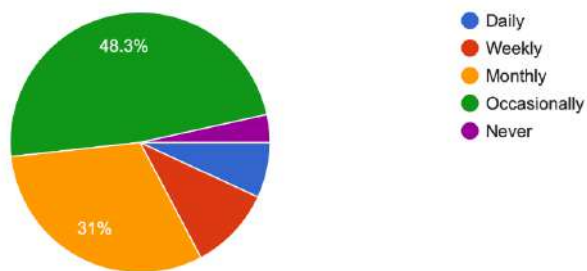
### A2.3 Questionnaires – December 2024/January 2025

Both a paper and online questionnaire were made available during December 2024 and January 2025 to gather both current use of the cabin and forest as well as thoughts and ideas for the future uses of the cabins and land. The questionnaire was promoted via social media including shares on local Facebook pages, at events the Trust attended, and copies were also made available at Bettyhill Library and Service Point.

58 responses were received. The following are the data and feedback from this questionnaire.

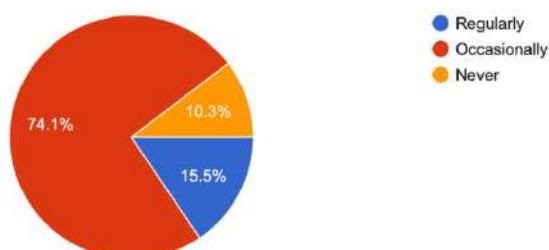
How often do you visit Borgie Breco?

58 responses



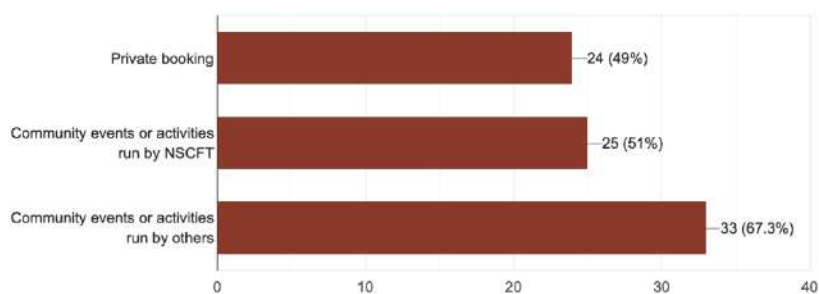
How often do you visit/use the current NSCFT log cabin (the smaller one)?

58 responses



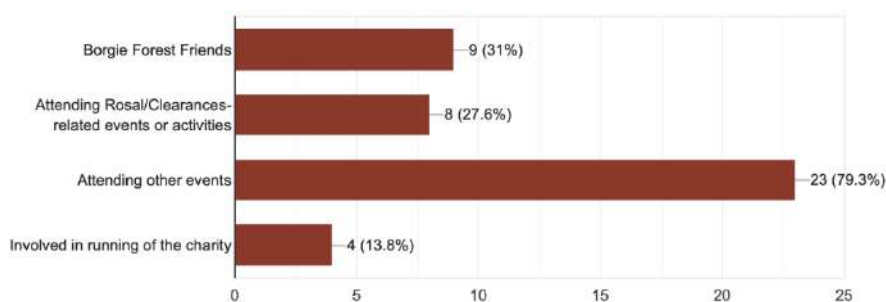
If you do visit the NSCFT cabin, what is the purpose of your visit? Select all that apply

49 responses



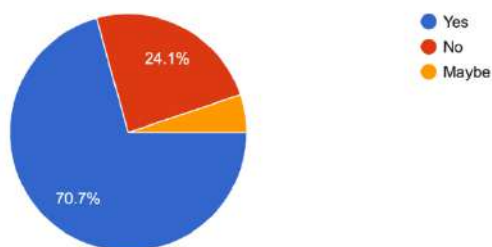
Do you currently have any involvement in the following NSCFT activities?

29 responses



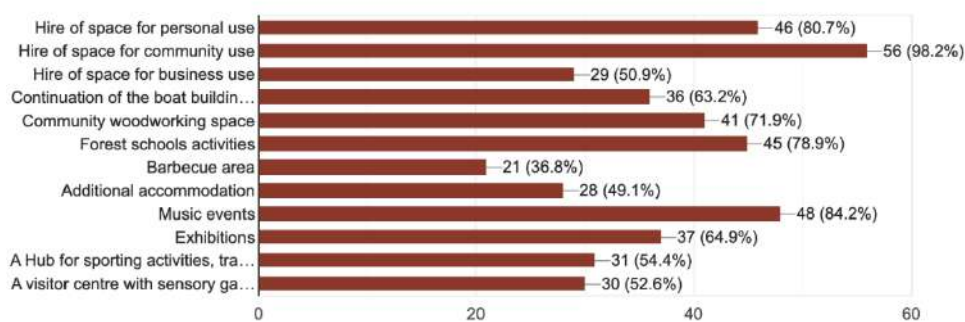
Have you visited the larger of the two cabins at Borgie Breco?

58 responses



Please tick any of the following activities you would like to see take place at the cabins:

57 responses



Please share any additional ideas you might have for activities/events at the cabins

17 responses

- It would be great for private hire (more space) as it's such a peaceful place for family get together and being able to stay over is a bonus. Love be a lovely setting for a wedding! Also would be great to be used as a space for the schools- I loved my visits to the forest as a child learning about different species of bugs and trees! Also loves planting my tree in the spiral walk- love coming back to find it!
- Cinema
- Craft workshops, artist in residence, pop up cafe (rather than permanent)
- If taken into NSCFT this will allow greater area community awareness of these excellent facilities. This will then enable a greater involvement and occupation period of these facilities.
- Weekend retreat for various groups. I very much enjoy the area and would love to see the cabin used more for the community.
- Important to keep community activities going in the area, but sadly due to age I can no longer participate but realise and appreciate all the NSCFT are doing
- Better phone signal/WiFi connection
- Craft fairs. Wellbeing days. Retreats.
- Retreats (health and wellbeing)
- Artists residency option or ecology residencies for studying and recording local fauna and flora, or group study days for people from further afield to study lichen, fungi, or other specialised topics.
- Supper clubs would be fun
- I think it is a great place and I would like to put on a complementary healing/health event there in the new year. It would be fun to have acoustic music performances from time to time.
- It would be good to have a grass camping area to allow extra accommodation overnight for events / groups.
- Forage education events

A Polycrub was installed for the boatbuilding project. We are keen to hear your thoughts on what this could be used for going forward. Please share any thoughts below.

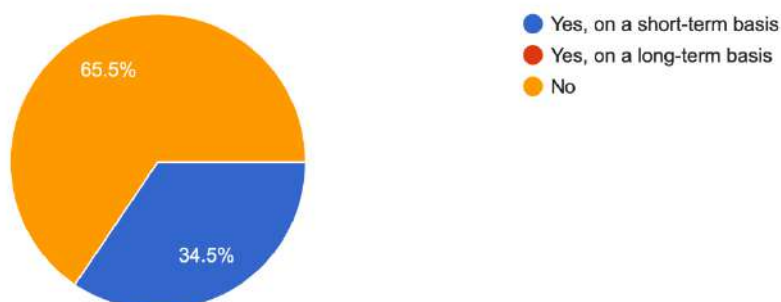
33 responses

- It would be a great use to give people of the community a place to grow veg/fruit with the rising cost of food nowadays- or run a school group for growing food or small trees to plant somewhere!
- Community growing, tree nursery
- Growing donated seeds and distributing the produce locally
- Another project or a gardening one
- Xmas trees! Community garden.
- Community gardening for mental health
- Growing of locally sourced wildflower seeds for replanting in the forest, local communities and private gardens - to help create further wildflower rich areas for local pollinators. Some wildflower seeds could be grown to help supplement the struggling wildflowers at Farr Glebe Meadow.
- A community space for growing vegetables etc.
- Build a St Ayles skiff. Grow food
- Workshop for any community projects. For gardening - community use.

- horticulture purposes
- More boat building, propagation
- More boat building or food (even if just herbs) growing
- Probably limitless use from frost free / dry storage, small scale projects where the warmth and weather protection would benefit, growing of fruits / vegetables etc.
- Community "grow your own".... for many different groups of folk, D of E volunteering/skill sections or similar
- When no longer being required for the boatbuilding project the polycrub could be used as a community growing area.
- Local growing of veg, communal
- Community garden
- Work space. Nursery
- Community growing space
- Could be used to encourage gardening or extra resource for activities
- Rent planting space kinda like an indoor allotment!
- Community growing project
- Looks like a good poly community poly tunnel for teaching children how to grown fruit and vegetables.
- Similar community projects or growing community vegetables and fruits.
- Community growing space /café
- Various craft workshops besides boatbuilding.
- For growing vegetables and fruit
- Community vegetable growing
- Similar projects
- Some herbs / salads for free "pick your own". A useful space for messy craft / group activities in bad weather.
- Equipment hire for sports in the forest like bikes, canoe, growing space for the community
- Market Garden herbs and plants

Would you be interested in hiring space within the cabin (three workshop/meeting spaces plus a larger workshop):

58 responses



If you would be interested in hiring space in the larger cabin, please give some details of what you would like to use it for.

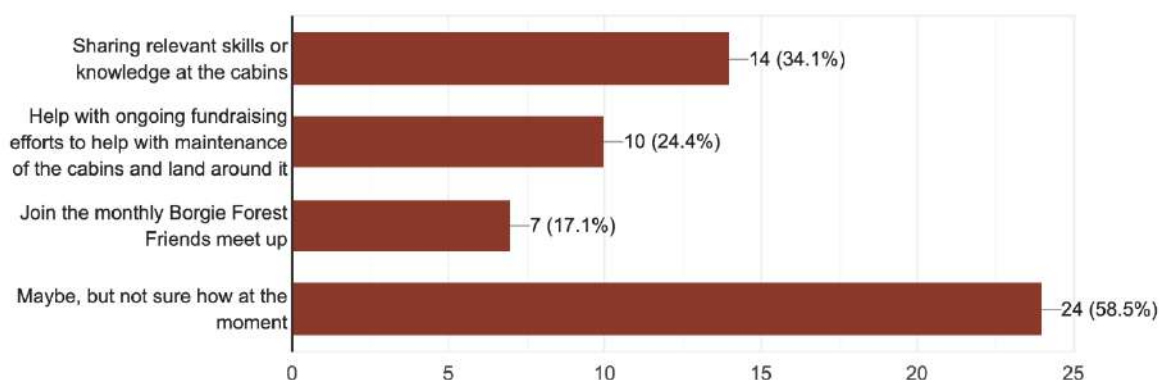
20 responses

- Possible music events

- As local and have a very large family with all uncles, cousins and now their children it's always nice to have somewhere for us all to gather- and the forest is great cause it gives everyone the space to unwind and get some fresh air
- Training event
- Maybe for occasional events
- Giving basketry workshops
- Possibly do some art workshops
- Classes over the winter - flower arranging, Zumba etc.
- Model making
- Accommodation/event space
- Wellbeing events (meditation, relaxation, self-help groups)
- I have been looking for a space to do art workshops
- Forest craft activities or wreath making
- Community events
- Supper clubs
- How much will be charged for the use of these spaces?
- Events
- Wellbeing Day and Residential Retreats
- Running workshops
- Retreat events such as wellbeing gatherings

Would you like to be involved in any way?

41 responses



## Appendix 3      Local venue hire rates (2025)

	<b>Description</b>	<b>Charity / local group rate</b>	<b>Business rate</b>
Tongue Hall	Large hall with kitchen	£8 per hour. Pound coins for use of kitchen.	£35 per hour. Pound coins for use of kitchen.
The Kyle Centre, Tongue	Modern facility with various room sizes, no large hall. Kitchen	£10 for first hour and £5 per hour thereafter	£25 per hour
Strathnaver Hall	Large hall with kitchen	Charity rate: £20 half day, £35 full day	£20 per hour
Bettyhill Hall	Large hall with kitchen	2 hour - £15 3 hour – £20 5 hour – £30 10 hour - £50	2 hour - £35 3 hour – £45 5 hour – £70 10 hour - £100
Naver Teleservice Centre, Bettyhill	Meeting room space	£25 per session (free for those who hire office space). Office space: £250 per quarter plus £30 quarterly contribution to electricity.	
Farr Edge, Bettyhill	Smaller facility with space for social events. Small kitchen	£30 per hour (free for voluntary groups)	
Armadale Hall	Modern facility. Large hall with kitchen	2 hours: £15 5 hours: £30 10 hours: £50	2 hours: £35 5 hours: £70 10 hours: £100
Strathy Hall	Largest hall in the area. Two meeting rooms. Kitchen and service area	£15 per hour for hall £15 per use for small meeting room	£25 per hour for hall £15 per use for small meeting room
Strath Halladale Hall	Large hall with kitchen	£15 per hour	Variable

**Table 16: Local venue hire rates**

## Appendix 4      Potential funders for community development projects

There are various potential funders for NSCFT's proposed development projects at the cabin and adjacent land. This section notes some of the larger or more obvious funders but is not intended to provide comprehensive coverage of a dynamic funding environment. Some funds are on-going, others annual, with relatively limited application windows, so not all are open to new applications at time of writing. The Community Woodlands Association publishes a monthly e-bulletin highlighting new funding opportunities.<sup>98</sup>

### National Lottery

#### Awards for All Scotland<sup>99</sup>

Awards for All can provide up to £20,000 for projects that do at least one of:

- bring people together and build strong relationships in and across communities
- improve the places and spaces that matter to communities
- help more people to reach their potential, by supporting them at the earliest possible stage.
- support people, communities and organisations facing more demands and challenges because of the cost of living crisis.

Funding can be to deliver a new or existing activity or to support organisations to change and adapt to new and future challenges.

#### Community Action<sup>100</sup>

The Community Action fund offers up to £250,000 for up to five years for projects that are open, inclusive and led by their community, and which will achieve at least two of the following outcomes:

- Build positive relationships
- Support people's health or wellbeing
- Help people improve their access and connection to nature
- Make a positive difference to the environment.

### Windfarm Distribution funds

The SSE Sustainable Development Fund<sup>101</sup> supports strategic projects in the regions where SSE is operating. Projects across the Highlands are eligible to apply.

North and West Sutherland Trust will disburse community benefit funding from the Creag Riabhach windfarm.

### North Highland Initiative

The North Highland Initiative<sup>102</sup> is a non-profit organisation established in 2005. It focuses on supporting and funding community building, food and farming, education, conservation and tourism. It collaborates with local businesses, organisations, and individuals to foster innovation, create employment, and enhance the quality of life for the people living in this unique and beautiful part of Scotland.

### Caithness & North Sutherland Fund

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<sup>98</sup> <https://www.communitywoods.org/back-copies-of-the-bulletin>

<sup>99</sup> <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/national-lottery-awards-for-all-scotland>

<sup>100</sup> <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/community-action>

<sup>101</sup> <https://www.sserenewables.com/communities/sustainable-development-fund/>

<sup>102</sup> <https://www.northhighlandinitiative.co.uk/>

The Caithness & North Sutherland Fund<sup>103</sup> was established by the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority and Dounreay Site Restoration Ltd to distribute funding to community organisations for projects that will increase the attractiveness of Caithness & North Sutherland as a place to live, work and invest with particular emphasis on achieving environment, social, culture and infrastructure improvements.

### **Other Local Funds**

The Highland Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund<sup>104</sup> supports community based initiatives that promote and develop good mental health and wellbeing and/or mitigate and protect against the impact of distress and mental ill health within the adult population.

The North Highland Initiative Community Infrastructure Support Initiative<sup>105</sup> offers specific assistance enabling small communities preparing to welcome visitors but also to provide services and support for everyone who lives across the region.

The Edinburgh Sutherland Association is a small charity which supports charities and worthy causes in Sutherland.

The Highlands and Islands Climate Hub – Climate Action Fund<sup>106</sup> supports climate action projects. It is currently closed but will reopen later in 2025.

### **Charitable Foundations**

#### Esmée Fairbairn Foundation<sup>107</sup>

Founded in 1961, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation is one of the UK's largest independent funders. In 2024, it provided £48.8m in funding towards a wide range of work in support of its aims: to improve Our Natural World, secure A Fairer Future and nurture Creative, Confident Communities.

#### The Pebble Trust<sup>108</sup>

Established in 2014, the Pebble Trust is a charity based in the Highlands of Scotland providing grant funding for projects which support its vision for a more sustainable, fair and low-carbon society.

The Robertson Trust <https://www.therobertsontrust.org.uk/>

The Dulverton Trust: <https://www.dulverton.org/>

The Weir Charitable Trust: <https://weircharitabletrust.com/>

The Henry Smith Foundation: <https://henrysmith.foundation/>

The Mushroom Trust: <https://mushroomtrust.com/>

### **Co-op Local Community Fund**

The Co-op Local Community Fund<sup>109</sup> supports projects in its members' communities that provide access to opportunities and resources to help people thrive in one of the following ways:

- enables people to access food
- creates opportunities for young people
- improves people's mental wellbeing

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<sup>103</sup> <https://www.cnsf.org.uk/>

<sup>104</sup> <https://www.highlandtsi.org.uk/hcmw-fund>

<sup>105</sup> <https://www.northhighlandinitiative.co.uk/cisp/>

<sup>106</sup> <https://hiclimatehub.co.uk/climateactionfund>

<sup>107</sup> <https://www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk/>

<sup>108</sup> <http://www.thepebbletrust.org/>

<sup>109</sup> <https://causes.coop.co.uk/>

- promotes community cohesion
- builds sustainable futures

### **SEPA Scottish Landfill Communities Fund**

The Scottish Landfill Communities Fund (SLCF)<sup>110</sup> 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. There are 6 potential objectives of funding, these include:

Object C: “to provide, maintain or improve a public park or other amenity”.

Object C projects are usually only eligible for funding if the project site is within 10 miles of a landfill site or transfer station – the cabins are ~3.5 miles from the Tongue landfill, and ~5 miles from the Bettyhill landfill.<sup>111</sup>

### **Scottish Forestry Community Fund**

The Scottish Forestry Community Fund<sup>112</sup> supports groups and organisations that encourage people to use woods more.

Eligible projects include activities associated with woodland-based:

- school care clubs and play schemes
- schemes that promote physical activity such as walking, safe routes to school, natural play and adventure play
- volunteer group establishment and the induction of volunteers
- volunteering facilitation focused on skills training, health improvement and community development
- projects promoting Gaelic

### **Community-led Local Development Funding**

Community Led Local Development (CLLD) funding is the successor fund for LEADER, which delivered support for rural development through implementing Local Development Strategies and was aimed primarily at small and medium sized community driven projects that are pilot and innovative in nature.

The 2025 iteration of CLLD<sup>113</sup> was delivered by Highlands & Islands Climate Hub, working in partnership with Highland Third Sector Interface and the Highland Council’s Community Regeneration Funding.

Community Regeneration Funding<sup>114</sup> is an umbrella term used to cover multiple community-led external funding programmes, including the Highland Coastal Communities Fund and the Place-based Investment Programme. The funds are not currently open for applications.

## **Appendix 5      Pictures from Building Condition Survey**

To be supplied as separate document

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<sup>110</sup> <https://www.sepa.org.uk/environment/waste/scottish-landfill-communities-fund/>

<sup>111</sup> <https://www.sepa.org.uk/data-visualisation/scottish-communities-landfill-fund/>

<sup>112</sup> <https://www.forestry.gov.scot/forests-people/communities/community-fund>

<sup>113</sup> <https://hiclimaturehub.co.uk/event-listing/clld-fund>

<sup>114</sup> [https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/283/community\\_life\\_and\\_leisure/1027/community\\_regeneration\\_funding](https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/283/community_life_and_leisure/1027/community_regeneration_funding)