

# Landscape Scale Conservation Case Study

## Coigach & Assynt Living Landscape

People and nature working together

### Summary

The Coigach & Assynt Living Landscape (CALL) Project is a unique partnership of community, charity and private landowners working together in a Living Landscape initiative. Encompassing over 60,000 hectares (232sq miles) it is one of the largest landscape restoration projects in Europe. The Project was conceived in 2009 by The Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) and is underpinned by the concept of the 'ecosystem approach'. But the project also endeavours to take nature conservation itself out of its silo, and making it a much stronger element of socio-economic decision making, with far greater involvement with and benefit for the local communities that live and work in this incredible landscape.



***“Involvement in the CALL Project has expanded Tanera Mor’s horizons, bringing us into contact with a fantastic range of organisations, people, and ideas. Enthusiasm, solutions and experience abound and we firmly believe the future of both Tanera Mor and the local area will be brighter as a result of the project” Lizzie Williams, Manager, Tanera Mor.***

## Challenges

Coigach and Assynt are some of the least densely populated parts of Western Europe, with an economy heavily dependent on primary agriculture, fishing and tourism. The last fifteen years have seen a reduction in the area's population, particularly amongst 18 – 35 year olds. Employment opportunities and access to land are key barriers to those wishing to remain in the area or to relocation. Crofting is the main form of land tenure, but opportunities for young people to obtain a croft are limited and many of the traditional land management skills are not being passed on. Consequently people are losing their connection to the land where they live.

However, over the last twenty years the area has witnessed a dramatic change in land ownership with a number of community organisations and charities acquiring estates that had been traditionally managed for sporting interest. This change in ownership and outlook provided the opportunity for a number of landowners to join forces to work towards common goals, which on their own would have been impossible.

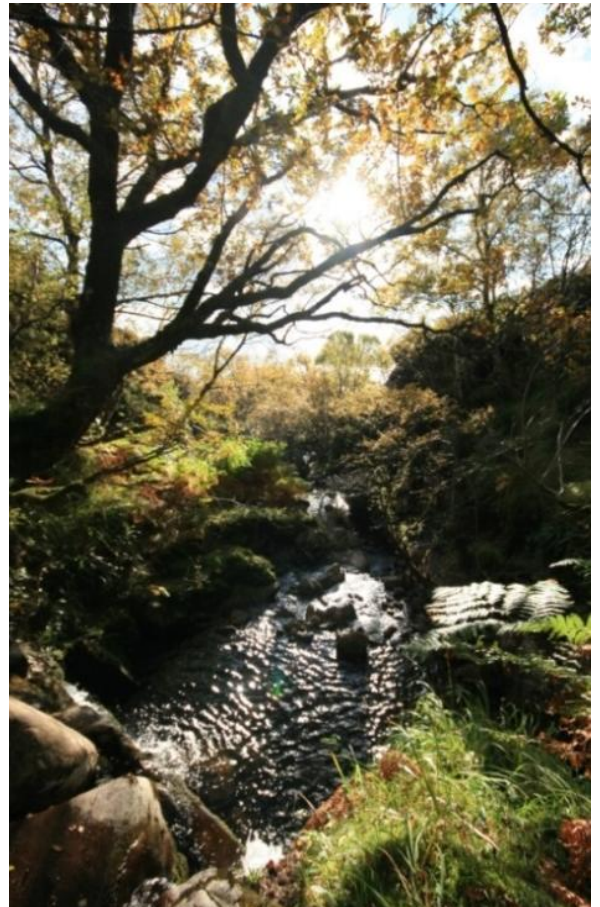
The project aims to achieve the following;

- Conserve and restore features of the natural and built environment.
- Increase community involvement and empowerment in heritage management.
- Provide opportunity for increased access and learning to, and from, the landscape.
- Deliver meaningful and sustained, socio-economic benefits for the local population.

## The solution

In 2010 the CALL Project Partners launched a programme setting out a forty year vision which articulated potential management actions and initiatives to be undertaken in the first five years. The plan brought together the views and aspirations of the partners and a wider range of community based organisations from within the local area. This led to the official launch of the CALL Project in 2011, initially with six landowning partners. The Partnership has now grown to include fourteen organisations and expanded to include local and national interest groups, rather than just land owners.

Out of this original plan developed the Coigach & Assynt Living Landscape Partnership Scheme and thereafter followed a successful application to the Heritage Lottery Fund's Landscape Partnership Scheme programme. The Scheme will start its delivery in late Summer 2016 and aims to deliver many of the objectives outlined in the 2010 project plan.

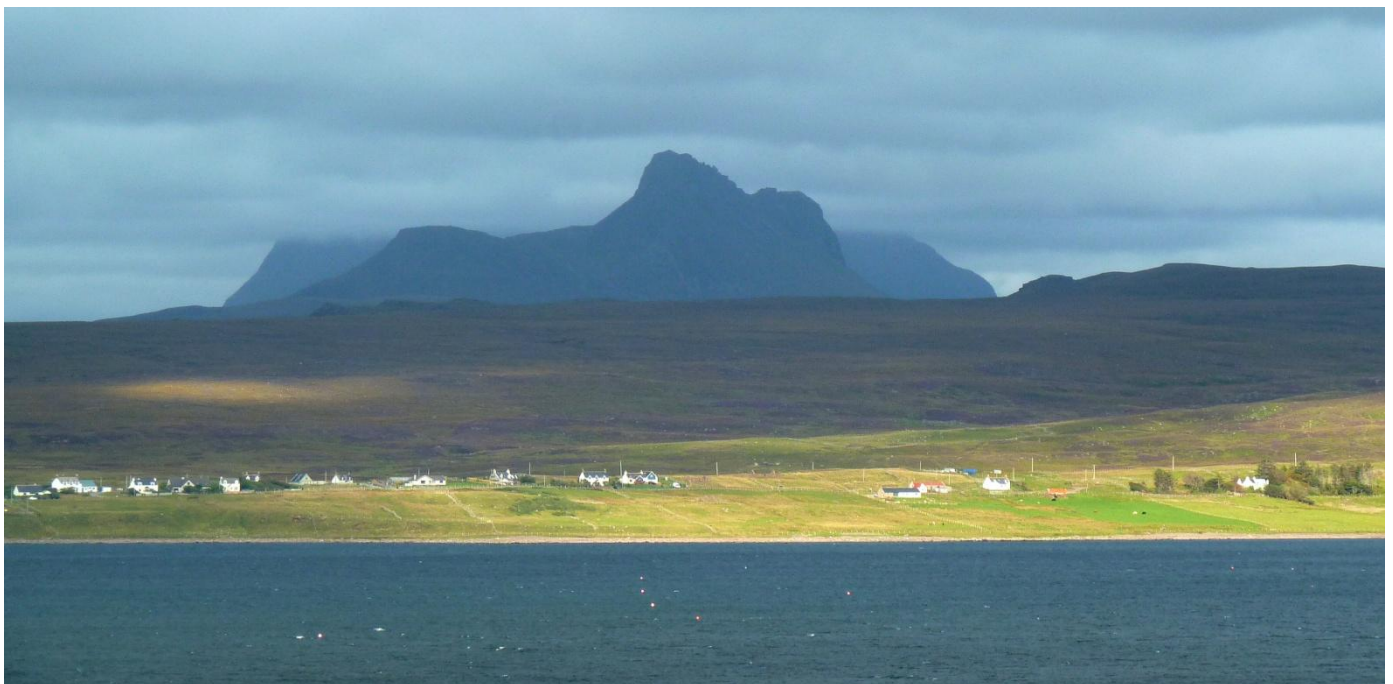




## Outcomes

Since the project's inception and formal launch in 2011 there have been a number of successes;

- Establishment of a native tree nursery at Little Assynt. Now in its fourth year of production the nursery produces in the region of 30,000 native trees a year. These are aimed for the local market where seed provenance is paramount. In addition the nursery provides local employment and serves as a hub for volunteering and training opportunities.
- A programme of training courses has been delivered with a range of people from the local communities benefitting. These have focused on traditional rural skills that seek to engage with and re-connected people to the landscape around them.
- A successful submission was made to the Heritage Lottery Fund's Landscape Partnership Scheme programme, and in July 2016 Stage Two approval was granted. A five year scheme of twenty eight projects will start to be delivered from late summer 2016.



## Facts and figures

Details for significant outcomes:

- ***A project area of 600 square kilometres with a resident population of approximately 1,200 people***
- ***A growing Partnership that today includes 14 Partner organisations***
- ***To date 8 people have been employed by the project, with more to come through the Landscape Partnership Scheme(a significant number given the area's low overall population)***
- ***Establishment of a native tree nursery, producing 28,000 trees per year***
- ***Funding secured from Heritage Lottery Fund to deliver a 5 year scheme incorporating 28 individual projects***



## The partnership

The Partnership is led by the Scottish Wildlife Trust, and includes the following organisations;

- Assynt Field Club
- Assynt Foundation
- Coigach Community Development Company
- Coigach Salmon Fisheries Limited
- Culag Community Woodland Trust
- Eisg Brachaidh Estate
- Historic Assynt
- Isle Martin Trust
- John Muir Trust
- Kylesku Estate
- North-West Highlands Geopark
- Tanera Mor
- Woodland Trust



## Contacts

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