

Broadford and Strath Community Company (Strath Leisure, its trading arm)



Vision and aims

Improving the natural and built environment of Broadford and Strath to ensure it is a desirable place for current and future generations to enjoy living, working and spending time.

To be strong, self-sufficient, strategic, dynamic, inclusive and eco-aware working for the social benefit of the whole community.

So far over £1,800,000 of investment has been secured for the improvement and creation of facilities for the benefit of residents and visitors.

Staffing

9 Staff: The community company directly employs 6 staff. 1 administrator, 3 educators, 1 coordinator / horticulturalist, and 2 horticultural therapists..

Camping Skye / Strath Leisure normally employs 2 permanent staff, and seasonal workers at the community owned campsite.

Broadford Community Woodland

23 ha bought from the Forestry Commission in 2011 for £35k,

Funders: Highland Council, Scottish Executive, Portree Rotary Club, Awards for all Scotland (Lottery), Community Woodlands Association, West Highland College – UHI, Big Lottery Fund, Coop Community Dividend Scheme, and the David Thin Trust (Ross-shire).

Initial ideas for the community woodland included:

- Removal of invasive & non-native vegetation and regeneration of a native, mixed woodland
- Creating a network of paths, nature trails and mountain bike tracks
- A community-run campsite
- A picnic area and recreational space
- An event space
- Visitor Centre including a shop, gallery and café
- Visitor parking for up to 200 cars
- Youth Adventure Site
- A community orchard and allotments

The following benefits to the community were anticipated:

- A safe, managed recreational space for people of all ages to enjoy
- Sustainable sources of income for the community
- Economic benefits to local businesses
- A space for native plants and wildlife to thrive, enhancing local biodiversity
- Land for the use of future generations.

The woodland now includes:

- The Growing Hub; community allotments in polytunnels. 1 member of staff
- Flourish - therapeutic horticulture, 2 members of staff
- Men's Shed - 'tea, coffee, craic and sometimes a bit of woodwork'! No paid staff but managed by the growing hub coordinator.
- Camping Skye - community owned camp site, 2 staff - run through the trading arm Strath

Leisure

- Forest school / Outdoor learning - funded so accessible
- Paths that connect to other paths in adjacent Forestry Commission land creating a network.
- Christmas trees sold for donations

Projects in more detail

Growers Hub - community allotments in polytunnels, growing groups and therapeutic horticulture, with a focus on environmental sustainability and community wellbeing.

Started in 2014 on a bit of cleared forestry wasteland and now a thriving community hub.

Raised beds in polytunnels, 2 for West Highland College (Crofting and Rural Skills Course) and about 20 for folk growing for the table. Both the primary and high schools have growing groups.

Funding:

- The first project was the Green Growers Project funded by the Climate Challenge Fund with the intension of reducing the need to buy food and food miles etc.
- A second and third grant came from the Climate Challenge Fund.
- The European Regional Development Fund, provided funds to develop the allotments further with more polytunnels, raised beds, a woodland cabin and a wood re-use facility.
- In 2018 The National Lottery Community Fund awarded a five-year grant which saw everything come together with the formation of the Growers Hub and a Growers Hub Coordinator, Nicholas Kelly. This allowed the Hub to develop, introduce new participants such as the Men's Shed, build new allotment plots for community members and continue with the young people's growing groups.

The first polytunnel was constructed by students and tutors from the Crofting and Countryside Skills course delivered by the UHI, West Highland College.

Flourish - Horticultural therapy, using accessible, high raised beds. It caters to a number of folk with Down Syndrome as well as other issues. 1 member of staff, Judy Finlay, a horticultural therapist, with a second post funded by profits from the community campsite.

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Mens Shed - 'Tea, coffee and craic and sometimes a little bit of woodwork'!

Part of a world-wide movement started in Australia about 12 years ago; there are now about 100 Men's Sheds in Scotland. The first one on Skye was established in Broadford in 2018 and is part of the Growers Hub (initial advice on setting up came from the Men's Shed in Fort William).

Ladies are welcome too.

Funding:

- The National Lottery Community Fund.
- The Co-op Community fund
- Howdens - construction and hardware, Portree

The Men's Shed meets formally twice a week but is apparently rarely empty. Jobs include benches needing TLC, garden planters and looms for Rag Tag (a charity / social enterprise in Broadford which promotes mental and social wellbeing while making up-cycled crafts from donated materials, and then selling them through a charity shop).

It took a year to convert a wood recycling shed into the workshop with new doors, windows and insulation.

With re-purposed wood, Men Shed members built bird and bat boxes, and garden benches which went on display at the local Christmas Fayre, with donations going towards new equipment.

Members comments:

“Gets me out and being part of something again after giving up work because of health reasons.”

“Great way to learn a few new skills and catch up with folk.”

Forest School / Outdoor learning

Providing free style learning and music for children, 3 staff. Attended by 71% of the kids from the local primary school because funding made it accessible, and kids from elsewhere throughout the summer - 3 staff; with ongoing funding for these posts currently being sought.

Funding:

Aspiring Communities Award £134k

Camping Skye - Community Owned Campsite.

Broadford and Strath Community Company purchased the Broadford Community Woodland in 2011. After consultation, a campsite and events space were identified as the priorities; with the best change of delivering the greatest benefit to the community. It was opened in June 2018 after one year's construction, and is managed by Broadford and Strath's trading arm, Strath Leisure. Business in a normal year is booming, thanks to the increase in visitor numbers to Skye, especially in campervans. It normally employs 3 to 4 staff.

www.campingskye.com or Tel: +44 (0) 1471 550420

<https://www.facebook.com/CampingSkyeBroadford/>

Funding from the National Lottery Community Fund and Highlands and Islands Enterprise

Projects outside the community woodlands include:

Greener Broadford

Where a project officer ran events and workshops on reducing carbon footprints. This is no longer funded, and the work is now being carried out on a volunteer basis.

Christmas Fayre at Broadford Hall

Hogmanay Event

A Community Garden

Initiated in 2003

Funders

Highland Council, Beechgrove Garden, Jewson , Portree Rotary Club , Skye & Lochalsh Housing Association, Compass, Broadford and Strath Community Council

Footpath and Bridge

Safe walking from Broadford into areas of natural beauty as the first phase of a network of paths around the area; starting with a 1.7km link between Broadford and Kilchrist, using the track-bed of an old quarry railway. (2003-4)

Funding: £120,000 Aggregates Levy Board (now Entrust), and the Scottish Executive.

The Broadford Bay Heritage Trail and Mackinnon Pier

The aim was to raise awareness of the area's archaeological; industrial; maritime and cultural heritage, and to encourage more people to become involved with their heritage. The trail links key sites and themes around Broadford Bay, including Liveras Cairn and Ashaig Well (2007-11).

The B listed Mackinnon Pier was structurally sound but underused. Part of the project was to reinstate this as a working pier to bring economic benefits. Visitor moorings were installed to encourage visitors to linger in the area, and Highland Council, the owners of the pier, also installed navigation lights and watering facilities to improve its usefulness to the traditional fishing fleet.

Funding: £140k from: Highland Council; Scottish Natural Heritage; SALE (now HIE); Forward Scotland (now Entrust); Scottish Executive; Heritage Lottery Fund; Hugh Fraser Trust and Leader.

Plastic free Broadford and beyond (An Environmental Action Group)

The group organised an 'alternative to plastics' pop up shop and ecobrick display at the Broadford Gala; ran workshops and are working with the Co-op across Skye to reduce plastic bags. They have also contacted Scottish Water to install public drinking taps (Top Up Tap), and Highland Council about recycling. In addition they are working with the School Eco Committee; Danielle Macdonald's Zero Waste Skye, Raasay and Lochalsh and participated in the Global Climate Strike. A funding bid has been made to the Climate Challenge Fund to support Precious plastics (plastic up-cycling machinery), a project officer and Ecobrick facility.

Skye Cycle Way - Broadford to Kyle of Lochalsh on the old road

£146,000 –Sustrans Community Links / Places for Everyone (funded by the Scottish Government through Transport Scotland).

£1000 Highland Council's Ward Discretionary Fund and £500 donation

Elgol toilets

Elgol receives 70,000 visitors a year but Highland Council opted to stop funding the public toilets. Given the potentially devastating impact of this decision on the local community, the toilets are now being run by volunteers, with immediate running costs covered by two Highland Council Schemes. The toilets are in need of refurbishment, so applications have been made to other funds.

Funding: Highland Council's Ward Discretionary Fund and Comfort Scheme

Application to Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund.