

Watten Community

Development Plan

Prepared for Watten Community Council



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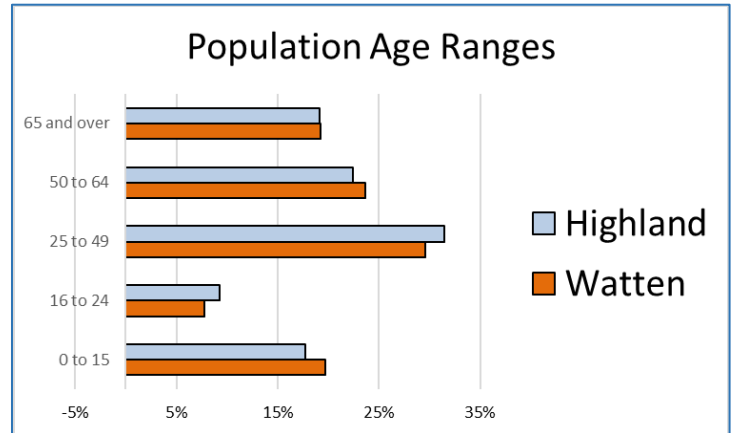
Contents

1	About Watten	1
2	Community Development Proposals: the Priorities	2
3	Community development – capacity building	2
4	Improved mobile and broadband connections.....	4
4.1.1	Diagram of Watten exchanges (www.samknows.com).....	4
4.1.2	Diagram of Mobile signal strength and Map of Masts, Caithness	5
5	Increasing Health and Wellbeing – Enhancing Local Walks.....	6
5.1.1	Watten Core Paths from Highland Council mapping service.....	6
6	Improved facilities at Loch Watten.....	7
7	Active Sports – a MUGA.....	9
8	Meeting social needs – a community café.....	10
9	Appendix: Community assets.....	12
9.1.1	Map: Watten community assets.....	12
9.1.2	List of Community Built Assets.....	13
9.1.3	List of Community Groups	17
10	Appendix: Community Engagement with Community Groups.....	18
11	Appendix: Survey findings – Summary	24
11.1	Methodology and response rate	24
12	Appendix: Community engagement June and July.....	27
13	Appendix: Risk Register.....	30

1 About Watten

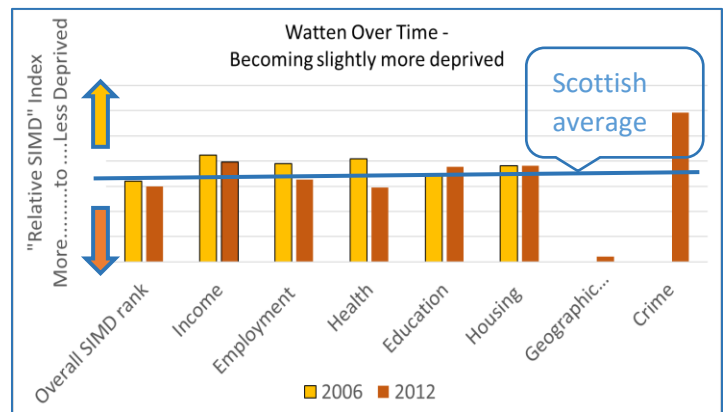
Watten is a community based around the village of Watten, in landward Caithness. It has a population of 714 according to the 2011 census, and unlike many settlements in the north Highlands has a population age profile close to the Highland average (see diagram).

Watten's geographical location, about 8 miles west of Wick and 12 miles east of Thurso on the main road between Wick and Thurso, provides a good location for people working in and commuting to either of these main Caithness settlements. Amenities in Wick and Thurso are also accessible to people who can drive there. The village is set in a rolling agricultural landscape, surrounded by farmland and close to Loch Watten, a renowned fishing loch which is popular with local, national, and international fishers.

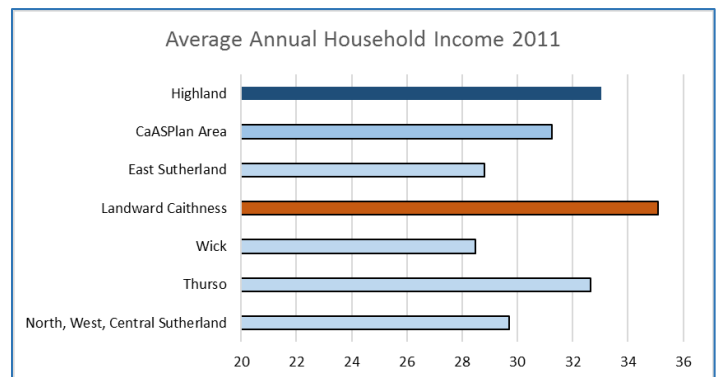


Watten is a safe place to live with significant community assets including a school, a village shop and post office, playing fields and playpark, a community hall, and a Church with a resident Minister. Its population, just over 700 people in 330 households, enjoy a good quality of life with access to larger economic centres for jobs, regional services, and for secondary, further, and higher education.

Watten is around the Scottish average in terms of its "multiple deprivation" index, although it is slipping over time, particularly in relation to Health. The diagram across show that Watten is at or on the Scottish average for most measures except geographic isolation (where it is significantly "deprived") and crime (where it is very crime-free).



Work undertaken by Highland Council on household incomes in Caithness and Sutherland in 2011 indicates that Landward Caithness is the wealthiest council ward in Caithness and Sutherland, and higher than the Highland average. Comments on this by community members were that this relatively high income is due to salaries for engineers employed Dounreay and may not apply to Watten.



Over the course of our visits to Watten, and in earlier discussions with the Steering Group, we heard many comments that it was difficult to get people out of their homes to engage with community activities; that people stayed at home in the evenings; that events put on by the Hall Committee had been poorly attended and that existing groups memberships were aging and reducing. The pub hosts the weekly Lunch Club, which was well-attended.

Nevertheless, from our engagement events, it was clear that the community did have clear desires for improvements to community life. A group of parents had set up Watten Improvement Group which had successfully funded a much improved playpark for younger children. WIG members now had ambitions to host a regional facility, a MUGA, that would benefit both Thurso and Wick and communities between them, including Halkirk.

2 Community Development Proposals: the Priorities

We carried out various engagement events to try to determine community priorities for development. These were meetings with community groups and representatives over 2 days in May; a survey; a drop-in event in June and a follow-up meeting with the community in early July. We established current community assets and highlighted strengths and areas for development with these assets.

The summary of community assets is at **Error! Reference source not found.: Error! Reference source not found..**

The summary of the May meetings is at 10: Appendix: Community Engagement with Community Groups.

The summary of the survey is at 11: Appendix: Survey findings – Summary.

The outcome of this work produced five distinct priority areas for the community that were explored with the community at a later meeting in July (see 12 Appendix: Community engagement June and July).

1. Improved telephone and broadband connection
2. Improved walks / local paths
3. Improved facilities at the loch
4. Youth / sports club / recreational facilities
5. A place for informal socialising / local café.

3 Community development – capacity building

Watten's community assets and community development are currently mainly influenced by the Hall Committee and by the Watten Community Council. Both of these bodies expressed concern in the level of interest shown by the community in events and clubs or groups hosted and supported by these organisations. Their feeling was that the main barrier to community development was lack of interest in "taking part". Many of those on these committees had volunteered for a considerable period of time, and there were signs of volunteer "burn out" in those groups.

One demonstrable exception to this is the work done by Watten Improvement Group in planning and funding the new playground. The WIG undertook this work as they wanted a good and secure facility for their children to play. In addition to successfully applying for Foundation Scotland funds, they undertook

a significant programme of fundraising, including international food nights, a ceilidh, fundraising fete, and other activities. People in the community spoke highly of these events which were well-attended; and people said that they missed these opportunities for socialising.

In order to continue the community engagement and project development work started by this exercise, we strongly recommend that the community seeks additional support to build capacity. This support should:

- Help develop the community communication networks. While this study created a list of most of the addresses in Watten, using postcode data, there is no single list of all community addresses. There is no community website or FaceBook page;
- Help the community groups that exist, work together for mutual benefit. For example there is scope for an ongoing discussion between the Hall Committee and the community for additional uses of the Hall, and to agree what is required to meet those needs;
- Carry out a community skills exercise, to determine what skills people have that they are willing to contribute;
- Help take a selection of priority proposals forward to feasibility stage, where there are people in the community who support the proposal but who either do not have the expertise or capacity to lead a project;
- Consider setting up a community body, or adapting an existing community body, to take forward development proposals.

4 Improved mobile and broadband connections

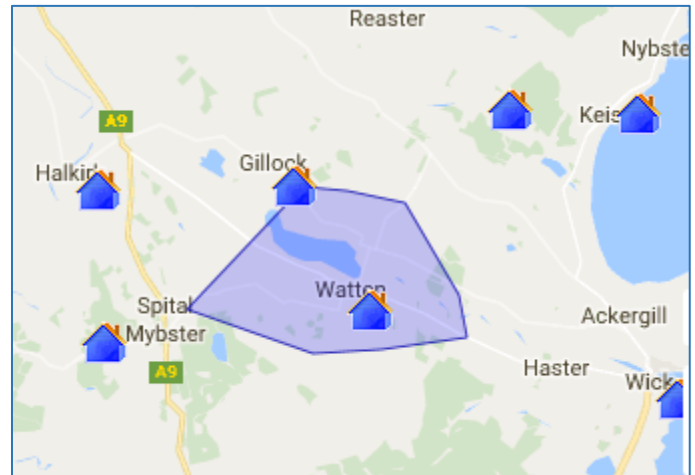
Broadband and mobile signals reportedly vary greatly in Watten. There is no mobile signal in the centre of the village. The school has new IT equipment but according to the people at the meeting, this could not be used because of the poor broadband signal.

People expressed significant interest at meetings and in the survey of the possibility of improving at least broadband signal, which would then allow new applications using the internet for mobile calls.

4.1.1 Diagram of Watten exchanges (www.samknows.com)

Watten is served by one telephone exchange in the centre of the village. This exchange is ASDL enabled for speeds up to 8Mbps, and according to BT high speed Fibre is available for some properties that are suitably close to the cabinet.

Community Broadband Scotland continues to fund scoping studies for community broadband projects, to find out if it is possible for communities to develop their own broadband or to engage a contractor to deliver broadband for them using government funds set aside for this purpose.



Mobile masts and signal

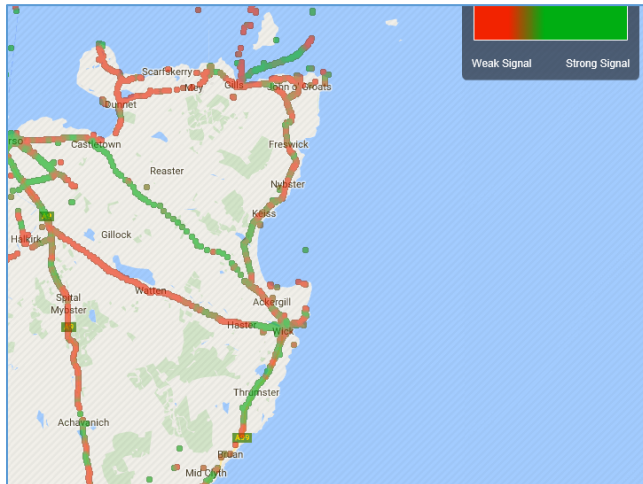
Watten, along with much of Landward Caithness, suffers from poor mobile signals as a result of a lack of masts. While less common, some communities – such as the Isle of Coll (see <http://developmentcoll.org.uk/mobile-coverage/>) – have managed to have a new mobile phone mast installed which is then leased out to a mobile phone operator.

4.1.2 Diagram of Mobile signal strength and Map of Masts, Caithness

1. Source: <http://opensignal.com/coverage-maps/UK/>

2. Source: https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?hl=en&id=zs3-Afvwq4U.kgYicJMvpTBk&mid=1DMAym-TrwapFk_XMRBYNmCRUZ-U

Mobile signal coverage in Caithness



Mobile Phone Masts in Caithness



Next Steps

It would be possible for the community to apply for funding for an initial scoping study, which in the first instance is based on a community survey of availability. Other communities have been through this process and would be able to assist: and HIE, who oversee the CBS programme, can also advise.

Once completed, if there is a need that meets the definition, the community could then progress to technical feasibility. This is more complex but again there is funding available for commissioning the necessary technical expertise. There are already technological advances which are extending the geographic “reach” of fibre from the cabinet, and these may provide a cost-effective solution.

At present, Community Broadband Scotland and Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband are undertaking a review of which locations the revised BT roll-out programme will address. This will lead to a nationwide Open Market Review (OMR) - to see where providers are and aren't providing a service. Any areas which will not have broadband speeds to meet government targets will be included in a State Aid Public Consultation (SAPC). Once the OMR and the SAPC have taken place, this will help identify which premises will require public investment to improve broadband speeds through a community broadband project or further broadband roll out. This information will be available from CBS in 'early 2017'.

Risks

The community identified that these projects would require both significant time to take forward, and the necessary skills.

Looking further forward, a community-owned and run broadband service carries the need to deliver that service, building in financial and technological risk. Other communities have addressed this by “contracting out” the service in its entirety, once the infrastructure is in place.

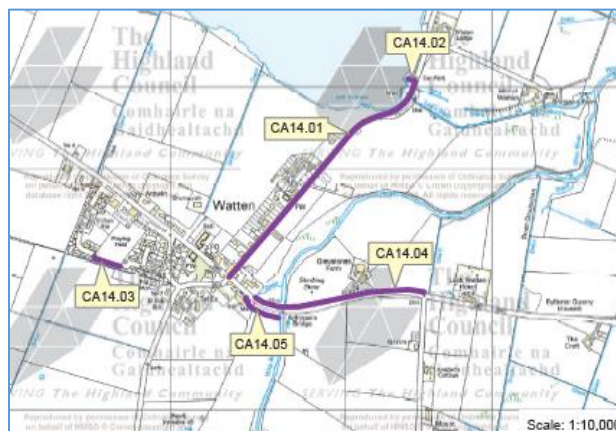
5 Increasing Health and Wellbeing – Enhancing Local Walks

Watten is set in a beautiful natural environment, but lacks any easy access to the environment on foot or by cycle. There are very limited “core paths” and the main recreational path is a short walk down to the Loch carpark along Station Road.

5.1.1 Watten Core Paths from Highland Council mapping service.

There were clear and consistent community engagement findings that people wanted more walks available from the village. People suggested

- A safe walk from the back of the School to the Loch, with increased amenities at the Loch;
- A walk around the Loch,
- A safe walk/ cycles towards Mains of Watten,
- A safe circular walk up Glen Acharole to the Forest and Loch of Tottingall and back to Dunn .



The community engagement identified significant constraints to improving paths around the village, although many of these were assumed by attendees and have not been recently tested. In particular, people seemed unaware that they had a “right to roam” on any land, subject to conditions. These are set out at <http://www.snh.gov.uk/enjoying-the-outdoors/your-access-rights/> . While there is nothing to prevent people accessing the local countryside, the reality is that this would be rough walking and not suitable for all.

Next steps

The Highland Paths Officer can assist communities in understanding the process required to open up new paths and to connect existing paths. The Highland Paths Officer can also assist in identifying and negotiating with landowners on reasonable access.

Outline costs

Paths for All maintain a very useful database on potential path costs, together with allied hardware such as bridges and handrails. Paths can cost anything from £6 per meter for top-dressing an existing path, to £29 per meter for a “toptrec” path – and that is before site clearance, drains, steps, and bridges are taken into account. That said, a simple mown path with informal bridges – stones, planks, stepping stones – across streams and damp areas is much less costly, can be installed by volunteers, and is less likely to cause concerns for landowners.

Risks

Paths are expensive to create and to maintain, and will become a significant resource and financial burden on the community if they decide to take this on, on a voluntary or a lease basis.

Partnership working, business and financial planning will be necessary to determine the extent of the community’s involvement in path creation and maintenance.

6 Improved facilities at Loch Watten

Currently, there is a pull-out loop at the East end of Loch Watten which allows parking on that side of the road. On the opposite side, there is another car-park. There are 2 picnic benches in the “island” created by the loop road, a boat which has been re-purposed as a floral display, and an interpretive board for the wildlife at the Loch.

This land is all privately owned and any improvements would require that the landowner was willing to permit any developments, and could enter into an agreement with the community body on leasing the necessary land.



fisherman’s car park at Loch Watten,
with picnic bench

boats at Loch Watten

picnic site in the road loop



Community engagement findings were that people wanted to see more local use of the Loch, taking into account its SSSI status and the need not to disturb the fishing – which would not restrict use on a Sunday.

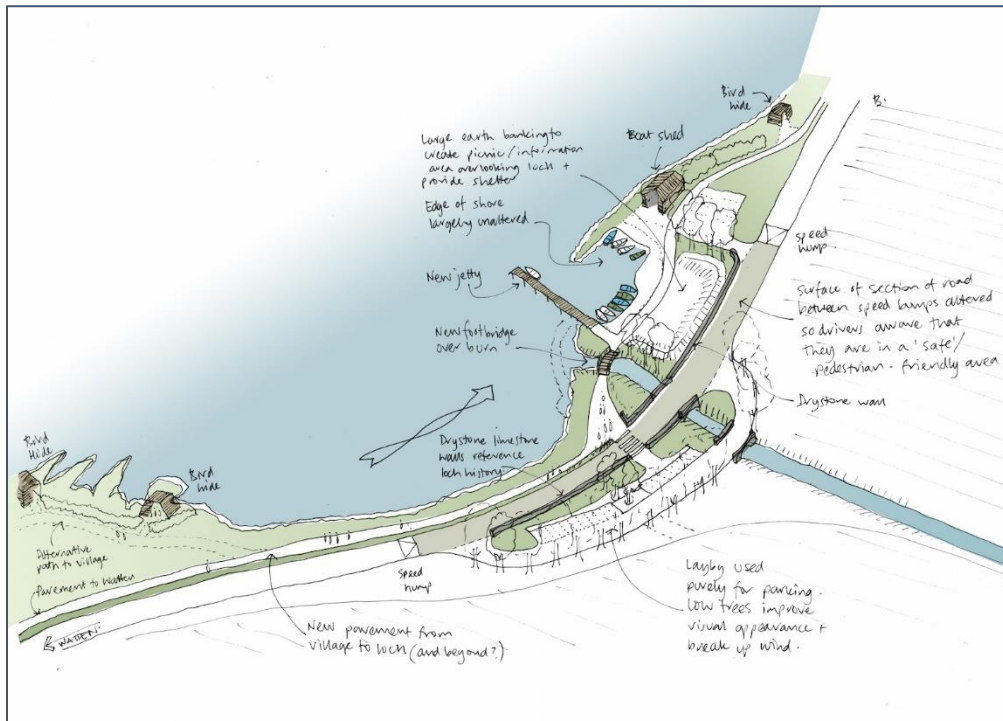
Any additional use of the site would have to overcome the constraints of the site. These were identified as:

- Wind and exposure: the main wind direction is from the West, along the Loch and towards the site;
- Insects particularly when the wind drops;
- Road safety at the site - fast traffic on the B870
- The Loch is an SSSI and appropriate consents would have to be obtained for any construction potentially impacting on the Loch.

Outline sketch of improvements

For the community consultation events, we provided an outline drawing of one potential method for development, to help people visualise what this might look like. Key features were:

- Improved parking
- Planting for shelter
- An improved jetty
- Bird hides for watching wildlife
- Landscaping to improve the amenity area on the loch-side of the road
- Speed bumps to slow down through traffic.



This is an ambitious plan, and would require the support of landowners, SNH and other regulatory bodies, and the Council for traffic control.

Next Steps

One of the landowners of this area is working together with Dounreay Fly Fishing Club and local residents to determine what might be done at the lochside. This would require a feasibility study to set out constraints and identify costs.

Risks and challenges

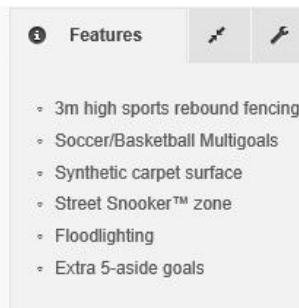
This site is all privately-owned and so any community funded activity would require at least a lease arrangement to allow grant funding to be available. The risk of investing in improvements is that there is no group that then carries out maintenance, and funding would be required for maintenance costs. There is no direct income generation from the site that would meet those costs, and much may have to be done on a voluntary basis through a local group.

7 Active Sports – a MUGA

One of the findings of the community survey was the need for a location for active sports in the community. The Community Hall is large enough to be used for some indoor sports, such as badminton, and the football field is available for larger team sports traditional in the area, including football, shinty, and hockey. However, access to the Hall is limited by its use for other functions, particularly during weekday evenings. The weather in Caithness means that the football pitch is unusable for a large part of the winter.

The amenity area at the playing fields is owned by the Council, and it would be possible to develop this further for use for

outdoor sports for all ages, by the provision of a Multi Use Games Area. This is an all-weather surface area which is marked for a variety of sports including tennis, badminton, basketball, five-a-side football, and so on.



Development Plans

The Watten Improvement Group has obtained some initial costings and identified a location for a MUGA in Watten, in a sheltered part of the playing fields (see below). A MUGA could be used by all ages of the community, and could also be made available to other communities who do not have an all-seasons facility.

Next Steps

The Watten Improvement Group are considering their capacity for taking the plans for the MUGA forward. They hope to identify a local group or club who would take over the management of the site and run it for the community. The Group would develop the site and to support any managing club to access funding for maintenance.

The WIG would plan to work with the community to determine how the multi-use games area would deliver benefits for the wider community. This could host sports such as basketball, badminton, and tennis, enabling wider participation in sports from more age groups.

Outline costs

Experience elsewhere suggests a MUGA capable of a 7-a-side football pitch, tennis and netball courts, is in the order of £50,000; a larger MUGA with floodlighting would cost around £110,000. Maintenance costs are modest if the initial install is carefully specified.

Risks

The key risks relate to the ongoing maintenance. These facilities are usually run by volunteers; and when key volunteer leaders step down, facilities can quickly become underused and poorly maintained. Ongoing maintenance may require charges for usage, and people's expectations should be set accordingly.

8 Meeting social needs – a community café

Community Engagement findings

Watten hosts a range of volunteer-led social activities, centred on sports, music, craft skills, and the annual Fun Day. The community engagement work carried out to produce this plan highlighted the need for additional social spaces in the community.

People were asked about their usage of current community spaces – the Hall, the Pub, the Village Shop and Post Office.

The Village Shop was a clearly popular service, with 45% of respondents visiting it more than once a week. The Brown Trout Inn, the only informal socialising facility, was surprisingly underused, with 16% of respondent using it more than once a month, and 56% of respondents using it only “every now and then”. 71% of the respondents responded that they never or rarely used the Village Hall. The Community Council noted that the Hall had groups in most nights, but they were relatively small groups.

Development plans

The community engagement work showed that a café as a space for informal socialising, as the potential for additional economic activity in Watten; and as a service to visitors, was a key priority for the community. This would allow people to drop in and meet up a time of their own choosing; and in the future to provide a place for visitors to the area to relax. It would also allow people who cannot access a car, a place to socialise in the village.

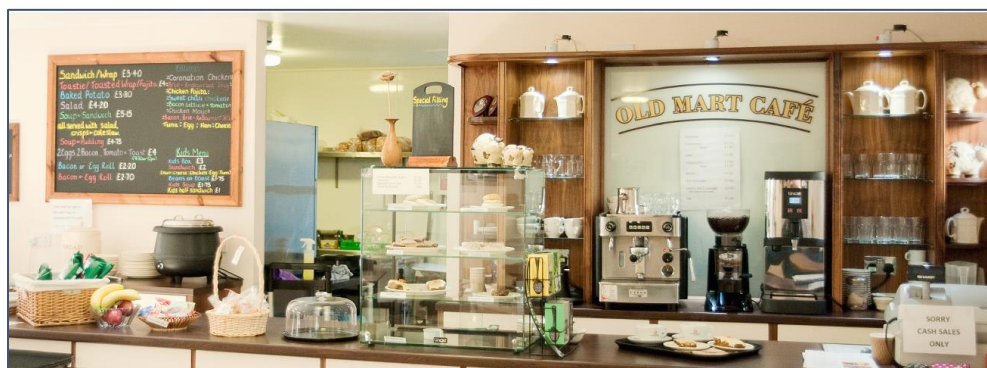
A community-led café would demonstrate the community’s self-reliance, rather than hoping for a private sector provider; provide employment; reduce social isolation; enhance Watten’s reputation as a destination for visitors, thus strengthening the sustainability of the shop and the pub; serve local produce whenever possible; and complement the more formal services provided by the pub. In addition to locals, it would attract custom for example, for people visiting for the MUGA and for fishing or using the loch.

The café could host events such as a youth club (which might have a dedicated space), and could provide a gallery to display local arts and crafts, and local history exhibits. It could run a home delivery service for visitors and locals alike, including for older people.

Other communities similar sized to Watten have established successful cafes. These may start out as run by the community themselves, or, as in the case of Maud Village Trust, the Trust leases the café space to a local enterprise.

Maud Village

Café



Next steps

The community engagement events did not demonstrate any enthusiasm for a volunteer café, suggesting that any café would have to run as a social enterprise. A café and associated development would require a feasibility and business plan, in order to plan for the most appropriate location, investigate architectural options and planning requirements, and to demonstrate that it could generate enough income to be financially viable. This plan will have to explain where the café would be, and the costs of land purchase and of building. There would have to be an appropriate legal body set up to run the café which is permitted to trade and which can potentially raise loan funding to cover initial working capital such as stock.

Outline costs




Costs for construction will vary depending on whether this is a new build or whether an existing building could be adapted. The community findings were clear that the Hall would not be an appropriate location to adapt or extend, leaving the solution as a potential new build.





Fixtures and fittings costs can be tailored to meet the ambition of the business. A small catering kitchen, a good coffee machine, and all the required fittings (tables, chairs, crockery, and equipment) will come to a minimum of £25,000.




Risks



Community cafes are now being regarded as risky by grant funders as community planners have been demonstrated to be over-optimistic on sales and costs. Broadly, a café open for 6 hours, 4 days per week which serves an average of 30 customers per day can expect to do slightly better than breakeven. Any plans for a café will require robust marketing strategy and a clear vision of what will draw people from outside the local area to ensure ongoing financial viability.

9.1.2 List of Community Built Assets

	Asset	Short description	Findings from Community Engagement
	Watten Community Hall	The Hall is run by a volunteer Hall Committee, with the CALA pre-school as the “anchor tenant” which provides the Hall with financial sustainability. The Hall is generally in good condition. The Hall hosts most of the community groups in Watten, the main exception being the Lunch Club (which is in the Brown Trout hotel).	<p>The Hall Committee consider that the most urgent priority for the Hall is to improve and expand the parking.</p> <p>Storage is an issue and is a constraint on the Hall’s use for other clubs and sports.</p> <p>There were comments that the Hall is difficult to access in weekday evenings for non-club events, and that it is expensive to hire e.g. for badminton.</p> <p>People noted that there was no Youth Clubs in Watten, with people travelling to Halkirk and Wick for Cubs, Scouts, Guides, and Youth Clubs.</p> <p>In the recent past there had been table tennis in the Church Hall, with the tables stored at the Church Old Stables. No one was aware of what had happened to the equipment.</p> <p>The survey findings were that only 10% of respondents used the Hall “more than once a week”, and a further 17% using it “more than once a month”.</p>
	Watten Village Shop	The Woodside Store and Post Office has accessible opening hours and provides community information such as local notices. It is an important asset in a community where the next shop is in Halkirk (8 miles) or Wick (8 miles).	The Store is privately owned and we did not seek comments on its services.
	Watten Post Office		The Shop and Post Office were the most frequented of the community assets, with 50% of survey respondents visiting the Store “more than once a week”.

	Asset	Short description	Findings from Community Engagement
	Brown Trout Hotel	The Hotel provides both the village pub and accommodation for mainly fishermen for the loch. Other users are the workers for the SSE upgrades that are taking place close to the village.	<p>The Inn was one of the least frequented of community assets, with only 20% of people using it “more than once a month”.</p> <p>The Hotel hosts the Lunch Club which is one of the most popular clubs in Watten, attended by around 20 people.</p>
	Watten Parish Church	The Church of Scotland parish is served by a resident Minister.	We were not made aware of Church-led activities in the community. Watten Parish Church had just appointed a new Minister during our work.
	Watten Primary School	The Primary School has a roll of around 56 pupils from P1 to P7. The catchment area for the School borders with Halkirk and with Wick. The School has a small hall which is available for hire for community activities.	The School has an active PTA, which had, for example, successfully fundraised for new IT equipment for the School. The School Roll and the school’s location ensure that it does not face closure. The School would like better links for the School to the Loch to help with outdoor and science education; it cannot use this asset currently due to the dangers of walking children down the footpath next to Station Road.
	Watten Playgrounds	<p>Watten has two playgrounds. The most extensive are the playing fields in the West of the village, where in addition to the football pitches (outdoor, grass) there is a new playground funded through the efforts of the Watten Improvement Group.</p> <p>There is also a small, older, playground at Henderson Square, on Station Road, towards the Loch.</p>	<p>The new playground and the playing fields are one of the most used community assets, with 33% of survey respondents using it “more than once a month” or “once a week”. Comments were the lack of toilets at the playpark; the nearest are a short walk away in the centre of the village, and this is an issue both for children at the playpark and others using the playing fields.</p> <p>The Watten Improvement Group were considering a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) at the playing fields but were ambivalent given the time and effort involved.</p>

	Asset	Short description	Findings from Community Engagement
	Loch Watten Picnic Area and Parking	There is a small parking area and turning area at Loch Watten. This is on privately-owned land and is mainly used by sports fishers as access to the loch. Local residents occasionally use this a picnic area, and there are 3 picnic tables.	<p>This area did not appear to be used much by the community. Although the loch is famous for fishing, community engagement comments were that the site was windy and exposed; plagued by flies in summer; and that the speed of traffic down Station Road at the end of the loch made it too dangerous for children.</p> <p>Some people stated that people travelled inland from Wick to the Loch, as Wick is subject to cold easterly winds and Watten is more sheltered.</p>
	Watten Core Paths	Watten “core” paths – that is, paths recognised by the Council – are from the East end of the village along the road to the Loch, and a path completing a loop from Bain Place to Achingale Place. There is also a narrow path from the East end of the village alongside the A882 towards the turning to the Camster Cairns.	<p>The community engagement work and survey showed that the current path from the village to the Loch is one of the most frequented community assets.</p> <p>There were many comments in the survey that there was a lack of access to safe paths in and around Watten. The Watten walking group used the local roads; potentially very dangerous, especially in the winter. Dog Walkers tended to drive to above the North side of the loch.</p> <p>The engagement events also highlighted the desire for a safe path from the School to the Loch.</p>
	Loch Watten fishing	Watten’s renowned fishing is commercially managed by the Hotel, by local landowner Hugo Ross, and from the Caravan Site, who provide boat hire. The Dounreay Fly Fishing Club both fish the loch and provide boats for hire, although these are currently at the west end of the Loch.	<p>The local community seems almost divorced from the Loch as a community asset. Geographically, the village faces away from the Loch.</p> <p>People expressed a desire for a walk around the Loch; but issues associated with land management and ownership were perceived as very significant in preventing this.</p>

	Asset	Short description	Findings from Community Engagement
	B&B / guesthouses	There are at least 3 guesthouses near Watten, at Loch Watten House, Bilbster and Spittal on the A9. Other B&B is provided in the village.	
	Old Watten Free Church	The congregation of the Free Church in Watten was amalgamated with the Bower and Orlig congregations in 1989.	The old Free Church building was sold privately in April 2011 and is no longer a community asset.

9.1.3 List of Community Groups

This list of community groups is those we were made aware of during our engagement events. There may be others. Comments are from the engagement events and we have not independently verified this information.

Community Groups using the Hall:

- Bowling club
- Rifle Club (winter only)
- Craft and Chat
- Art Group
- Mums and Toddlers (this group was ceasing due to lack of attendance)
- Brownies

Other groups:

- Watten Improvement Group
- Parent-Teachers Association
- Lunch Club

We visited the Craft and Chat, Lunch Club, PTA representatives, Brownie leaders, the Pre-School (who also assisted with the Mums and Toddlers), the Watten Improvement Group as part of our community engagement. The Rifle Club had closed down for the summer season.

10 Appendix: Community Engagement with Community Groups

We held semi-structured interviews with 35 members of the community at various locations, and met a cross-section of ages. We visited the Craft and Chat, Lunch Club, PTA representatives, Brownie leaders, the Pre-School (who also assisted with the Mums and Toddlers), and Watten Improvement Group representatives as part of our community engagement. The Rifle Club had closed down for the summer season. We were unable to reach working-age men, parents of high-school children, or high-school children; mainly as there was no likely location or time where they would be. Although the high-school children are on a school bus to Wick or Thurso High School, they are met on return to Watten by other buses which take them on to their various settlements; or they walk home. It will be particularly important to encourage participation by these groups at the later engagement events; however it should also be recognised that generally these are groups least likely to engage.

Recurrent themes from the consultation:

- Lack of facilities / amenities to enjoy Watten's landscape and Loch in particular
 - Need for development of safe walks / cycles – from the school to the Loch, around the Loch, other
 - Need to develop better and safer facilities at the Loch parking / picnicking area – would attract people from Wick and even Thurso
 - Combine developments with those desired by fishermen?
 - Consider further developments eg windsurfing, kayaking (note that Thurso has national and international visitors for both the above)
 - Could any benefit be taken of the infrastructure developments for SSE?
- Lack of facilities for young people
 - Youth club at the Hall / at the Church Stables with e.g. table tennis, snooker?
 - Other activities in the Hall – e.g. badminton
- Village Hall is at the same time busy and under-used.
 - Lack of storage and limited parking at events is an issue
 - Little access to Hall by members of the community unless they are a group – use at weekends?
 - Some groups could be moved to day use to allow more use of the Hall e.g. for sports in the evenings?
- Watten Improvement Group's work and the events have been much enjoyed and these are missed now that there are fewer of them
 - Playpark a great asset but lack of nearby toilets is an issue
 - The proposals for a Multi-Use-Games-Area are being developed but the WIG are ambivalent about taking this on given the amount of work involved.

Watten Arts and Crafts Group

Number attending =7

The discussion opened with by providing an outline of the consultation activity we are doing on behalf of Watten Community Council.

Themes emerging

- People would like to make greater use of Loch side facility. There is a picnic bench but not much else there. If this were developed people would use it more often
- Currently mostly fishermen use the loch
- There is no safe place to walk in Watten. Heavy lorries trundle past making it unsafe to walk where there are no pavements
- The community path is inadequate
- There are clubs and activities for older people but nothing for younger people
- There are brownies and guides but no cubs
- WIG (Watten Improvement Group) have in the past put on a range of activities. This encouraged community participation and was welcomed by the community. Events included dances and food evenings
- Parking at the village hall needs to be improved as it is inadequate when an event is taking place
- This group did not see the need for community café or a place for locals to have coffee. They did talk of some mothers from the village who met for coffee on a bench outside the shop once their children are in playgroup
- Most people travelled to Wick or Thurso for activities such as keep fit or badminton

Watten Improvement Group

Meeting with Valerie, secretary of WIG.

The WIG was formed to develop the community play park as there were no places for children to play. Their main activities involved fund raising for equipment, which cost over £100,000. They are not a registered charity but an association who have their own constitution and are independent of the community council. CVG have been very supportive in helping the group set up. There are 8 “core” members of the group.

Themes emerging

- The group continue to work towards improving facilities for children and young people. They are an active and energetic group willing to take on challenges to enable development within Watten.
- The group carried out various fundraising activities for the playpark, including a Hogmanay Party, a Halloween Party, an “international food” night, a summer funday at the playing fields with stalls, bouncy castle, barbeque; a Hall event where stallholders could do their own fundraising which was good for the community but not so effective at raising funds.
- There are currently no facilities for young people in the community. Most parents have to travel to Wick or Thurso for activities with their children. Badminton in Wick has a full waiting list. Some of the activities in other areas include; youth clubs, dancing, gymnastics, swimming and Highland dancing
- There are no youth clubs in Watten and nothing for young teenagers
- They are in the process of exploring the potential to develop an outdoor play area for football/tennis and badminton. They have a draft plan of what they are looking for and have made progress in identifying potential locations and costs. The group have a clear idea of what they would like to see being developed.
- There is no mobile signal or good wifi in Watten and this could be developed too.
- Loch Watten is a popular destination for people from Wick in summer as it does not suffer from colder sea winds. Boat hire used to be available locally.

Watten Pre-School

Parents / grandparents collecting children – talked to **6**

Teachers – talked to **1**

CALA provide pre-school care for Watten Community children 3-5 years old. There are around 17 children currently in the pre-school. The numbers vary simply because this serves a small community with a varying population.

There are currently 3 children in the mother and toddlers group and the volunteer who runs this, has decided to close it.

Themes emerging

- Mobile phone and broadband reception in Watten are very poor
- The Loch could be used much more e.g. for a kayaking club, windsurfing etc especially on a Sunday when there is no fishing.
- Some of the mothers go powerwalking on the roads (wearing high-viz jackets) and there was a keep fit in the Hall
- There is a lack of things in Watten for parents with young children to do, particularly when the weather is bad.
- The new playground is excellent but the lack of toilets is a problem – small children can't make it as far as the public toilets which are sometimes locked.
- Some sort of "soft play" with facilities for parents to sit and chat would be excellent – there is nothing locally although the Pultneytown People's Project do have one in Wick.
- There is nowhere safe to go for walks / bike rides with children in the village other than round the short loop; traffic is too fast on the single track roads and there is nowhere to get off them.
- The "core path" out to the East of Watten is a very narrow footpath – can barely get a buggy on it and it goes exactly to the junction and no further
- Mother and toddlers is poorly attended and it is difficult to see how a soft play could be viable.
- There is a lack of storage in the Hall for any equipment – it has to be stored in the pre-school area. The preschool have to take out all of their equipment and put it away each day and would like more storage in the Hall itself.
- Cycle track/skateboarding track
- Safe walking area for buggies
- Youth Club
- Activities at the hall geared more for older people no slots left for children and young people
- Lack of parking for village hall

Watten Lunch Club

Numbers attending = 17

Watten lunch club meet in the Brown Trout Hotel every second Wednesday. Around 20 people regularly attend on a fortnightly basis. This is a voluntary run club and provides an opportunity for older people to come together.

Themes emerging

- Lack of anywhere to walk safely within Watten was an ongoing theme with people who attended the lunch club. They would like a walking group started.
- Most people were keen to see the loch side developed and spoke of having facilities that would make better use of a community beauty spot
- One commentator stated that a previous application to the Windfarm funds by Dounreay Fly Fishing Association for a pier for the loch had been turned down for lack of community benefit.
- The group would like to see some kind of development such as a café or even just improvement of the picnic area. Many of the attendees looked after grandchildren and like to walk down there but felt it wasn't as fully developed as it could be
- People seemed satisfied with services and resources relating to health and social care however it was identified by one person that they would like some kind of homecare service within Watten as often there is a shortage of home care when people become more frail
- There is nothing for young people in the community
- There could be e.g. table tennis or a snooker table in the Hall. It was mentioned that there used to be a snooker table for the community but no one seemed to know where this was now. Storage would be an issue.
- The attendees were not aware of Otago sessions (chair-based exercise) – might be interested?

School/PTA/ and Brownies

Numbers attending meeting = 3

Watten Primary is currently a three teacher non-denominational rural primary school, with a current school roll of 56 serving an area of approximately 4 miles in radius from the village of Watten. The school building comprises of 3 classrooms, a library, dining room and a large foyer area. There is an area of tarmac and grass on which pupils play.

Eco Committee – the School has a pupil Eco Committee who are encouraged to make suggestions and create projects for the School to be more environmentally aware.

Buddy System - The school operates a buddy system where the older children are encouraged to develop supportive relationships with the younger children, Children engage in buddy activities over the course of the year.

Sport facilities

Children take part in a variety of sporting events over the year including rugby, football and Highland Games. Older pupils represent their school in the Small Schools Swimming Gala, the Rural Schools Sports and are given the opportunity to take part in the Junior Triathlon

Caithness Music Festival

Watten Primary participates in the Caithness Music Festival in June every year with each class taking part in a group entry. Children are also given the opportunity to enter solo sections.

Themes emerging

- Discussion centred around facilities and resources for children and young people. The school provides the opportunity for children to make use of sports facilities and outside of school there is nothing within the community other than the children's play park.
- The issue of safe walking space was again raised with many parents feeling that they cannot walk around the village safely
- Parents were supportive of the initiatives being proposed by WIG
- There is a Brownies group at the school – 12 children attend
- The Rifle Club is popular across generations, from aged 14 and up – runs Easter to October in the Hall – could it run over the summer with e.g. clay pigeon shooting?
- No Scouts or cubs for boys because there is no one to run it; they go to Halkirk but only 2 local boys attend
- Halkirk run Rainbows which the Watten families use
- There are youth clubs run by the [Baptist Church](#) in Wick and in Keiss once a week; also the parents in Halkirk run a youth club in a dedicated space.
- Might be possible to use the stables at the manse for a youth club – had been done in the past and there was a table tennis table for it
- There is a local football club run by two volunteers – there are 40 children at it
- They use the pavilion at the sports club – at one point it was going to be sold, but now there are changing rooms and a toilet (only open when the club is there)
- Circular walk around the loch could potentially provide resource for walkers and children on bikes
- Picnic area by the loch not safe for children as road runs beside location of picnic benches
- Because of the distance from all of the various facilities, the school spend a significant sum on buses - £3,500 per year – uses up most of school funds and the parents have to subsidise and fundraise for these
- A walk from the back of the school to the loch would be excellent, away from the traffic – John Swanson owns fields at back of Hotel / School, Robbie Flett owns those in the centre.

11 Appendix: Survey findings – Summary

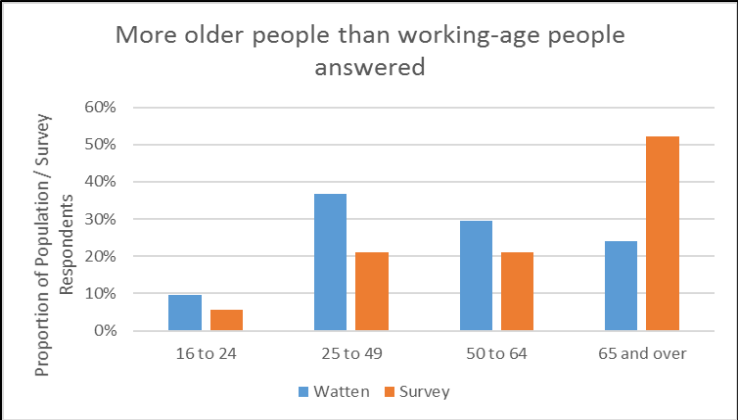
11.1 Methodology and response rate

The survey was sent out by post with a return envelope, to a list of addresses in the Watten Community. This list was drawn from the postcode areas covered by the Watten Community Council, using postcode maps to establish which postcodes were in the area, and then the Royal Mail’s postcode finder to identify which addresses in that postcode were likely to be in the WCC area. The survey was sent out to 333 households, and there were 76 responses (response rate 23%).

Distribution of Responses

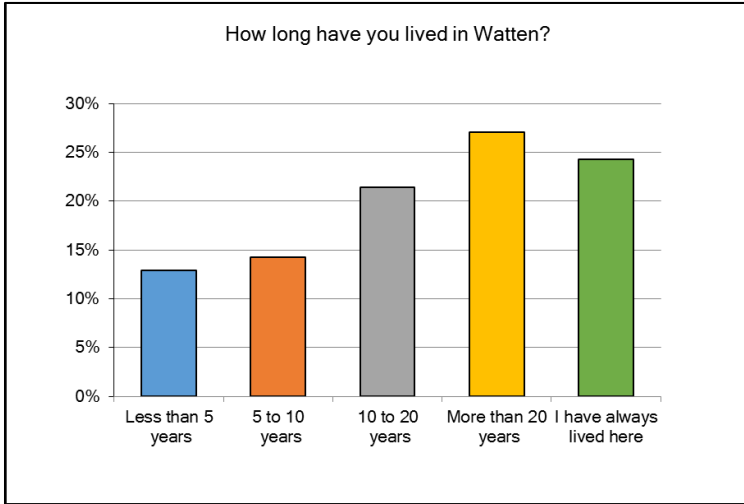
As is usually the case, there was a higher response from older people than younger people compared to the Watten population.

Unsurprisingly, given the population distribution, 42% of respondents described themselves as “retired”, with 33% working and 11% looking after a family.



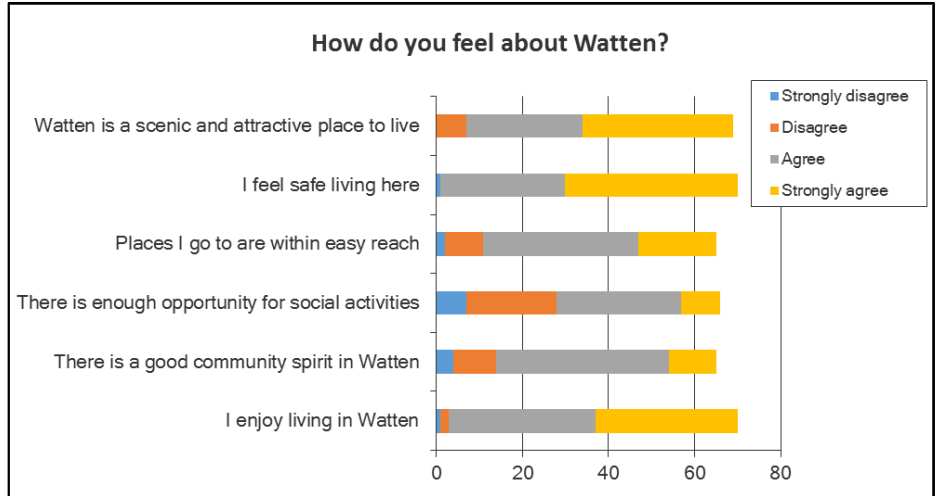
Watten as a place to live

Many responders had lived here for a long time, with almost half of respondents having lived in Watten for at least 20 years.

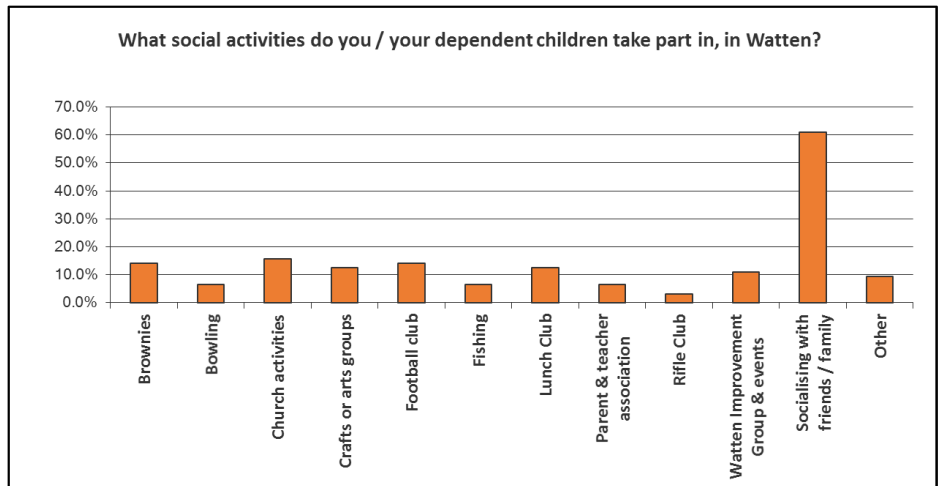


The survey asked a question based on the most important criteria for “a good place to live” - attractive, healthy, social, and with services in easy reach. Most people liked living in Watten.

The only issue which had a significant proportion of people disagreeing, was the statement that “There is enough opportunity for social activities”, with 28 respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with this statement.

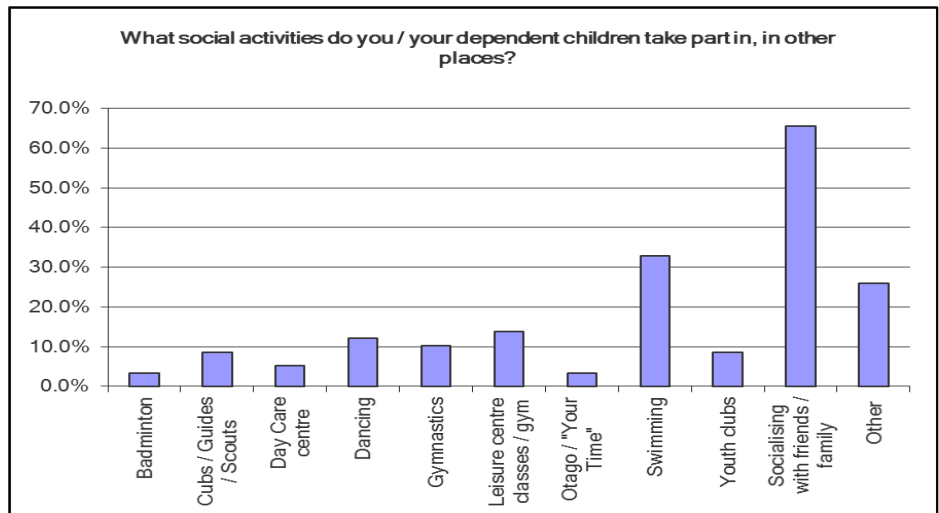


Socialising and social activities in Watten were consistently with friends and family, with some small proportion of people taking part in more organised activities, including sports, arts, young people’s organisations, and church activities.



Equally, people did not travel much to other activities.

People said to us during the engagement events that parents were most likely to travel frequently for youth activities.



Using community assets

The Village Shop was the most frequently used community place, with 71% of respondents using this more than once a month or once a week.

The Brown Trout Inn was the least frequented community place, with 16% of respondents visiting more than once a month or once a week.

Local walks and the playing fields were popular, with nearly half of respondents using these regularly. Almost 305 of respondents visited the Village Hall more than once a month or once a week.

Watten Priorities

People were asked to choose up to 3 of a list of potential properties.

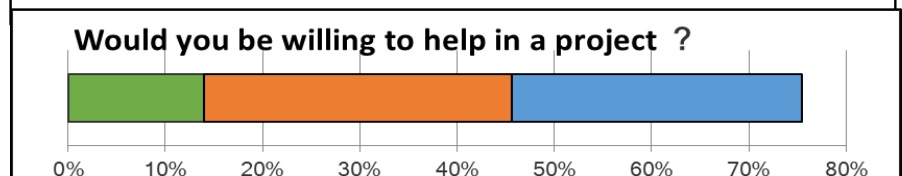
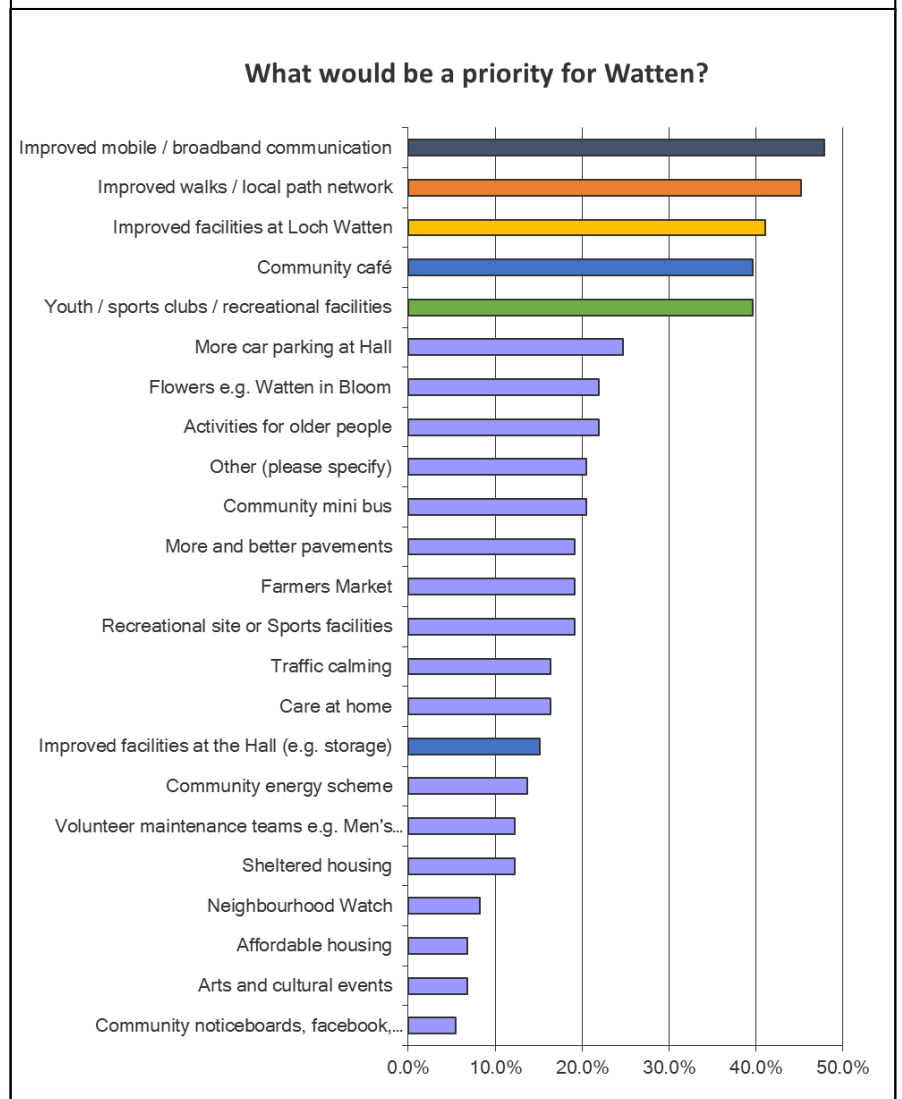
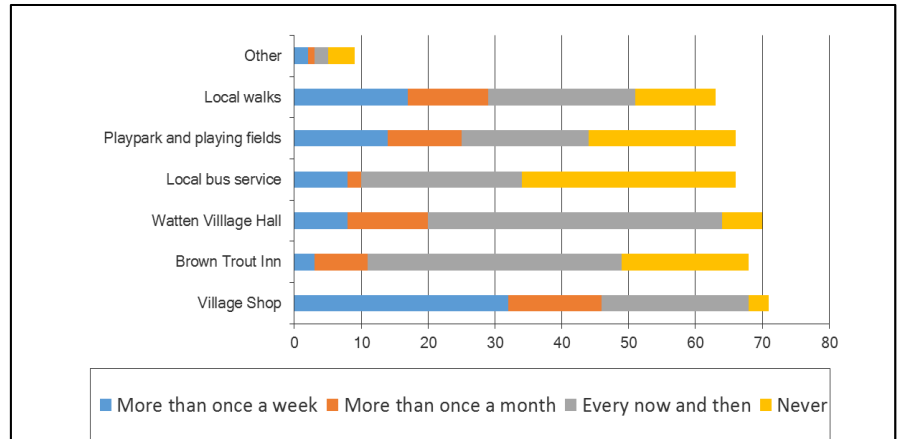
The top 5 were:

- Improved mobile / broadband communication
- Improved local paths
- Improvements at Loch Watten
- A community café
- Youth / sports / recreational facilities.

Volunteering

37% of respondents told us they already volunteer.

When asked if they would volunteer in a Watten project, 8 said “yes” and 18 said “possibly”. 31 said “no” or did not reply.



12 Appendix: Community engagement June and July

We held two community engagement events in Watten to discuss the results of the survey and next steps.

The first was held at a weekend morning, and advertised at the shop, the Brown Trout Inn, in posters at the Village Hall, and on the Watten Improvement Group's FaceBook page. The event was very poorly attended, with only 3 members of the public.

The second was held in an evening, and people who had provided us with contact details in the survey were invited directly by email or phone.

The purpose of this meeting was to progress the community-led Action Plan and to reaffirm results of the survey to try and determine the prioritised activities the community may want to take forward. The meeting took place in the village hall and provided an opportunity for people to raise issues and questions. 23 members of the community were in attendance.

We opened the meeting by providing an outline of the work that has been done to date. A survey has been completed with 86 people responding to questions concerning the developments they would like to see. A few people raised the point that they did not receive the questionnaire. It was explained that they were sent out on a postcode basis and some houses may have been missed due to the varied range of postcodes covering the Watten Area. A broad range of consultation events took place with a variety of community groups and individuals. The outcome of this work produced five distinct priority areas that were most commonly mentioned as initiatives residents' would like to see being carried forward. These were: -.

1. Improved telephone and broadband connection throughout the village
2. Improved walks / local path
3. Improved facilities at the loch
4. Youth / sports club
5. Community café

The meeting then went on to look at some of the positive and negative issues of each of the areas.

1. Improved telephone and broadband connection throughout the village

Positive themes	Negative themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This would solve the poor mobile reception issue• People wanted this• This would be good for education / nursery• There is a known Scottish government development for improving broadband that could provide a pathway for this initiative• Economic benefits with people having the ability to work from home	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expensive• Would require very technical skills• The time required to drive this project forward• Security

2. Improved walks /local path

Positive themes	Negative themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety within the village could be improved • Could potentially extend existing paths to improve walking and cycling within the village • Need circular routes • Highland Council have Paths Officer who could help with landowner negotiations and permissions required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dead end roads • Speed danger from traffic • Nowhere for young people to cycle • Landowner consent required for any formal paths

3. Improved facilities at the loch

Positive themes	Negative themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could set up partnerships with others (Dounreay Fly Fishing Association) • Plan has already been developed by DFFA for a jetty • Would provide facilities for families as well as fishermen • Would encourage visitors to the area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation issues • Landowners (permission would need to be sought) • Road control • SSE works (3 months) • DFFP plan has already been refused due to lack of community involvement

4. Youth / Sports Facility

Positive themes	Negative themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watten improvement group have a plan prepared and have estimated cost of MUGA • Provides opportunity for a range of sports football/tennis • Potential site has been identified in unwanted space • Could provide a starting point for other potential developments e.g. community café, war museum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would require 70K to progress • Requires support from the community

5. Community Café

Positive themes	Negative themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for a commercial café • Historical attractions could encourage visitors e.g. Camster Cairns /War History • Options for location – by park / loch 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hall extension impractical as too much to run • Can't use the hall due to other group needs • Internal configuration would not suit extension • Lack of time • Lack of volunteers

Next Steps

1. There was a general feeling that people required more time to discuss developments more broadly within the community.
Action. Coordinate further meeting with interested community members to discuss details of the plan more fully
2. Make use of groups who are already constituted to consider grant applications to Foundation Scotland.
Action. Set up group or sub groups from an existing constituted community group
3. Establish a flexible timescale for implementation of community plan.
Action. Discuss timescales at the next meeting.
4. Employ a development worker to implement community plan or (self- employed development worker) to undertake further work on the community vision for the future. Explore the potential of a “ring fenced” project concept.
Action. Contact CVG to discuss how to take this forward

A third meeting was held, hosted by Foundation Scotland.

Only 8 people attended.

The meeting discussed each of the priority items one by one, starting with the loch development. Some issues were raised by the landowner – the designation as SSSI and the flood plain issue which would prevent the Council from granting planning permission. Landowner was going to look into both of these issues and report to next CC meeting. Dounreay Flyfishing were going to talk to other similar developments, eg St Johns Loch where a fishing area is combined with a community space very well. He will also report back to CC at next meeting. The project needs a group to drive it, with assistance from landowner and Dounreay expertise.

Broadband – again this project needs a driving force in the community as the Community Council does not intend to be the driving group (lacks time, experience etc) One person present is going to approach local businesses, particularly Willie McGillivray to see if anybody is interested in setting up a group.

Local Walks – nobody present at the meeting was interested, but it was generally felt that walkers would benefit from loch development idea

MUGA – locals have heard that WIG plan to move on this.

Others – Community Council wondered if communication would help, given that some of the things appearing on people’s wish list already existed such as community noticeboard. There were suggestions to improve visibility of notice board, add posters to hall window.

13 Appendix: Risk Register

This section identifies potential risks which could endanger the delivery of the Watten Development Plan and attainment of the community vision. The risk probability is measured (1 is low risk and 3/6 high risk) with mitigation and contingency measures outlined.

Risk Category	Risk Name	Probability (1-3)	Impact (1-3)	Risk Score (1-9)	Mitigation	Contingency	Action when
Organisational	Cannot attract / retain enough volunteers with commitment and skills to take the project forward	3	3	9	Employ Development Officer to help bring projects forward and engage with active community participants.		
Funding	Windfarm financial support ends / not achieved	2	3	6	Maintain working relationships with windfarm community trusts.	Apply for funding from another source.	
Delivery	Land access not supported by current owners	2	3	6	Ongoing dialogue with owner; landowners significantly involved with loch project.	Identify possible, lesser, developments on existing community asset sites	

Risk Category	Risk Name	Probability (1-3)	Impact (1-3)	Risk Score (1-9)	Mitigation	Contingency	Action when
Finance	Income generating projects not delivered / do not deliver sufficient income to provide maintenance of capital investments	2	3	6	Income generating work targeted during initial period of development	Ensure robust feasibility and business planning Maintain good financial controls and forecasts for projects	Project design Project delivery Project delivery
Community	Community do not engage with projects and/or assist with implementation process	2	3	6	Increase awareness of Rogart Trust and the interesting and important projects it includes	Review plan and include projects which are well supported	As appropriate
Community	Community oppose project implementation	2	3	6	Ongoing community engagement through each project design and delivery	Further consultation undertaken on potentially contentious projects	Prior to project implementation
Community	New issues and/or opportunities emerge after plan adoption	3	1	4	Plan reviewed every 12 month with a full review after 5 years.	Key issues included with emergency review.	As issues and/or opportunities arise