

NICE

Nairn Improvement Community Enterprise



A NICE Vision for
Nairn

Nairn Improvement Community Enterprise

NICE (Nairn Improvement Community Enterprise) was formed in 2010 as a company limited by guarantee to facilitate the regeneration of Nairn Town Centre and its surrounding areas. It has recently been recognised by Scottish Government as a Community Body under the “Right to Buy” legislation, and is in the process of identifying robust business cases to fund the purchase of properties so that relevant “community assets” can be retained and enhanced for the benefit of the local community. NICE is recognised by OSCR as a charity number SC 042118.

The company has established itself with 9 directors who have agreed to serve without payment for their services and already has the support of 130 members. It has set itself the urgent target of increasing membership to at least 1000, representing about 10% of the Nairn population.

NICE are in the process of creating a Vision for Nairn underpinned by a Business Plan that seeks to find ways of achieving our aims and freeing up the value locked in local property and assets and in particular the assets of the Nairn Common Good Fund.

We want Nairn to follow the example set by the Inverness Common Good Fund, not to sell off its assets, but to use these to generate a healthy annual income and to maximise the financial return to the area by using these assets as leverage and income generating revenue as a legacy for future generations.

We can only do this with the support of the Highland Council and in particular our 4 Nairn Local Elected members who are, for all intents and purposes, the “stewards of the Nairn Common Good assets”

We also need total support and buy in from our 3 local community councils as well as other bodies such as the Farmer’s Society and other local asset owners who are key stakeholders in Nairn.

We see the way forward as Partnership but meaningful partnerships are based on mutual trust and respect. For too long this has not existed between statutory and voluntary agencies in the Nairn area. We need to change these working relationships if progress is to be made.

Legislation

Now is the perfect opportunity to put the tales of the past behind us and move towards a new dynamic vision for Nairn. The Scottish Government have several significant pieces of legislation either on statute or in the process of becoming legislation. These include The Right to Buy legislation and a plethora of community empowerment and capacity building policies including;

- Scottish Government; The Government’s Economic Strategy
- Scottish Government; Achieving a Sustainable Future; Regeneration Strategy
- Scottish Government: Town Centre Regeneration; How does it work and what can be achieved
- Scottish Government: Community Empowerment Action Plan
- Scottish Government: Building a Sustainable Future
- Scottish Government: Community Empowerment and Regeneration Bill
- Scottish Community Development Centre for Learning Communications; Building Community Capacity
- Development Trust Association Scotland: Promoting Asset Transfer
- Planning Aid Scotland: Planning for Community Developments

Our Aims

THE VOICE OF *Nairn*

We want to act as a voice for the community of Nairn to channel their views productively. We want to promote the message that the regeneration of our town is in the hands of our community and help them take ownership. Through engagement and consultation we want to instil civic pride deep into the heart of our community.

OUR *Nairn*

We want Nairn to become an example of best practice for community ownership and engagement. Central to this will be the community taking ownership for the regeneration of our town through social enterprise, entrepreneurship and the right to buy.

REGENERATE *Nairn*

We want to transform and reinvigorate Nairn's townscape and general appearance through developing an action plan for investment to develop new facilities and venues, improve and regenerate existing ones, and proactively conserve Nairn's architectural heritage.

FINANCE *Nairn*

We want to attract external funding to help develop Nairn's assets. We will investigate all possible funding and grant aid streams to help regenerate our town.

BRAND *Nairn*

We want to create a unique brand for Nairn; one that provides our town with a unique sense of place and recognisable image.

MARKET *Nairn*

We want to promote and market Nairn as a progressive and developing town to attract and retain residents, businesses, tourists, employers and employees.

GREEN AND OPEN *Nairn*

We want to help Nairn realise the full potential of its Green and Open spaces making sure that these are being fully utilised and meet the needs of the community.

DESTINATION *Nairn*

We want Nairn to lead as a destination of choice and, in addition to regenerating buildings, we hope to build the case for an Arts and Cultural Centre and a Biodiversity Wetlands all year round facility

EMPLOYABILITY *Nairn*

We want to create new jobs and retain existing ones through the delivery of our NICE Vision.



Locality Planning and Enabling Communities

Nairn Common Good

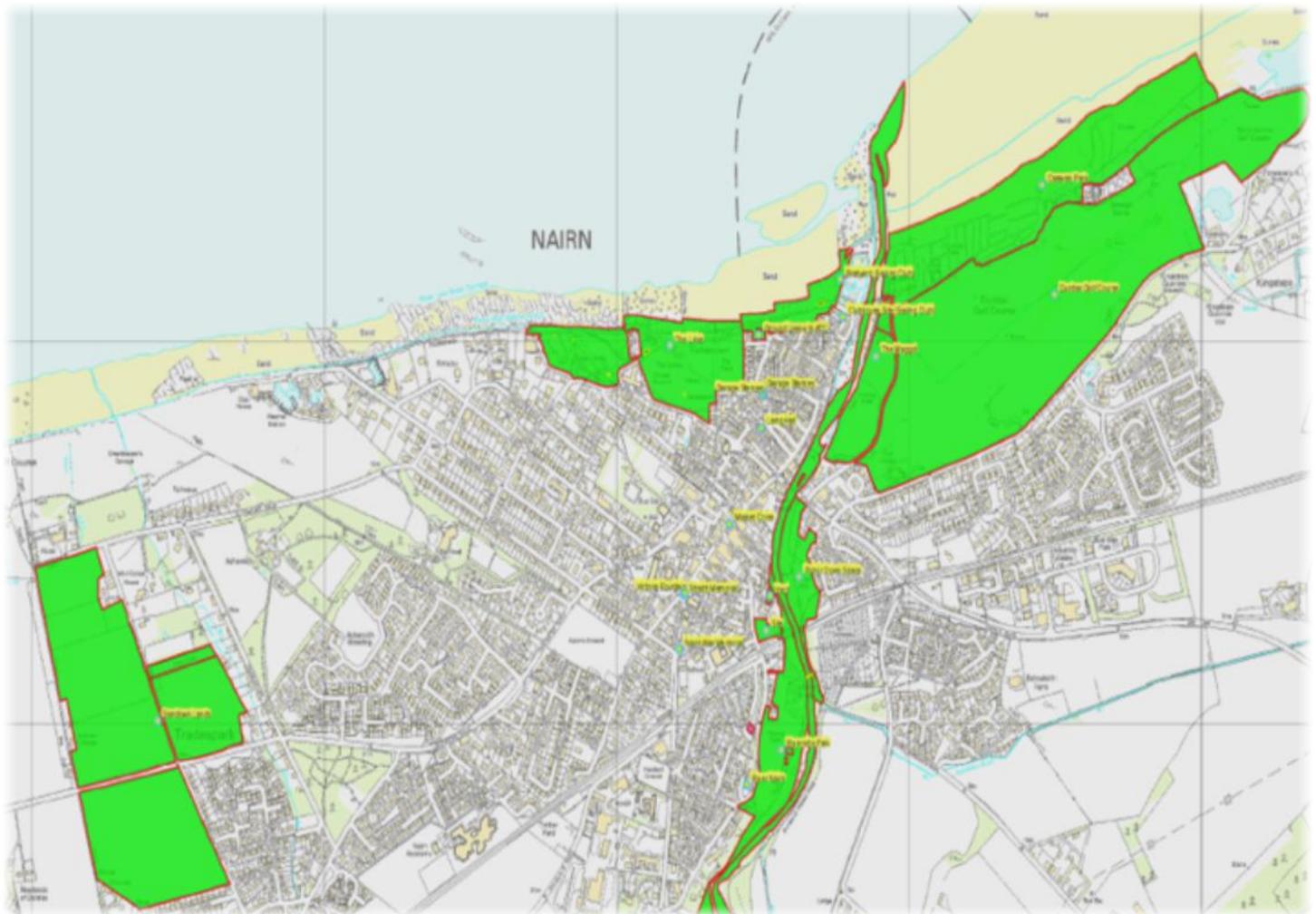
The extent of the Nairn Common Good Lands is not in dispute but the future of the development of them has been the subject of fierce debate. The most recent proposal involved extensive housing and other development but these have been withdrawn in the face of refusal of Planning Permission and the housing market crash. That proposal provoked significant local opposition.

Legal advice, including an Opinion from Scottish Counsel, is available to NICE and NICE believes that the Nairn Common Good Lands are alienable by Highland Council but must be used or disposed of in a manner which does benefit the Burgh and citizens of Nairn.

The four local Highland Councillors are regarded by NICE as gatekeepers and protectors of the interests of Nairn. NICE intends to engage with them to formulate a proposal acceptable to Highland Council. Such a proposal must not only meet the Councillor's legal obligations, but must carry the wholehearted support of the citizens of Nairn.

NICE believes the Nairn Common Good Lands can be revenue generating and if consensus can be achieved as regards a suitable proposal then the Nairn Common Good Lands will be a key which will unlock other aspects of the NICE Business Plan.

The areas marked in green on the map below are the Nairn Common Good land areas.



NICE Masterplan: Nairn Town Centre



Site A: Rosebank Church and Hall



Site B: Regal Cinema



Site C: Car Park



Site D: Bus Station



Site E: Viewfield Stables



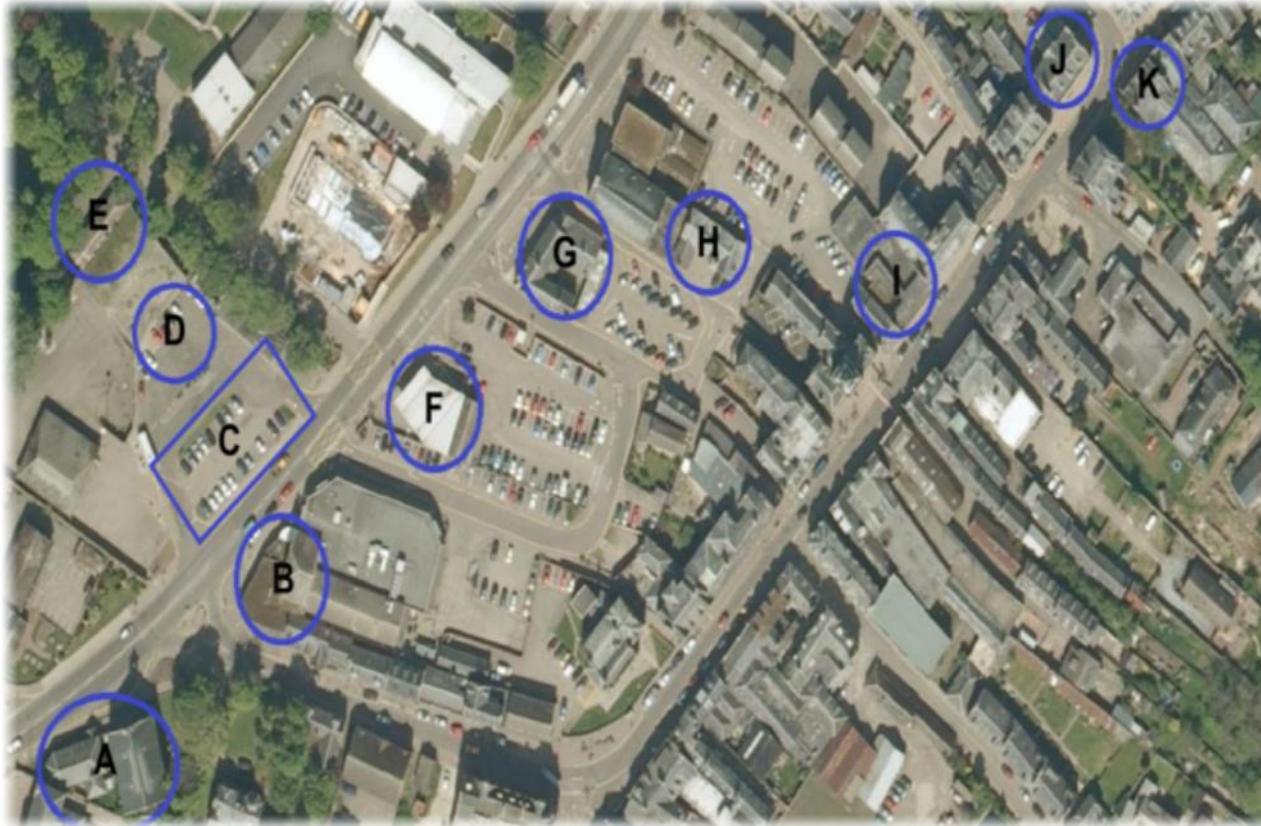
Site F: Petrol Station



Site G: Social Work Building



Site H: Finance Building



Site K: Ballerina Cinema



Site J: Baron House



Site I: Nairn Library

Other Developments

There are other projects around town with the potential for developing but these will require to be discussed with respective owners

Sandown and Tradespark



These areas could be developed for:



Affordable Housing



An All Year Round Arena, possibly a new home for Nairn County



A Wetlands Biodiversity Centre

Farmer's Show Field



Key Town Centre Sites



Site A: Station Park



Site B: Council Depot

Old Links Primary School



SWOT Analysis:

Strengths

- Good reputation as Tourist Town
- Excellent Award winning beaches
- Two championship Golf Courses
- Good quality open spaces at the Links and Viewfield Park
- Top Quality hotels and Guest Accommodation
- Railway and Bus Stations
- Access to immediate countryside
- Access to Culbin Woods
- Gateway location to the Highlands from the East
- Range of Festivals and Events
- Large static caravan park for tourists
- An Excellent Conference Venue at the Newton Hotel
- Stunning and varied natural surroundings
- Ornithology and Sealife
- An authentic Scottish experience
- Proximity to Airport
- Good Climate
- Brighton of the North



Weaknesses

- A96 Runs through centre of Town
- Number of old dilapidated buildings
- No street themed furniture
- Numbers of sets of traffic lights
- Limited wet weather attractions
- Limited town centre car parking
- Arrival experience / limited signage
- Lack of town promotion, signage and branding
- Key visitor facilities need upgrading
- Perception Nairn is on periphery of Highland Council
- Perception Nairn is suburb town of Inverness
- Poor first impression when entering town
- Poor to non-existent marketing of Nairn as a tourist destination
- Standard of local information available is both poor and inadequate
- Dwindling retail facilities
- Seasonality Issues: peak time accommodation difficult to obtain
- Severe competition from surrounding towns
- Poor architecture of new builds and in wrong locations



SWOT Analysis:

Opportunities

- Attract entrepreneurs, investors and people with an existing interest in the town
- Engage the wider Nairn residents in the Right to Buy options
- Explore the land and buildings opportunities in particular accessing common good to unlock the property portfolio
- Improve affordable housing for all in Nairn
- Improve the healthy lifestyles for residents
- To create high environmental standards/eco-town
- Welcome to Nairn- improve floral displays, amenity furniture and streetscapes
- Invest in Art in Public Places
- Develop Arts/Cultural Facilities for locals and visitors
- Develop Wetland Interpretation to attract all year round visitors
- Improve overall interpretation and signage
- Improve Civic Spaces and Places
- Create “Evening Economy” for visitors
- To develop sustainable tourism
- Add to quality tourism and leisure facilities
- Developing a dynamic and innovative brand for Nairn
- Creation and retention of jobs



Threats

- Imposition of new developments alien to ethos of Town
- Exploitation from chain stores and large developers
- Deterioration of buildings infrastructure by failure of owners to bring into public use
- Failure to exploit rich historical background of the town
- Further reduction in visitor numbers through competition from other resort towns
- Insufficient public funding – withdrawal of services
- Lack of Highland Council Vision for future regeneration of Town
- Traffic Management issues
- Deterioration of surrounding environments and ecosystems
- Housing developments which are unsuitable, unsustainable and inappropriate
- Seagulls



Comparators for Nairn

In this section we draw on four examples from which NICE Nairn's vision can be shaped. These comparators are the Tate St Ives, Louisiana Gallery near Copenhagen, Duff House in Banff and the Regal Cinema Bathgate because of their close comparisons with Nairn's potential.

There are others such as "themed towns" Wigtown is Scotland's Book Town, West Kilbride, Craft Town Scotland or Fort William's Outdoor Capital of the UK.

The Tate, St Ives

Art gallery in St Ives, Cornwall, England, exhibiting work by modern British artists.

The three-storey building, designed by architects Evans and Shalev.

Lies on the site of an old gas works, overlooking Porthmeor Beach.

It was opened in 1993, in just six months welcomed over 120,000 visitors – 50,000 more than the original target for the entire year. Since then, the gallery has been an outstanding success with an average of 240,000 visitors per year.



The Regal Cinema, Bathgate

One of Nairn's main blights is the old Regal Cinema Building owned by the Coop. An almost identical Regal Cinema in Bathgate has been converted to a Community Theatre.

The Regal cinema in Bathgate opened in 1938, seating 1067, and is in exterior form very much as originally built

The building is a fine symmetrical Art Deco composition with classical overtones

The interior has undergone some changes, to allow the building to be adapted for community use

Bathgate Regal Community Theatre established in 1995 is now a community led venue in the heart of Bathgate

The theatre provides;

- An programme of film, music, theatre, comedy and children's events
- A unique venue for performances, celebrations, conferences or events
- Spaces for classes and workshops



Louisiana Museum

This collection of indoor galleries and outdoor sculpture parks located on the shore 20 miles from Copenhagen has remarkable similarities with Nairn's Viewfield Park, the Links and beach. Built over a 40 year period in 8 phases it demonstrates what an artistic vision can do for a community.

The simplicity of Louisiana's architecture is the first thing that strikes you on a visit to the museum. The main entrance to the old patrician villa welcomes the visitors to an almost homelike atmosphere.

Features

Large scale gallery with major focus on children and families

550,000 visitors per annum

75% income earned from entrance fee, retail, catering and Friend operation

25% income from central & local government equally

Built over a 40 year period



Map of Louisiana Museum



Nairn's Viewfield House and Park extending through to the Links and Beaches

Duff House, Banff

Standing adjacent to the ancient royal burgh of Banff in the North of Scotland, Duff House is a magnificent example of baroque architecture. It was designed by William Adam in 1735 for William Duff and since then has been used as a family house, hotel, sanatorium and prisoner-of-war camp.

Following extensive restoration, the house was re-opened in 1995 as a five-star country house and gallery, run in partnership by Aberdeenshire Council, Historic Scotland and the National Galleries of Scotland.

As part of its commitment, the National Galleries provides most of the house's artworks, opening up Scotland's national collection of fine art to new audiences.

Highland Council were "gifted" one sixth of the Scottish Modern Art Collection

This could be exhibited in Nairn if we have the buildings and the Vision?



Funding Sources

There are a number of sources of funding for Community organisations in relation to securing community assets. The following are some of those most appropriate for NICE.



Capital and revenue grants in excess of £50,000 are available for a wide range of applicant organisations and projects which benefit coastal communities



Growing Community Assets awards grants for projects from £10,000 to £1 million



Community Spaces Scotland

Community Spaces Scotland offer grants from £10,000 to £250,000



VisitScotland Growth Fund is designed to assist the tourism industry in reaching the ambitious 50% growth target by 2015



Historic Scotland provides a number of grant and funding schemes to support bodies and individuals in the protection, education and promotion of the historic environment.



The Climate Challenge Fund is being supported by an alliance of partners from key organisations and networks throughout Scotland, who bring expertise and experience of community-level interventions.



HLF offer a range of grant programmes, awarding grants upwards of £3,000-£5 million.



Funding is available to eligible projects for up to 95% of £750,000.



Social Investment Scotland (SIS) is a registered Charity and Social Enterprise which provides business loans to Third Sector organisations.



Building communities. Transforming lives. The Biffa Awards Flagship project offers successful projects grants of between £150,000 and £500,000.



The Social Investment Business* (TSIB) is a specialist fund manager and has made and managed over 1300 investments in civil society organisations ranging from under £5,000 to almost £7 million.

The Way Ahead

Clearly NICE have created an ambitious Vision for Nairn but unless they agree a way of delivering this Vision that is all it will be – a Vision.

The Directors of NICE are clear that they see themselves as non executive Directors tasked with creating policy and strategy but not with “hands on” experience of delivering their Vision. To do this they will need to secure resources in terms of funding and the ability to recruit appropriate staff to oversee the delivery of their Vision.

In the short term, twelve to twenty four months, they will require to secure revenue funding to appoint a Business Manager to begin the process of delivering the Vision and Business Plan. However this delivery process will require to engage the much wider Nairn business community and if it is to be successful it will require NICE and the wider Nairn business community to be working in close partnership.

It is therefore recommended that models of best practice be investigated from other Community Interest Companies and the lessons gained from these are used to assist NICE in securing the resources required to take forward their Vision and Business Plan.

Forres Area Community Trust (FACT) was set up in September 2011 to promote the regeneration of Forres and its surrounding communities.

Aspiring to be recognised as a charitable company limited by guarantee, the Trust aims to identify and develop projects that create social and economic benefit for the community. Members plan to help ensure that the Forres area remains a place where people want to live and work, now and in the future.

Already £175,000 of joint funding has been secured from Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) and Moray LEADER. This is earmarked to enable the employment of two full-time equivalent development officers.

Discussions should be held with Highlands and Islands Enterprise to identify how these were funded and explore if a similar arrangement could operate in Nairn.

Business Improvement Districts

A Business Improvement District (BID) is businesses working together and investing collectively in local improvements, in addition to those delivered by the statutory authorities, which will be of benefit to the businesses involved whilst contributing to the sustainable economic growth of the local economy.

BIDs in Scotland are not restricted to town and city centres, to allow for innovative BIDs to be developed in areas such as the hospitality sector, tourism and visitor markets, commercial or industrial districts, rural areas, agriculture or single sector businesses who wish to collectively improve their business environment.

A BID is not a substitute for central or local government investment, but an additional investment to strengthen the local economy and give local businesses a unified voice, helping to provide an arena for businesses and local authorities to increase their understanding of each others priorities.



The Next Steps: Actions Now

- (1) NICE will meet and brief the Highland Council and the Nairn Elected Members on their Vision for Nairn
- (2) NICE will meet and brief the 3 Nairn Community Councils on their Vision for Nairn
- (3) NICE will meet and brief those property owners who are part of the NICE Vision for Nairn
- (4) NICE will convene a Public Open Meeting to deliver their NICE Vision for Nairn to the general public on October 12th 2012.

The Next Steps: Actions to Follow

- (5) NICE will expand its Board of Directors to include those who may be able to contribute to the delivery of the NICE Vision
- (6) NICE will begin a membership and recruitment drive with a target of obtaining at least 10% of the Nairn population in their membership
- (7) NICE will identify how the delivery of their Vision and Business Plan can be achieved. This should include investigating potential funding to further engage the wider Nairn business community in a Business Improvement District Initiative
- (8) NICE will consider BID Scotland as a potential funding partner as part of the NICE Vision for Nairn.
- (9) Models of best practice from other Community Interest Companies will be investigated and the lessons gained from these are used to assist NICE in securing the resources required to take forward their Vision and Business Plan
- (10) When resources are secured NICE commissions the Business cases for the first two Right to Buy projects namely the Old Social Work Building and the Bus Station
- (11) NICE will begin discussions with Highland Council to explore how they might be able to “acquire assets surplus to the Council’s requirements” at a lower than market value
- (12) The options of creating a new all year round wetland facility and visitor centre be further examined including how these would be funded and operated
- (13) The options for creating Arts and Cultural facilities be explored further in particular NICE will appraise the options for creating an Artistic hub in Nairn which would serve as an all year round attraction
- (14) NICE will begin discussions on the way in which the Nairn Common Good assets can be most productively used for the benefits of the people of Nairn including how these can create a legacy for future generations.

