



Nairn Improvement Community Enterprise



Towards a Strategic Economic Plan and Active Masterplan

Don Murray



NATURE PLACE PEOPLE
SUSTAINABLE HORTICULTURE CONSULTANCY

Don Murray MSc, FCI(Hort), FLS • Freelance Consultant • 07491 981622

September 2021

An idea for Nairn

We want Nairn to be very distinctive. The aim is that it is complementary to Inverness-shire and Morayshire and yet differentiated and contrasting. An amplified overarching theme of a seaside town into a seaside destination of mixed-use accommodation set within a verdant, nature-filled landscape reflecting the natural beauty of Nairnshire and the Highlands.

A place of Creativity & Culture:

Building on existing artisans and place to become a renowned centre of culture and creativity with a reinvigoration of Nairn's story and brand identity brought to life by events, festivals, and cultural ideas.

Reshaping the Town:

Physically regenerating the town to create a more sustainable and liveable place adapted for a post-Covid and more digitally enabled world using the opportunity to redevelop the town centre and Sand Down development as a catalyst for wider change.

Carbon Neutral Town:

Transforming green investment at scale for Nairn to become carbon neutral by 2030.

Digital Enterprise:

Building on the Highlands tech strengths to enhance Nairn as a significant Highlands centre for digital technologies and enterprise, underpinned by a programme of upskilling across communities.

Entrepreneurship & Innovation:

Supporting businesses (existing, new, and early stage) to survive and thrive, targeting growth in key sectors and developing our entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystem.

Skills & Employment:

Preventing long-term mass unemployment by supporting a culture of enterprise and offering extensive and inclusive reskilling/upskilling programmes for citizens to take advantage of new opportunities.

Vision for Nairn

The vision is for a thriving and vibrant Nairn, with greater local autonomy, enhancing and benefitting from Nairn's vast local assets specifically Common Good land and innovating its way into global markets. A unique blend of 'people and place' where the environment is valued both as a business asset and as an inspiration for life.

Seven cornerstones emerging:

- Leveraging Common Good Land for its core purpose - the people of Nairn
- Inspiring business to achieve their national and global potential
- Creating great careers here
- Creating value out of knowledge
- Using the natural environment responsibly as a key economic asset
- Sandown can be the catalyst for Community Reengagement and Masterplan development.
- A 21st century Garden Town regeneration that embraces sustainability that will achieve 2030 Sustainability Development Goal targets.



Sandown - a catalyst for Nairn's Vision.

Strategic Economic Plan - a path towards achieving the idea

Recommended that the Nairn Improvement Community Enterprise (NICE) and local partners including Highland Council submit a draft outline Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) 2022-2026 and 'levelling up' to Scottish government.

A SEP for Nairn potentially comprises of three distinct, but related, propositions:

1. It is the NICE levelling up plan, seeking national buy-in to and support for a multimillion £ investment strategy to 2026, and a number of investment-ready 'early wins' in 2022/23. We believe this level of investment can deliver an additional £m GVA p.a. by 2026 and make a significant contribution to Scotland's performance and profile in emerging industries, new technologies and global markets.
2. It is anticipated NICE's initial levelling up investments will amount to c £100m over the first two financial years. If successful, these investments will unlock delivery of jobs, homes, and increased GVA, and provide firm foundations for the delivery of our overall 2022-26 growth plan.
3. It is the NICE 'leveling up' offers and asks of government - to take increasing local responsibilities for planning and managing growth. We believe this will deliver better local and national results as an exemplar of Scottish government's ambitions contained within the 'Sustainable Growth Commission' report that sets out '*The new case for optimism and a strategy for inter-generational economic renaissance*'

A Strategic Economic Plan for Nairnshire is a 'levelling up/Growth' strategy that reflects Nairn's aspirations and connects with the surrounding area (Inverness-shire and West Moray) and focuses on enhancing the Common Good Land, with three major themes:

- **Future Economy**
 - Investment which will capitalise on Nairn's strengths and unique characteristics to exploit new and emerging markets
 - Examples: Inverness Airport/Air Hub; Marina; Marine renewables; Locally owned energy; Smart homes; health; Agri-tec; Horticulture; Knowledge (University of Highlands and islands).
- **Growth for Business**
 - Investments which will accelerate increases in productivity and competitiveness in the area's businesses
 - Examples: Bespoke business 'Growth Hub'; Creative and digital industries development both as enabling technologies and in their own right; Hub and spoke support for other 'bedrock' sectors
- **Conditions for Growth**
 - Investments which will address continuing blocks to growth, in infrastructure and human potential
 - Examples: Transport Infrastructure; Flood Resilience; Digital connectivity; Smart Grids; Housing and new ways of living; Skills, talent and raising aspirations; Community capacity and resilience; Nairn connectivity, water, and sewerage

An active Masterplan

Recommended that Nairn requires a clear and local government backed set of strategic positioning based upon past and present community conversations and responses translated into a set of guidelines (Key Drivers, Guiding Principles, the Spatial Strategy, and suggested Actions) that, when combined, form a masterplan to give direction for community-led activity and external investment or support.

Nairn has benefited from various initiatives and regeneration in the past decade, with much appreciation recognised by community members for the improvements across the urban fabric, services, facilities, and voluntary work.

An active masterplan is a process that any person or organisation with an interest in Nairn should get involved in wherever possible or appropriate to their own aims. It is not intended that NICE should deliver or lead all these Actions, but they are committed to driving forward the Actions and playing a central role for supporting other organisations to ensure connectivity in the delivery of these Actions.

Named organisations are not solely responsible or obliged to make specific Actions happen either; they are associated to Actions based on conversations during the Charrette process regarding their ongoing work, future directives, and their commitment to improve Nairnshire.

Organisations and individuals who are not mentioned should not feel external to this process; many, many more were featured and praised during the Charrette, and all have a positive part to play in realising the outcomes.

This Active Masterplan will be most successful if everyone with an interest in Nairn or Nairnshire identifies their part and contributes their commitment to making it happen.

With the Sandown development requirement to re-engage with the community, recommended a company is sought who work with communities and the public sector to make places better for example - Icecream Architecture <https://www.icecreamarchitecture.com/>

Examples of Regeneration and Garden Towns



CGI of West Carclaze Garden Village



Bakers Arms, Walthamstow - Jan Kattein Architects



Northwest Bicester is a government-designated eco-town



De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill with recently completed seafront promenade and gardens



Seafront planting with contemporary shelter / kiosk Bexhill



Town square improvements at Helensburgh