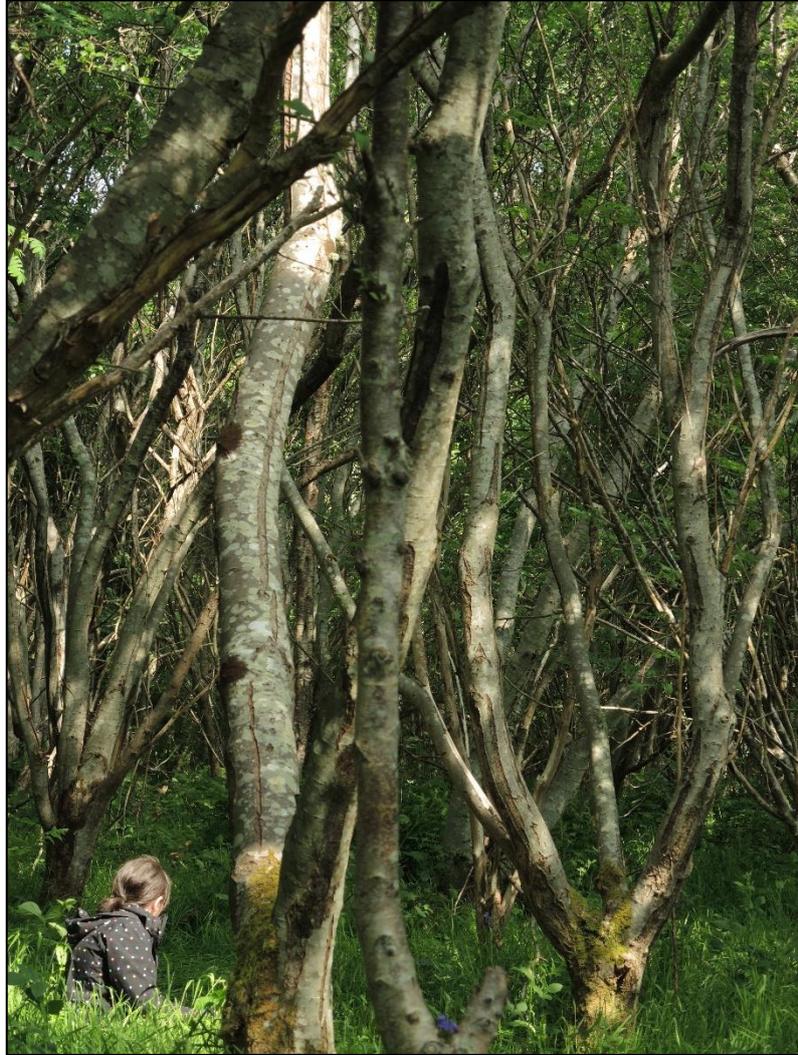


CALLP Outdoor and Woodland Learning Project

Business Feasibility Study



By Lizzie Williams, on behalf of the Coigach & Assynt Living Landscape Partnership, April 2021.



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1 Executive Summary

The Coigach & Assynt Living Landscapes Partnership has been providing outdoor learning experiences in Achiltibuie Primary School, Lochinver Primary School and Ullapool High School since 2016. The CALLP will end in September 2021. Everyone involved is adamant that the children should continue to benefit from outdoor learning, but the funding of external provision like that provided by CALLP is a challenge.

The original idea in the CALLP project was to develop a commercial 'Bushcraft Business' which would generate surplus income to subsidise / support the outdoor learning provision with local schools. This business has not been developed, due to unavoidable time-constraints and various other reasons.

This report looks at the schools' outdoor learning needs in the future, and the feasibility of developing an enterprise that could support those needs.

An assessment of the existing provision of outdoor learning by the CALLP shows that the *status quo* is strongly desirable. However, the more complex projects (John Muir Award, Hill to Grill and Island Explorer) may be too expensive to deliver in their current states in the future.

An assessment of the market for outdoor learning experiences across the Highlands and further afield shows that establishing an enterprise is possible, and that there is not a comprehensive offering filling this growing niche in the Coigach & Assynt area. The area seems to receive the type of visitors that would participate in these activities and there may be a market amongst local visitors.

A 'Nature Connection Enterprise' concept is proposed, with a possible base at Culag Woods. Other similar enterprises are used to model the potential figures. The pros and cons of possible structures - nesting the enterprise within Culag Community Woodlands Trust, and establishing a new Community Interest Company – are discussed.

The initial conservative estimates show that the enterprise might generate a small profit. Even with more optimistic figures, this enterprise would not generate sufficient surplus income to fully support the ideal provision for local schools. Additional fundraising would therefore be required, and some potential funding sources are suggested.

In conclusion: there is potential to establish an enterprise which enables visitors and residents to connect more deeply with this beautiful place. Success would require dedication and resourcefulness. It is unlikely that this enterprise would fulfil its intended purpose of subsidising the provision of outdoor learning to local schools. However, it is likely to be a worthwhile venture in its own right, as every opportunity to connect people with nature – so that they value it and care for it – is needed at this crucial time for the environment. This report will feed into the development of a new project.

2 Introduction

The benefits of outdoor learning for children are widely recognised, and include improved confidence, concentration and general health and well-being, and lower stress levels. Learning outdoors particularly benefits kinaesthetic learners and those who struggle to concentrate in a conventional classroom setting. Developing children's connection with, and respect for, the natural environment is

crucial at this time of biodiversity and climate crises, and 'Learning for Sustainability' – which includes outdoor learning – is an important part of Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence¹.

However, providing outdoor learning within schools is often challenging. There are many competing demands on both teachers' and pupils' time, and the required child-to-adult ratios can be prohibitive. Schools often benefit from having external assistance to arrange activities, and a facilitator who is comfortable and confident in delivering outdoor activities and ensuring that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

The shock of the Covid-19 Pandemic and the experience of Lockdown have highlighted the importance of being in fresh air, and connected to nature – for general health and well-being, and for mental and spiritual health. Indeed, the Scottish government have emphasised the role of outdoor learning in recovery from the lost months of school time².

The children and families of the Coigach and Assynt areas have been very fortunate since 2016 because outdoor learning has been provided – fully funded – by the CALLP scheme (more details below). This provision will end in September 2021, but it is widely considered to be crucial that space and time are available for this element of the curriculum in the months and years ahead.

Connection to nature is not only important for school children; the Covid-19 Pandemic has accelerated the rising popularity of experiences which expose people of all ages to the nurturing effects of nature. With the benefits now widely acknowledged, these activities – from bushcraft to forest bathing - are becoming more popular and widespread.

Meanwhile, the ongoing climate and biodiversity crises are rising in prominence. Society is becoming more aware of the need to protect our natural home, and to raise citizens who are informed about - and deeply connected to - these important issues.

"In the end we will conserve only what we love; we will love only what we understand; and we will understand only what we are taught." (Baba Dioum, 1968.)

In this context, there may well be a potential to create a business which helps people – of all ages; visitors and residents – to feel the benefits of being close to nature and to learn about the natural world, and to carry those benefits and lessons into their wider life. This could be a very exciting opportunity.

This report investigates the feasibility of establishing a 'bushcraft business' - or similar enterprise – to benefit participants and to support the provision of outdoor learning experiences in schools in the Coigach & Assynt area.

- The report first examines the *status quo* within the schools, and the range of enterprises in the Highlands and beyond which seek to connect people with nature, in a variety of different ways.
- A concept for an enterprise is then proposed, with estimate financial figures.

¹ <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/a-summary-of-learning-for-sustainability-resources>

² <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-advisory-sub-group-on-education-and-childrens-issues---phased-return-to-in-person-learning-in-schools-and-elc-settings---next-steps/>

- The figures required to continue the *status quo* of outdoor learning provision within schools are demonstrated.
- Various possible outcomes are discussed.

The research for this report has been carried out through a variety of desk-based web-research, conversations and face-to-face meetings, from November 2020 to March 2021 (see Appendix 1). Due to Covid-19 restrictions, there have been very few in-person meetings but that has not hampered the process unduly.

3 Analysis of the Current Situation: OWL project and Market Assessment

3.1 The CALLP Outdoor and Woodland Learning (OWL) Project

The Outdoor and Woodland Learning (OWL) Project forms part of the [Coigach & Assynt Living Landscape Partnership](#) (CALLP) Scheme – a 5-year multi-partner project which started in 2016. The OWL Project is led by [Culag Community Woodland Trust](#) (CCWT) in partnership with [Scottish Wildlife Trust](#), and has the following vision:

‘To encourage education about the area’s natural environment thereby creating a legacy of understanding and respect for the local environment.’³

Over the course of the CALLP Scheme the OWL project has focussed on valuable aspects to deliver outdoor learning to the schools in the area, including: *employment and training of suitably qualified project staff to develop and lead outdoor sessions; development of curriculum linked sessions and programmes in conjunction with school teaching staff; working in partnership with other local outdoor leaders, bringing together local expertise to deliver high quality outdoor learning programmes; creating a stock of equipment required for outdoor learning; training of local teaching staff in outdoor leadership skills; identification and development of suitable outdoor learning sites for the local schools, and collation of resources and outdoor session plans on a central database.*

The OWL project is due to finish at the end of September 2021 with the main school engagement phase to be completed by end of June 2021 (end of summer term). An important part of the project is to try to ensure the long-term sustainability of the delivery of outdoor learning for the local schools. Whilst training of teaching staff is a valuable part of this plan, it is unrealistic to expect in-school teaching staff themselves to continue the regular weekly sessions, with competing demands on time, and the problematic logistics of child-to-teacher ratios, small staff teams, and even getting children appropriately dressed and mobilized on bad weather days.

In addition to the delivery of outdoor learning sessions themselves, the substantial stock of outdoor learning equipment and resources will need maintenance (see Appendix 2).

3.1.1 Longer-term outdoor Learning provision: the original concept

The original concept that was included in the development of the OWL Project was to establish a ‘bushcraft business’ which would run sessions for (predominantly) visitors. Participants would be charged to attend these sessions, and the profit would be used to fund outdoor leaders so that they can work with the local schools to assist delivery of outdoor learning, as described above. It was envisaged that the main market for this kind of outdoor session would be holidaying visitors during

³ Fiona Saywell, CALLP Project Brief for Project 6: Outdoor & Woodland Learning, v5. 4th August 2015.

the summer months, with lower levels of activity during the ‘shoulder months’, earlier and later in the year.

3.2 Current provision to local schools

Over the course of a ‘normal’ (ie non-Pandemic) academic year, the OWL project achieved an average of 1026 engagements per year. This is not the number of individual children that the project has worked with, but the total of pupils at sessions throughout the year. This is not the most common way of calculating engagement, but is more appropriate for such small schools: this project has been able to work consistently with each cohort of pupils, which is likely to embed the knowledge and values more deeply than an occasional experience.

3.2.1 Primary Schools

There are two primary schools in the CALLP area: Lochinver (30 pupils in two classes; 6 in nursery) and Achiltibuie (13 pupils in one class in the main school; 4 in nursery). (Figures correct as of April 2021.)

Currently (Covid-19 restrictions permitting), the OWL team spend one day with each primary school each week. During that day, the small schools are split into two groups (for example, in Achiltibuie: Nursery – P3 = 11 children; P4 – P7 = 6 children), and each group spends half a day outside. This requires one member of the OWL team plus one member of the teaching staff.

The regularity allows continuity of outdoor projects (such as the investigation of the badger sett in Achiltibuie); principles are more deeply embedded, and the established routine makes it easier and quicker to ‘mobilize’ the children each week. An additional benefit for a single-class school is that, when half the children go outside, it allows the remaining teacher and children some quieter, more focused time.

The Head Teacher of these two schools considers this work to be crucial and is adamant that this level of provision is essential into the future – both to assist with recovery post-Covid-19, and for the general well-being of the children. Such is the value of this work to all pupils that he is willing to contribute money from the school’s limited funds towards outdoor learning provision.

In addition to this weekly provision, the OWL team have been conducting the **John Muir Award** with P7 pupils in their ‘Transition year’ prior to entering Ullapool High School. This programme works with all six Primary schools across the UHS catchment area, and requires a significant investment of time: 13 days of directly working with pupils plus planning time, for two staff members, with additional time from assistant staff such as Rangers and Mountain Leaders to provide the multi-day experience: Introduction Day in Ullapool; Explore Days in each village; Share Days in each village; Activity Day in Ullapool and a Hill Walk on Quinag.

Feedback on John Muir Award

“I observed big steps in confidence, both in how pupils engaged with the landscape and their peers who would become their future classmates. Not only did they learn about the environment, there were some wonderful breakthrough moments of pupils overcoming real challenges and fears; life-changing experiences which will enhance their future lives enormously.” Anthony O’Flaherty, Teacher, Ullapool Primary School

“We all had so much fun. I wish we could do it all again” P7 Pupil

3.2.2 High School

The two primary schools feed into Ullapool High School, which comprises approximately 150 pupils over five year-groups.

The terminology at High School level is 'Outdoor Education' rather than 'Outdoor Learning', and the emphasis during any outdoor education experience is on structured learning outcomes, as opposed to the slightly looser 'child-led' approach at primary level.

In High School there is less flexibility within the timetable – due to the pressures of the curriculum and exams – for a regular weekly outdoor education session. The High School Outdoor Education coordinator tries to ensure that each class in the lower three years of the school has one day of outdoor education experience each term (or the equivalent, across the year). The CALLP team have been primarily working with the S1 and S2 year groups.

The S1 pupils take part in the Island Explorer programme on the Community-owned Isle Martin: 4 days, with 3 nights camping. This is an intense programme with a high budget the majority of which is covered by the CALLP, to minimize the financial burden on families. The programme involves approximately 30 pupils each year and all food and activities are supplied, which necessitates additional activity leaders (for instance, a kayak instructor) as well as CALLP staff and school staff.

Feedback on Island Explorer Programme

"I've been really impressed by the resilience and enthusiasm of this amazing group. As well as learning about this beautiful island and being outdoors, everybody has learnt a bit more about being responsible, respecting each other and supporting each other in their personal journeys." Teacher

"This morning I was woken by splashing in the sea outside my tent – I peeked out to see an otter fishing – MAGICAL!" S1 Ullapool High School pupil

For the S2 pupils, the CALLP team have run the Hill-to-Grill project in partnership with the [John Muir Trust](#) (JMT). This is a 5-day programme based around deer management and venison. The CALLP team organise and lead 3 of the 5 days in conjunction with JMT staff, and provide some input on the 5th day, which is led by school staff.

Feedback on Hill-to-Grill project

"This was an excellent opportunity and a true cross curricular project which put learning into a realistic context. We could never have done anything like this without the fantastic support of CALLP. I am sure other schools would love to have this opportunity." Anne Hunter, Deputy Head Teacher of Ullapool High School

"It was really good fun stalking the deer, and very interesting seeing the deer butchered, getting to hold the organs and helping skin one." S2 Ullapool High School pupil

There have been other opportunities via CALLP such as spending 2 days with the Clachtoll Broch archaeological dig project, and an accredited outdoor first aid course was delivered to up to 10 pupils age 16+.

The senior years of the school have no provision for outdoor education during the school day, but there are opportunities to work towards the Duke of Edinburgh Award and the John Muir Award, amongst other things, in after school clubs.

The High School Outdoor Education coordinator says that the ‘Island Explorer’ and ‘Hill to Grill’ projects have been ‘perfect’, and it will be a huge shame to lose the CALLP support.⁴

The school’s own budget for outdoor education is negligible, but the coordinator is resourceful and resolute; she has experience seeking funds to facilitate activities, as well contributing her own time and funds. In the absence of support from CALLP, she is determined that the Island Explorer programme will continue: it is a long-established week in the annual time-table. To cover the loss of CALLP funding, pupils’ families will be asked to contribute more towards the cost, and the school will need to input more staff time and seek external funding. This will inevitably put strain on staff and families, and some pupils will not be able to attend due to the cost. Unfortunately, the Hill to Grill project will be lost, but the JMT are establishing a Junior Range programme which will provide useful opportunities to the pupils most interested in these issues.

The High School would welcome any financial and practical support to enable their outdoor education programmes. This is particularly important as the community recovers from the Covid-19 Pandemic: although catching up academically is crucial, there should also be an emphasis on the benefits of being outdoors for physical, mental and social well-being. As Marguerite Hunter Blair and Anita Grant, authors of ‘An evidence report on Covid-19 and children’s play’ say: *“Helping children and young people to connect with nature, be more active and have fun together will promote and create the conditions for optimal learning.”*⁵

3.3 Market Assessment

In order to assess the potential viability of an enterprise, it is first important to understand the current availability of similar ventures.

There are many outdoor learning operators in the Scottish Highlands – and of course beyond – who deliver different experiences through different models, for instance;

- Providing outdoor experiences to local children
- Providing outdoor learning training to educators
- Providing outdoor experiences to children of holidaying families – ‘a kids’ club’
- Providing outdoor learning experiences to holidaying families
- Providing virtual outdoor experiences
- Providing outdoor experiences to adults

Below is a selection of the different operations that provide outdoor and / or environmental learning experiences, representing the various models above. Prices of activities, and the basic structure of the organisation, have been included where relevant or known. These are arranged in approximate geographic order, with those in the North West Highlands first, then heading South and East.

3.3.1 Highlands

1. **Katrina Martin** – Achmelvich - <https://katrinamartin.uk/upcoming-events/>
 - Various nature connection offerings
 - Deep Nature Dive in Culag Woods
 - Nature Connection workshops
 - Photography
 - Recently established; offerings are in development.

⁴ Jemma Middleton, Ullapool High School, *pers comm*, March 2021

⁵ <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/outdoor-play-is-key-to-reopening-and-recovery/>

2. **Assynt Leisure Centre** – Lochinver - <https://www.assyntleisure.co.uk/learning>
 - Woodland Artisan – some within Culag/ Glencanisp – with CALLP
 - Wildlife Wonders – with Assynt Field Club
 - Creative Writing
 - Rural / Heritage Skills and Local History (no details yet)
 - Price varies; some free, some approx. £2/hr

3. **Kinder Croft** - <https://www.kindercroft.org/> - nr Ullapool
 - Current focus on Early Years
 - Exploring potential to expand to older local children – summer camp / bushcraft
 - No plans to open to visitor children
 - Structure: CIC

4. **High Life Highland's Countryside Rangers** <https://www.highlifehighland.com/rangers/your-countryside-rangers/>
 - Formerly the Highland Council Countryside Rangers. High Life Highland is a Charity owned by the Highland Council. (It can apply for grants but still must cover costs.)
 - Run many events and guided walks which aim to help raise awareness and encourage appreciation of the scenery, wildlife and heritage of the Highlands, aimed at local communities and visitors.
 - Eg guided walks from Clachtoll and Achmelvich huts – (but not bushcraft etc)
 - Work with schools
 - Need to charge for their service to schools
 - Delivered through occasional projects; ie Project Eagle – 1-2 classroom sessions then 2-3 outdoor sessions
 - 'Schools Out' sessions through the holidays
 - Across Highland region
 - Woodland/ Beach
 - The High Life Highland Countryside Rangers also have responsibilities for:
 - The promotion of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code
 - Contributing to the Highland Council's Biodiversity duties
 - Promoting Eco-school status for all schools in the Highland Council area
 - The management of a large number of countryside sites throughout the Highland Council Area
 - Volunteer days

5. **Wildwoodz** - <http://www.wildwoodz.co.uk/> - Tore/Munlochy
 - Paintballing etc, but also recent development of focus on Outdoor learning / education activities for physical and mental health and wellbeing.
 - John Muir Award; Saltire Award; pond dipping sessions; sustainable living; woodland maintenance and management.
 - Bushcraft & survival skills
 - Bushcraft session, 2 hours, £22pp, age 8+, 1:10 adult – child ratio. (Have had up to 30 kids in the past!)
 - Bushcraft party - Up to 12 kids aged 8-12 (at least 2 parents must be present - £220 (£18.50pp))

- Survival skills - Up to 12 persons aged 12+. A 3-hour taster session £270 (£22.50pp)
 - Wild Woodsman - Up to 12 persons aged 12+. 5 hours of Woodland know how - £450 (£37.50pp)

- 6. **The Sheiling Project** - <https://www.theshielingproject.org/> - nr Beaully
 - Outdoor Nursery for 'local' early years – Summerlings
 - Family / Group holidays – crafting etc.
 - Online / virtual learning courses being developed for schools
 - Recently became an SQA (Scottish Qualifications Authority) centre and offer Nat 5 Environmental Science
 - Venue hire
 - Structure: CIC; feels it is very important to charge properly from the start, to avoid funding dependency / gap, or disappointment

- 7. **The Dell of Abernethy Wild Club** - <https://www.thedellofabernethy.co.uk/>
 - The Dell is a collection of self-catering cottages on the edge of Abernethy Forest, just outside Nethy Bridge village.
 - One staff member at The Dell has WALT training
 - For guests: Recently established, to provide experiences for families and children
 - £75/half day for family
 - £30/child for 3 hour session; 3-6 children, >5 yrs old
 - For locals kids: Started in Autumn: weekly after-school sessions
 - Crafts, den building, bug hunting etc
 - £12.50/child; 3 hours; 10 kids (1 adult) – 5-11 yr olds – always fully booked

- 8. **Naturedays at Aigas** - Beaully - <https://www.naturedays.org.uk/>
 - Project title of the Aigas Trust for Environmental Education – charitable arm of Aigas Field Centre (www.aigas.co.uk)
 - Opportunities for all ages – on site and outreach
 - Family days - by donation
 - School groups - £2.50/child

- 9. **Go Wild Highlands** – Easter Ross - www.gowildhighlands.co.uk
 - Former Highland Council Countryside Ranger Ian Paterson established an independent business after taking voluntary redundancy.
 - Canoe trips to families holidaying in the area
 - 'Base Camp' days for local children aged 8-12. Groups of 10, £30 for 6 hours (no lunch provided). Little infrastructure, equipment required; no AALA licence needed. very popular – always booked out.
 - Also offers Outdoor Learning to local schools: a 3-hour session costs £150 per class or £250 for a whole school day.

- 10. **Wild Things - Findhorn** - <https://wild-things.org.uk/>
 - "Our goal is to foster a greater appreciation, awareness and love of the natural environment".
 - Offer various training courses for educators (Outdoor Learning Training; Woodland Activity Leader Training, Coastal Activity Leader Training, Bushcraft Training)

- School programmes: Woodland Classroom; Coastal Classroom; Bushcraft Club (8–12-year-olds) and a Bushcraft Award (14+); support to John Muir Award
 - Wider Community: Social care / Silver Saplings
11. **Wildwood Bushcraft** – <https://www.wildwoodbushcraft.com> – Lochailort, and Essex
- Range of outdoor / survival experiences, including family bushcraft days and weekends, and canoeing and bushcraft expeditions
 - 1 day £90/ 2 days £180 / 4 day expedition (over 18s) £420
12. **Stramash Social Enterprise** – various locations – <https://stramash.org.uk/>
- Mainly early years / outdoor nursery in various locations (Oban/Fort William/Tornagrain / Elgin)
13. **Branching Out –Scottish Forestry** - <https://forestry.gov.scot/forests-people/health-strategy/branching-out>
- Innovative development for adults who use mental health services in Scotland. For each client, the service consists of around three hours of activities per week in a woodland setting, over 12 weeks.
 - Activities are adapted to suit the client group, site and time of year, and generally include:
 - physical activity e.g. health walks and tai chi;
 - conservation activities e.g. rhododendron clearance and bird box construction;
 - bushcraft, e.g. fire lighting and shelter building; and
 - environmental art e.g. photography and willow sculptures.
14. **Ariane Burgess** - <https://arianeburgess.com/about/> - Forres
- Has recently built an Outdoor Learning Space in a Forest Garden
 - Will be available to rent in near future (as of April 2021), for anyone wishing to conduct an outdoor learning experience / event with adults / young people.
 - Contact via website for more details.
15. **West Coast OWL (Outdoor & Woodland Learning) Group** – also a Facebook Page: www.facebook.com/WestCoastOWL
- Connecting and Networking across Wester Ross and Skye
 - Established in January 2021 with expertise in Forest School practice, child rights and safeguarding, outdoor learning and wellbeing, philosophy of education, arts and community engagement.
 - 2021 aims include:
 - Establishing a network for outdoor and woodland learning practitioners and projects. Sharing good practice and forming an Outdoor and Woodland Learning Community.
 - Working with schools and youth organisations to support the amplification of outdoor and woodland learning for children and young people.
 - Working with local and regional organisations to support the amplification of outdoor and woodland wellbeing for communities.
 - Co-creating and collaborating on future plans with our West Coast OWL Community.

3.3.2 Relevant Initiatives - Further Afield

16. **Nature & Therapy** – Devon - <http://natureandtherapy.co.uk/>
 - Shinrin Yoku; Ecotherapy – one-to-one; Wild Coaching - 2 hours @ £80
 - Training of Shinrin Yoku practitioners
 - Work with local NHS

17. **Liz Dawes** – Staffordshire - <https://www.theftg.earth/>
 - The Forest Therapy Guide
 - One – to - one Forest Bathing: £100 for 2 hours
 - Group Forest Bathing: £25 for 2.5hours – up to 11 in group

18. **Wild Bushcraft Company** – North Wales - <https://wildbushcraft.co.uk/courses/full-day-bushcraft>
 - Bushcraft: Learn knife and saw skills, make wooden tools; learn knots; erect tarpaulins, light fires, make campfire bread, game prep, edible / useful plant identification
 - Minimum group size is 4 people; 10am-5pm; £98pp inc. VAT
 - Also school groups:
 - Bushcraft and survival skills
 - Nature awareness
 - Wild food and foraging
 - Conservation and woodland management
 - Woodland crafts and green woodworking.

19. **Anake Outdoor School** – Washington, USA – <https://anake.wildernessawareness.org/>
 - 9-month residential, transformative, holistic learning experience focusing on eight core areas of study
 - Tuition fees: \$12950

3.3.3 Virtual Experiences – examples

- **The Forest Therapy Guide** – Liz Dawes - <https://www.theftg.earth/remotely-guided-forest-bathing>
 - Remote forest bathing
 - £15 / person for 1hr 45 mins zoom group session
 - Particularly suited to people who are house-bound or isolated and cannot reach open space in-person.

- **Dan Puplett Nature Awareness**
 - Online educational webinars www.danpuplett.net/event
 - *Bird Language eCourse*

- **Wilderness Awareness School** – Washington, USA
 - Various e-courses <https://www.wildernessawareness.org/>:
 - Kamana Naturalist Training Program – e-course
 - Nature Connection eCourse

- **Kat Martin** – <https://katrinamartin.uk> – potential for virtual courses in the future.

3.3.4 Conclusions from market assessment

It is evident that there are a wide range of ways to connect with nature available to suit all needs and aspirations. There are successful ventures which could be used as models, and lessons to be learnt.

Whilst there are many businesses elsewhere in the Highlands and beyond, in the North West Highlands there is not yet an enterprise that responds to the increasing demand for adults, children and families to connect with nature in diverse ways.

Some operations fill part of the niche: for instance, the Highlife Highland Rangers provide guided walks and the 'School's Out' programme, and also get involved with some project work with schools. There is a risk that a business offering experiences to visitors and residents could compete with – and be detrimental to – the Rangers' activities. However, Andy Summers (Head Ranger) explains that the School's Out holiday activity days are primarily aimed at local families – members of Highlife Highland – and run intermittently throughout the whole Highland region. Andy is therefore not concerned that a small local enterprise offering regular experiences to visitors and local families would be detrimental, and feels that an independent enterprise of this type should be encouraged, especially if it enables long-term provision of outdoor learning to local school children⁶.

3.4 Visitor and Market Research

Visitor Research conducted for CALLP⁷ shows that the majority of visitors to the area do not book activities etc before they come on holiday. The same research shows that the majority of visitors are interested in their natural surroundings: interested in short walks (68%), beaches / rock pools (66%), longer walks (>3 miles – 49%) and natural history (43%). Unfortunately, this survey did not research the market for participating in organised activities, but the Rangers report that their Guided Walks are always well-attended by visitors.

Approximately one third of visitors make 'no plans' for activities and attractions before coming on holiday to the region; less than 10% have made all their plans before they visit.

There are opportunities here: for strong, effective promotion '*in-situ*', to capture visitors who are making their plans ad-hoc, and also for more effective online promotion through local websites and social media to ensure that potential visitors to the area are aware of the activities on offer and arrive eager to join in.

Market / Demographic Segmentation

According to the Marketing Development Strategy, Coigach and Assynt 2020-21⁸, visitor profiles to Assynt and Coigach most closely align with Visit Scotland's '*Engaged Sightseers*' and '*Adventure Seekers*' market segment descriptions, followed by '*Natural Advocates*'.

- Engaged sightseers '*relish engaging with friendly locals and seeking out an authentic experience*'.
- Adventure seekers are '*energetic, sociable, career minded*' individuals who '*enjoy visiting natural sites and taking in the landscape via walking, hill climbing or cycling*'.

⁶ Andy Summers, *pers comm*, March 2021

⁷ Based on 417 responses to a questionnaire, in 2018 - <https://coigach-assynt.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/CALL-Tourism-Research-Report-FINAL.pdf>

⁸ For the Landscape Routes App project, Coigach & Assynt Living Landscape Project 21 – www.nwhgeopark.com

- Natural advocates *'value peace and quiet', 'the wellbeing aspects of our natural environment' and enjoy 'gentle outdoor activities'*.

It is highly likely that these motivated and dynamic people would be interested in participating in an experience in which they **learn**, that brings them a **deeper 'sense of place'**, and a **connection to nature**.

No directly applicable data is available for the residents of Coigach and Assynt. However, we do know from surveys that the residents value the natural environment highly⁹ and that childcare is an issue¹⁰. A local survey (perhaps through Facebook or SurveyMonkey¹¹) would help determine the extent of the local market for such activities.

3.5 The feasibility of a Nature Connection Enterprise

The research above has shown that there is a strong possibility that a market exists in the North West Highlands for experiences that facilitate connection to nature – primarily for visitors but also some residents. This is especially likely given the extreme natural beauty of the area and the diversity of landscapes and natural resources. The majority of visitors come to the area to experience the natural beauty, and many would welcome an opportunity to learn and experience it more deeply in some way, with help from an expert. Local families value nature highly, and there is a paucity of activities for children during the school holidays; these two factors make it likely that there might be uptake of a regular offering such as a 'kids' club'.

It is possible that an enterprise offering such experiences would generate a surplus revenue which could contribute to funding outdoor learning in local schools, but it is unlikely to fully support the level of provision that is needed or desired.

3.5.1.1 *Is 'bushcraft' still 'on trend'?*

When the original project was conceived in 2016, the idea of creating a 'bushcraft business' was proposed because the term 'bushcraft' was very much in vogue. Five years later, the fashion may have swung away from bushcraft somewhat, and other terms - and modes of engaging people with nature - are more popular.

Bushcraft means different things to different people, so it is helpful to define what is meant in this context. To some people, bushcraft might conjure the image of wilderness adventure and survival skills: fire starting, shelter building, hunting, fishing, tracking, tying knots. Woodland crafts and basic tool making can also be included. This is all important and fun, but to restrict it to these physical activities is to miss important elements. Developing respect for nature is crucial, as is having a deep awareness and connection with the environment. Being able to identify wildlife – birds, plants, trees, fungi – is important, and will help with foraging for wild food – sustainably.

Whilst this broad 'bushcraft' is still popular – particularly with children and families - other activities have been emerging as popular and important, and the experience of Lockdown due to Covid-19 has accentuated this. The importance of open space and connection with nature for well-being and for physical, mental and spiritual health is now widely acknowledged, and interest in activities that

⁹ Coigach Community Survey Report (2011): Respondents' best things about living in Coigach: top of the list= Scenery / beauty / natural environment.

¹⁰ <https://assyntcommunity.files.wordpress.com/2018/12/Assynt-Community-Plan-FINAL-VERSION.pdf>

¹¹ Assynt Development Trust have kindly offered use of their SurveyMonkey account; adam.assyntdevelopmenttrust@gmail.com)

facilitate this connection is rising. These experiences may also inform and inspire participants about the climate and biodiversity crises, which may lead to more ‘pro-environmental behaviours’ in their wider life¹².

Therefore, it seems sensible to expand the concept beyond a ‘bushcraft business’ to a business offering a wider range of ‘nature connection experiences’ to a broader spectrum of people; we could use ‘Wild Wellness’ as a working title.

3.6 A Proposal for a ‘Wild Wellness’ Enterprise

In the Coigach & Assynt area the resident populations are small, but from Easter to October the area receives thousands of visitors – a number which is rising due to the success of the NC500 driving route, and will be expected to rise at least in the short term, with the reduction in foreign travel due to the Covid-19 Pandemic¹³. VisitScotland predict that people who have travelled the NC500 route will return to the areas they enjoyed during the tour, for longer holidays - perhaps two weeks, with two centres.¹⁴

An enterprise could be established to offer outdoor experiences to visitors, with the aims of:

1. Generating surplus income to **contribute to the funding of outdoor learning in local schools**.
2. Providing opportunities for people to **connect with nature** for their own enjoyment, well-being, and physical, mental and spiritual health.
3. Enhancing participants’ appreciation for the natural world, which may in turn lead to **changes in the way they live their life**¹⁵.
4. Providing an **income for local people**.
5. Enhancing the **local tourism ‘offering’**, thus increasing the number of nights visitors are likely to stay in the area, which is some local residents prefer, as opposed to increased numbers of short-stay visitors.¹⁶

The enterprise could comprise two main elements; which have been given provisional working titles:

- a. children and families – broadly ‘bushcraft’ activities: ‘Wild in the Woods’
- b. adults – forest immersion: ‘Wild Wellness’

This enterprise would benefit from having a physical base from which to operate. It need not have an elaborate infrastructure, but should provide basic services:

- Toilet – most likely a compost loo
- Basic shelter from weather and midges
- Storage for equipment and resources

Below are some of the potential activities which could be offered; each would appeal to different demographics, age groups etc. This is not an exhaustive list. Other than the ‘Adventurous Activities’,

¹² See for example: Erica Molinaro *et al* (2020) From childhood nature experiences to adult pro-environmental behaviors: An explanatory model of sustainable food consumption, Environmental Education Research, 26:8, 1137-1163, DOI: 10.1080/13504622.2020.1784851

¹³ <https://www.visitscotland.org/research-insights/coronavirus-insights/uk-market>

¹⁴ Source: Ewen McLachlan, Discover Assynt and Assynt Development Trust - *pers comm*, November 2020, based on NC500 research.

¹⁵ See footnote 10.

¹⁶ Based on findings from Countryside CALLP Sense of Place Report 2020

these activities should not require onerous training or an expensive licence from the Adventurous Activities Licensing Authority¹⁷.

inc 'Deer Stalking'



FIG 1 – POTENTIAL ACTIVITIES FOR AN ENTERPRISE WITH THE VISION OF ALLOWING PEOPLE TO CONNECT TO NATURE.

There is such a wide variety of potential activities, but for the purposes of this concept – for simplicity - I will focus on a small subset; these are activities which already exist within the skillset of potential activity leaders in the area.

3.6.1 Possible location

Culag Community Woodland – on the outskirts of Lochinver - has many attributes that make it ideal for this venture:

- It has an excellent network of well-made paths.
- There is a variety of habitats, including native woodland, plantation, marsh, hill top and shore
- There is already some 'outdoor play' infrastructure – dens, camps, outdoor classroom etc.
- It is relatively near to areas of high visitor concentration: Clachtoll Beach (which reportedly received 15,000 families per year¹⁸).
- It is also near to a relatively high resident population – Lochinver and surrounding villages, and Lochinver Primary School.
- There is a storage facility on-site for the learning equipment and materials; this is currently being up-graded, and could be modified in the future to provide a basic shelter.
- There are various, ample parking facilities.
- It may be possible to use toilet facilities at Assynt Leisure, and to book the facility as a contingency for bad weather days.
- A legal structure – Culag Community Woodland Trust – is already in place, which could act as the 'parent organisation' for this enterprise – see below for other options.

¹⁷ <https://www.hse.gov.uk/aala/public-information.htm>

¹⁸ Ewen McLachlan *pers comm*, from discussions with Clachtoll Campsite co-owner.

Culag Woods could therefore be the 'Base Camp', and some activities could be provided in other suitable locations throughout the area, such as various locations in Coigach and elsewhere in Assynt. *(NB – financial calculations do not include travel to other locations at this stage.)*

The table below outlines a possible structure for a 'Wild Wellness' enterprise, with activities for children, families and adults. The assumptions about group sizes and figures are conservative but are not based on an in-depth market survey: more detailed research would be necessary before significant investment is made in such a venture.



3.6.2 A possible concept for a Wild Wellness enterprise

This is a very simple concept of the activities that could be offered, using Culag Woods as the base. It comprises offerings for children, families, and adults.

Wild in the Woods		Example enterprises:	
Example activities: Wildlife ID, tracking, rock-pooling, foraging - woodland & shore; 'Survival Skills' – fire lighting, cooking, shelter-making, navigation; Woodland Artisan – willow / hazel weaving, spoon carving; Simple outdoor imaginative play; Mindfulness; Woodland management / active conservation / tree planting		- Dell of Abernethy - Wild Club - Go Wild Highlands - Base Camp	
Kids' Club	Details	Potential income	Potential expenditure
Target market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parents who would like to give their children a fun, wholesome and educational experience, connecting to nature - and have some child-free hours for themselves - Resident families in school holidays 	£30/ child Assume average 8 children/ session Per session: £240 Sessions / year: 12 Total income: £2880	3 hour sessions + 1 hour prep/tidy Staff costs Activity leader: 4 hours @£20/hr = £80 Assistant: 3 hours @ £12/hr = £60 Total: £140 / session Sessions / year: 12 Expenditure: £1392 (overheads included separately)
When?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3-hour (half day) sessions. - Throughout the school holidays – particularly Summer but also Easter and October - At peak season, possibly 1 half day per week - 10am-1pm or 2pm-5pm. 		
Age group and capacity	5-11 year olds The activity leader would need an assistant for the contact hours, for safety reasons. Capacity: Minimum 6; Maximum 16; two adults		
Family Days	Details	Potential income	Potential expenditure
Target Market	Families seeking an 'authentic', educational experience, connecting to nature but also 'bonding' together and removing the pressure on parents to entertain kids themselves.	£25/adult or child Assume average 8 participants Per session: £200 Sessions / year: 32 Total income £6400	3 hour sessions + 1 hour prep/tidy No assistant needed Staff costs @£20/hr: £80/session Sessions / year: 32 Expenditure: £2560 (overheads included separately)
Age group and capacity	Families – up to 12 participants total including one adult per family		Approx overheads/session: £80 Approx Total: £160/session

Wild Wellness		Example enterprises:	
Example activities: Shinin-Yoku (Forest Bathing); Deep Nature Dive; Mindfulness; Eco-therapy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Katrina Martin - Liz Dawson - Dan Puplett 	
Group Sessions	Details	Potential income	Potential expenditure
Target market	Adults seeking the benefits of connecting to nature; mindfulness; reducing anxiety. Also interested in wildlife. Residents and holiday makers	£25/participant Assume 6 participants Per session: £150	2 hr session + 0.5 hr prep Staff costs @£20/hr: £50/session
When?	Year-round; Spring – Autumn weekly; Winter twice/month	Sessions / year: 38 Total income: £5700	Sessions / year: 38 Expenditure: £1900 (overheads included separately)
Age-group and group-size	Age 15+ (?); Min 4; Max 8		
Private Sessions	Details	Potential income	Potential expenditure
Target market	As above – but preferring a private session	£100 / session	2 hr session + 0.5 hr prep
When?	From Spring – Autumn twice/month; Winter 1 / month		Staff costs @£20/hr: £50/session
Age-group and group-size	Age 15+ (?); 1 (or perhaps a pair?) Nb – could sell a ‘course’ of sessions	Sessions / year: 19 Total income: £1900	Sessions / year: 19 Expenditure: £950 (overheads included separately)
Annual Summary			
Income		Expenditure	
Sessions	£16,880	Overheads (Estimate; details in excel; includes staff admin time)	£8,500
		Staff contact time	£6,802
		Total	£15002
Net income	£1578		

These are conservative estimates. All calculations and assumptions are explained in the accompanying excel workbook (Appendix 3). There is potential to increase activity, for instance by increasing intensity during holidays, and including kids’ club and family days at weekends during term time.

More in-depth research of the potential market is required, with a forecast / projection over the early years of growth, for a full Business Plan.

3.6.3 Possible structure of the enterprise

The enterprise could have various different legal structures; I have included two possibilities here: incorporating the activity into CCWT, and forming a CIC. Each model has various ‘pros and cons’.

An alternative would be to establish a new Registered Charity, but given that this is an onerous process, and CCWT is already in place and suitable for the role, this does not seem a sensible route.

3.6.3.1 CCWT as parent structure

One possible avenue is for the enterprise to sit under the umbrella of Culag Community Woodland Trust (CCWT), which is well-established with a functioning board and experienced part-time staff. CCWT used to run ‘Culag Enterprises’ – a path training and construction company – which closed some years ago. It may be that this enterprise is a better fit with CCWT’s objectives and skill set, and CCWT would be willing and able to take on the responsibility of management and ensuring financial stability.

Because of the variety of different activities envisioned for the enterprise, it is likely that more than one activity leader would be involved. It may therefore be most efficient for the activity leaders to be self-employed and offer their services on a freelance basis to CCWT.

Clients would pay their fees to CCWT and activity leaders would invoice CCWT for their time. Surplus revenue would contribute to paying for the activity leaders for work with schools.

Activity leaders would be responsible for their own Class 2 National Insurance Contributions, and would pay Income Tax on income over £12500 through the HMRC Self-Assessment system.

Pros:

- CCWT already exists and may be happy to take on this project.
- CALLP is likely to be comfortable transferring the physical assets (equipment and resources) to a partner organisation; indeed the assets are already on-site and owned by CCWT, and CCWT (or whoever takes them on) is obliged to maintain them for 10 years under the terms of the Heritage Lottery Fund.
- CCWT – being a Registered Charity - is eligible for applying for a variety of grants.
- Clients are likely to be willing to pay their fees to a charity as it is clear that there is a wider community benefit.
- CCWT already has Public Liability insurance, and it may be relatively easy to include these new activities under that provision.

Cons:

- Does CCWT have the capacity / appetite to take on this responsibility and potential administrative burden?
- Are activity leaders happy to take on the risk of being self-employed?

3.6.3.2 Wild Wellness in the Woods CIC

Alternatively, a new Community Interest Company (CIC) would be established¹⁹.

A CIC is a form of Social Enterprise; a legal company structure. It is a hybrid between a Charity and a profit-making company. The CIC defines a specific community benefit at the outset (and reports on it

¹⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2009/dec/01/setting-up-community-interest-company>

annually), and an 'asset lock' is imposed, which means that if the CIC closes, the assets must be transferred to another CIC or Charity. Directors of the CIC can be paid, and there is no need for a volunteer board of directors (which is difficult to recruit in this era of volunteer-fatigue, and can be cumbersome). It is a relatively simple process to establish a CIC, and the regulation is designed to be light-touch.

The CIC could have a number of paid Directors – ie the activity leaders - who would share the provision of the activities according to their skill-set, and also share the burden of administration and responsibility for ensuring that the enterprise is successful.

The CIC can also have an advisory board (who can be volunteer Directors) – to help steer the enterprise.

Participants would pay the CIC. The activity leaders would be paid Directors of the company. As above, surplus revenue would contribute to paying for the activity leaders for work with schools.

As a Paid Director of a CIC, the Employee and Employer would be responsible for paying Class 1 (Category A) National Insurance Contributions. On income over £9500/ year, employee would pay at 12% and employer at 13.8% (though this would probably be covered by the £4000 Employment Allowance²⁰). Income Tax is payable on income over £12500. This would need to be managed through a PAYE system.

Pros:

- 'Lightweight' structure with a clear purpose.
- It would be eligible for applying for grants from some (more progressive / enlightened) funders.
- Clients should be happy to pay a CIC, as long as the purpose and structure is clear.

Cons:

- A CIC is not eligible for applying to all grants.
- There would be a considerable burden of responsibility resting on the activity leaders (Directors): is this realistic / fair?

In either scenario there is a burden of administrative, financial and legal responsibility. Who is best placed to carry this burden? This is the inescapable reality of establishing an ambitious enterprise.

3.6.4 Marketing strategy

These are initial thoughts; more detail would be included in a Business Plan.

The enterprise will need its own website, which can be achieved relatively cheaply through WordPress or Wix, and will require a simple booking system and online payments.

This website should be linked to existing marketing initiatives such as [Discover Assynt](#) and the recently re-branded [Visit Coigach](#). Effective social media use is crucial – primarily Instagram but also Facebook and Twitter; use relevant hashtags to link with other initiatives and enterprises. Linking to popular local sites such as 'Achiltibuie Appreciation Society', Assynt Activity or Assynt Advertising Facebook pages reaches a large number of locals and visitors.

²⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/claim-employment-allowance>

For the many visitors who do not book activities in advance of their trip, effective use of print media is important. Adverts and articles in Assynt News and Ullapool News are surprisingly effective. Posters and fliers must be visible in holiday accommodation and frequently-visited locations such as local Stores, cafes, and hospitality venues and visitor attractions. It is important to develop good relationships with these businesses – as well as other outdoor / adventurous activity leaders, and those with a similar ethos – to enable cross-marketing opportunities and build a supportive community of like-minded people.

Given the low number of visitors who book their activities in advance of their holiday, there is potential to increase this figure: social media is a way to reach more people before their holiday so that they are at least aware of the opportunities available, even if they do not book.

The Coigach-Assynt Sense of Place Toolkit will provide support for effective marketing – encouraging visitors to engage more deeply with their chosen holiday destination²¹.

Wherever possible, it will be useful to conduct Monitoring & Evaluation of the activities – not only to ensure that the enterprise is achieving its goals, but also to include in future marketing materials and any fundraising efforts.

3.7 The Cost of Provision for Schools

3.7.1 Transition and High School

The calculations for each of the three programmes for older children (the John Muir Award P7 Transition, Island Explorer and Hill to Grill) are shown in Appendix 3, and summarised below.

Item	Approximate annual cost
John Muir Award P7 Transition	£9200
Island Explorer	£8615
Hill to Grill	£2910
Total	£20725

These Transition and High School programmes have been very successful. However, they are very resource-intensive, and thus expensive to run. The programmes could be simplified and pared down to make them cheaper. With each decrease in contact time and stripping down of detail there is a risk that the intervention becomes less effective – but the experiences should still be beneficial and formative.

It has been noticed that of all age-groups in Highland, the current S1s have been most affected by the Lockdown, perhaps partially as a result of the lack of Transition activities in Summer 2020. It is therefore essential that provision is made for Transition activities of some sort, but it may need to be a simpler programme.

As mentioned above, JMT and the High School have plans to establish a Junior Ranger programme, and continue to run the Island Explorer programme, with more contribution from school and families.

3.7.2 Primary Schools

The cost of providing weekly sessions for each school throughout the school year, and half day per week planning, preparation and ‘curation’ of equipment is approximately £400 / week for both

²¹ Link will be included when this work is complete; Toolkit will be hosted on www.nwhgeopark.com/

schools (£200 / day) - a total of £16000 for 40 weeks' provision through school year, to both Achiltibuie and Lochinver primary school.

The rate of £20/hr is used for these calculations. This is lower than the charge-out rate used by NGOs such as JMT and SWT. However, the half-day preparation is included separately in the cost of £200 / day. Free-lance activity leaders elsewhere (ie Ian Paterson of Go Wild Highlands) charge £250/day but that is not for a dependable weekly commitment, and it does include the preparation time etc.

The figures could be reduced by reducing the frequency of visits to Primary schools – to once a fortnight, or once a month. However, with such a reduction comes the loss of benefits from frequent consistent interaction with children, as discussed in section 3.2.1.

A private enterprise proposed here could not generate sufficient profit to fully subsidise the provision of regular outdoor learning sessions to the two local Primary Schools to replicate the current (excellent) situation or even provide rudimentary provision. Therefore, additional funding will be required to perpetuate the status quo. Some potential grant sources are listed in the table below.



3.8 Possible additional sources of funding for outdoor learning provision schools.

Name	Info	Approx Grant Available	Notes
Coigach Community Development Fund	Small Grants available for local initiatives – constituted bodies - in Coigach (postcode dependent)	£5000	This is funding from the Community Wind Turbine. The availability will reduce from 2022 for several years.
North Highlands Initiative	NHI operates across Caithness, Sutherland and Ross & Cromarty to assist in making this amazing part of the UK a place where businesses and communities are sustainable and where there are job and career opportunities for young people. The three key areas of activity for NHI are Food & farming, Tourism and Community support and leadership.	£1000	Mentioned by Ewan McLachlan of Assynt Development Trust
Peter Samuel Charitable Trust	This UK-wide trust has a number of areas of interest, including medical sciences, heritage, forestry/land restoration and improving the quality of life for those living in south central Berkshire, East Somerset and the Scottish Highlands .	£500-£60000; average £6350	
A M Garnett Charitable Trust	Small trust that supports the advancement of health, environment, education, and other general charitable purposes. Highland (primarily Newtonmore).	£50-£1000	
The Pebble Trust	The Trust provides grant funding for projects which support the vision of a more sustainable and equal society, where constraints on fossil fuels lead to a more localised economy with stronger, more resilient, communities, and where human activities take account of climate change and the wider environment. Applications will be prioritised from the Highlands and Islands .	up to £5000	
Lydia Michael Trust	To benefit the public by furtherance of education, the improvement of the environment and promotion of the welfare of the community, with a preference towards the Highlands of Scotland .	Total annual £4050 in 2019	
The Gordon & Ena Baxter Foundation	Generally, applicants should demonstrate a sound management plan, and a clear benefit to communities in Moray and the Highlands and Islands . They will fund projects that cover one or more of the following: Education and Training, Health, Care, Sport, Arts and Heritage, and Conservation and Environment.	£100 - £25000	(Currently suspended due to Covid-19 uncertainty...)
Scottish Sea Farms Heart of the Community	The over-arching principle for grant allocation will be to deliver lasting change within communities using the following criteria: - Health & Health Promotion - Education - Personal Development that leads to the enhancement of a community - Community Projects that benefit the majority	£4000-£5000	
Highland Coastal Communities Fund	The Highland Coastal Communities Fund is a new fund designed to support economic regeneration and sustainable development around coastal areas in Highland. The fund is derived from revenue generated by Scottish Government Crown Estate marine assets. Projects must be located within 5km of the coast. Allocations for 2020/21: Sutherland - £700,407; Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh - £347,543	£5000-£100000	

4 Conclusions

There is potential to establish an enterprise which enables visitors and residents to connect more deeply with this beautiful place. Success would require dedication and resourcefulness.

It is unlikely – based on sensibly conservative estimates – that this enterprise would contribute significantly to the provision of outdoor learning in local schools, as had been the original plan and hope.

Additional fundraising will therefore be required to continue the essential work of providing outdoor learning for local school children. The staff at both primary and high school level are adamant that, at the very least, rudimentary provision should continue, especially as children and families recover from the long periods of Lockdown resulting from the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Even if the enterprise cannot contribute significantly to the provision for local schools, it could be a worthwhile venture in its own right

4.1 Next Steps

For provision of outdoor learning in schools after CALLP: the existing OWL team should work together with school staff to seek funding and innovative ways of providing and resourcing the outdoor learning into the future.

For the potential ‘Wild Wellness’ enterprise: Further in-depth market research would be helpful to determine the likely uptake amongst visitors and residents; this could be in the form of a questionnaire – particularly over the coming summer, or even a small-scale pilot project.

The Highlife Highland Rangers are planning ‘School’s Out’ events through the 2021 summer holidays; the team should keep in touch with Andy Summers to share information and experiences which could inform the decision about establishing an enterprise.

The final months of the CALLP could be an opportunity to give the play infrastructure in Culag Woods some attention to get it up to standard. The dens and rustic playground areas would benefit from some small-scale investment of resources: some materials are needed but mostly labour.

This could be an exciting opportunity for an important new venture. Increasing peoples’ connection with nature – whether they are families or individuals on holiday, or residents of the area – is important for their own well-being, and could also contribute to lowering the impact of humans on the earth, and addressing planetary crises we are facing.

Appendix 1 - List of interviewees for OWL feasibility study

Interviews with the following individuals were undertaken between November 2020 and March 2021.
Many thanks to everyone for their time and contribution.

Name	Organisation	Contact details
Adam Pellant	Assynt Development Trust	adam.assyntdevelopmenttrust@gmail.com
Ewen MacLachlan	Assynt Development Trust	ewen.assyntdevelopmenttrust@gmail.com
Fiona Saywell	CALLP OWL Project and Culag Community Woodland Trust	fsaywell@coigach-assynt.org
Katrina Martin	CALLP OWL Project and Katrina Martin	kmartin@coigach-assynt.org
Ann Marie Firth-Bernard	Coigach Community Development Company	info@coigachcommunity.org.uk
Christine Jones	Dell of Abernethy	hello@dellofabernethy.co.uk
Ian Paterson	Go Wild Highlands	ian.paterson62@btinternet.com
Colin Masterson	Head Teacher - Achiltibuie Primary School and Lochinver Primary School	Colin.Masterson@highland.gov.uk
Andy Summers	Highlife Highland - Lead Ranger	Andy.Summers@highlifehighland.com
Jenny Grant	Highlife Highland Ranger	jen_jean@hotmail.com
Merlin Planterose	Kinder Croft	mplanterose@me.com
Alistair Punt	Stash (Stick-Stash)	alistair.punt@stashuk.biz
Pam Ross	Stick with Nature / Stick Stash (no weblink)	pamross123@btinternet.com
Sam Harrison	The Sheiling Project	sam@theshielingproject.org
Jemma Middleton	Ullapool High School	jemma.middleton@highland.gov.uk

Appendix 2 – Inventory of Equipment

Excel file available as separate document – up to date as of April 2021.

Appendix 3 – Financial calculations

Calculations for projected income and expenditure, and existing programme costs.
Excel file available as separate document.

This report was researched and written by Lizzie Williams – Freelance Consultant – in collaboration with Fiona Saywell and Katrina Martin of the CALLP OWL project. Please contact Lizzie.w.williams@gmail.com, or Fiona or Kat (contact details above) for further information or discussion.