

P09 Crofting project



Project Overview:

Crofting is a unique social system which stems from the Highland Clearances of the nineteenth century and has played a crucial role in shaping the landscape, natural environment, cultural heritage and social economy of all the crofting counties. In the project area there are three main areas under crofting tenure: the Coigach Peninsula, the Assynt Coast from Lochinver north to Stoer and then east to Kylesku, and the townships of Elphin and Knockan on the eastern edge of the project area.

Crofting is the primary form of small scale land tenure in the project area and a key part of the social and economic fabric. In addition, crofting land management can have considerable environmental benefits, and perhaps most importantly provides a vital link between the local community and the land.

The aims of the project are to:

- Provide support and practical assistance to crofters throughout the local area to allow them to realise their ambitions, make the most of the land under their custody and to encourage new entrants.
- Employ a Sustainable Crofting & Rural Projects Coordinator.

Project lead organisation and other organisations involved: Scottish Wildlife Trust

Project Location: Coigach & Assynt

Project dates: April 2018 to March 2022

Project Outputs

Measure	Target	Delivered	Notes
Project Officer Post	1	1	Crofting & Rural Projects Co-ordinator in post April 2018
Crofts mapped and recorded with Registers of Scotland	40	53	53 crofts mapped in Achiltibuie & Reiff townships. See Annex 4 Mapped Crofts, Annex 5 Map of Crofts Mapped in Reiff, Annex 6 Map of Crofts Mapped in Achiltibuie
SCF training courses delivered 2/12/20 NLHF accepted target "20 training courses delivered" but no formal change	20	25	5 SCF courses delivered until end of SCF funding. 9 further courses run 2019, 2 courses 2020, and 9 courses 2021. See Annex 1: List of Trainings
Demonstration Crofts Established	2	2	Management plans & established 2 crofts, Reiff/Achnacarnin

Measure	Target	Delivered	Notes
Demonstration Croft informal training/workshops held	26	5 training 7 videos	Informal trainings on Demo crofts, bee hive setting up and management, mushroom dowels, general cultivation, building/construction. Trainings interrupted by COVID-19 Restrictions. 7 informal crofting instructional videos posted on YouTube that as of 29/12/21 have received 10,274 views
Croft visits made to support practical land management advice	50	73	53 Achiltibuie & Reiff, Achlochan 3, Elphin 3, Clashnessie 12, Stoer 3, 14 Achiltibuie, 4 Achnahaird
Croft plans prepared and grant applied for (6),	10	23	Reiff 3 crofts, Achnacarnin 2 crofts, 14 (Achiltibuie wider township), 4 Achnahaird See Annex 2 Croft plans
Meetings with grazing committees undertaken and 1 management plan produced	8	1	2 meetings 2/12/20 NLHF accepted target unlikely to reach target as Grazing Committees not active, but no formal change
Croft township/ common grazing group plan prepared (year 4)	1	0.9	Moorland Management Appraisal published by Lockette Agri-Environmental for Achiltibuie Grazings. Distributed to the Grazings committee being presented more widely to the shareholders June 15 th 2022
Report: 'The state of CALL Crofting' published (year 3)	1	0.9	State of Crofting In Coigach & Assynt Report published disseminated to MSPs, Scottish Crofting Federation, SRUC, Crofting Commission, crofters in Coigach & Assynt, local libraries, schools and community councils & public buildings.
Follow up report and strategy for future working	1	0.7	As above
Management Plan Produced	1	0.7	See above for Ben Mor Coigach
Volunteer Days	60	0	No volunteering occurred.

Scheme Outputs

How has the project contributed to the CALLP Scheme Outcomes:

	1. The key features of the Coigach and Assynt Landscape will better understood and restored with a fit for purpose system in place to ensure the benefits are sustained.
Y	2. Where appropriate the connectivity and diversity of selected habitats will be mapped. <i>Peatland restoration, woodland expansion, deer management, croft improvements, horticulture to be addressed in the Moorland Management Appraisal.</i>
Y	3. Increased awareness and understanding amongst all individuals and groups of what makes Coigach and Assynt special and the threats to the unique heritage. <i>Expected moorland management appraisal.</i>

Y	4. Important elements of the built, cultural and natural heritage will be recorded, improved, made publicly accessible and celebrated by the local community. <i>State of Crofting information gathered and shared, livestock management, deer management, tree planting.</i>
Y	5. People will have gained new skills in researching, restoring and understanding their heritage. <i>Final report on State of Crofting in CALL circulated to local community groups, community councils, schools etc..</i>
Y	6. Collected data, information and interpretation will be more accessible in the public domain including posting on appropriate websites. <i>Training courses attended and advice from visiting experts.</i>
Y	7. Local groups and individuals understand, enjoy, value and take action in the Coigach and Assynt area in ways they did not at the outset. <i>The State of Crofting in CALLP, videos on CALLP website/You Tube</i>
Y	8. Increased access infrastructure at key strategic locations enabling people to enjoy the natural and cultural heritage of the area. <i>More crofters showing interest in cultivation, environmental schemes, and training. Crofters more interested and concerned with condition of soil. Wider public more interested in food production.</i>
	9. Increased opportunities for informal recreation that promotes health and well-being benefits.

Reflecting on the last 5 years, what's the one thing that you're most proud of that has come from your project being part of CALLP?

Setting up of demonstration crofts

Finding suitable people was essential in getting the demo crofts set up. They engaged with training, planning, resourcing materials and information. They are willing to experiment to see what works and learn by mistakes. It's a great source of pride for them to see the transformation of their crofts.

What difference has this project made to the built, cultural and natural heritage of Coigach and Assynt?

Crofts have been better maintained/cultivated, drained/ improved the look of. By mowing rank grass and weeds it is better suited to wildlife, sowing of perimeters with wild flower and bird seed improves the provision of food for wild birds. Leaving winter stubble improves conditions for invertebrates and rodents. Having soil analysed, cutting rushes and bracken, improving the pH balance increase grass production for pasture and acts as carbon sink. Providing courses in lime mortaring gives people an opportunity to gain the skills to maintain vernacular buildings

What difference has this project made to People?

Those involved in delivering this project have acquired new skills with regards to understanding crofting support through government, contacts within the government support mechanism, the Crofting Commission and academe. Local crofters have been encouraged by the demonstration crofts, encouraged to improve croft productivity and gain skills through training.

'we couldn't have done this without the help of the crofting project' Ish & Alan Pendred

'These courses are a great way of getting together and finding out what other people are doing' Meryl Carr

Useful Links

Coigach & Assynt Living Landscape Partnership
Scottish Crofting Federation <https://www.crofting.org/>
Crofting Commission <https://www.crofting.scotland.gov.uk/>
SRUC <https://www1.sruc.ac.uk/>
SAC Consulting <https://www.sruc.ac.uk/info/20005/consulting>
Farm Advisory Service <https://www.fas.scot/>
Lantra <https://www.lantra.co.uk/>
<https://www.ruralpayments.org/>

Future Plans and Legacy

Scottish Wildlife Trust have established a crofting officer post for the next 12 months to continue working with crofters. On the expected completion of the moorland management/township plan the grazings may be able to engage with Agri-Environment schemes. Discussed with local development companies with view to setting up collective growing scheme and composting systems. Crofter will continue to act on lessons learned and information gathered and continue with improving soil either for pasture, cultivation or horticulture. Continue the link between woodland expansion through the Woodland Trust Woodland Expansion post.

Lessons Learned

What are the three positive lessons gained from the scheme:

1. People really enjoyed the social aspect of training as well as what they learned.
2. Official advice and support for crofting is available from designated agencies
3. Take any help you can get whether from other crofters, neighbours or contractors

What are the three negative lessons gained from the scheme:

1. Not all crofters interested, some people are suspicious, and some hostile
2. Shortage of contractors, building materials, everything takes much longer than planned
3. People slow to react, there is a lot of interest as the scheme comes to a close.

Funding Partners



Photographic Evidence



Strained wire fence training © Murray Anderson



Broadcasting bere barley © Abigail Anne Campbell



Sheep & dogs © Abigail Anne Campbell/SWT



Winter fodder © Abigail Anne Campbell/SWT

Annex 1: List of Trainings

No.	Course	Venue	Course provider	Nos attended	Date
1	Access to Crofting Toolkit	Coigach Community Hall, Achiltibuie	SCF	20	03/11/2018
2	Strained Wire Fencing	276/274 Achnacarnin, Stoer	SCF	10	10/11/2019
3, 4	Polytunnel Growing All year round (2)	Leckmelm Forest, Ullapool	SCF	40	23/02/2019 09/03/2019
5	Rushes, Grassland & Croft Improvements	Coigach Community Hall, Achiltibuie site – 133 Polglass	SAC Consulting	18	08/03/2019
6	Agri-Environment Scheme	Lochinver Village Hall, Lochinver	Brendan O’Hanrahan	8	11/03/2019
7	Marketing, Branding & Packaging	Coigach Community Hall, Achiltibuie	SAC Consulting	20	22/03/2019
8	Common Grazings Workshop	Coigach Community Hall, Achiltibuie	SCF	8	23/03/2019
9	Introduction to Bee-keeping	Artists’ Studio, Glencanisp	SCF	18	30/03/2019
10	Make the Most of Your Croft	Coigach Community Hall, Achiltibuie site – 104 Achiltibuie	SAC Consulting	18	17/08/2019
11	Scottish Heritage Fruit Trees	Artist’s Studio, Glencanisp	John Hancox	17	11/10/2019
12	Mutton Butchery	Leckmelm Farm, Ullapool	Duncan Mackenzie	6	07/12/2019
13	Make the Most of Your Croft growing fruit & vegetables	Coigach Community Hall, Achitibuie	19/12/2019	26	19/12/2019

No.	Course	Venue	Course provider	Nos attended	Date
14	Sheep & Lamb Health	Elphin Tearooms	FAS	19	14/03/2020
15	Sheep-dog handling	Culnacraig/Zoom	Braehillor Sheep-dog handling	8	28/08/2020
16	Lime mortaring & pointing	Reiff	Brian Wilson	6	12 & 13/06/2021
17	Sausage making	Leckmelm Larder	Duncan Mackenzie	6	24/07/2021
18	Venison butchery	Leckmelm/Glencanisp Larder	Duncan Mackenzie	3	24/08/21
19	Venison butchery	Leckmelm/Glencanisp	Duncan Mackenzie	6	25/09/21
20	Venison butchery	Leckmelm/Glencanisp	Duncan Mackenzie	2	15/09/21
21, 22	Livestock transportation	Highland Business Ring, Tore	Lantra	7	August/September various dates
23	Digital: Economic & Social Impacts in Rural Areas (DESIRA)	Coigach Community Hall	James Hutton Institute	8	15/06/21
24	DESIRA	Coigach Community Hall	JHI	8	12/09/2021
25	Trailer Driving	Highland Business Ring, Tore	Lantra	2	22/09/21

Annex 2: Croft Plans

Croft No.	Township	Activity	Activity	Activity	Activity	Activity	Activity
231/232	Reiff (Demo croft)	Integrated Land Management Plan & Soil Analysis provided by SAC Consulting	Soil preparation, cultivation (ploughing, rotovating, harrowing, add in fertiliser and lime	Fencing – deer proof.	Polycrub, construction, soil preparation	Sowing/planting/horticulture/cereal crops/wild flowers & pollinators, bees	Mapped/preparation for registration
264/276	Achnacarnin (Demo croft)	Polycrub construction, soil preparation	Soil preparation, wild flower & pollinators				Mapped/preparation for registration
171, 172	Culnacraig	Soil analysis	Rush cutting	Add in lime	Spring harrowing	Grass re-seed	Mapped/preparation for registration
East	Acheninver	Soil analysis	Rush cutting	Add in lime	Spring harrowing	Grass re-seed	Mapped/preparation for registration
132	Polglass	Soil analysis	Rush cutting	Add in lime	Spring harrowing	Grass re-seed	Mapped/preparation for registration
118	Polglass	Soil analysis	Rush cutting/drainage	Add in lime	Spring harrowing	Grass re-seed	Mapped/preparation for registration
104/107	Achiltibuie	Soil analysis	Rush cutting	Add in lime	Spring harrowing	Grass re-seed	Mapped/preparation for registration
105	Achiltibuie	Fencing – deer proof					Mapped/preparation for registration
106	Achiltibuie	Soil analysis	Rush cutting	Add in lime	Spring harrowing	Grass re-seed	Mapped/preparation for registration
98	Achiltibuie	Soil analysis	Rush cutting	Add in lime	Spring harrowing	Grass re-seed	Mapped/preparation for registration
250/254	Achnahaird	Soil analysis	Rush cutting/drainage	Add in lime	Spring harrowing	Grass re-seed	
255/256	Achnahaird	Soil analysis	Rush cutting/drainage	Add in lime	Spring harrowing	Grass re-seed	

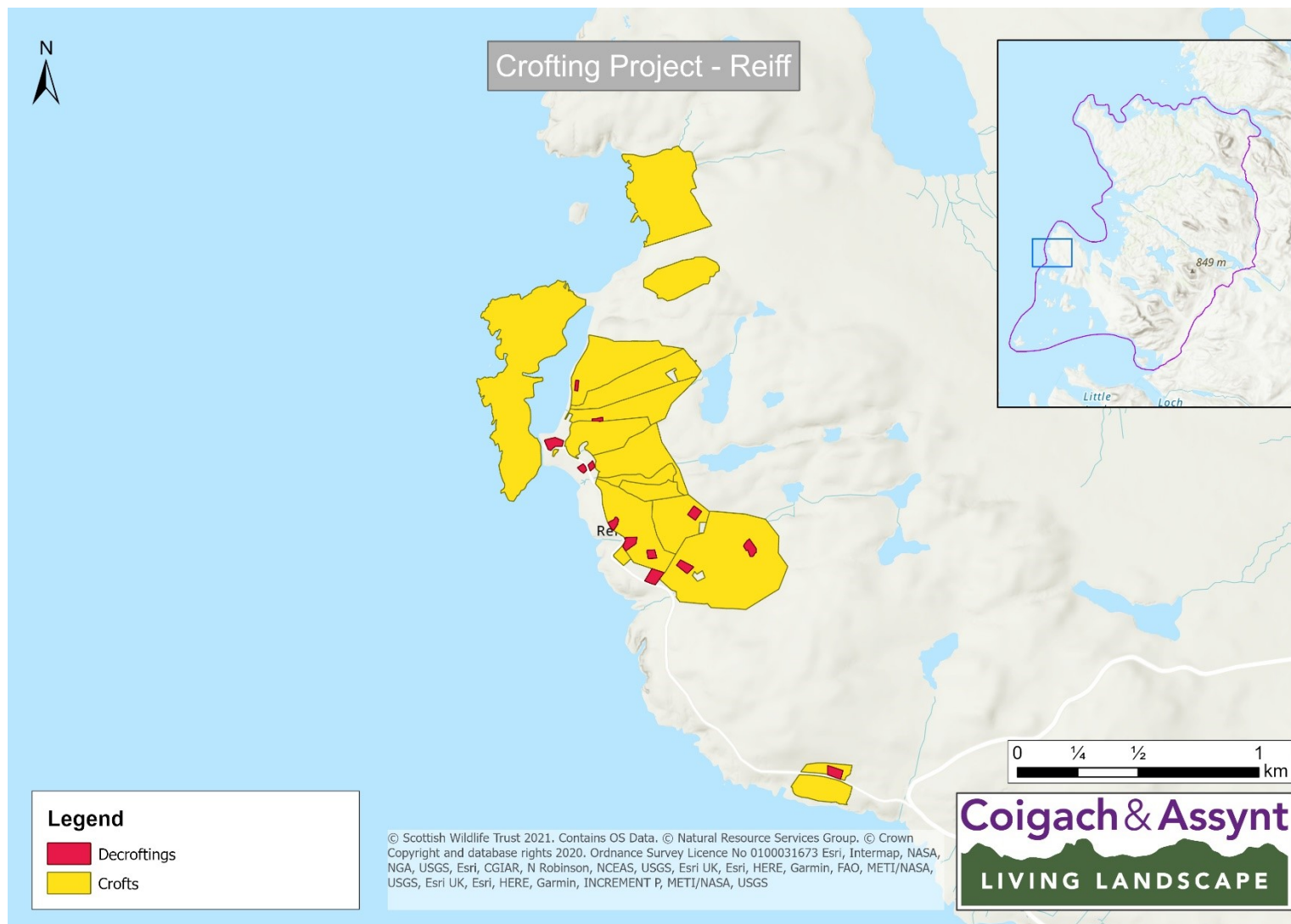
Annex 3 Croft Engagements

Croft no	Township	Activity	Activity	Activity	Activity	Activity
257	Achnahaird	Soil analysis	Rush cutting/drainage	Add in lime	Spring harrowing	Grass re-seed
103	Achiltibuie	Soil analysis	Fencing – stock fencing	mowing	Build scrapes	Add in shelter belts
133	Polglass/Achlochan	Soil analysis	Environment & Conservation plan	Implement recommendations	Fencing	Build scrapes
206	Polbain	drainage				
98	Achiltibuie	Rush layout for geese	Drainage suitable environment elvers			

Annex 4 Mapped Crofts

- 1/2 96 Achiltibuie
- 1/2 96 Achiltibuie (98)
- 100 Achiltibuie
- 101 Achiltibuie
- 102 Achiltibuie
- 103 Achiltibuie
- 103a Achiltibuie
- 103b Achiltibuie
- 104 Achiltibuie
- 105 Achiltibuie
- 106 Achiltibuie
- 108 Achiltibuie
- 110 Achiltibuie
- 111 Achiltibuie
- 112 Achiltibuie
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- 115 Achiltibuie
- 116 Achiltibuie
- 134 Achiltibuie
- 135 Achiltibuie
- 155 Achiltibuie
- 90 Achiltibuie
- 91 Achiltibuie
- 91a Achiltibuie
- 92 Achiltibuie
- 93 Achiltibuie
- 94 Achiltibuie
- 95 Achiltibuie
- 97 Achiltibuie
- 98 Achiltibuie
- 99 Achiltibuie
- 117 Polglass
- 118 Polglass
- 119 Polglass
- 120 Polglass
- 121 Polglass
- 122 Polglass
- 124 Polglass
- 124A Polglass
- 125 Polglass
- 126 Polglass
- 127 128 Polglass
- 1/2 128 Polglass (127)
- 129 128 Polglass
- 1/2 128 Polglass (129)
- 130 Polglass
- 131 Polglass
- 132 Polglass
- 133 Polglass
- 136 Polglass
- 137 Badenscallie
- 137.5 Badenscallie
- 138 Badenscallie
- 139 Badenscallie
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- 141 Badenscallie
- 142 Badenscallie
- 143 Badenscallie
- 144 Badenscallie
- 145 Badenscallie
- 146 Badenscallie
- 147 Badenscallie
- 148 Badenscallie
- 149 Badenscallie
- 150 Badenscallie
- 151 Badenscallie
- 152 Badenscallie
- 154 Badenscallie
- 165 Achnacarinan
- 169 Achnacarinan
- 166 Achduart
- 168 Achduart
- 171 Culnacraig
- 172 Culnacraig
- 175 Badenscallie
- Achlora
- East Achininver
- West Achininver

Annex 5 Map of Crofts Mapped in Reiff



Annex 6 Map of Crofts Mapped in Achiltibuie

