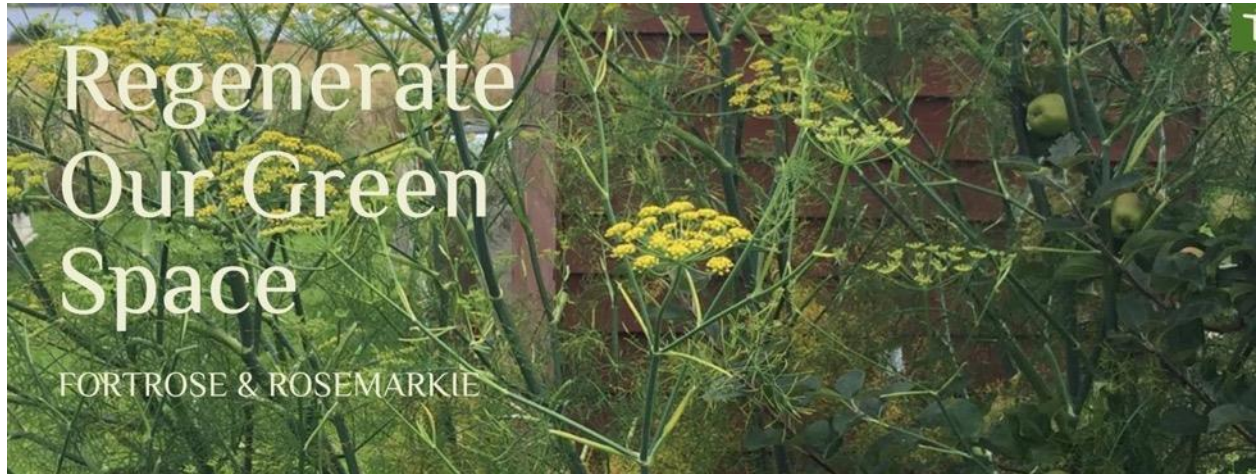




REGENERATE OUR GREEN SPACE

NESS COMMUNITY GARDEN PROJECT

BUSINESS PLAN

2025 - 2030

Produced for Regenerate Our Green Space (ROGS) Ltd, by
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Regenerate our Green Space Ltd (ROGS) was established in 2022 and incorporated as a company for public benefit in June 2023 (SC773036). It has a Board of 7 Directors, and over 200 members.

ROGS have already established an active presence in Fortrose and Rosemarkie through a number of activities that have involved local people, including wildflower planting and path clearing events. They have received consistently high levels of support and encouragement from across the community and have a growing local membership base.

This project plan draws on findings of a Feasibility Study funded by the Scottish Land Fund at Stage 1 between September 2023 and August 2024 to explore the potential for allotment plots, a community garden and community food-growing plots, wildlife habitat and wildflower plots, and public amenity space at Fortrose. The feasibility study has identified a paucity of publicly accessible greenspace in Fortrose, and high demand for allotment space.

An area of land leftover from a recent housing development at the corner of Ness Road and Ross Crescent has been identified as a suitable site. The land is currently unused, and the current owners (Tulloch Homes) have agreed in principle to sell the land to ROGS for community use. The site will be owned and controlled by community members to:

- Create a community garden area,
- Create new allotments for individual and community use, and
- Support nature by protecting and improving areas for wildlife and increased biodiversity.

There has been extensive community consultation about the potential to acquire land in Fortrose that can be used to benefit nature and people in the community. Community feedback has been received through interactions with individuals and key stakeholder groups and organisations, and through a community survey.

As part of this research, over 475 people from the Fortrose and Rosemarkie community council area engaged with the project and shared views through a combination of social media engagement, a door-to-door petition, and an awareness raising session at the Co-op, 75 people completed an online community survey, and around 30 people visited an on-site drop-in information session. The key priorities identified through consultation for community owned greenspace are:

- Regeneration of space for nature where people can connect with nature,
- Allotments and communal food growing space, and
- A community garden with meeting space, and
- Accessible paths, seating and growing spaces.

The need for this amenity space has been evidenced by strong community support; a lack of available and accessible greenspace within easy access of the town centre; a strong fit with national and local priorities to deliver strong, vibrant and resilient local communities, healthy and active communities, and to protect and enhance the local environment.

A provisional cost plan indicates initial acquisition and development costs of less than £30,000 ex VAT. A range of potential funding sources have been identified, and financing the project is likely to come through a portfolio of grant funders, supported by in-kind donations and modest local fundraising.

The ongoing costs of running the site are expected to be low. The community garden and growing spaces will be managed and maintained by volunteers, supported by member fundraising activities and occasional small grants. Individual allotment spaces will self-fund through plot rental income and membership fees.

Full findings are summarised within this plan, and can be found in more detail in the related documents:

- Community Feasibility Study and Research Report by H. Barton Consulting, August 2024.
- Ecological Survey Report by P. James, July 2024.
- Bird Report by A. Clunas, July 2024.
- Landscape Design by Horner and MacLennan Landscape Architects, August 2024.

INTRODUCTION

Regenerate Our Greenspace Ltd (ROGS) aim to develop a small area of unused land at Ness Gap Fortrose to provide public amenity space. The land will be used to provide community garden and food growing spaces, small individual allotments, and will also provide space for wildflowers and to protect wild space for nature. A central aim of the project is to protect and enhance greenspace in Fortrose for the environmental and social benefit of both people and nature.

ABOUT REGENERATE OUR GREENSPACE LTD

Regenerate Our Green Space Ltd (ROGS) is a company limited by guarantee with a voluntary Board of Directors, operating on a social enterprise model for public benefit in the Fortrose and Rosemarkie Community Council area. It was incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee (SC773036) in June 2023.

The organisation was initially formed as a voluntary community group in 2022. Since formation, the founding members have supported and assisted Fortrose and Rosemarkie Community Council's hedge planting at Wester Greengates, and Rosemarkie Amenities Association's hedge-planting near the community-run beach cafe in Rosemarkie. They have successfully lobbied Historic Environment Scotland to plant two large areas of the grounds at Fortrose Cathedral with wild flowers (planting began in autumn 2023). They have also worked with local residents to clear blocked paths at Feddon Hill, and organised community Spring Cleans around the Cathedral and at Rosemarkie beach.

They hope to partner with the Rosemarkie Amenities Association again to create wild flower patches throughout Rosemarkie village, and plan to lobby more widely for a reduction in the use of pesticides and herbicides in both Rosemarkie and Fortrose. They have also recently been asked by a local landowner to provide support for a nature restoration project at the Hill of Fortrose.

COMPANY STRUCTURE

The company has a Board of six full Directors and one Co-opted Director, drawn from the founder members of the organisation. Directors of the Company will subsequently be elected by the Ordinary members at an annual general meeting in November 2024. Ordinary membership is open to all individuals aged 16 or over who are resident in the community, entitled to vote and who support the purposes of the company. Individuals age between 12 and 15, or who are otherwise not eligible for Ordinary membership can apply for Junior or Associate membership with no voting rights, providing at least three quarters of members are members of the community at any time. There are 214 Ordinary members at 31 July 2024.

The Articles of Association allow for up to nine Directors, including two Co-optees. One Co-optee place is designated for a young person (age 16 to 25). There are no known younger members who may be able to fill this position. However one of the Directors is actively working with the Highlife Highland Youth Development Officer to support two junior members to act as potential youth advisors to the Board.

The main purpose of ROGS, as set out in its Articles of Association, is the protection and improvement of the environment and positive community action. Through community consultation they aim to identify and manage sustainable projects that enhance and improve the natural environment; and to inspire, empower and support members of the community to take positive actions to lead, develop and participate in projects that are beneficial both to the natural environment and people in the community.

ROGS MANAGEMENT

The ROGS Board has seven Directors, who collectively bring considerable experience and expertise to the running and management of the Company. Full details of their individual experience and interests are provided at *Appendix 1*.

Directors:

- Morag Bramwell – Chair
- Lynne Mackenzie – Company Secretary
- Steve Bramwell
- Alister Clunas
- Paul Dungey
- Jo-Anne Pugh
- Trish McKeggie (Coopted)

Several of the Directors are existing allotment holders and/or have interests, qualifications or professional expertise in horticulture, agriculture, conservation and land management. The Directors are highly experienced in running voluntary Boards and committees and in making successful grant applications to support community projects. They also have wide connections and networks across the communities of Fortrose and Rosemarkie through membership of other groups.

In addition to the main Board, connections are being found and developed amongst the new membership to support the work of the Directors. These include volunteers with horticultural and ecological expertise, business skills, charity governance and book-keeping experience. They are already starting to play a valuable role and contribution to the organisation. The Directors are actively considering the formation of sub-groups for the project management of developing the site, and for fundraising activities.

Key Volunteers:

Viv Hill – a long term resident of Fortrose who is keen to support a strong community, has offered her many decades of book-keeping experience to act as a Treasurer.

Heather Alexander – recently moved to Rosemarkie, having extensive experience of volunteering. She was a long-term committee member in the Strathbungo Society in Glasgow, committee member and then president of Scottish Women In Business, a founding steering group member of Glasgow Southside u3a and was a Trustee of the John Muir Trust, where she served on the Governance Working Group. She has offered to keep watch on corporate governance, data protection and compliance.

AFFILIATIONS

Regenerate Our Green Space have signed the Highland Charter for Climate, Nature and Health. They are members of several local and national networks and organisations that can provide support and advice for community land ownership and use. They currently include:

- Highlands and Islands Climate Hub,
- Highland Good Food Project,
- Highland Environment Forum,
- Community Land Scotland, and
- Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations (SCVO).

ROGS also have a close and co-operative working relationship with the existing Rosemarkie Allotments and Garden Society (RAGS). They also have active links with the local Men's Shed who have provided support setting up banking, and with IT, as well as offering future help with making wooden benches, planters etc.

PROJECT OUTLINE

ROGS have identified an area of currently unused land in Fortrose that is available to purchase for community use. They aim to develop the land as an amenity greenspace for the benefit of the local community and nature. The site will be owned and controlled by community members, to:

- Create a community garden area,
- Create new allotments for individual and community use, and
- Support nature by protecting and improving areas for wildlife and increased biodiversity.

SITE OPTIONS

The Board of ROGS have identified that any site needs to meet the following requirements:

Essential	Important	Desirable
• Accessible for Vehicles • Complies with local development plan • Uncontaminated land • Available	• Large enough for food growing and public amenity • Affordable • Parking available / potential • Access to water supply	• Close to town centre

With these criteria in mind, ROGs have scoped land in and around Fortrose that may be suitable, and have assessed the following potential sites:

Site	Essential Criteria	Important Criteria	Desirable Criteria	Rank
1. Tullochs, Ness Gap	Meets all	Likely to meet. Size manageable	Yes	High
2. 19 Deans Road	Meets most Not currently available	May meet Size large	Yes	Med
3. Christopherson land	Meets some (availability tbc)	May meet Size OK, esp if combined with site 4	Yes	Med
4. Leisure Centre	Meets some (availability tbc, planning compliance tbc, interim use)	Likely to meet Size small	Yes	Med
5. Fraser's field	Not currently available	Likely to meet	Yes	Med/low
6. NE Ness Road site	Not currently available	Likely to meet	Yes	Med / low
7. Scorrilea site	Not currently available, less accessible to town	Not known	No	Low
8. Canonbury site	Not currently available, not accessible	Not known	No	Low



THE PROPOSED SITE

The proposed site is currently owned by Tulloch Homes (now part of The Springfield Group). Eight potential sites were considered as part of a feasibility study carried out during 2023-24. This was the only site that met both the essential and important criteria established by the Board, and also the only site identified as immediately available.

The site is 0.69 acres. It is a triangular area of land that is now surplus to Tulloch's requirements following completion of their housing development at the Ness Gap.



The site is an unshaded sunny field, bordering Ness Road and Ross Crescent. The field slopes gently South East towards the Moray Firth. The prevailing wind is south-westerly, though cold north and east winds coming off the sea can also affect the land. It sits within easy walking or cycling distance from adjoining residential areas, Fortrose Academy, Eilean Dubh Care Home and from the centre of the town. It is elevated above the Ness Gap housing development, with attractive views over the Moray Firth.

SITE SURVEYS

The land is currently unused and untended, and the whole site is overgrown. It has not been in any productive use for at least twenty years, and has not been maintained since the housing developments were completed. It is currently in a neglected and unused state. Topographical, ecological and bird surveys have been carried out, with no significant issues found. The overall site appearance is poor semi-improved grassland, with insufficient species available to assign the vegetation to a recognised NVC plant community. All of the plant species are common, both nationally and locally, and none are of conservation interest. Seven bird species were identified landing at the site, including three amber listed species (Whitethroat, Meadow Pipit and Reed Bunting) and one red listed species (House Sparrow). No species of national or regional importance were identified during the surveys.

ROGS recognise that the development of the site as proposed will cause some temporary destruction of habitat and displacement of bird and animal species. Site works will be carried out during winter months and outwith the bird breeding season, at times that will cause minimal disruption. As the space develops, input from expert advice available within the Board will ensure that habitats are provided to support a much wider range of biodiversity of plants, insects, birds and animals, and to support a much broader range of species than are found there now.

There are no existing local landscape designations such as SSSI (Sites of Special Scientific Interest), AONB (Ares of Outstanding Natural Beauty) or SEPA (flood risk) restrictions on the sites that may otherwise restrict use as proposed. There is no knowledge or evidence of there ever having been industrial or other use in the area that might present contamination issues or compromise the proposed land use.

SITE RESTRICTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Communications from Tulloch Homes / Springfield Property Group have confirmed that they are willing in principle to sell or gift the land to a suitable community group, subject to the likely following conditions:

- Transfer subject to planning permission for the proposed use, with a right to review to ensure that the use will not be detrimental to the amenity of their adjoining development, and
- Subject to a long-term clawback arrangement requiring payback of the market value of the land to Tullochs if it changes from community use, and commercial or residential development of the land takes place in the future.

These conditions are still subject to further negotiation as the plans move forward. The owners have meanwhile been happy to agree access for topographical and other surveys and for valuation.

Some initial planning guidance has been obtained by ROGS from the Planning Advisory Service (PAS). PAS anticipate that planning permission will likely be required for the creation of allotment plots, and for the erection of any related structures such as sheds, or parking spaces. As the land is not currently designated as agricultural, planning permission may also be required for change of use. Pre-application advice is available from the Highland Council Planning Authority free of charge for non-profit organisations and community groups. A preplanning application was made on 2nd July 2024, to ensure that there are not likely to be any unreasonable constraints to the intended use.

The National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) is in favour of allotments, and specifically promotes local living and proposals that will have a positive impact on health, which included access to allotments in both cases. Overall, the information above suggests that the use of the land for community growing/allotments and as a community garden could be supported. Bringing it into community ownership and management would immediately improve local outlooks, providing both amenity and environmental benefits to the local community.

A detailed legal check of title conditions, wayleaves and public rights of way that may affect the property will be made before purchase. ROGS are not currently aware of any issues that might impact either acquisition or proposed use of the site.

OUTLINE PLANS

A design brief informed by community feedback has been provided to landscape architects Horner and MacLennan, along with the details from site surveys above. The design brief strives for: healthy soil, elimination of pesticides herbicides and artificial fertilisers, hard surfaces which have minimal environmental impact, biodiversity, encouraging all forms of wildlife, re-use and repair, using local sources and suppliers, accessibility for disabilities and all ages. The project has an emphasis on food growing for health, community and the environment. It has also been heavily influenced by early feedback and community preferences from community consultations outlined in the next section of this report.

Interim results of the community survey suggest the main priorities for the residents who responded are:

- Regeneration of space for nature where people can connect with nature,
- Allotments and communal food growing space, and
- A community garden with meeting space, and
- Accessible paths, seating and growing spaces.

An initial outline design gives room for eight quarter plots (60m²), at least one of which will be set aside for community growing, ideally with raised beds accessible for wheelchair users. This may change depending on actual demand as use of the site evolves, and the design allows flexibility for plots to be split or extended if required. The sharing of plots with friends or other family members will also be encouraged, and has been found to work well amongst allotment holders at Rosemarkie.

ASSESSMENT OF DEMAND

LOCAL AREA

Community profiling indicates recent rapid recent growth of both communities as a result of new housing developments. In Fortrose, new housing has been built on the hillside at Feddon Hill and more recently at Ness Gap. Both are separated from the older town centre, and there is a perception that more of the 'newer' community members commute to work in Inverness, Dingwall or other settlements. There are few informal outdoor designated meeting spaces for the community other than a seasonal beach café at Rosemarkie or the Cathedral grounds at Fortrose. Most planned activities are hosted indoors at the Library or Leisure Centre in Fortrose, the Town Hall Fortrose, at the Free Church Hall in Fortrose or at the Gordon Memorial Hall in Rosemarkie.

There are also a high proportion of older residents, with a higher-than-average proportion of older single households, compared to the Highland average. With an ageing demographic, there is a longer-term likelihood of increased health-related issues and a risk of increased social isolation within the community.

A Greenspace Audit carried out by The Highland Council in 2010 mapped the existing availability of publicly available greenspace in Fortrose and Rosemarkie. The settlements are surrounded by open space, but most of it is actively managed and fenced off farmland, or has a designated use such as the golf course and campsites. Since the audit was carried out, amenity land has been developed or has degenerated to woody scrub. This paucity of accessible greenspace combined with a post-pandemic surge in demand for allotments at nearby Rosemarkie, has added impetus to the community's ambitious project to create new allotments, community food growing and a community garden.

The project targets these identified and emerging community needs by providing opportunities for individual and community activity, volunteering in outdoor space, social events, and intergenerational activity. It will provide opportunities to maintain or increase physical activity, and to support both physical and mental wellbeing.

Community feedback has also identified a community priority to retain and protect greenspace for the benefit of the community and nature. Following the loss of greenspace in and around the settlements for new housing development, there is strong support to restore and protect natural environment and wild spaces, to encourage greater biodiversity and for wildlife. These are core aims of the project, and it will make a strong contribution to supporting these locally identified community needs.

MARKET

There are currently few growing spaces currently available to residents in the Black Isle. Where they exist, sites and the number of plots available are small, and waiting lists are generally closed due to low turnover and the lack of ability to meet existing demand.

Demand is also reported to be high in the nearby larger towns of Inverness and Nairn. Sites have reported big increases in demand nationally since the Covid-19 lockdowns. This has also been reflected in the local experience of the Rosemarkie Allotments and Garden Society. New house

building at both Fortrose and Rosemarkie has seen high increases in local population, which may also be a factor in increasing demand. Overall, demand across the Highlands is variable, but is on average 46% of available capacity, and with existing sites already fully subscribed.

Representatives of other sites in the Black Isle and in commutable areas of the Highlands have expressed support for more allotment provision at Fortrose. Expressions of support have also come from Transition Black Isle and from the Black Isle Horticultural Society. Community interest in community food-growing space and / or a community garden is also very high (see Community Consultation details below), with around 25 new members already proactively interested in potential volunteering opportunities.

17 survey respondents so far have expressed an early interest in taking on either a full or a shared allotment at Fortrose, and other people have shown a potential interest depending on how the growing spaces are developed and a more detail of practical implications being available. Demand is expected to increase as face-to-face engagement takes place and as the project starts to become more tangible and visible to local residents, with known demand already outstripping the capacity of the available site for individual allotment plots available.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

ROGS have carried out extensive consultation and engagement with the community and with key stakeholders over the last two years to gather views and to gauge support for developing the project. To date, this has included:

- 2021 – Initial Facebook survey via the Black Isle Noticeboard, generating **54** positive responses.
- June 2023 - Creation of a website and social media pages.
- June 2023 – Door-to-door calls in the community to gather **475** signatures for a Community Right to Buy over a one-week period.
- October 2023 - A post to the Black Isle Noticeboard Facebook Page to raise awareness of the group and to gain support for Co-op Community Fund fundraiser.
- December 2023 – In-person awareness raising sessions at the Co-op in Fortrose, engaging with over **200** members of the public.
- Spring 2024 – Information and update article in the Black Isle Chatterbox magazine.
- An online community survey promoted via email, website, social media and local community networks, gathering **75** responses.
- June 2024 – direct mail leaflet campaign achieving over **200** new members.
- On site pop-up information event attended by **30** members of the community.
- Regular updates to members and key stakeholders, by email contact, phone calls and individual meetings and conversations. All the local elected members, the community council, the ward manager and nine community groups and other organisations with complementary aims and objectives have so far provided positive support for the project.
- Regular and constructive conversations have also taken place with immediate neighbours to listen to concerns and provide updates and reassurances as the project has progressed.

Feedback has been consistently positive, with strong and enthusiastic support from across the community for the project concept and location from across the community. Around 25% of the adult population have actively supported the concept of community-owned land for allotments, community growing and garden space and to protect nature.

Through the community survey, local respondents have also consistently identified potential benefits including greater community cohesion, increased social interactions, better physical and mental wellbeing for individuals, and increasing skills and capacity within the community to grow food. There is also very strong support for a community garden (82%), and for spaces that encourage and regenerate nature and wildlife (82%).

STRATEGIC FIT

In the 'Allotments Guidance for Local Authorities', the Scottish Government have brought together evidence of wide and sustained benefits to the communities and individuals involved in community growing of any sort. They identify cross-cutting benefits that contribute to both National Outcomes and National Indicators, and to UN Sustainable Development Goals under the national outcome themes. The project contributes well to the following National Framework outcomes:

- **Communities:** We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe.
- **Poverty:** We tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally.
- **Health:** We are healthy and active.
- **Environment:** We value, enjoy, protect and enhance our environment.

By developing community-owned and managed assets and strengthening collaborative links with other groups, various strands of the proposed project will help to deliver numerous national and local strategic outcomes. These are identified in further detail within our feasibility report and summarised under the following themes:

COMMUNITY AND PLACE

The project will contribute directly to the following national and local objectives for Community and Place:

- National Outcomes 2 and 11 (inclusive, empowered and resilient communities; tackling poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth (land) and power more equally).
- Community Empowerment Act Part 9 (community use of land for food production).
- NPF4 (improved open spaces to support local living).
- Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan (settlement placemaking priorities to safeguard and secure Green Networks).
- [Opportunity Black Isle Place Plan](#) (become a zero-carbon, sustainable and resilient [Black Isle] community with opportunity and health and wellbeing for all).
- Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement (community ownership and use of land).
- Place Principle (collaboration and community involvement to achieve better outcomes for people and communities).

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The project will contribute directly to the following national and local objectives for Health and Wellbeing:

- National Outcome 8 (healthy and active communities).
- Fairer Scotland Action Plan 2016 (access to healthy, nutritious food).
- Good Food Nation Policy 2022 (commitments to allotments and community growing).
- NatureScot – Our Natural Health Service (responding to growing pressures from an ageing population, more people with multiple conditions and chronic illness).
- Think Health, Think Nature, Highland Green Health Partnership (developing and promoting green spaces for public health benefits).
- Connected Scotland Strategy 2018 (tackling social isolation and loneliness, building stronger social connections).
- Active Highland Strategy 2017 (enabling the inactive to become active, enabling the active to stay active throughout life, maintain and improve active infrastructure, including natural spaces, support resilient communities through activity)

CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT

The project will contribute directly to the following national and local objectives for Climate and Environment:

- National Outcome 6 (people value, enjoy, protect and enhance their environment).
- Glasgow Food and Climate Declaration 2022 (supporting integrated food strategies).
- Climate Change Plan (path to a low carbon economy).
- Environment Strategy for Scotland 2020 (nature protected and restored, healthy environment supports a fairer, healthy, more inclusive society).
- Good Food Nation Act 2022 (easy access to a good, healthy food system, food system good for the natural environment, supports good physical and mental health, promotes a good food culture).
- Highland Nature Biodiversity Action Plan 2021-26 (increase participation in green and blue activities, increase public engagement, improve biodiversity data gathering).
- Highland Community Food Growing Strategy 2022-27 (support access to land for community growing, build on momentum for community food growing and local food resilience).
- Highland Council Allotment Policy 2024 (support community led allotment sites as a community asset, and in response to climate change and biodiversity loss).
-

OTHER COMMUNITY/ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Research co-ordinated by Greenspace Scotland in 2011 explored the social return on investment (SORI) from allotment projects across Scotland. They calculated every £1 invested in a sample project

could generate around £16 in social benefits.¹ The SORI calculations vary considerably depending on geographic location, population size, relative indices of deprivation, and on whether the returns consider social and economic benefits or also include the value of increased natural capital, for example.

The site at Ness Gap is approximately two thirds of an acre, and the future SORI value is not possible to calculate at this stage. However, drawing from the Greenspace Case Studies of modest garden or nature-based wellbeing projects that a social return of between £8 - £12 per £1 of investment could be anticipated.

The personal economic benefits to individual plot holders will very much depend on what they choose to use their plots to grow, how they source initial tools and stock, and how they manage them. It can be possible for a well-managed full allotment to produce enough food to provide a quarter of the fruit/veg requirements of a family of four over the year. This will be more limited at Ness Gap due to the size of the plots proposed, but could save a plot-holder up to £250 - £500 a year in food costs after around three years of establishing their plot.

FINANCIAL MODELLING

PHASING ASSUMPTIONS

Development of the project assumes a site acquisition around the end of 2024, with the first year of operation starting from the calendar year 2025. The first phase of activity on the site will be the most extensive. It will make use of the dormant winter months to put in place the overall site infrastructure, including marking out the paths and allotment beds, erecting a tool shed, planting boundary hedging and installing a water supply (piped or through rainwater collection).

During the Spring, the allotment plots will be established to maximise the income generating capacity of the site at the earliest opportunity. It is anticipated, however, that the new plots will not be mature enough to support much, if any plant or food production during the first season, and that rental income may therefore be restricted.

The central community space will be developed in an overlapping third phase, which may be flexible depending on funding availability and volunteer capacity. Access to natural space and seating areas have been identified as a priority through the community survey, and grass paths and seating areas throughout the site will therefore be a priority within this phase.

The design of the site allows for flexibility for growing areas to be divided up differently, increased or reduced as use of the site and community needs evolve.

¹ Greenspace Scotland, *Capturing the Changes that Count – a review of greenspace in Scotland's SROI programmes and projects*, November 2013. Retrieved from <https://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/FAQs/sroi>, accessed July 2024.

CAPITAL COSTS

The main costs for the project will come in the first year from site acquisition, site preparation, capital infrastructure and initial planting of wildflower and community garden space.

ROGS have been awarded Stage 1 funding for ecology, topology, and valuation surveys, and to develop business/feasibility plans and landscape design. They intend to proceed to a Stage 2 application to meet land acquisition and legal costs. Grant funding, donations, in-kind contributions and sponsorship (for benches or tree planting, for example) will be sought for the initial infrastructure and site development costs. A desktop scoping exercise has been carried out to identify potential sources of grant funding for initial phases of the project, which are detailed in our feasibility report.

Initial desk-top scoping and existing experience within the ROGS Board has identified a number of potential funding sources for various elements of the project, as summarised below. As detailed design plans and costs are becoming clearer, the Directors have scrutinised the conditions of grant funding, and identified a shortlist of potential funders to make initial contact with, as detailed in the feasibility study. They will be progressing this as a priority action over the next three months. Several of these grant sources have already been used by our funding team for other successful projects carried out by community groups in the Black Isle.

The cost headings and potential funding sources identified to date are summarised in the table below. (Further detail on the scoping of potential grant funds are provided in the next sections).

Item	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Comments/ Potential funding source/s
Acquisition - Site purchase - Legal & Title Fees	£20,000 (valuation) £3,500 (est)			25%-30% Discount to be negotiated <i>Up to 85% Grant from SLF / HIE for purchase and 100% for legal fees.</i>
ACQUISITION COSTS	£23,500			
Site Preparation & Infrastructure - Water supply - Groundworks for: Hedging Path network Pond Growing plots	£6,000 est			Water supply from butts or via neighbour in first instance Groundworks local contractor <i>Grant potential from Community Regeneration Funds, Nature Restoration Fund, N.Highland Initiative, H&I Climate Hub, People's Postcode Trust, Mushroom Trust, Cruach Trust, Pebble Trust, Landfill Communities Fund.</i>
Allotments Set-up - Shed - 2 x Water butt sets (230l)	£2,037 (Fettes) £80 (B&Q)			10% discount likely available from local sawmill <i>Funds as above</i>
Communal Spaces - Rustic Benches - Accessible raised beds	£900 £600		£300	At cost wood supply & work with BIMS should reduce costs of all timber items. <i>Local sponsorship, Fit for Life Foundation</i>
Tools & Equipment - Shared hand-tools / mower etc	By donations	Donations / Men's shed	Donations / Men's shed	Free supplies <i>Local donations, B&Q Foundation, Wickes Community Programme</i>
Initial Plant Stock - Hedging & trees - Wildflower seeds - Garden plants	Free £500 est £1,000 est	£500	£500 Future years self-generating	Free supplies <i>Tree Council, Branching Out, Woodland Trust, H&I Climate Hub, Local donations</i> May also be able to get donation / discount on plants from local supplier/s
INFRASTRUCTURE & SET-UP TOTALS (Exl acquisition)	£11,037	£ 500	£ 800	Target: 80% from grants 10% discounts 10% donations / goodwill

REVENUE COSTS

After the first year, the ongoing operating costs of the site will be very low. Costs will mainly be routine administration of the site, insurance, repair and replacement costs.

Operating costs have been assessed using the nearby Rosemarkie allotment site accounts as a comparison. Here, the main expenditure is for insurances and routine site maintenance. It is assumed that insurance costs will be similar, or less if a combined policy can be secured. Site maintenance such as fencing or hedge repairs and mowing grass paths will be covered by volunteer input. Other organisation administrative costs, such as membership communications, venue hire for AGMs and sundry office costs, will be covered by unrestricted funds raised to support the organisation as a whole.

ROGS aim is to be self-financing to meet ongoing costs within three years, through the rental of growing space and through member subscriptions and local fundraising activities. By securing community ownership, there will be no lease payments for the site. Using experience from the Rosemarkie allotment site, costs are therefore anticipated to be around £200 to £350 each year. These are outlined in the table below:

Revenue Cost Item	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Comments
Administration and running costs, including: Gazebo hire for pop-up events Sundry Postage Membership & community engagement	£75	£75	£80	General ROGS governance administration (newsletters, AGM hall hire, website fees, company returns etc). will be absorbed within overall ROGS overheads. Most general maintenance, strimming etc will be carried out by volunteers.
Insurance (Public liability)	£120	£132	£145	Based on equivalent costs for RAGS and allowing for 10% inflation. Some savings may be achieved if policies can be combined with other sites.
Maintenance or repair of infrastructure and communal equipment	£0	£50	£100	
New or replacement planting	£0	£150	£150	Costs expected to reduce longer term as project evolves and able to generate own seeds, plant-stock and local donations.
TOTALS	£ 195	£407	£475	

INCOME GENERATION

INCOME FROM GROWING SPACES

Development of a community garden, planting for wildlife corridors, fencing or footpath upgrades will be developed incrementally. It is anticipated that community use may develop or change over the first years of use. Funds for these projects will be raised through a combination of fundraising, in-kind donations and small grants, specific to each project, supported by in-kind contributions and targeted fundraising or local sponsorship.

Individual Plots

The allotments will generate sufficient income to cover insurance and administration costs through rental fees. The following is an estimate based on the indicative site designs and rental rates at comparable sites.

Plot Size	Number	Annual Fee	Total
Full Plot	0	£50.00	£ 0.00
Half Plot	0	£25.00	£ 0.00
Bed / Small plot	7	£12.50	£ 87.50
Annual membership (allotment plot)	7 min	£10.00	£ 70.00
Annual subscriptions (community garden/ plots)	10 est	£ 5.00	£ 50.00
Total income from plot fees and subscriptions			£207.50

The annual fee for an allotment growing plot is based on equivalent local rates of £25 for a half plot at the Rosemarkie and the Cromarty allotment sites. Both of these locations are currently fully used and have good demand for any vacancies. Based on known demand in Fortrose, this is considered a reasonable rate. An allotment membership fee will also be charged for each individual who works an allotment (initial assumptions are 1 person per plot, though some plots may also be between two or more individuals. The income assumed here is therefore a minimum and may be higher).

Use of Communal Plots

Use of a community growing space will also initially be funded either by donation or by an annual subscription of a nominal amount of £5.00 per annum to cover use of tools and informal membership of a growers' forum to discuss and decide on use of the communal space. The nominal charge will make it accessible and affordable to as many people in the community as possible. Once the project is established, it may be possible to provide access to the community growing space at no charge. A 'membership' commitment may still be required, however, to both manage numbers using the facility and provide a continuing forum for about how the space should be used.

Community Fundraising

To supplement income from plot fees, ROGS will also develop a fundraising plan to raise additional income to cover routine maintenance and repairs, and to develop a small sinking fund towards the ongoing improvement and maintenance of the site. Initial fundraising and donations will be used to supplement grant funding applications along with in-kind contributions. Fundraising potential of

around £1,000 per annum for ROGS from activities requiring only modest input has been identified, as summarised in the table below:

Activity	Type	Period	Target Amount	Comments
Co-operative Community Fund (Current participants)	One-off	Now	£1,500	£971 already received
Sponsorship opportunities (Memorial benches, trees etc)	One-off	Year 1	£500 +	
Total Target (Pre-Development)			£2,000	Will establish early fund to cover fixed revenue costs; to support ongoing community engagement, and initial purchases of seeds and plants etc.
Plant donations	Ongoing	Years 1 - 3	£150	In-kind contribution value
'Friends of Ness Community Gardens' or similar	Ongoing	Years 1 - 3	£720 (based on 20% current membership @ £20 pa)	Potential for member or other supporters who are not allotment plot holders or community garden growers to support through an annual 'friends' payment.
Local market refreshments (using produce grown on-site).	Ongoing	Years 1-3	£200 (based on 2 x per annum – locations)	TBI are often looking for groups to provide refreshments at monthly Black Isle community markets (e.g. Culbokie or Cromarty). RAGS experience suggests £100-£200 profit possible per market.
Local events	Ongoing	Years 1-5	£1,000 (based on 1 x per annum)	Based on an offer from F&R Golf Club to host 'race nights' which can typically raise up to £1k
Seasonal sales of surplus produce or plants	Ongoing	Years 2-3	£100 (based on 2 x sales per annum)	There is not currently a community market at Fortrose or Rosemarkie. Occasional sales may be possible through the other TBI markets, or through supporting organisations such as the beach café, or at community engagement events on-site. There is no longer a greengrocer selling locally grown fresh produce in Fortrose. Nearest local supplier is Black Isle Berries farm shop at Tore (8 miles)
Target Annual Fundraising Potential (Post-acquisition)			Up to £2, 020	(Excluding in-kind donations)

ROGS aim to raise project specific funds of £1,000 by the time of purchase to support the initial acquisition and development costs, and to cover first year costs when plot rental fees will be very limited. A further modest target is proposed of £500 per year of funds raised by ROGS to be ringfenced specifically for this project for Years 2 and 3. This will avoid stretching capacity of the Directors and volunteers in the first two years whilst the site is being developed and established. It can be increased from Year 3 onwards to start to create a reasonable sinking fund for ongoing repairs, maintenance and renewal of the site and infrastructure.

Any surpluses not required to support this project will be available to support future projects and/or the wider objectives of ROGS within the Fortrose and Rosemarkie communities. A small group of member volunteers should be able to assist in delivering a fundraising plan, and avoid reliance on continuous grant funding other than for occasional one-off infrastructure costs (upgrading paths or site facilities, for example).

FINANCIAL PROJECTIONS

Five-year financial projections are summarised at *Appendix 2*.

They show high costs in the first year based on the land purchase and associated costs, followed by the capital costs of groundworks and developing the initial site infrastructure. Funding has been scoped, and it has been found there is good potential to raise grant funds to cover these costs, supplemented by achievable discounts, contributions in kind, donations and local fundraising.

Thereafter the revenue costs of running the project are very modest as it will be managed and run by volunteers of allotment plot holders. Costs mainly relate to insurance and administration of the allotments and community gardens, with estimated costs based on known expenditure at nearby allotment sites. The feasibility study has established that these costs can be comfortably met through a combination of fees for the use of allotments / community growing plots, and through a modest fundraising programme managed by a member sub-group. Funds raised will also build up a sinking fund to cover ongoing repair and maintenance costs.

After year 3, it is anticipated that use and design of the land may change as community and community needs and preferences evolve. One-off applications for suitable grant funds will be assessed as needs arise. Any infrastructure or site improvement plans can be phased to meet volunteer capacity and funding availability.

RISK ASSESSMENT AND MITIGATION

Risks have been identified through a SWOT analysis detailed in the feasibility report. Those most likely to impact on the project are detailed in the risk register included at *Appendix 3*. All risks identified fall within acceptable to tolerable ranges with control measures in place.

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Providing funds can be raised to cover the initial acquisition and site preparation costs, the project is very well placed to be viable and sustainable in the long term. Use of the site is flexible enough to allow for phasing to be varied without significant impact. Ongoing costs are very low and can be covered by volunteer input and local fundraising. ROGS will have flexibility to control expenditure and to find cost-effective ways to cover the ongoing maintenance and improvements to the site, so that it can be maintained for the benefit of nature and people in the community for the long term.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: BOARD PROFILES

Morag Bramwell (Chair)

Morag has a first BA in languages and a Post Graduate Diploma in Business & Secretarial Studies. She worked as a secretary, then a TV Programme Researcher. After moving to the Highlands, she did a second degree in Object-oriented Computer Programming (OU). She spent two years working with three different medical practices computerising medical histories, then worked for approximately 10 years as a Data Analyst with NHS Highland.

Morag joined Rosemarkie Allotments & Gardens Society (RAGS) before retiring and has been Secretary at RAGS for several years. Since retiring she has been a volunteer at Fortrose Academy's vegetable, fruit and flower garden. She is a member of the Soil Association and Pesticide Action Network and a range of environmental groups. She started up ROGS with a view to creating community gardens and allotments in Fortrose, after being inspired by the Highland Good Food Conference.

Lynne Mackenzie (Company Secretary)

Lynne grew up on the Black Isle. After studying Art, then gaining an M.A. hons in History of Art from the University of Aberdeen, she moved to Glasgow, where she worked with several contemporary arts organisations and then for Glasgow Museums and Collections. She then made the leap into freelance work as a visual arts PR and marketer, curator and advisor, with a bit of web design on the side. She relocated home to Rosemarkie, where she is developing her own artistic practice inspired by a keen interest in the natural environment and focused on botanical painting. She is a committee member of Rosemarkie Allotments and Gardens Society and enjoys time on her own allotment.

Steve Bramwell

Steve is a retired Consultant Urologist and spent 35 years in NHS surgical practice. He has lived in Fortrose for the past 22 years. Steve has served on the Committee of Chanonry Sailing Club as Secretary and volunteer fund raiser, and was involved in the building of two St Ayles Rowing Skiffs. Other interests include rowing, cycling and outdoor pursuits in general. He is interested in setting up projects to enhance the quality of life in communities on the Black Isle and is a trustee and past Chairman of the Black Isle Men's' Shed, for which he has secured a number of successful funding applications. He was principal fund raiser for the Fortrose and Rosemarkie trishaw mobility Trikes project and a committee member of the Black Isle Repair Café in a fund-raising capacity

Alister Clunas

Alister has worked his whole career in conservation land management. Latterly Property Manager of National Trust for Scotland's Mar Lodge Estate from 1998-2005. From 2005-2015 He was Chief Officer of Aberdeen Greenspace Ltd which carried out greenspace projects within the boundary of the City of Aberdeen funded mainly through the Landfill Communities Fund. Now retired, he volunteers for RSPB on their Highland reserves delivering visitor management at Loch Ruthven and

practical tasks at Culbin Sands. He is Chair of the Highland Branch of the Scottish Ornithologists' Club.

Paul Dungey

Paul has a Diploma in Fine Art, and an Archaeology & Prehistory Honours Degree 1988. He worked as a Field Archaeologist throughout the UK for 10 years. He then worked in Oban and was a Mountain Rescue Team Member in Argyll as a Physiotherapist. He has since worked at the RNI Inverness as a Community Physiotherapist, and as a Specialist Physiotherapist for people with a learning disability at New Craigs Hospital. He is inspired to work with people who may be the most vulnerable citizens in our society, and gains significant job satisfaction from achieving positive outcomes for them. He has been a member of the Rosemarkie Allotments and Gardening Society since 2011, where he combines food growing with wildflowers for nature.

Jo-Anne Pugh

Jo-Anne grew up in Caithness. She has been a journalist for the BBC for more than thirty years in various parts of the UK, and currently work part-time for the main London news desk. She moved back to Scotland with her family in 2013 where her two children attended Avoch Primary and Fortrose Academy. She has been active in both schools' parent councils and is currently a member of Fortrose and Rosemarkie Community Council. With the community council, she organised the planting of a 220m native hedge on Common Good land in Fortrose to encourage wildlife, help combat climate change and encourage neighbours to get to know one another. Coming from a family of keen gardeners, she enjoys the challenge of growing fruit and veg in her exposed garden at Upper Raddery.

Trish McKeggie (Co-opted)

Trish has a National Certificate in Agriculture from Oaklands College, and extensive experience of working on various farms. She came up to Scotland to work in Ord House Hotel, and kitchen garden. In 1990s, she and a friend started and ran a small tree nursery, and In 2000 she started her own gardening business, until retirement. She now volunteers in a Fortrose Charity shop. She is on the Food and Growing group for Transition Black Isle, Resolis Community Hall committee and Rosemarkie Allotments & Gardens committee. She has been a founder member of ROGS, and an associate member since the organisation became an incorporated company, as she lives just outside the Fortrose and Rosemarkie community council area and has become a Co-opted Director.

APPENDIX 2: 5-YEAR FINANCIAL PROJECTIONS

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
EXPENDITURE					
Capital Expenditure					
Site purchase (1)	£20,000				
Site preparation and infrastructure (2)	£11,037				
Site improvements (3)	£0	£0	£0	<i>£tbc</i>	<i>£tbc</i>
Revenue Costs					
Legal Fees est	£3,500				
Insurances (4)	£120	£132	£145	£160	£176
Administrative (5)	£75	£75	£80	£90	£100
Repairs/maintenance	£0	£50	£100	£250	£250
Replacement planting (6)	£0	£150	£150	£0	£0
Annual Expenditure	£34,732	£407	£475	£500	£526
INCOME					
Starting Balance (7)	£1,000	-	-	-	-
Grants (8)	£17,500 £8,830			<i>up to 100%</i>	<i>up to 100%</i>
Discounts and in-kind contributions (9)	£6,000 £2,207	£150	£150	£200	£200
Revenue (rental) income and subs (10)	£207	£207	£207	£207	£207
Local Fundraising (11)	£0	£500	£500	£500	£500
Annual Income	£35,744	£857	£857	£907	£907
BALANCE					
Surplus / Deficit	+ £1,012	+ £450	+£382	+£407	+£381
Year End Balance	+ £1,012	+ £1,462	+£1,844	+£2,251	+£2,632

Assumptions

1, Purchase cost shown is the undiscounted valuation. A negotiated discount of £5k has been assumed, and is included as an in-kind income contribution

2, Anticipated costs for the preparation of the land for use, installation of infrastructure etc have been identified and broad cost estimates obtained. These are subject to change as the design is finalised and subject to any planning conditions. Final costs and grant income projections are still subject to change and will be adjusted as required. The broad estimates are considered reasonable in comparison to other projects scoped and currently known conditions.

3, No site improvements or changes are anticipated within the first three years. Some changes or additions may start to emerge after year 3 as experience of the site develops and as community needs

and aspirations develop. These cannot be costed at this stage. They will be funded, if necessary, through appropriate small grant applications and targeted fundraising activities.

4, Insurance costs are based on current premiums paid by the Rosemarkie Allotment and Gardens Society with a 10% annual uplift assumed. There may be some scope for a shared policy to reduce costs for both organisations. This has still to be explored.

5, General ROGS governance administration (newsletters, AGM hall hire, website fees, company returns etc) will be absorbed within overall ROGS overheads.

6, Most general maintenance, strimming etc will be carried out by volunteers. A notional allowance has been made for materials that cannot be secured through supplier donations. As the site will be new, minimal maintenance is anticipated in the first 3 years. Damage or vandalism costs may be claimed through insurance if required.

7, Income from the Co-op 'Local Community' fund will be received in November 2024. It is proposed that around £1k from this is ringfenced within ROGS general funds to support the initial revenue costs of this project.

8, Grants include an assumed 70% intervention from the Land Fund to cover land purchase costs (14k), and a 100% award from SLF to cover legal expenses (£3.5k).

A portfolio of potential grant providers has been identified to support all other initial site preparation costs. The Directors are confident that Year 1 costs can be reduced considerably through the goodwill contributions of local contractors, donations and in-kind contributions.

A grant funding requirement of 80% has been assumed over all costs, but may be lower.

Up to 100% grant funding has been notionally assumed for any site improvements identified after year 3. This may be supplemented through locally raised match-funds as required.

9, A discount of 30% of the land valuation is assumed at purchase (6k)

A 20% contribution to initial infrastructure costs is assumed through in-kind contributions, donations and match funds raised locally, to supplement a target of 80% grant funding.

10, Revenue income is based on conservative estimates of 7 individual allotment plot holders, 7 allotment rentals, and 10 community plot subscribers. One allotment plot is designated for community use. Shared plots will be allowed and encouraged, and both individual and community plot subscriptions are based on conservative estimates.

11, Projections have shown that a fundraising sub group of volunteers should be able to easily raise at least £500 per annum and are very likely to be able to exceed this target.

APPENDIX 3: RISK REGISTER

The risk register has been limited to those that have been identified to have a potential medium/high impact on the project without mitigation.

No.	Identified Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Unmanaged Risk Score	Mitigation	Managed Risk Score
1	Gaps in committee skills	Low	Medium	Medium	High levels of existing expertise. Proactive ongoing review, increase membership, co-opt skills as required.	Low
2	Lack of community support	Low	High	Medium	Strong community research indicators. Mixed use of space reflects community priorities & feedback. Revert to general amenity land as a long-term option if support fails. Can revert to wild state.	Low
3	Lack of volunteers / Volunteer fatigue	Low	Medium	Medium	A good proportion of the members and non-members have already volunteered. Proactive community engagement. Provide a variety of inclusive one-off and regular/weekly volunteering opportunities. Adapt plans to community needs & feedback. Regular reports back to the community via social media and email on achievements and positive volunteering experiences. Site maintains flexibility to adjust to less volunteer intensive use, e.g. more wild-space or allotments.	Low
4	Poor management of site/ Vandalism / damage Reputation fails	Low/ Medium	Medium	Medium	Site visible by neighbours and adjoining roads. Maintain good relationship with neighbours and other landowners. Proactive site management /watch, and respond quickly to any issues. Good community and Community Council engagement and involvement in actively resolving issues.	Low

					Continue synergy with other local groups. Welcome all parts of the community and proactive partnership with less engaged groups within the community. High levels of existing expertise and working operational models that can be adopted from RAGS. Experienced Board members. Constitution gives Members powers to replace Board.	
5	Planning objections/ conditions of use (Pre-planning advice suggests change of use permission may be required).	Medium	High	Medium / High	Early identification of concerns through community engagement. Proactive in building good relationships with immediate neighbours. Continued contact and advice from PAS	Low Medium