



MARYBURGH and CONON BRIDGE



Community Facilities Needs Analysis and Outline Development Plan

January 2011

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and Outline Development Plan
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Section 1: Executive Summary

- 1.1 Maryburgh Amenities Association, Conon Bridge Community Council and Maryburgh Community Council have collaborated to commission this report. It aims to review the existing community facilities and services in the two villages, look at how they match community needs and to outline a development path for the future.
- 1.2 Section 2 introduces the background to the study, highlighting the following key points:
- Conon Bridge and Maryburgh are adjacent but distinct communities, with their own historic connections;
 - They are expanding communities;
 - They are largely residential villages and are attractive for commuters to Dingwall, Inverness and further afield because of their close proximity to the trunk road network, allied to the appeal of their rural setting;
 - They support a limited range of modern community facilities, soon to be supplemented by a new amalgamated school that will have facilities for community use and is expected to be ready for use in 2012/13.
- 1.3 Section 3 provides summary information on the demographic and social profile of the area, highlighting the following key points:
- The population of the area is around 3,500;
 - The overall population profile for the area is:
 - Children under 15 years of age – 18%
 - Working age population – 61%
 - Pensionable age population – 21%
 - The main area of deprivation is assessed as geographic access to services, with the area being categorised as ‘accessible rural’;
 - Compared with the Highland average, there is a higher percentage of:
 - Households with dependent children

- Ownership of 2 or more cars/vans
 - Arts, museums, theatre, cinema attenders
 - Newspaper readership
 - Internet usage
- There are 213 primary school pupils enrolled in session 2010/11, with projections of a maximum combined school roll of 280 over the next 10 years;
 - There are currently 55 pre-school children enrolled in local nursery/playgroup provision.
 - Population projections indicate that any examination of community facilities should take into account the need to ensure that the area can attract and retain families with children while responding to the growing needs of the older age group.

1.4 Section 4 explores the current and planned community facilities as follows:

Existing facilities

- Maryburgh Amenities Centre
- Conon Bridge School, Community Facilities
- Maryburgh Free Church Hall
- Ferintosh (Conon Bridge) Church of Scotland Hall
- Maryburgh Playing Field
- Conon Bridge Playing Field
- Maryburgh and Conon Bridge Bowling Club
- Riverbank Ice Rink
- Other Facilities

Future Developments

- Conon Bridge and Maryburgh Primary School
- Maryburgh School
- Golf Course
- Conon Bridge Railway Station

1.5 Section 5 outlines the findings from two drop-in public consultation sessions, which gathered 87 responses about the kinds of activities, services and facilities people saw as important to them:

Activities, Services, Facilities	Level of response	Top 5 ranking (by percentage)
Arts, Cultural & Heritage Activities	416	1. Craft Fair / Crafts 2. Drama Group

		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Music Group 4. Singing Group 5. Highland dancing / Line dancing Group
Sports & Outdoor Pursuits	483	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Walking 2. Cycling 3. Football, Juniors 4. Football, Seniors 5. Hill Walking
Leisure & Recreation Activities	404	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Keep Fit / Yoga / Slimming 2. Badminton 3. Photography 4. Gardening 5. Dog Training
Community Facilities Provision	456	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Coffee Shop / Café 2. Youth Club Drop-in Centre 3. Sports Hall 4. Farmers / Produce Market 5. Seniors Social Club Drop-in Centre / Playgroup / After Schools Club
Social Activities	865	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gala Day 2. Car Boot Sale 3. Concerts 4. Fête 5. Quiz Night

1.6 Stakeholder consultations were also carried out with Maryburgh Amenities Association, Maryburgh Community Council, Conon Bridge Community Council, Brahan Estate, and The Highland Council. The top six priorities for improvements were identified by stakeholders as:

- Access to safe routes of travel within and between communities (*high*)
- Opportunities for business & employment (*medium*)
- Information about the local environment & natural assets (*medium*)
- Information about & access to leisure & recreational opportunities (*medium*)
- Opportunities for outdoor sports & pursuits (*medium*)
- Access to facilities and activities for children (*medium*)

1.7 Section 6 summarises the wide range of community needs identified. Different approaches and solutions are likely to be required to engage with and meet the needs of the different age groups:

- Children (> 15)
- Young people (16 – 24)
- Adults (25 – 64)
- Older adults (65 >)

1.8 Section 7 presents the identified development options in some detail, including an assessment of their various strengths and weaknesses and potential sources of funding; while Section 8 summarises the options as an Outline Community Facilities Development Plan for Maryburgh & Conon Bridge:

Development Issue	Decision Required	Priority (to be decided by the wider community) High Medium Low
Management & Governance	Establishment of a Community Company or Companies? [see Appendix E for possible governance models]	
Management of community facilities in the new Conon/Maryburgh primary school	Negotiation with the Highland Council on community management of the facilities.	
Community facilities in Maryburgh	All of the 3 options identified will require negotiation with the Highland Council on the potential for transfer of land/buildings to the community.	
Option 1: Maryburgh School	This is a relatively high cost option which, nevertheless, could offer substantial community benefits both immediately and over time as the site is developed. It would require substantial community input, both in the development phase and in the ongoing management of a new facility.	
Option 2: Maryburgh Amenities Hall	Maryburgh Amenities Hall requires some refurbishment and, by combining this refurbishment with the development of extended accommodation, this option would allow the community to both improve existing provision and meet its ongoing needs.	
Option 3: Maryburgh School and Maryburgh Amenities Hall	Using both buildings in Maryburgh would bring the opportunity for a wide range of community activities, but may be seen as overprovision. The overall site would be large and could create space for housing. Managing both buildings in Maryburgh would be demanding for the community.	
Development of Playing Field spaces	Improvements to the playing fields at Maryburgh would enhance what is already an important green space in the centre of the village. Incorporating the school field would help to safeguard the playing area and increase the possibility of youth development in association with the facilities at the new school.	
Feasibility & Design Study / Business Plan	All the options have the capacity to provide community facilities which meet the needs of the community and complement the facilities which will be available at the new school in Conon Bridge. Further work will be required to identify the most viable and sustainable option.	

Next Steps

- 1.9 It is recommended that this Community Facilities Needs Analysis and Outline Development Plan is circulated within the wider community as appropriate, including Ward Members and other community groups in order to open up debate about the report's findings and proposals.

Section 2: Introduction and Background

- 2.1 Maryburgh and Conon Bridge are both expanding communities and it is important that residents can access the services, activities and facilities they need. The objectives of this study are to make sure that there is a clear idea of what people see as priorities for development and that any future developments are viable and sustainable in the longer term.
- 2.2 Conon Bridge and Maryburgh are adjacent but distinct communities, separated by the River Conon. Maryburgh is located to the south of Dingwall on the A862, at the junction with the A835 road to Ullapool and the west coast and on the north bank of the River Conon. Conon Bridge is across the river, on the south bank.
- 2.3 Both villages were developed along the new road to Dingwall following the opening of Telford's bridge in 1809. Previous to the bridge travellers used the Scuddale Ferry at Conon, and the coaching inn located there. Maryburgh was closely linked to the Brahan Estate, housing estate workers. Telford's bridge across the Conon was replaced in 1969. A railway station in Conon Bridge served both communities from its opening in 1862 until it was closed in 1960.
- 2.4 Maryburgh and Conon Bridge are now largely residential villages and are attractive for commuters to Dingwall, Inverness and further afield because of their close proximity to the trunk road network, allied to the appeal of their rural setting. Expansion in recent years is reflected in the current Local Plan, which anticipated a need for 75 to 100 additional houses in Maryburgh and a further 260 homes in Conon Bridge by 2017. From 2001 to (October) 2008 there were already 121 new housing completions – 88 in Conon Bridge and 33 in Maryburgh. The Housing Land Audit carried out by Highland Council in 2007 saw a further 96 houses in Conon Bridge and 25 in Maryburgh between 2010 and 2012 and identified sites for a further 335 in Conon Bridge and 95 in Maryburgh for development in 2013 and beyond. There is also the potential of further development on sites not identified in the local plan and, additionally, in the surrounding area as the

planning guidelines for development of houses in the hinterland become more flexible.

- 2.5 Housing development is likely to have slowed down with the recent recession but it does seem likely that both Maryburgh and Conon Bridge will expand significantly over the next 10 years.
- 2.6 Conon Bridge supports a church with adjacent hall, a bowling club, playing field, hotel, hairdresser, veterinary practice, post office, 'take-away' and a number of small retail outlets, including a mini-market. The railway station and petrol station are now closed (and the petrol station site has planning permission to build flats) although there is a proposal to re-open the railway station. The local pub has been subject to an unsuccessful proposal to demolish it to build flats and is currently managed by the nearby hotel.
- 2.7 The fish processing plant established during the 1980's has been closed for a number of years and the site has remained derelict, although again it is likely to be redeveloped as housing. Key community requirements identified in the current local plan include a new hall, shops and further outdoor recreation space. Traffic management through the village is seen as a key development factor.
- 2.8 Maryburgh has a church with adjacent hall, an amenity centre and playing fields and supports a shop and local pub/restaurant. As with Conon Bridge, there are concerns about traffic management through the village.
- 2.9 Highland Council has recently carried out an extensive consultation exercise regarding the future of primary school provision in Maryburgh and Conon Bridge. This has resulted in a decision to build a new amalgamated primary school on the existing Conon Bridge primary school site. The new school will have facilities for community use and is expected to be ready for use in 2012/13. This is therefore a propitious time to look at community needs and how they can be met.

Section 3: Area Profile

- 3.1 Appendix A gives a breakdown of the demographic data currently available for the Conon Bridge and Maryburgh communities. An overview is provided here.
- 3.2 The catchment area covered by the two Community Councils is shown in the map below:



3.3 The current combined Community Council area population is 3,135. However, the Scottish Government's 'Neighbourhood Statistics' data is more useful in providing a more up to date and detailed breakdown of the demography of the area (as of 2008) for the two main settlements. In recent years the geographic unit used by the Scottish Government for the collection of statistical information has become the data zone, with larger areas being formed through the best fit with the data zones within their boundaries. For the Maryburgh and Conon Bridge communities there are five appropriate data zones:

- S01003877 Conon Rural
- S01003879 Conon South
- S01003884 Conon North
- S01003889 Conon Bridge
- S01003895 Maryburgh North West

3.4 The combined data zone population for the main settlement area (at 2008) is estimated at 3,473 ^[1].

Population	Conon Rural	Conon South	Conon North	Conon Bridge	Maryburgh North West	Totals	%
Children >15	105	149	143	100	145	642	18%
Working age – female	180	226	223	158	225	1,012	29%
Working age – male	213	259	223	180	228	1,103	32%
Pensionable age	132	171	147	139	127	716	21%
Totals	630	805	736	577	725	3,473	100%

3.5 The main profile information for the area is shown in the table below:

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Category	Conon Rural	Conon South	Conon North	Conon Bridge	Maryburgh North West	Tot/Avg
Housing						
Total number of households 2001 census	215	261	305	250	268	1,299
Index of Deprivation (SIMD 2009) – [1 = most deprived]						
2009 ranking	4477 (7/10)	5212 (9/10)	1761 (3/10)	4178 (7/10)	4917 (8/10)	4109 (7/10)
Income	8/10	9/10	3/10	7/10	8/10	7/10
Employment	8/10	8/10	5/10	8/10	9/10	8/10
Health	9/10	10/10	4/10	8/10	8/10	8/10
Education, Skills, Training	9/10	9/10	2/10	6/10	7/10	7/10
Geographic access to Services	1/10	2/10	2/10	2/10	2/10	2/10
Crime	8/10	6/10	2/10	4/10	9/10	6/10
Housing	6/10	10/10	4/10	6/10	9/10	7/10
Physical Environment						
% of people within 0-500 metres of a derelict site	4.6	47.6	67.8	100	91.5	62
Access to Services (in minutes)						
Drive time to a GP	7.1	7.3	6.0	5.6	4.9	6.2
Drive time to Post Office	4.7	1.3	1.6	1.0	1.3	2.0
Drive time to a Supermarket	10.3	6.7	6.5	5.5	5.0	6.8
Public transport time to a GP	17.8	19.1	14.9	14.6	14.6	16.2
Public transport time to a Post Office	53.4	18.2	14.7	5.0	5.1	19.3
Public transport time to shopping facilities	66.1	16.5	12.9	12.2	17.7	25.1
Urban/Rural ranking	Accessible rural	Accessible rural	Accessible rural	Accessible rural	Accessible rural	Accessible rural

3.6 From the information shown in sections 3.4 and 3.5, the overall population profile for the area is:

- Children under 15 years of age – 18%
- Working age population – 61%
- Pensionable age population – 21%

3.7 The main area of deprivation is assessed as geographic access to services, with the area being categorised as ‘accessible rural’. The area within the catchment zone

assessed as most deprived is Conon North.

3.8 The Arts Council Area Profile Report (see Appendix A) provides further information about the area profile for post code IV7 8. This shows that, compared with the Highland average, there is a higher percentage of:

- Households with dependent children
- Ownership of 2 or more cars/vans
- Arts, museums, theatre, cinema attenders
- Newspaper readership
- Internet usage

School populations

3.9 The breakdown of the primary school rolls at Conon Bridge and Maryburgh in the 2010/11 session is as follows:

	Conon Bridge	Maryburgh	Total
P1	23	6	29
P2	15	11	26
P3	24	7	31
P4	14	15	29
P5	18	15	34
P6	14	14	28
P7	21	16	37
Total	129	84	213

3.10 The Council's last available projections for each community shows the Conon Bridge school population growing to around 180 before stabilising around 150/160 while the school population from Maryburgh is seen as being relatively stable around 90/100. This would give a maximum combined school roll of 280 over the next 10 years.

3.11 In terms of children involved with formal pre-school provision, 45 3 and 4 year olds attended the nursery in Conon Bridge school in 2009/10 and 7 4 year olds attended Maryburgh school. A further 12 3 year olds are enrolled at the playgroup in Maryburgh, in the Amenities Hall.

Population projections

3.12 The Highland Council projects that the population of Ross and Cromarty will grow by 14.2% to 58,805 by 2033. Within that total the percentage of the population aged 15 and under is seen as falling from 18.1% to 15.9% while the percentage aged 65 and over is seen a growing from 18.3% to 31.7%. There are no projections on a more local level, but it seems likely that similar growth and changes in population make up will be seen in Conon Bridge and Maryburgh. Indeed, given the scale of potential new housing development, the area may well see growth beyond the Ross and Cromarty average. This emphasises the requirement for any examination of community facilities to take into account the need to ensure that the area can attract and retain families with children while responding to the growing needs of the older age group.

Section 4: Community facilities - current and planned

Existing facilities

- 4.1 There are a number of existing community facilities available within Conon Bridge and Maryburgh and outline information on those and on potential future facilities are given in this section. A location map is shown in Appendix C.

Maryburgh Amenities Centre



- 4.2 The Amenities Hall opened in 1981. It is owned and operated by the Maryburgh Amenities Association. The hall is built on land leased from the Highland Council (along with the adjacent football pitch) with around 20 years of the lease remaining. The hall was built to a modular design. It seems to be in reasonable condition for its age although it would benefit from general upgrading. The Amenities Association also has ambitions to improve the heating system, stage and acoustics. Regular users include:

- Playgroup
- WRI
- Craft club
- Brownies
- Scouts
- Youth club
- Lunch club
- Indoor bowling
- Junior football.

- 4.3 Part of the hall is used as a changing area by the football club, with spaces and showers for the home and away teams. The hall is also used for a wide range of ad-hoc bookings, including dances, parties, the annual gala and the other social events which go towards rural life.

- 4.4 The hall is managed on a voluntary basis, although there is a paid part time caretaker. Annual costs are around £22,000 with the main items of expenditure being the caretaker's wages and energy. Income is aimed to balance expenditure, but in recent years this has not been the case and reserves have fallen from around £20,000 to less than £6,000. The main items of income are letting fees (around £6,000) and fundraising. The Amenities Association organises the annual gala which generates a surplus of around £3,000.

- 4.5 Adjacent to the hall is a portacabin which is used as a base by the Ross & Cromarty Heritage Society. The Society's intention is to make a multi-media account of each of the thirty-six Communities in Ross and Cromarty. The portacabin also provides meeting space for the Amenities Association and is fitted out with a broadband connection shared by the Amenities Association, Community Council and the Heritage Society.

Conon Bridge School, Community Facilities

- 4.6 The current primary school in Conon Bridge has a gymnasium with separate changing rooms and toilets and a Community Room. The Conon Bridge School and Community Complex Management Committee have the use of these areas out with school hours (although the school has first call on the space on Wednesdays) for a variety of activities run by user groups. The space is well used and there is difficulty in accommodating any additional users. The current users include:

- Indoor bowling,
- Badminton,
- Youth Club
- Brownies
- Cubs
- Scouts
- Highland Dancing
- Taekwondo.

- 4.7 The Management Committee is not charged for use of the space but is expected to pay 10% of the school's heating and lighting bills, though this is being re-negotiated. The Committee also works with the school to ensure that the spaces available to the community are kept to a good standard (for example decoration, flooring) and buy equipment such as chairs etc. Highland Council employs a caretaker for around 6 hours per week to open and close the premises for community use.

Maryburgh Free Church Hall

- 4.8 The Free Church Hall is around 10 years old and is extensively used for church activities. It is not generally available for community use although currently the Mother and Toddler group uses the space weekly in return for a donation. Occasionally other community groups have used the hall when there have been problems with other venues and when it fits with church use.

Ferintosh (Conon Bridge) Church of Scotland Hall



- 4.9 Ferintosh Parish Church Hall is mainly used for Church related activities and events. There is Sunday morning crèche; a Sunday Club during school term; an Xtra Time youth group for P6/7 pupils on Friday evenings; Church Guild; River Cafe, which meets on the second Wednesday of the month in school term; Youth Fellowship for S1/4 young people; Prayer Group and Bible Study. The Church carries out a range of fundraising activities throughout the year.

Maryburgh Playing Field



- 4.10 The playing field at Maryburgh is part of the land leased by the Maryburgh Amenities Association from the Highland Council. Adjacent to the school playing fields and a Council play area, it is maintained by the Highland Council. Most of the area is laid out as a football pitch and this is rented by the Maryburgh Football Club. The pitch is in good order, although part of it needs drainage improvements.
- 4.11 The football clubs in Maryburgh and Conon Bridge have recently amalgamated and the combined club plays in the Ross-shire League and the Highland Amateur Cup. The pitch is used for competitive matches 2 or 3 times a week throughout the summer, from March to September. The club also uses changing facilities in the Maryburgh Amenities Hall.
- 4.12 The football club operates only one team but it does see the potential of introducing youth soccer, with an under 16 and/or under 14 team.

Conon Bridge Playing Field



- 4.13 Conon Bridge playing field is adjacent to the Church Hall. It is laid out as a football pitch

and was formerly where the Conon Bridge team played. The playing field was donated to Conon Bridge by Conon Mains for that use and it is maintained by the Highland Council. There are standalone changing facilities, although they require some upgrading.

- 4.14 Since the amalgamation of the clubs the Conon pitch has been used for training, to avoid overuse of the Maryburgh pitch, and the playing field used for various community events.

Maryburgh & Conon Bridge Bowling Club

- 4.15 Maryburgh & Conon Bridge Bowling Club has an outdoor bowling green and clubhouse in Conon Bridge. The club has around 50 members and plays in the Ross-shire League. The clubhouse is not normally available for external bookings. It has a kitchen and is used for the catering round league matches and tournaments. There are also indoor bowling mats which members use.

Riverbank Ice Rink

- 4.16 Caberfeidh Curling Club owns an outdoor curling pond adjacent to the Riverside Tavern in Conon Bridge. This is a concrete base which can be flooded and used for curling when the weather is cold enough. This happens relatively infrequently and the curling club sees potential in making the rink available for other purposes. For example, with suitable surfacing and marking out it could be the site of a multi-use games area without compromising its occasional use as a curling rink in the winter.

Other facilities

- 4.17 There are various play areas for younger children in Maryburgh and Conon Bridge and as housing development takes place it is likely that further such provision will be made. The Seaforth Riding Centre is based at Dunglass, in buildings leased from the Brahan Estate. It is a private facility with no horses available for the public. The Brahan Estate has also worked with the RSPB to develop a Red Kite Feeding Centre at Tollie where a derelict steading has been converted into a viewing facility for visitors, with a full-wall window, interpretation centre and a wildlife garden.
- 4.18 A range of other natural assets are also present in the Maryburgh and Conon Bridge area. These include footpaths, woodlands, hills, river, loch and archaeological sites. Outdoor pursuits identified included cycling and mountain biking, hill walking, jogging, fishing, bird watching, horse riding / trekking and archaeology. In particular the Brahan Estate welcomes local people to use and enjoy the extensive path network through its land.

Future developments

Conon Bridge and Maryburgh Primary School

- 4.19 As mentioned in para 2.10 above, a new school is planned to serve both Maryburgh and Conon Bridge, with work programmed to start on site in May 2011 and finish in October 2012 [for the latest Education Authority information see Appendix D and also www.highland.gov.uk/learninghere/schools/proposednewschool.htm]. The new joint school will be built on the site of the existing Conon Bridge School and the plans include a nursery unit and provision for community facilities. As is currently the case the community

will have access to a community room and to the school hall (2 badminton court size), changing facilities and a small community kitchen. Externally the plans incorporate grassed play areas and an artificial pitch which will also be available for the community outside school hours. This is an improvement on the current community facilities in Conon Bridge School and, unlike at present, it should be possible for more than one group to use the spaces at one time. Plans for management of these facilities are still being developed.

- 4.20 The school has ten classrooms, giving a maximum capacity of 300 pupils, reducing to 295 if the primary 1 roll is capped at 25. Any further cap on primary school class sizes would also reduce the number of pupils that can be accommodated. The Scottish Government has been aiming to reduce class sizes for primary 1 to 3 to a maximum of 18 and, while this may be unachievable in the short term, it may well reappear as a goal once the financial climate improves. Current projections for Conon Bridge and Maryburgh show the maximum combined school roll rising steadily to 280 over the next 7 years.
- 4.21 The new school will also have nursery provision to provide for the 3 and 4 year olds in the Conon Bridge and Maryburgh communities. The intention is that each child will be able to attend for one 2.5 hour session each day, but wrap around facilities will allow parents to choose additional time if they wish to pay for that. The Council sees this provision as obviating the need for any other childcare provision for the age group outside the new school.
- 4.22 It is anticipated that the new school will be fully funded within the Highland Council's capital programme allocation of £8,229,000 (confirmed at the Council meeting in June 2010, although the project has not yet gone out to tender). There is no provision for any capital receipt to contribute towards these costs.

Maryburgh School



- 4.23 When the new amalgamated school opens the existing Maryburgh Primary School will no longer be required for educational purposes. The local plan suggests that the site may have potential to be re-used/re-developed to provide community facilities, social/amenity

housing or small business accommodation. At its meeting in August 2006 the Highland Council's Education, Culture and Sport Committee recognised it as important that the Maryburgh community be given an opportunity to consider the future of the school site and agreed that the Service would enter into consultation with the Maryburgh community on the future of the existing Maryburgh school site. It is understood that these consultations have yet to take place.

- 4.24 The main Maryburgh School building is attached to the former school house, which has been sold and is now privately owned. The building has a floor area of 285 square metres and contains 3 large classrooms and some ancillary rooms. There are also 6 temporary buildings on the site, providing accommodation such as the nursery unit, canteen kitchen and janitors store. A hard playground on the site is supplemented by a large grassed play area and play park adjacent to the Maryburgh playing field.
- 4.25 All the buildings require extensive repair. In 2003 the Council estimated that the main building alone needed over £500,000 of maintenance works, little of which has been carried out subsequently. The temporary buildings are in very poor condition and would be unlikely to be worth renovating.



Golf course

- 4.26 A 9 hole golf course is being developed on land at Tollie leased from the Brahan Estate. The developer's intention is that this will be a pay and play course, with no club membership. The course is due to open in 2011 and while of clear interest to tourists it will also be a facility for local people to complement the membership courses at Strathpeffer and Muir of Ord.

Conon Bridge Railway station

- 4.27 Conon railway station closed in 1960, but plans have been produced to re-open the facility following on from the success of the re-opened Beaulay station. The estimated cost of the works involved is some £760,000 and discussions are currently taking place between the various agencies involved. Highland Council has allocated £100,000 in its capital programme to improve access for pedestrians and cyclists. The Highland Council and HITRANS are now working with Transport Scotland to identify funding for design work.

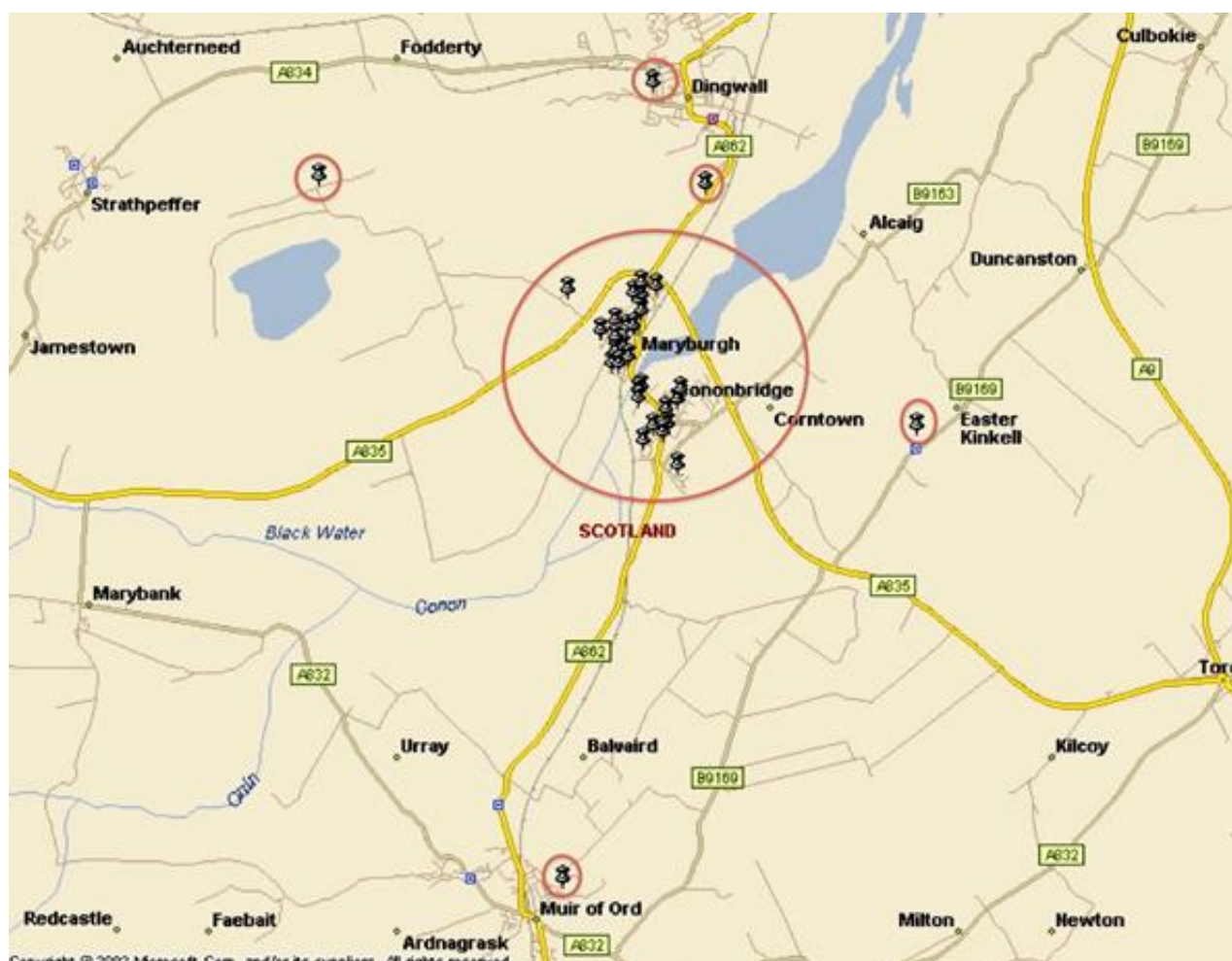
Section 5: Consultation

Public Consultation

- 5.1 Two drop-in sessions were held during June 2010: Maryburgh Gala Day on Saturday 19th June; and Ferintosh Parish Church Hall, Conon Bridge on Thursday 24th June. Appendix B gives the results of both these consultations.



- 5.2 A total of 87 survey responses were received, with the following geographic breakdown by post code area:



5.3 People were asked to put forward their views about community needs and indicate the kinds of activities, facilities and services that they saw as priorities.

5.4 The profile of the typical responder was: female, aged between 25 and 64, and in work.

5.5 The breakdown of all responders was as follows:

- Female – **59 (70%)**
- Male – **25 (30%)**
- <14 **10 (11%)**
- 15-24 **10 (11%)**
- 25-44 **31 (37%)**
- 45-64 **27 (32%)**
- 65-74 **7 (8%)**
- 75+ **1 (1%)**
- Working **53 (69%)**
- Student **11 (15%)**
- Retired **10 (13%)**
- Unemployed **0**
- Carer **2 (3%)**
- Other (describe): 5 at school; 5 full time mums; 1 disabled person; 1 working part-time.

5.6 The survey was arranged in 5 sections, which had the following level of response:

Section	Level of response	Top 5 ranking (by percentage)
Arts, Cultural & Heritage Activities	416	6. Craft Fair / Crafts 7. Drama Group 8. Music Group 9. Singing Group 10. Highland dancing / Line dancing Group
Sports & Outdoor Pursuits	483	6. Walking 7. Cycling 8. Football, Juniors 9. Football, Seniors 10. Hill Walking
Leisure & Recreation Activities	404	6. Keep Fit / Yoga / Slimming 7. Badminton 8. Photography 9. Gardening 10. Dog Training
Community Facilities Provision	456	6. Coffee Shop / Café 7. Youth Club Drop-in Centre 8. Sports Hall 9. Farmers / Produce Market 10. Seniors Social Club Drop-in Centre / Playgroup / After Schools Club
Social Activities	865	6. Gala Day 7. Car Boot Sale

		8. Concerts 9. Fête 10. Quiz Night
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Stakeholder consultation

- 5.7 Discussions were held with a range of stakeholders to explore future development of community facilities. An online survey to find out what they saw as the priority needs for the area was also made available, and, although this attracted only three responses, these have been incorporated into this section.

Maryburgh Amenities Association

- 5.8 The Amenities Hall is seen as being well used by the community. There are a range of regular users across the week, including the playgroup which uses the small hall every morning and a weekly lunch club which serves people in both Maryburgh and Conon Bridge. Although there are one or two new user groups - such as a Craft Group - use has been declining slightly. For example, the school used to regularly use the games hall, but this no longer happens. The Highlife scheme, which allows subscribers to use Dingwall Leisure Centre as much as they wish at no extra cost, is also seen as affecting use of the hall.
- 5.9 The Amenities Association sees it as important that the hall is complementary to other community facilities rather than in competition. For example, opportunities are seen to provide regular classes and as an entertainment venue, both music and family based entertainment. This would require improvements to the stage and sound systems. A need is also seen to improve the heating system and the Amenities Association has recently taken part in a LEADER funded project to look at renewable energies in halls in Dingwall & Seaforth. Use of renewable energies could also help reduce or contain energy bills, which are one of the halls main expenses. The hall can also continue to act as a general community facility, meeting the needs of user groups and the events that go to bring together a rural community such as public meetings, the annual gala, sales of work, parties and dances.
- 5.10 The Amenities Association is exploring changing its organisational structure to become a company limited by guarantee. As well as providing protection for members of the Committee (or directors as they would become) this structure is seen as more robust for the future.

Maryburgh Community Council

- 5.11 Maryburgh Community Council believes there may be some potential in the community taking over and developing the school buildings when they become redundant. Any development would have to be self financing but it is suggested that this could be achieved, for example, through the rental of office units, including to the Heritage Society which currently rents space in the portacabin in front of the hall. Commercial activity, such as hairdressing, would also be a possibility. Space for a café and/or drop in facility for older people and for young people is also seen as a need that the school buildings could meet. Other potential uses identified include housing services such as a public library (which could be operated by the community) and even a hostel for walkers and cyclists. If there were a Facilities Manager, with oversight of both the school building and the Amenities Hall, then any remodelling of the school buildings could include accommodation which could be offered as part of the remuneration.

- 5.12 The Community Council is supportive of the Amenities Association's intention to convert to a community company. It would see it as appropriate for the company to hold the community assets, with subsidiary bodies being established to operate them as required. This is seen as including the Amenities Hall and the lease on the playing field. It is the community company that is seen taking over the school buildings if this were to happen.

Conon Bridge Community Council

- 5.13 Conon Bridge currently has no village hall although the proceeds from the sale of the previous hall (around £65,000) are still available and held by the Conon Bridge New Hall Committee. There are community facilities in Conon Bridge Primary School, but these are not seen as adequate to meet community needs. The space is limited and available to only one group at a time. As a result community groups have had to try to make other arrangements. A need is seen for a whole range of activities in the future, covering all age groups - the young, families, the working age population and the retired. There are opportunities to develop, or give a home to, for example book clubs, lunch clubs, whist drives and film shows. Transport may be an issue and there may be a need to look at some kind of community transport initiative, for example to help older people get between different community venues in Conon Bridge and Maryburgh. This would help prevent any issues of duplication.
- 5.14 The Conon Bridge Community Council is currently investigating the setting up of a community company and would be willing to look at the possibility of a combined company working for both villages.

Brahan Estate

- 5.15 Brahan Estate has played a central role in the history of Maryburgh, with the first houses in the village being for workers on the estate. Brahan also provided the land currently leased from the Council by the Amenities Association for the playing field and hall. The estate sees itself as a community resource and is a major benefit to the area in terms of open space and access to the countryside. A need is seen to do more to create and maintain footpaths. Within the villages the estate sees it as a priority to ensure that there are facilities for primary age children in both communities.

Highland Council

- 5.16 The Highland Council carried out extensive consultations before deciding to develop the new school at Conon Bridge to serve both communities. The school is expected to start on site in April 2011, finishing in 2012/13. The Council's capital plan has a budget of £8,229,000 available for the project and it is expected that this will cover the costs with no need for associated income. Community facilities are an integral part of the new school. No decision has yet been made on how they will be managed but the Council is open to the community being closely involved. The Council currently has no plans for the school buildings in Maryburgh and would look to discuss their future with the community.

Survey

- 5.17 Response to the stakeholder survey was disappointing, but the community facilities,

activities and services seen as most important by the respondents were as follows:

- Support for the elderly
- Availability of childcare
- Information about your local environment & natural assets
- Access to the countryside and your local environment
- Information about your local heritage & archaeology
- Access to your local heritage & archaeology
- Information about your local activities – things to do and see
- Access to play areas for young children
- Access to and use of playing fields
- Policing / community safety
- Social activities for children
- Social activities for adults
- Access to safe routes of travel within and between communities
- Access to facilities and activities for children

5.18 The respondents rated the following existing community facilities, activities and services as 'good':

- Access to the countryside and your local environment
- Access to and use of playing fields
- Access to sports facilities & clubs (i.e. football, rugby, shinty, etc.)

and rated the following as 'poor':

- Access to arts and cultural events & activities
- Opportunities for business & employment
- Access to training, learning, skills development opportunities & support

5.19 Asked about the kind of improvements they would like to see, the respondents gave the following responses:

Access to arts and cultural events & activities	Better stage lighting, sound system, ability to show films, have bands etc., refurbish the stage. Have the amenities set up a website that can take bookings and advertise all events in the village; improvements to existing facilities for drama, concerts etc.
Opportunities for business & employment	Would like to have a couple of retail units to allow for business to be based in the village selling local produce; provision of small office / workshop / commercial units.
Support for the elderly	Drop in centre for the elderly; provision of "drop in" facilities.
Availability of childcare	Prefer to have child minders; provision of better nursery / playgroup facilities.
Information about your local environment & natural assets	To have some display boards on the walks about the surrounding countryside; see question re heritage/ archaeology.

Access to the countryside and your local environment	Access is good.
Information about your local heritage & archaeology	To be able to display this in the community hall at all times; should be provided along with info on local environment and natural assets.
Access to your local heritage & archaeology	Facility needs to be provided.
Information about your local activities – things to do and see	A couple of more public notice boards around the village. Help to keep the "Maryburgh Roundabout" going and having it in digital format; publicity needs to be improved.
Access to Citizen's Advice / Council services information & support via community facilities	Provision in Dingwall is adequate.
Access to play areas for young children	Secure play areas; existing ok.
Access to and use of playing fields	Really want to keep our green space, have the pitch floodlit; existing ok.
Policing / Community Safety	Not a major concern at present.
Social activities for children	The hall puts on events during school holidays.
Social activities for adults	Want to have regular dances, keep fit classes with crèches.
Access to sports facilities & clubs (i.e. football, rugby, shinty, etc.)	Be able to hire the pitch /showers out of the football season.
Opportunities for outdoor sports & pursuits (i.e. walking, canoeing, cycling, etc.)	Have a scheme similar to Abriachan around the tallysow. With eco and conservation educational opportunities, art and areas to picnic around the walk.
Access to safe routes of travel within and between communities	Want to see improvements so everyone can commute without always using the car; safety on A862 is a major concern.

5.20 The top six priorities for improvements were:

- Access to safe routes of travel within and between communities (*high*)
- Opportunities for business & employment (*medium*)
- Information about the local environment & natural assets (*medium*)
- Information about & access to leisure & recreational opportunities (*medium*)
- Opportunities for outdoor sports & pursuits (*medium*)
- Access to facilities and activities for children (*medium*)

5.21 Other comments received were:

“Want to see the building [*Amenities Centre*] refurbished so it is a more pleasing place to hold events and attract more business. Want to keep the green space in the village so that Maryburgh can keep the gala week and gala day going. This is a popular well attended event that has a long tradition.”

Section 6: Community Needs

6.1 From the information set out in this report and the community engagement carried out a wide range of needs can be identified. Different approaches and solutions are likely to be required to engage with and meet the needs of the different age groups. A summary of these identified community needs includes:

Children (> 15)

- Pre-school provision - mother and toddler, playgroup, nursery
- Play areas
- Opportunities for outdoor sports & pursuits
- Social activities
- Access to arts and cultural events & activities
- Information about the local environment, natural assets, heritage & archaeology
- Access to facilities and activities for children
- Access to safe routes of travel within and between communities

Young people (16 – 24)

- Opportunities for outdoor sports & pursuits
- Social activities
- Access to arts and cultural events & activities
- Information about the local environment, natural assets, heritage & archaeology
- Information about & access to leisure & recreational opportunities
- Access to safe routes of travel within and between communities

Adults (25 – 64)

- Opportunities for business & employment
- Opportunities for outdoor sports & pursuits

- Social activities
- Access to arts and cultural events & activities
- Information about the local environment, natural assets, heritage & archaeology
- Information about & access to leisure & recreational opportunities
- Access to safe routes of travel within and between communities

Older adults (65 >)

- Support for the elderly
- Opportunities for outdoor sports & pursuits
- Social activities
- Access to arts and cultural events & activities
- Information about the local environment, natural assets, heritage & archaeology
- Information about & access to leisure & recreational opportunities
- Access to safe routes of travel within and between communities

6.2 Some of these community needs can be met by providing additional or new information points / boards; some can be met by continued and / or extra group / organisation work (both formal and informal); and some can only be met by making use of existing / improved / or new facility based infrastructure.

6.3 It is also worth mentioning that there was some evidence of demand from the community consultation for business space - either operated commercially or by a social enterprise. Various ideas that could be taken forward in this way received some support from the public, including:

- Craft fair
- Coffee shop/café
- Farmers/Produce market
- Car boot sale
- Computer learning/internet centre

6.4 There was less support from the community for purely commercial activity, such as space for start up businesses or bunkhouse accommodation.

6.5 Although there was this support for social enterprise and/or commercial space this study has not looked at the viability of individual enterprises. No specific interest in starting (or re-locating) a private business on a commercial basis has been noted and any social enterprise would involve a high degree of community commitment. Separate business plans would be required for any such potential operation.

Section 7: Development options

Management

7.1 An important factor in looking at the potential development of community facilities is the

capacity of the community to operate and fund such facilities. In the current economic climate it will be important to have a robust management structure which can ensure strong financial control. There are currently a number of organisations or groups with an involvement in community facilities in Maryburgh and Conon Bridge. These include:

- Maryburgh Community Council;
- Conon Bridge Community Council;
- Maryburgh Amenities Association;
- Conon Bridge School and Community Complex Management Committee.

7.2 For the future it is seen as important that facilities are managed to complement each other rather than compete. In that way more of the community's needs could be met and the facilities are more likely to be viable. Both communities have intentions to establish a community company. Maryburgh Amenities Association has gone some way down the path of exploring conversion to a company limited by guarantee. Discussions are also ongoing on the potential to combine the two Community Councils and, if this were to happen, it would seem a reasonable next step to look at how one community company could meet the needs of both communities. See Appendix E for a brief explanation of possible governance models. This community company could then hold the community assets for Maryburgh and Conon Bridge (other than those owned by a specific group or organisation). Currently this would be the Amenities Hall, the Maryburgh Playing Field and the Conon Bridge Playing Field.

7.3 Discussions are also taking place with the Highland Council on the management arrangements for the community facilities in the new school. It is suggested that a management agreement/lease is sought, so that the community facilities in the school (for the hours set out in the agreement) are also seen as a community asset to be managed by the community company. In this way rather than being a standalone facility the school could be managed to complement other community facilities and add to the overall flexibility and viability.

7.4 There are a number of options regarding other community facilities and in particular the redundant school site in Maryburgh and the Amenities Hall. Both are seen as having the potential to meet community needs, although operating two facilities in Maryburgh - the Amenities Hall and the Maryburgh School buildings - would be a major undertaking both managerially and financially.

7.5 Various options, their strengths and weaknesses, are discussed further in this section. The options discussed are:

- Maryburgh School ;
- Maryburgh Amenities Association Hall;
- Using both Maryburgh School site and the Amenities Hall;
- Playing fields.

Options

Option 1: Maryburgh School



- 7.6 This option is for the school site to become the focus for community facilities in Maryburgh, with the existing Amenities Hall potentially being surplus to requirements.
- 7.7 The community could take over the existing Maryburgh School site when it becomes surplus to educational requirements. This would give access to a stone building with a floor area of 285 square metres, a substantial hard surfaced site with car parking, 6 temporary buildings, a playing field area and a play area.
- 7.8 This option would depend on the Highland Council being willing to transfer or lease the site to the community. This possibility has already been discussed at the Education, Culture and Sport Committee and there is a commitment for the service to discuss the possibility with the community before making recommendations for the future of the site to the Council. Transfer of land to the community has become less complex due to the introduction of the Disposal of Land by Local Authorities (Scotland) Regulation 2010, which came into force on 1 June 2010. This permits local authorities, in appropriate circumstances, to dispose of land for less than the best price without seeking the consent of Scottish Ministers. The new “self-certification” process requires the local authority to ensure that proper procedures and circumstances apply. The purposes which may lead to the disposal of land are:
- economic development or regeneration;
 - health;
 - social well-being;
 - environmental well-being.
- 7.9 Alternatively, if the Council were not willing to transfer the site, the community (through an appropriate community company) could register an interest in the site under the terms of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, giving it a right to buy the site should it come on the market. Of course this would involve paying for the site which may lead to some difficulties. The Big Lottery, for example, has made it clear that it welcomes proposals towards the redevelopment of an asset rather than towards the purchase from a public body such as the Council. They generally expect the asset to be transferred at little or no cost to the community.
- 7.10 The school building itself is large enough to provide much of the space required to meet many of the identified community needs. It could, for example, be redeveloped to provide space for a community café/drop in facility for older people, a youth club, IT suite and club room which could be used for heritage displays, craft fairs and produce markets. The temporary buildings are not in good condition, but their removal would create a relatively large site the community could use for further developments.

- 7.11 If the school buildings were to replace the existing Amenities Hall, it would be possible to build a new hall on the school site. This could perhaps be smaller than the existing Amenities Hall, but designed with more flexible spaces to allow for arts performances and other community uses. Changing facilities for the playing field could also be developed, along with an external multi-sport games area to provide for five a side, basketball etc.
- 7.12 The school site may be larger than needed for community use and it may be possible to earmark some of the area for affordable housing, so generating a receipt which could contribute to development costs. As the community would have received the site free of charge there are some complications with this. Highland Council has recently decided to attach an economic development burden to the transfer of halls to community groups and would be likely to take the same view with school premises. This is designed to protect the Council's interests if the site is subsequently sold for a purpose with no community benefit. If that were to happen, then the site value at the time of transfer to the community plus inflation must be paid to the Council. However, if the proceeds of the sale are to fund another community project the Council would intend to return that sum to the community, placing a similar economic development burden on the new project.
- 7.13 In practice, as any transfer would be to a community organisation (likely to be a company limited by guarantee) it would not normally be possible for the proceeds of any sale to be used for a non-community purpose as this would be against the constitution or articles of a community group. Potentially this might arise if the community group went into administration but it is difficult to envisage other circumstances.
- 7.14 As the new facility would be replacing the Amenities Hall, the current hall site would become redundant and this could also be sold to generate income towards the development costs. This would also involve some negotiations with the Council to transfer the land as, while the Amenities Hall belongs to the Amenities Association, the site it is built on is leased from the Highland Council.
- 7.15 Although the Council may transfer the school site to the community at no cost, the redevelopment costs of this option are likely to be substantial. In 2003 the Highland Council estimated that the main school building required over £500,000 of maintenance works. Adding the cost of site clearance and redevelopment to meet community needs would give a full cost of well over £1 million, especially if it involved a new hall. A full feasibility and design study would be required before starting on such a development. Seeing the project through to completion and then operating the expanded range of community services would also require substantial community input and further work would be required to find out whether this would involve the employment of staff or could be taken on by the community on a voluntary basis.
- 7.16 One advantage of this option is that the new development would replace the Amenities Hall, but the existing hall could continue to operate through the development phase (unless the capital receipt for the hall site is required in advance).
- 7.17 In terms of ongoing running costs, a redeveloped school site would be likely to be more expensive than existing provision at the Amenities Hall. The building is older and repairs and maintenance costs are likely to be higher. Energy costs are also likely to increase, although this can be offset through good design and the introduction of renewable energy sources. The introduction of new services for the community will have revenue implications, including potentially staffing for any community café or drop in facility.

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Brings a substantial site into community ownership; · Potential to be transferred or leased to the community at no cost; · Would provide the space and opportunity to meet a wide range of community needs; · Development could be phased; · Potential to sell part of the site to create a capital receipt towards redevelopment costs. 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The main school building requires substantial works; · Site clearance and redevelopment costs would be substantial; · The site may be bigger than necessary to meet community needs; · This would be a major project requiring substantial community input; · Likely to incur significant additional running costs.
<p>Conclusions</p> <p>This is a relatively high cost option which, nevertheless, could offer substantial community benefits both immediately and over time as the site is developed. It would require substantial community input, both in the development phase and in the ongoing management of a new facility.</p>	

Option 2: Maryburgh Amenities Hall

- 7.18 This option is to upgrade and extend (or even to replace) the Maryburgh Amenities Hall to make it the focus of community activity.
- 7.19 Maryburgh Amenities Hall was opened in 1981. It is currently the main community facility in Maryburgh and, indeed, as there is no hall in Conon Bridge it is the main community asset in Maryburgh and Conon. The building, which was built to a modular design, is in need of upgrading and if this were to take place it could offer enhanced opportunities to meet community needs. However, the building is now some 30 years old and it would be prudent to undertake a full building survey to ensure that it can be re-developed to meet modern standards. If the building is towards the end of its life, a better option may be to replace it with a new build.
- 7.20 The current hall has a total area of 425 square metres, including the main hall at 220 square metres and the small hall at 75 square metres. Although it can accommodate existing community demands there is little room for expansion and, for example, it has been necessary to locate a portacabin on the forecourt to provide meeting space and a workspace for the Ross and Cromarty Heritage Society. The location of the changing rooms and showers for the adjacent football pitch also limits the flexibility of the interior space.
- 7.21 It would be possible to extend and re-model the current building at the same time as carrying out refurbishment works. This could give the possibility of creating enough space for current and future community needs such as a community café and drop in facility and dedicated youth club space alongside improved performance space, heating and services. It could also allow for the re-location of the changing facilities. The

introduction of solar heating and/or use of the playing field to provide ground source heating could do much to improve the heating system while reducing running costs.

- 7.22 An extension of 250 square metres might cost some £500,000; a further £400,000 towards refurbishment and improvement of the existing building would give an overall project cost of some £900,000. Alternatively, a new build hall of 700 square metres might cost in the region of £1.5 million. The end result would be a revitalised hall designed to complement the new community facilities at the new school. Community facilities would be concentrated on the two sites, in Maryburgh and Conon Bridge, allowing a management focus and co-ordinated working.
- 7.23 In terms of financial viability, this option would be likely to be comparable to the costs of the existing Amenities Hall, with the additional costs from increased space offset by more efficient heating and energy. As the spaces would be redesigned to more closely fit with community needs there is also the opportunity to increase letting income by extending the range of groups using the facility. Flexible space also means that potential new services such as a community café could be introduced on a trial basis.
- 7.24 A full feasibility and design study would be necessary before taking this option forward.

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The community already owns the Amenities Hall; • Would both refurbish existing provision and add new potential; • Would provide the space and opportunity to meet a wide range of community needs; • Could be designed to provide flexible space; • Does not complicate management of community facilities. 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The modular structure of the existing hall may pose difficulties; • Although building on existing assets this is not a cheap option; • The community would not have access to other facilities in Maryburgh while work was going on.
<p>Conclusions</p> <p>Maryburgh Amenities Hall requires some refurbishment and, by combining this refurbishment with the development of extended accommodation, this option would allow the community to both improve existing provision and meet its ongoing needs.</p>	

Option 3: Maryburgh School and Maryburgh Amenities Hall

- 7.25 This option would be for the community to use both the Maryburgh School site and the Amenities Hall to complement the new facilities being built as part of the Conon Bridge and Maryburgh School.
- 7.26 This option would depend, as with option 1, on the Council transferring the school site to the community. Potentially, by making use of both sites the community could minimise

the need to extend or replace the existing accommodation. There would be a need to:

- refurbish and adapt the Maryburgh School building;
- clear the remainder of the site, removing the temporary buildings;
- refurbish the Maryburgh Amenities Association Hall.

- 7.27 Some community activity could take place in the refurbished school building. For example, it might be suitable as an office base for the Amenities Association and community company as well as for the Heritage Society. It could also provide a community café/drop in facility for older people, an area for heritage and craft displays and a general activity room to complement the larger space in the Amenities Hall.
- 7.28 The Amenities Hall could be upgraded, especially in terms of heating and energy and improved performance space. It may be possible for a ground source heating installation using the green space and pitch to serve both the school building and the hall.
- 7.29 Overall the combined sites would be larger than required for community use and it would be possible to dispose of some of the area, for example for housing. It would be important to create a sympathetic design for the overall site, with separation between the community use and other uses, while maintaining the clear and well used green space in the centre of the village. Any proceeds from such disposal would be recycled into the overall project costs.
- 7.30 The costs of this option are likely to exceed £1 million, with the largest part of expenditure relating to the school site. Other than any shared elements relating to renewable energy work on the two sites could be consecutive, meaning that the hall would be available to the community while the school building was refurbished and the school building available as the hall is refurbished. Although they might be taken forward as two separate phases there would be a strong possibility that funding for the second phase would be more difficult to achieve as the community would already have a newly refurbished building.
- 7.31 This is likely to be the more expensive option in terms of annual running costs. There would be two buildings to manage, with two sets of energy and property related costs as well as ongoing repairs and maintenance. It would seem likely that often there would be part of each building being used, so that they would both be using heat and light and both would have to be opened and closed and cleaned after use. In particular, if provision includes a dedicated community café and drop in facilities for older people there would have to be staffing and/or volunteer input throughout the advertised hours.
- 7.32 A full feasibility and design study would be necessary to produce firmer information on the costs involved, both in terms of the capital development costs and the ongoing running costs

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Brings both the school and the Amenities Hall into community use; · Would both refurbish existing provision and add new potential; · Would provide the space and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The school building requires substantial works; · Possibly seen as overprovision; · Less opportunity to purpose design flexible spaces;

<p>opportunity to meet a wide range of community needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Although not involving new build or extension this is not a cheap option; · More complicated management requirements; · Higher running costs.
<p>Conclusions</p> <p>Using both buildings in Maryburgh would bring the opportunity for a wide range of community activities, but may be seen as overprovision. The overall site would be large and could create space for housing. Managing both buildings in Maryburgh would be demanding for the community.</p>	

Development of Playing Field spaces

- 7.33 Maryburgh Playing Field is adjacent to the Amenities Hall and is largely used by the Maryburgh Football Club (which has recently joined with Conon Bridge). The football pitch is in good condition but part of the pitch does tend to get waterlogged and so it does require some attention to drainage. It is heavily used during the league and cup season. There is also the potential to combine the existing playing field with the school field, which is on the same site but on a lower level. This would allow for an informal kickabout area which would reduce the demands on the formal pitch.
- 7.34 The pitch at Conon Bridge is relatively underused at present. It does have a changing facility, although this needs some improvement. This site could be used both as a training facility for the football club and as the venue for youth matches if the club pursues youth development and the creation of youth teams.
- 7.35 Alternatively, if the Maryburgh Playing Field is expanded and improved as above and the new school incorporates a full artificial pitch for community use it may be that the Conon pitch becomes surplus to requirements as a pitch and could be redeveloped as a recreational open space in the centre of the village. The ownership of the area needs clarification and the implications of any change of use investigated.

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · High quality grass playing fields in Maryburgh would complement artificial pitch at the school; · Creates the opportunity for youth development work; · Works in Maryburgh could be combined with improvements to the hall; · Developing general recreational open space in Conon Bridge would enhance the general environment. 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The ownership and conditions attached to the Conon Bridge pitch are unclear;
<p>Conclusions</p>	

Improvements to the playing fields at Maryburgh would enhance what is already an important green space in the centre of the village. Incorporating the school field would help to safeguard the playing area and increase the possibility of youth development in association with the facilities at the new school.

Funding

- 7.36 Following these options, whichever is chosen, would require a significant injection of capital funding. There are possibilities for this which could be explored and some of these are discussed here. Developments in Maryburgh and Conon Bridge are likely to be phased or consist of a number of inter-linked projects. This is likely to mean that each phase or project will have its own discrete funders.

Land sales

- 7.37 If the Maryburgh School is transferred to the community it may be possible to use some of the site for social housing. This could potentially give rise to a capital receipt and, as long as this is invested in the development of community facilities, this would not necessarily prevent the Council transferring the site at no cost. Similarly, if it is decided that the Amenities Hall is no longer required, its site could be sold and the proceeds put towards development costs. In either case it should be noted that it would be necessary to check the deeds for the land to ensure that there are no restrictions on use that cannot be resolved.
- 7.38 If the community decided not to develop the school site, it may be possible to negotiate with the Highland Council for the school site to be sold, with the proceeds invested in community facilities elsewhere in Maryburgh and Conon Bridge. This would have a number of advantages. The net effect to the Council is the same as transferring the school site to the community; it allows the community to concentrate its efforts on improvements to existing facilities; it translates the school site into a cash sum for investment by the community; it means the community is not faced with the challenging development project that the school site would bring; it would provide a reasonable site for social housing in Maryburgh.

Highland Council

- 7.39 As part of its capital programme the Highland Council has established a Capital Discretionary Fund which is currently £500,000 each year but will rise to £750,000 from 2012/13. This fund allows the Council to respond to community initiatives and as such it would be open to the Maryburgh and Conon Bridge communities to apply for support.
- 7.40 The Highland Council also seeks developer contributions with regard to new housing development to offset the costs of dealing with pressures on facilities and local infrastructure. For example, developer contributions are required in Conon Bridge towards the provision of community facilities associated with the new school and the developer of new housing opposite the school is expected to provide play facilities which may duplicate facilities at the school and so be better put towards other developments. Given the number of new houses which will potentially be built in Maryburgh and Conon Bridge over the next few years, this could lead to a sizeable sum being available. As has been

mentioned above, the new combined school (including the community facilities) is fully funded from the Highland Council's capital programme and there is no assumption of capital receipts or other income towards the costs. Developer contributions received may therefore be available for the development of wider community facilities to complement those in the school.

LEADER

- 7.41 The Highland Council operates a LEADER programme as part of the Government's Scottish Rural Development Programme. Through the two European funds operated as part of the programme - LEADER and Convergence - support can be offered for the development of community facilities. Currently a rate of 90% is being offered, although this is likely to be for a limited period and a rate of 50% is more usual. The Red Kite Feeding Station at Tollie mentioned in 4.10 above was developed with LEADER support. In addition the LEADER programme has secured additional funding specifically earmarked for community services and facilities and for larger scale projects.
- 7.42 An issue with funding issued through the LEADER programme is that payment of the grant is only made in arrears, after invoices have been paid and this can be verified through bank statements. This can lead to severe cash flow difficulties, especially for larger scale projects.

Lottery

- 7.43 The Big Lottery has recently launched its new Investing in Communities programme which has a number of strands. One of them, Growing Community Assets, is designed to support communities to own and develop community assets. Projects must be aiming to achieve four specific outcomes:
- Communities work together to own and develop local assets;
 - Communities are sustainable and improve their economic, environmental and social future through the ownership and development of local assets;
 - Communities develop skills and knowledge through the ownership and development of local assets;
 - Communities overcome disadvantage and inequality through the ownership and development of local assets.

- 7.44 Sportscotland also manages lottery funding and operates a Sports Facilities Fund. The upgrading of existing grass pitches is seen as a high priority for their funding and they can also fund floodlighting if that were seen as necessary. A degree of partnership funding is usually expected although clubs can apply for up to 100% of funding if the project cost is below £50,000.

Community Energy Scotland

- 7.45 Community Energy Scotland delivers the Community and Renewable Energy Scheme through which communities can access funding towards renewable energy projects. Grants of up to £150,000 are available. As long as the total paid over 3 years is below the State Aid de minimus (around £160,000) community groups can also benefit from Feed in Tariff payments.

Trust Funding

7.46 There are a large number of charitable trusts and foundations which can grant aid community based projects. Some of the larger, such as the Gannochy Trust, Robertson Trust and the Garfield Weston Foundation, can give substantial amounts if they decide to support a project. Many others will give relatively small grants - say £1,000 to £5,000. Some trust funds have a fairly general remit, while others target funding at specific priority areas and so it is important to apply appropriately. Many trusts will only support registered charities.

Community fundraising

7.47 Many funders expect to see a commitment from the local community in terms of funding raised locally for the project. Currently much of the fundraising in Maryburgh (such as the annual gala) goes towards the running costs of the Amenities Hall, but it would be possible to run specific events in support of particular developments. In Conon Bridge, largely because of the sale of the former community hall, there is a fund of around £65,000 held for community facilities.

Conclusions

7.48 All of the options - the Maryburgh School site, the Amenities Hall, or the school building and the Amenities Hall - have the capacity to provide community facilities which meet the needs of the community and complement the facilities which will be available at the new school in Conon Bridge. In each case the development costs are likely to be substantial, in the range of £1 million to £1.5 million or even more. There are potential funding sources which might meet these costs.

7.49 Each option has strengths and weaknesses and it will be important for the community to be clear about the input required for their preferred option before taking it further. This includes gaining a firmer idea of the capital costs as well as the community input required. In particular, if new services are introduced to meet identified community needs, further work will be required to establish whether these can be provided by the community on a voluntary basis or whether they will involve the employment of staff. This would make a huge difference to the ongoing costs and potential viability. A full feasibility and design study will be essential to clarify these issues.

Section 8: Outline Community Facilities Development Plan

8.1 Based on the information outlined in the previous sections, the following community facilities development plan is proposed for consideration by the communities of Maryburgh and Conon Bridge. It concentrates on the identified priorities for action arising from this community facilities needs analysis.

8.2 Outline Community Facilities Development Plan – Maryburgh & Conon Bridge:

Development Issue	Decision Required	Priority (to be decided by
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		the wider community) High Medium Low
Management & Governance	Establishment of a Community Company or Companies? [see Appendix E for possible governance models]	
Management of community facilities in the new Conon/Maryburgh primary school	Negotiation with the Highland Council on community management of the facilities.	
Community facilities in Maryburgh	All of the 3 options identified will require negotiation with the Highland Council on the potential for transfer of land/buildings to the community.	
Option 1: Maryburgh School	This is a relatively high cost option which, nevertheless, could offer substantial community benefits both immediately and over time as the site is developed. It would require substantial community input, both in the development phase and in the ongoing management of a new facility.	
Option 2: Maryburgh Amenities Hall	Maryburgh Amenities Hall requires some refurbishment and, by combining this refurbishment with the development of extended accommodation, this option would allow the community to both improve existing provision and meet its ongoing needs.	
Option 3: Maryburgh School and Maryburgh Amenities Hall	Using both buildings in Maryburgh would bring the opportunity for a wide range of community activities, but may be seen as overprovision. The overall site would be large and could create space for housing. Managing both buildings in Maryburgh would be demanding for the community.	
Development of Playing Field spaces	Improvements to the playing fields at Maryburgh would enhance what is already an important green space in the centre of the village. Incorporating the school field would help to safeguard the playing area and increase the possibility of youth development in association with the facilities at the new school.	
Feasibility & Design Study / Business Plan	All the options have the capacity to provide community facilities which meet the needs of the community and complement the facilities which will be available at the new school in Conon Bridge. Further work will be required to identify the most viable and sustainable option.	

[1]

There is a Maryburgh Community Council area around Loch Ussie, and to the north towards Knockfarrel, that is not included in data zone SO1003877 (which is instead within the Strathpeffer data zone SO1003902). There is also an area in the SO1003877 data zone, around Balavil, that is not included in the Conon Bridge Community Council area.