



Assynt Housing Needs Report



This report was commissioned by the Assynt Development Trust

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1. Executive Summary

The Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust (HSCHT) was commissioned to carry out a survey of all households in Assynt. The study was commissioned by Assynt Development Trust to inform further operational and development plans and to establish where there is demand for future new housing provision. The study clearly reveals a number of informative and important results which can be summarised as follows:

- A total of 678 surveys were delivered to properties in Assynt, including holiday homes, and 165 completed surveys returned giving a response rate of 24.3%
- The survey returns show that there is a high number of people who own their home, 83% (117) of those surveyed.
- The 2011 census reported that there were 698 homes in the community, 188 (26.9%) of which are second residences / holiday homes. This is significantly higher than the Scottish average of 1.5%.
- There is an aging population in the area with 48% (67) respondent households containing one adult aged over 60, some of whom may need alternative housing provision in the future.
- The majority of the community supported the statement that the area needs both more affordable homes to rent (110) and affordable homes to buy (110) and that priority for these homes should be given to local people (136) and local people with young children (131).
- Over half of survey respondents (53%) said they spend more than 10% of their income on energy bills and maybe in fuel poverty. The Scottish Government defines fuel poverty as a household that spends more than 10% of its income in order to maintain a satisfactory heating regime.
- When asked about requirements for energy efficiency measures, 61% of respondents said that their home would benefit from energy efficiency measures. The two top measures identified were: new / more efficient heating system and renewable energy.
- A small number of respondents (10) said that improvements or adaptations were required to allow them to continue living in their current home. The two top measures identified were a new bathroom or kitchen refit. As some of the measures are age or disability related, financial assistance may be available following a means assessment.
- A total of 25 respondents said that they are considering moving home. Of the 25, 19 would like to stay in the Assynt area and 6 would like to move away from the area.
- Of those wishing to move and stay in the area, most currently reside in privately rented accommodation (9). Other current tenures of those wishing to move are: owned (5), social rent (4) and renting from the council (1).
- Overall, the preferred 1st choice tenure of most people wanting to move and stay in the area is social rent (renting from either the council or housing association), selected by 9 respondents. Other first choice tenures selected were: building a home (5), buying a property (3), buying a shared equity home (3) and buying a smaller accessible home (1).
- Of those that chose the 1st choice preference of social rent, most (7) selected a monthly rental budget of £276 - £400 per month. Only 4 out of the 9 that selected the 1st choice tenure of social rent are currently registered on the HHR.

- When looking at potential future demand and future independent households in the area, 24 individuals were identified that may require independent housing in Assynt within the next 5 years.
- Again, the preferred 1st tenure choice for most of these potential new households was that of social rent, selected for 11 out of the 24 new households.
- There is demand for smaller bed units, with 9 selecting the option of one bedroom properties and 8 selecting the option of two bedroom properties.
- A separate survey was commissioned to try and identify people who would like to relocate to the Assynt area. This survey was completed by 11 respondents, with 10 stating that they would like to relocate to the area to live permanently.
- Social rent again was the preferred 1st tenure with 6 selecting this as their first tenure choice.
- All 10 would be looking for a 2 bedroom property.
- Taking into consideration the overall housing need (**both current residents and potential future households**) of respondents to this survey, the most popular first choice tenure is that of social rent (27) with high demand smaller 1 and 2 bed units. This is followed by building a home (10) and buying on the open market (9).
- The below tables summarises the combined housing need of all respondents and shows the potential housing demand within the next 5 years based on 1st choice preferences only.

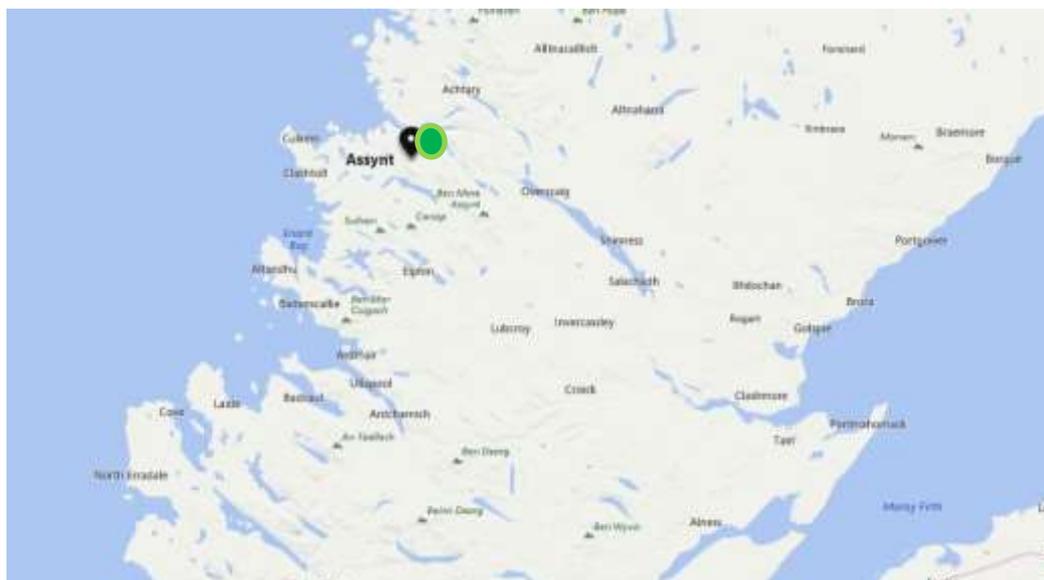
<u>First Preference</u>	Bed size not known	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed or more	TOTAL
Social Rent	0	10	13	3	1	27
Buying a low cost shared equity home	1	0	2	2	0	5
Buying a property on the open market	0	0	4	4	1	9
Building a Home	0	0	6	3	1	10
Renting a smaller accessible home	0	2	0	0	0	2
Buying a smaller accessible home	0	0	1	0	0	1
Renovating a property	0	0	2	0	0	2
TOTAL	1	12	28	12	3	56

- A number of respondents (38) said that they had family members or friends that have moved away from the area because they could not find suitable accommodation.
- The survey tried to establish what would encourage more families with young children to remain in, or come to live in the area. The most popular answers were: more job opportunities, affordable housing, better transport links and faster broadband.

2. Introduction and Methodology

2.1.1 The Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust (HSCHT) was commissioned to carry out a survey of all households in Assynt (including those who do not currently require housing).

2.1.2 Assynt is an area in the south-west of Sutherland, lying north on Ullapool on the west coast of Scotland. Assynt is known for its landscape and remarkable mountains, which have led to the area, along with neighbouring Coigach, being designated as the Assynt-Coigach National Scenic, one of 40 such areas in Scotland. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assynt>



<https://www.bing.com/search?q=Assynt+map+&qsn=&form=QBRE&sp=-1&pq=Assynt+map+&sc=8-9&sk=&cvid=82467EDB369349A9AAFC4273B095CB45>

2.1.3 The study has been commissioned by Assynt Development Trust to inform future operational and development plans and to establish where there is demand for future new housing provision. The study used information from a number of sources:

- Desktop analysis of available demographic and housing demand data.
- Analysis of other relevant reports and statistics.
- Postal self-completion household questionnaire.
- Option to complete survey online and link on a QR code

2.1.4 Surveys were distributed to all households within the designated area. They were invited to share their views, even if their household had no immediate housing need.

2.1.5 The survey sought the views and opinions of respondents on a wide range of housing related matters designed to build up a picture of the community and its issues and priorities.

2.1.6 A total of 678 surveys were delivered, one to each household.

2.1.7 A total of 165 household surveys were returned, 124 using the prepaid envelope provided and 41 used the online facility, giving a response rate of 24.3%

2.1.8 Of the 165 households who answered the question relating to permanent residence, 89% (147) reside permanently in the area. The remaining 11% (18) were second home owners and their profile and

housing need are not taken into consideration in section 4 (Respondent Profile) and section 5 (Housing Needs & Demands) of this report.

2.1.9 A separate survey was commissioned for people not living in the Assynt area that would like to relocate to the area. The link to this survey was shared on social media by the Assynt Development Trust and HSCHT and in total, 11 people completed this survey. The results of this survey are discussed in Section 5.4 of this report.

2.1.9 It should be noted for both surveys that respondents did not answer all questions in the survey applicable to them. The report therefore provides a breakdown of how many respondents answered each particular question.

2.1.10 In common with other housing surveys, this report provides a snapshot of the housing need at the time of writing.

2.1.11 The data from the 2011 census has been used for comparison in this report.

The new definition of household in the census is:

“A household is: • one person living alone; or • a group of people (not necessarily related) living at the same address who share cooking facilities and share a living room or sitting room or dining area Inclusions: • Sheltered accommodation units in an establishment where 50 per cent or more have their own kitchens should be defined as households (irrespective of whether there are other communal facilities) • All people living in caravans on any type of site that is their usual residence should be treated as households. This will include anyone who has no other usual residence elsewhere in the UK.” www.ons.gov.uk

3. Respondent Profile

3.1.1 The survey returns are broken down into different tenure types and compared against the 2011 census results for the Assynt Community Council area, the Highland region and Scotland as a whole.

Table 1. Tenure Profile

Tenure	Survey Respondents %	Assynt Community Council 2011 Census %	Highland %	Scotland %
Owner occupied	83%	72.9%	67.2%	62%
Social Rented	7%	15.8%	18.9%	24.3%
Private Rent	7%	5.9%	9.9%	11.1%
Living Rent Free	1%	3.9%	2.3%	1.3%
Other	2%	1.4%	1.7%	1.3%

3.1.2 The majority of survey respondents (83%) are owner occupiers. This is higher than the 72.9% reported in the 2011 census for the Assynt area. By comparison, the Highland average is 67.2% and the Scottish average is 62% of owner occupiers.

3.1.3 The number of respondents for this survey living in social housing however is lower than reported in the census, with only 7% of survey respondents compared to the Assynt Community Council census

total of 15.8%. For comparison, the average across Highland is 18.9% and Scotland is 24.3% of homes owned and managed by local authorities or housing associations.

3.1.4 The number of people living in private rented accommodation who replied to this survey (7%) is slightly higher than the 5.9 % represented in the Assynt census. The number of survey respondents living in rented accommodation is also lower than Highland (9.9%) and Scotland (11.1%).

3.1.5 The census 2011 data for Assynt area shows that there are in total 698 homes in the community of which 70.1% (489) are occupied household spaces and 29.9% (209) are unoccupied. Out of the 209 homes that are unoccupied, 26.9% (188) homes are second residences / holiday homes. This is significantly higher than the Scottish second home of 1.5% and Highland of 5.7%.

3.1.6 When asked “how long have you lived in this area or community?” the majority of respondents (73%) stated that they have been resident for over 10 years, 7% have been resident between 6 to 10 years, 10% between 2 to 5 years and 10% less than 2 years. This information suggests that there is not a particularly high turnover of homes in the area.

3.2 Age & Composition of Households

3.2.1 A total of 145 respondent households provided information on the age of all individuals living in their household and this accounted for a total of 311 individuals.

3.2.2 Of these 311 individuals, 35% (110) were aged 60 or over. This is similar to the Assynt census where 33.6% of the population were aged 60 or over. This is higher than both the Highland Region (25.9%) and Scotland (23.2%). This demonstrates an ageing population in the area, some of whom may require alternative housing provision in the future.

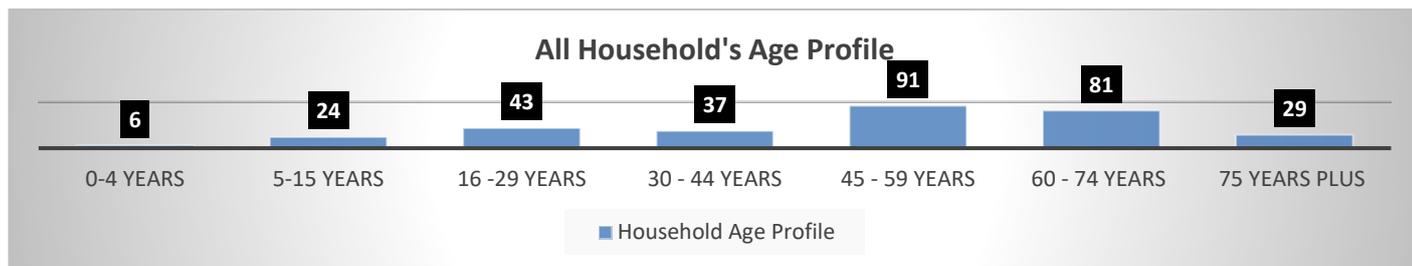
3.2.3 Population projections to 2035 show an increase in the % of the population in the Sutherland area aged 75 and over from 11.3% to 23.1%. The care needs of elderly people increase significantly beyond 75 and an understanding of how their numbers might change is essential to service planning (HC Planning & Development Service, Briefing Note 52).

3.2.4 In contrast, the percentage of people under 16 represented in this survey is only 9% (30). This is lower than the Assynt census of 14.9%, which is again lower than both Highland (17.9%) Scottish (17.3%) averages.

3.2.5 The Lochinver school roll has been decreasing in recent years from 45 in 2016-17, to 40 in 2017 – 18 and is now at 35 in 2018 -19. Population projections in the Sutherland area to 2035 show a decrease in the under 16 age group from 14.7% to 13.7%.

3.2.6 The survey response illustrates a diverse community which like many other rural communities has a significantly higher proportion of older households. A full breakdown of respondents is provided in the chart below:

Table 2. Age of Household Occupants



3.2.7 The majority of survey respondents 39 (28%) live in a two person household, where at least one adult is aged 60 or over. This is followed by 28 (20%) living in a one adult household aged 60 or over.

3.2.8 The 2011 census shows that two person households accounted for the majority of households in Assynt area (40.7%). Followed by one person households (35.8%).

3.2.9 Out of the 139 respondents that answered the question on household composition, 67 households (48%) contain at least one adult over 60. A full breakdown of the composition of survey respondent households is contained in Table 3.

Table 3: Household Composition

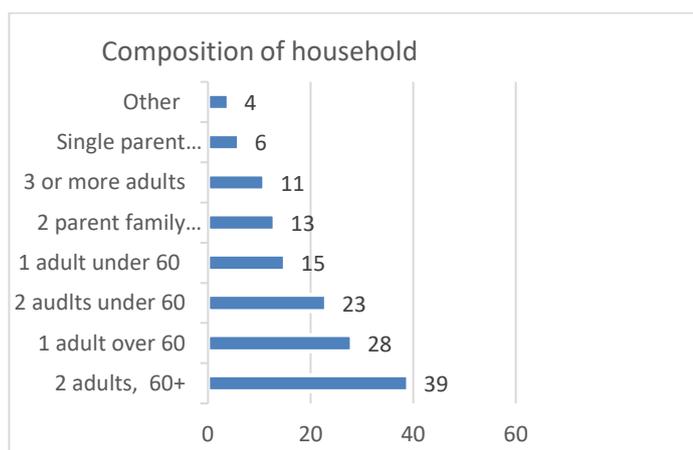
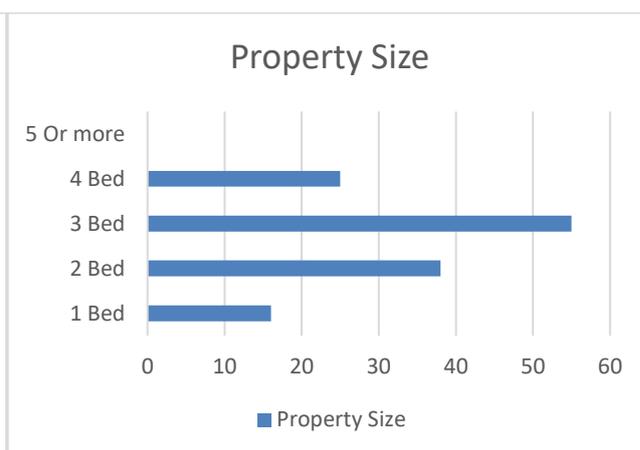


Table 4: Property Size



3.2.10 When asked "how many bedrooms are in your home" 3 bedroom properties 55 (39%) accounted for the majority of properties followed by 2 bedroom properties 38 (27%)

3.2.11 There are 29 households that have two or more spare bedrooms. The tenure of most of these properties is that of owner (26). The tenure of the other households are private rent (1) and living rent free(1) and not specified (1).

3.2.12 Of these 29 properties identified that have 2 or more spare rooms, 16 are occupied by at least one household member age 60 plus, some of whom may look to downsize in the future.

3.2.13 Only 1 current household with two or more spare bedrooms said that they would like to move home due to their current home being too large and they wish to downsize. This respondent is an adult only household and lives in 4 bedroom, privately rented house. If this respondent was to move, it could free up a home in the area for a larger household that are looking to rent.

4. Current Households Needs

4.1 Energy Efficiency Measures

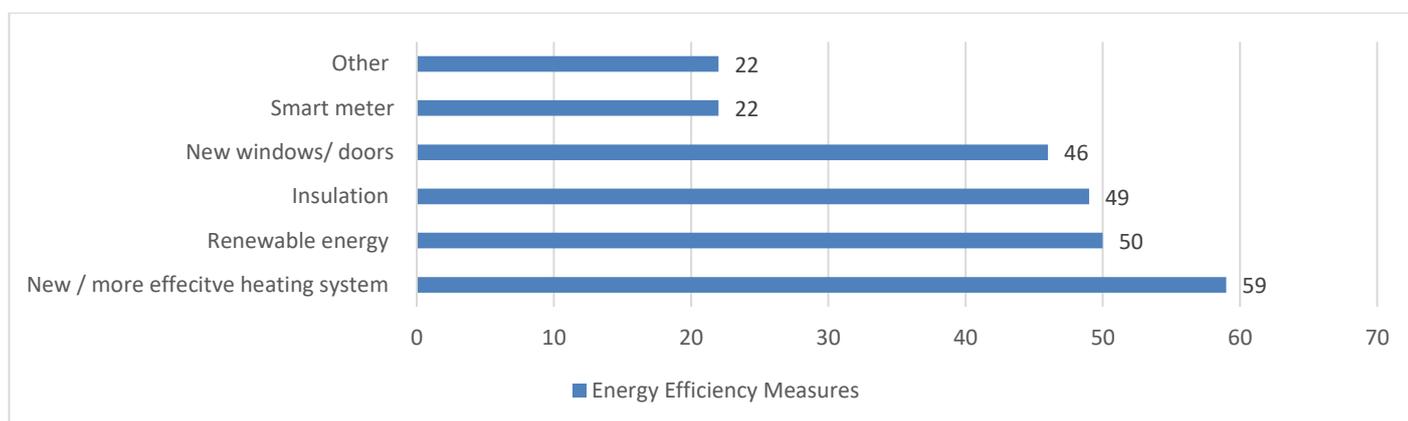
4.1.1 Survey respondents were asked if they spend more than 10% of their income on energy bills. 143 respondents chose to answer this question with 53% (76) answering “yes” to spending over 10% of their income on energy bills and 47% (67) answering “no”.

4.1.2 The Scottish Government defines fuel poverty as “A household is in fuel poverty if, in order to maintain a satisfactory heating regime, it would be required to spend more than 10% of its income (including Housing Benefit or Income Support for Mortgage Interest) on all household fuel use.” (<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2002/08/15258/9955>)

4.1.3 The follow on question asked “would your home benefit from energy efficiency measures” and 61% (89) of respondents answered “yes” to this question. Respondents were then asked to identify what energy efficient measures they require .

4.1.4 The top two measures identified were more of more efficient heating system 59 (25%) and renewable energy 50 (22%). A full list of measures is contained in Table 5 below:

Table 5: Energy Efficiency Measures



4.1.5 Note: The energy savings trust can provide information and support on all energy matters and the measures and assistance available <http://energysavingtrust.org.uk/domestic-0>. Home Energy Scotland provides free, impartial energy efficiency advice to householders, community groups and businesses and can advise you on current grant schemes and offer.

4.2 Adaptations or improvements to current home

4.2.1 Respondents were asked “does anyone in your household have difficulty living in your home because of their age, a disability or long term illness?” and 6 respondents answered “yes” to this question.

4.2.2 All 6 households contain at least one adult aged 60 or over.

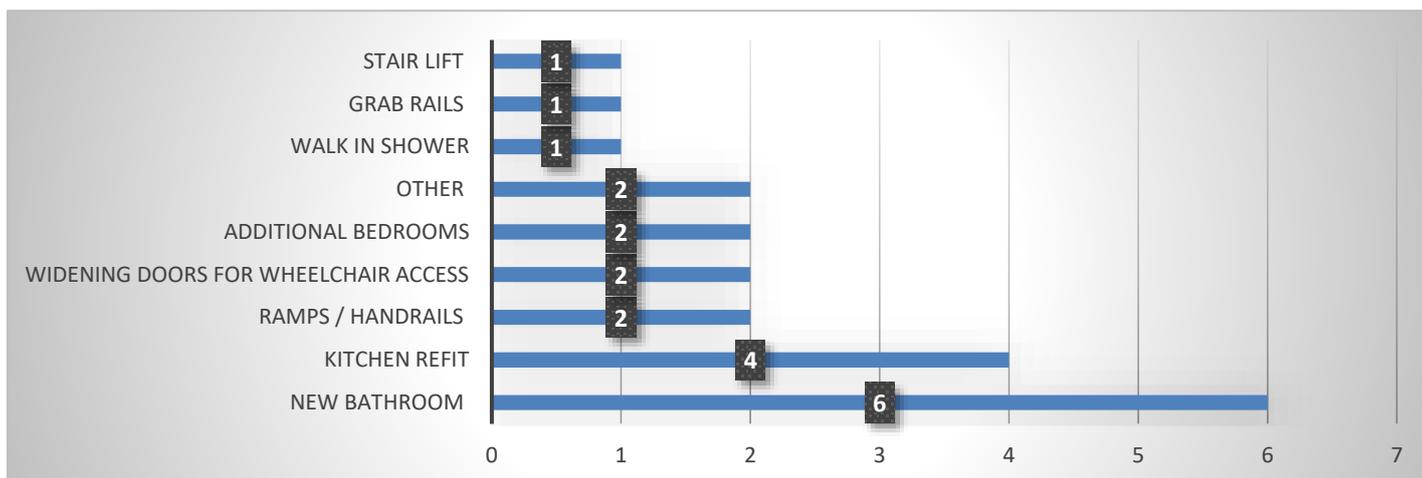
4.2.3 Only 2 households out of the 6 are considering moving home. Both have listed health and disability as a reason for wishing to move.

4.2.4 Half of these households (3) also answered “yes” to improvements or adaptations being required to allow them to continue living in their current home. They listed a range of adaptations to their home such as installation of grab rails and widening of doors for wheelchair access. As these measures are age or disability related, help and financial assistance may be available through Highland Council. *

4.2.5 In addition to these 3 respondents, a further 7 respondents also answered “yes” to improvements or adaptations being required to allow them to continue living in the current home.

4.2.6 Of the overall 10 respondents that answered “yes” to their homes requiring adaptations or improvements, half are owner occupiers (5). The remaining respondents live in socially rented accommodation (2) and private rent (1). The other 2 respondents did not indicate the tenure of their current home.

Table 6. Household Improvements / Adaptations



4.2.7 Most respondents selected that improvements were required to their bathroom (6) or kitchen (4).

4.2.8 Out of the 10 respondents who answered “yes” to requiring improvements or adaptations, only 3 are actually considering moving home and their housing need is considered in the section 5 below. This suggests that the other 7 may consider the required improvement / adaptations to their homes in due course to allow them to continue living in their current home.

4.2.9 Highland Council offers home improvement grants to eligible owner occupiers and assistance to Highland Council tenants for improvements / adaptations

*[http://www.highland.gov.uk/info/1075/supported and sheltered housing/228/home modifications for the elderly or](http://www.highland.gov.uk/info/1075/supported_and_sheltered_housing/228/home_modifications_for_the_elderly_or) [http://www.highland.gov.uk/news/article/3194/council offers home improvement grants](http://www.highland.gov.uk/news/article/3194/council_offers_home_improvement_grants)

4.3 Householder's whose home does not or will not meet their need but not considering moving home

4.3.1 A number of respondents answered "no" to their current home not meeting the needs of all householders now (7) and not meeting all householders' needs in 5 years' time (15) that **are not** considering moving.

4.3.2 Most respondents stated the reason for their home not meeting their needs was to do with the size of the property (6), with 3 stating their home was too small and 3 stating they require more bedrooms in their house.

4.3.3 Other reasons given for not considering moving home included: planning an extension, submitting planning to build a new house soon and financial constraints.

4.3.4 Having children / young adults in the home that may require additional space was a reason for 3 households as to why their home does not / will not meet all householders needs.

4.3.5 Three respondents listed adaptations that are required to their home and it may be that they are planning to carry out these improvements / adaptations rather than moving home.

4.3.6 There are limited options for moving to alternative accommodation in the area and this may also be another reason why people answered "no" to not considering moving home.

5. Housing Needs and Demands

5.1 Householders that are considering moving

5.1.1 When asked if you are considering moving home, overall a total of 25 households stated that they were considering moving with 19 stating that they would like to stay in the Assynt area and 6 would like to move away.

5.1.2 Current tenures for those wishing to leave the area are: owner (4), social rent (1) and rented other (1). All households are adult only households and reasons for leaving the area include: to give or receive family support, to be closer to family / amenities, current home too expensive and current home being too large.

5.1.3 Of the 19 households wishing to move and stay in the area, 6 answered "no" to their home currently meeting all their household members' needs. This increased to 8 answering "no" when asked if their home would meet all their household needs in 5 years' time.

5.1.4 The tenure of those considering moving is: private rent (9), owned (5), social rent (4), renting from the council (1).

5.1.5 The preferred 1st choice tenure of most people wanting to move is social rent (renting from either the council or housing association), selected by 9 respondents. Other first choice tenure preferences were: building a home (5), buying on the open market (3), buying a shared equity home (1) buying a smaller accessible home (1) and one did not specify any tenures (1). Please note that one respondent selected a joint first tenure of both social rent and building a home.

5.1.6 Of those that selected the 1st choice preference of social rent, most (7) selected a monthly rental budget of £276 - £400 per month. Only 4 out of the 9 are currently registered on the Highland Housing Register (HHR).

5.1.7 Four respondents that selected the 1st choice tenure option of social rent already live in a property of that tenure. 2 wish a bigger house (both currently reside in 1 bed property) and 1 wishes to downsize from a 3 bed to a 2 bed property.

5.1.8 The 2nd most popular first choice was that of building a home, selected by 5 respondents. The budget for self build ranged from up to £100,000 to £200,000 plus. Self-build would be dependent on the availability of plots in the area and this will be discussed further in section 5.6.

5.1.10 5 of the respondents that currently live in privately rented accommodation selected a greater security of tenure for a reason for moving with 2 out of the 5 stating that they wish to become home owners.

5.1.11 Most respondents would be looking for either a 2 bedroom (9) or 3 bedroom property (5) for their new home.

5.1.12 Table 7 below shows a full summary of the 19 respondents that wish to move and stay in the area.

Table 7: Householders Considering Moving

Tenure of current home and bedrooms	Composition of home	Does current home meet household needs?	Will home meet household needs in 5 years' time?	Reason for wishing to move	Timescale for moving and bedrooms required	Preferred 1st choice tenure	Preferred 2nd choice tenure	Preferred 3 rd choice tenure	Monthly rental budget	Budget for purchasing a home
Social Rent 1 Bed	1 adult over 60	No	No	Health or Disability, Current home too small, To give or receive family support	Immediately 2 Bed	Social Rent	Not Specified	Not specified	£276 - £400	Not specified
Private Rent 2 Bed	2 adults under 60	No	No	Current housing costs too expensive, Current home in poor physical condition, To get greater security of tenure, Being made homeless	Immediately 2 Bed	Social Rent	Buying shared equity home	Private Rent	£401 - £500	Not specified
Owned 5 Bed	3 Adults and 1 child	No	No	To form a new household with another	Within 1 Year 2 Bed	Social Rent	Buy a property	Private Rent	£276 -£400	Up to £100,000
Social Rent 4 Bed	4 Adults	No	No	Health or Disability	Within 5–10 Years 3 Bed	Social Rent	Buying shared equity home	Not specified	£276 -£400	Up to £100,000
Social Rent 1 Bed	1 adult under 60	No	No	Health or Disability, Current home too small, To form a new household with another, To become a home owner	Within 1 Year 2 Bed	<i>Social Rent OR Building a home</i>	Not specified	Not specified	£276 - £400	Up to £100,000
Private rent 3 Bed	2 Adults plus children	No	Yes	To become a home owner, To get greater security of tenure	Immediately 4 Bed	Building a home	Private Rent	Buy a property	£501 - £600	£40,000 Plus
Private Rent 4 Bed	One adult	Yes	No	To become a home owner	Within 3 Years 2 Bed	Buying shared equity home	Buy a property	Social rent	£276 - £400	Up to £100,000
Private Rent 3 Bed	Single parent family	Yes	No	To get greater security of tenure	Within 3 Years 3 Bed	Social Rent	Buying shared equity home	Building a home	£501 - £600	£100,000 - £150,000
Owned 4 Bed	Single parent family	Yes	No	Current home too large and wish to downsize, housing costs too expensive, Current home in poor physical condition	Within 3 Years 2 Bed	Buying smaller accessible home	Building a home	Buy property	Not specified	£150,000 - £175,000
Owned 5 Bed	3 Adults	Yes	Yes	Retire	Immediately 3 Bed	Build a home	Buy smaller accessible home	Rent smaller accessible home	Not specified	£100,000 - £150,000
Rent from Council 1 Bed	1 Adult under 60	Yes	Yes	Current home too small	Immediately 1 Bed	Social Rent	Not specified	Not specified	£276 - £400	Not specified

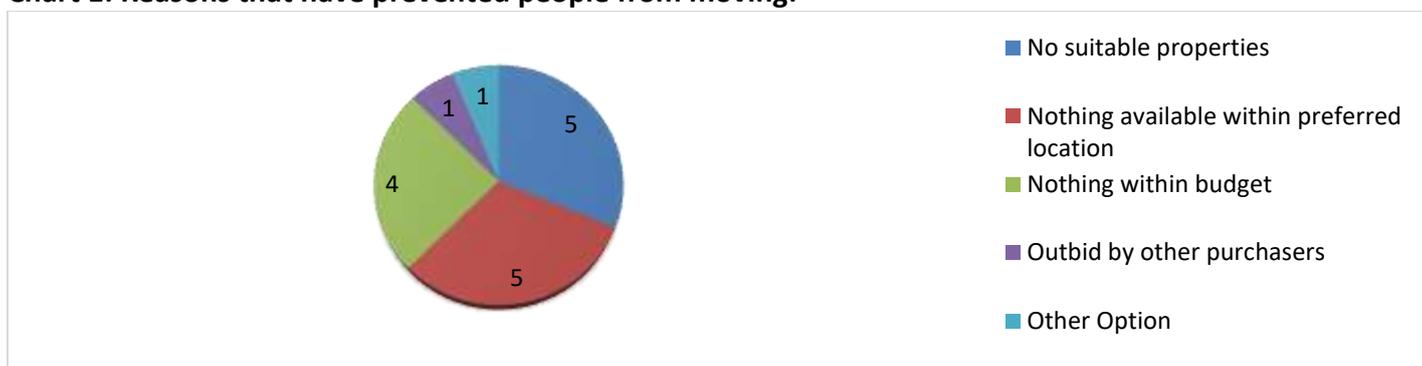
Private Rent 2 Bed	2 Adults over 60	Yes	Yes	Health or Disability, Current home in poor physical condition	Immediately Not Specified	Not Specified	Not Specified	Not Specified		
Social Rent 3 Bed	1 Adult & 1 Child	Yes	Yes	Current home too large and wish to downsize, Current housing costs too expensive	Immediately 2 Bed	Social Rent	Private rent	Renting smaller accessible home	£276 - £400	Not specified
Private Rent 4 Bed	3 Adults	Yes	Yes	To form a new household with another	Within 1 Year 1 Bed	Social Rent	Not specified	Not specified	£276 - £400	Not specified
Private Rent 4 Bed	2 parent family with children	Yes	Yes	Current housing costs too expensive, To become a home owner	Within 3 Years 3 Bed	Build a home	Buy shared equity home	Buy a property	N/A	£150,000 - £175,000
Private Rent 2 Bed	2 Adults under 60	Yes	Yes	Not Specified	Within 3 Years 2 Bed	Build a home	Buy a property	Buy smaller accessible home	Not specified	Up to £100,000
Owned 3 Bed	2 parent family with children	Yes	Yes	Newer high school/facilities	Within 3 Years 3 Bed	Buy a property	Not Specified	Not Specified	Not specified	£100,000 - £150,000
Owned 4 Bed	4 Adults	Yes	Yes	To live in an area with more facilities, and to live in a more sheltered situation.	Within 5 – 10 years 2 Bed	Buy a property	Build a home	Rent a smaller accessible home	Not specified	£175,000 - £200,000
Private Rent 2 Bed	2 Adults	Yes	Yes	Not specified	Within 5 – 10 years 4 or more	Buy a property	Build a home	Not specified	Not specified	£200,000 Plus

5.2 Reasons that have prevented people from moving

5.2.1 Of the 19 households considering moving and staying within the area, 10 have already tried to find alternative housing.

5.2.2 The most popular reason for not moving was that there were no properties available (5), nothing available in preferred location (5) and nothing within budget (4). A full breakdown of other reasons is provided in the chart below:

Chart 1: Reasons that have prevented people from moving:



5.2.3 When asked what they would do if they could not find suitable housing to move to that meets the needs of their household, most stated that they would wait until something becomes available (3) or wait until something becomes available (2).

5.3 Future households

5.3.1 In order to try and ascertain demand for future housing in the area, the survey asked if respondents had any members of their household that are planning to move out of their home within the next 5 years. 28 respondents (19%) answered “yes” to this question.

5.3.2 However, when then asked if they would intend to stay in the area, only 18 respondents answered “yes”. Some households had more than one member of their household planning to leave within the next 5 years and in total, there are 24 individuals that potentially require independent accommodation in the Assynt area within the next 5 years.

5.3.3 The preferred first choice tenure for most of these new potential households was that of social rent, selected for 11 out of the 24 new households. Only 1 of the 11 is currently registered on the HHR.

5.3.4 Social rent was the only tenure option selected for those looking to move either immediately or within a year.

5.3.5 Buying a property was the second most popular choice of tenure for future independent households, selected by 5 respondents. Buying a property was the most selected tenure for those looking to move within 5 years.

5.3.6 Overall, there is potential demand for smaller units with most requiring either a 1 bed (9) or 2 bed (8) property.

5.3.7 Table 8 below shows a summary of the demand for potential future households in the area:

Table 8: Future potential households

Immediately	Not Specified	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed
Social Rent	0	1	0	1	0
Within 1 year	Not Specified	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed
Social Rent	0	3	1	0	0
Within 3 years	Not Specified	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed
Social Rent	0	2	1	0	0
Buy a property	0	0	1	0	0
Buy Shared Equity	1	0	1	0	0
Build a home	0	0	2	0	0
Rent accessible home	0	1	0	0	0
Within 5 Years	Not Specified	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed
Social Rent	0	1	1	0	0
Buy a property	0	0	1	2	1
Building a home	0	0	0	1	0
Shared Equity home	0	0	0	1	0
Renting smaller home	0	1	0	0	0
TOTAL	1	9	8	5	1

5.3.9 The survey tried to establish what would encourage more families with young children to remain in, or come to live in the area. The most popular answers were: more job opportunities, affordable housing, better transport links and faster broadband.

5.3.10 A number of respondents (38) said that they had family members or friends that have moved away from the area because they could not find suitable accommodation.

5.3.11 Main reasons for leaving the area were either: employment (27) and housing (26). Other reasons for leaving were further education (9), economic (9), transport (8) and other (3).

5.3.12 Respondents were asked if any of the leavers from the area were planning to return to the area to live within the next 5 years. A total of 11 respondents answered “yes” and they were asked to share the link to the non –residents survey. This was a separate survey commissioned for returners / those wishing to move to the area and the results of this will be discussed in section 5.4 below.

5.4 Survey for Non – Residents

5.4.1 A separate online survey was devised for people that do not live in the Assynt area but are considering moving / returning to the area. The survey link was distributed by Assynt Development Trust and on HSCHT’s social media and 11 people responded to the survey.

5.4.2 Most of the respondents currently live in Scotland with 5 living in the Highland area at present and three in other areas of Scotland. Out of the other 2 respondents, 1 lives in Europe and 1 in the USA.

5.4.3 Out of the 11, 10 answered “yes” to the question would you consider relocating to either work or live in the Assynt area. This section will focus on the responses of the 10 respondents that answered “yes”.

5.4.4 Half of the 10 respondents have previously lived in the Assynt area and wish to return to live in the area.

5.4.5 The most selected reason for moving to the area was to live in the Assynt area (9). Other reasons for relocating included: family support / connections (3), to form a household with another (3), current housing conditions not suitable (3), new business venture (2), offer of employment (1) and to be closer to work (1).

5.4.6 All 10 would be looking for housing in the Assynt area, the majority of which selected a 2 bed property (7).

5.4.7 Social rent was the preferred 1st choice tenure for most respondents with 6 respondents selecting this as their first choice tenure. Please note that some respondents chose more than one 1st choice tenure.

5.4.8 A full summary of the housing need of the 10 wishing to relocate to the area is contained in Table 9 below:

Table 9: Housing Need of Those wishing to relocate to Assynt

Composition of home	Reason for wishing to move to Assynt	No. bedrooms required	Preferred 1st choice tenure	Preferred 2nd choice tenure	Preferred 3 rd choice tenure	Monthly rental budget	Budget for purchasing a home
1 Adult	Family support / connections	2	Social rent			Less than £300 per month	
2 Adults with at least 1 child	New business venture in the area, To live in the area, Current home not suitable i.e. too small, in poor condition, running costs too high, work in Lochinver	4	Social rent	Private rent	Building a home	£301 - £400	
2 Adults	Offer of employment, To live in the area, Family support / connections	2	Social rent	Renovating a property	Private rent	£301 - £400	
3 Adults	New business venture in the area, To live in the area	2	Social rent / Renovating a property	Building a home		£451 - £500	
2 Adults	To live in the area	2	Social rent	Private Rent	Renovating a property	£301 - £400	
1 Adult	To live in the area	1	Social Rent	Private rent		£401 - £450	
2 Adults	To live in the area, Current home not suitable i.e. too small, in poor condition, running costs too high, To form a new household with another	3	Buy a property / Buy shared equity Property				£150,000 - £175,000
3 Adults	To live in the area, Family support / connections	2	Buy a property / Renovate a property				£150,000 - £175,000
2 Adults	To live in the area, To form a new household with another	2	Build a home	Buy a home			Up to £100,000
2 Adults	To live in the area, Current home not suitable i.e. too small, in poor condition, running costs too high, To form a new household with another	2	Build a home	Buy shared equity home	Low cost mid market		Up to £100,000

5.4.9 6 out of the 10 have already tried to find housing in the area, with most saying that they were unsuccessful in finding a property due to nothing being available within their budget (5). Other reasons selected for not moving were: nothing in preferred location (3) and no suitable properties (3).

5.4.10 Nearly all respondents (9) answered “yes” to setting up a new business in the area. Proposed businesses included: tourism / hospitality, child minding and photography.

5.4.11 The top three measures identified for setting up a new business in the area were: funding / grants, affordable housing and business advice and support.

5.4.12 Respondents were asked to leave general comments and three people left comments as follows:

My partner and I live in Kinlochbervie but are struggling to find an affordable home within the area. We both work at a local fish farm and are willing to settle down here for good.

Existing housing (of which there is very little) is too readily given to people from out with the area who have absolutely no connection to the local area.

There is no 4-5 bedroom houses available on the west coast. We are overcrowded and due to the system no housing association can accommodate.

5.5 Other Supporting Data

5.5.1 In Highland there is a common housing register called the Highland Housing Register (HHR), which gathers information on all applicants wishing to apply for social rented housing in the region.

5.5.2 Current data from the HHR shows that there are currently 53 socially rented homes in the Lochinver area and 6 in Stoer. In Lochinver, there are 10 on the HHR waiting list with a first preference (4 on the housing list and 6 on the transfer list) and in Stoer, 2 on the HHR waiting list with a first preference (both on the housing list). First preference is generally considered the best indicator of local demand.

Table 10: Highland Housing Register (HHR) Data: Lochinver

Bed size	Demand using 1st choice 01.04.2018			Demand using all choices 01.04.2018			Total Supply 01.04.2018	Re-Lets 01.04.2017 to 31.03.2018		
	Housing List	Transfer List	Total	Demand using all choices	Transfer List	Total	Total	Housing List	Transfer List	Total
Bedsit/1 Bed	3	5	8	9	3	12	27	6	0	6
2 Bed	1	0	1	2	0	2	13	1	1	2
3 Bed	0	1	1	4	1	5	13	0	0	0
4+ Bed	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Total	4	6	10	15	5	20	53	7	1	8

Table 11: Highland Housing Register (HHR) Data: Stoer

Bed size	Demand using 1st choice 01.04.2018			Demand using all choices 01.04.2018			Total Supply 01.04.2018	Re-Lets 01.04.2017 to 31.03.2018		
	Housing List	Transfer List	Total	Demand using all choices	Transfer List	Total	Total	Housing List	Transfer List	Total
Bedsit/1 Bed	0	0	0	3	0	3	0	0	0	0
2 Bed	1	0	1	3	0	3	4	0	0	0
3 Bed	1	0	1	2	0	2	2	0	0	0
4+ Bed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	2	0	2	8	0	8	6	0	0	0

5.5.3 Anecdotal evidence from HSCHT’s work in other communities suggests that many people looking for housing do not register on the HHR as they do not think that they will be successful in finding a house through this route and they put up with other temporary housing solutions, move somewhere else or privately rent instead. This is further evidenced in this survey with only 4 of the 9 considering moving in Assynt with preference for social rent being registered on the HHR.

5.5.4 It should be noted of course that the HHR policy is one that must always fundamentally reflect housing need through a points system and, as such, applicants from other communities cannot be excluded who have expressed demand for the area in their applications.

5.5.5 The “Right to Buy” ended in Scotland on 31st July 2016. This measure aims to preserve the levels of existing homes for social rent for future generations and to stem the affordable housing shortage in the housing sector in Scotland. (www.scotland.gov.uk).

5.5.6 The Scottish Government’s target for affordable housing is as follows: *“We delivered 33,490 affordable homes during the last Parliament and have now committed to delivering at least 50,000 affordable homes by March 2021. This target represents a 67% increase in affordable housing supply, with 35,000 homes being for social rent – backed by over £3 billion of investment”*. (<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Built-Environment/Housing/investment/ahsp>)

5.5.7 The Highland Council estimates a population increase in Highland by 15% by 2035. This could add to the strain on housing in the region unless an on-going programme of development is delivered. (www.thehighlandcouncil.gov.uk Note_52__Council_Area_Population_Projections_2010)

5.6 House sales in the area

5.6.1 There are several property and house sales recorded on the Register of Scotland (www.ros.gov.uk) in the last 12 months. House sales are summarised in Table 12 below.

Table 12: House sales within last 12 months

Address	Purchase Date	Sold Price
Langfjord, Inverkirkaig, Lochinver	31.07.19	£85,000
9 Inver Park, Lochinver	23.11.18	£121,000
15 Kirk Road, Lochinver	14.01.19	£92,000
28 Kirk Road, Lochinver	18.01.19	£102,050
4 Inverkirkaig, Lochinver	18.01.19	£225,000

5.6.2 The current average value for property in Lochinver stood at £168,197 in March 2019. <https://www.zoopla.co.uk/house-prices/browse/lochinver/?q=Lochinver%2C%20Lairg>

5.6.4 The yearly average price for a property in Highland rose in April 2018 by 4.3% to £159,437. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-house-price-index-scotland-april-2018/uk-house-price-index-scotland-april-2018> . The yearly average for Scotland during the same period is an increase of 5.6% and an average house price of £148,952.

5.6.5 There are a number of properties for sale in the area at the time of writing this report and they are summarised in the below table:

Table 13: Properties for sale

Property Address	Description	Asking Price (Offers Over)
Mullach, Clachtoll, Lochinver	3 Bedroom Detached House	£255, 000
Hillcrest, Badnaban, Lochinver	5 Bedroom Detached Bungalow	£250,000
Free Presbyterian Manse, Lochinver	6 Bedroom Detached House	£200,000
216 Clashmore, By Lochinver	3 Bedroom Detached Villa	£215,000
Benachie, Free Church Manse	5 Bedroom Detached Villa	£245,000
Lochside, Lochinver	4 Bedroom Detached Villa	£250,000
Achins House , Inverkirkaig	5 Bedroom Commercial House with Book & Coffee Shop	£299,000

5.6.5 The average income in North West and Central Sutherland is £29,788 (Source: CACI Paycheck 2013. This is the latest data available to us, although salaries generally have increased very gradually in recent years). Given that banks typically lend around 3 times a households salary as a mortgage, which amounts to £89,364 then all of the homes for sale locally are vastly out with the reach of most average local households to purchase.

5.7 Self-Build Option

5.7.1 In this survey 10 respondents selected the first choice tenure preference of building their own home (this includes potential future households and returners to the area).

5.7.2 At the time of writing this report there was 1 house site for sale in Assynt at £75,000 (0.26 acres), with planning in principle for the erection of one house. This demonstrates that there is limited land available for self build projects. However given the area involved in the study, further investigation would be required to identify where land needs to be made available in order to meet the demand for self-build.

5.7.3 The croft house grant scheme is available to those who own a croft to receive a grant towards the cost of building a house. Further information can be found by visiting the following website: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/farmingrural/Agriculture/grants/BDandM/CHGS>

5.7.4 In the Scotland, there is a Self-Build Loan Fund which can assist self-builders by providing short term funds that help them to complete their build. (www.hscht.co.uk).

6 Employment / Business Opportunities

6.1.1 When asked the employment status of all members in the household aged over 16, the survey return showed that 176 (61.5%) survey respondents are currently working. Of all household members who are working, 101 are in full-time or part-time employment (57%) and 75 are self-employed (43%).

6.1.2 The working age (16-64) population of Highland continues to be influenced by young people leaving Highland for higher and further education. Over the last 25 years there has been a decline of -23% in the number of working age people in the Sutherland area (HC Planning & Development Service, Briefing Note 52).

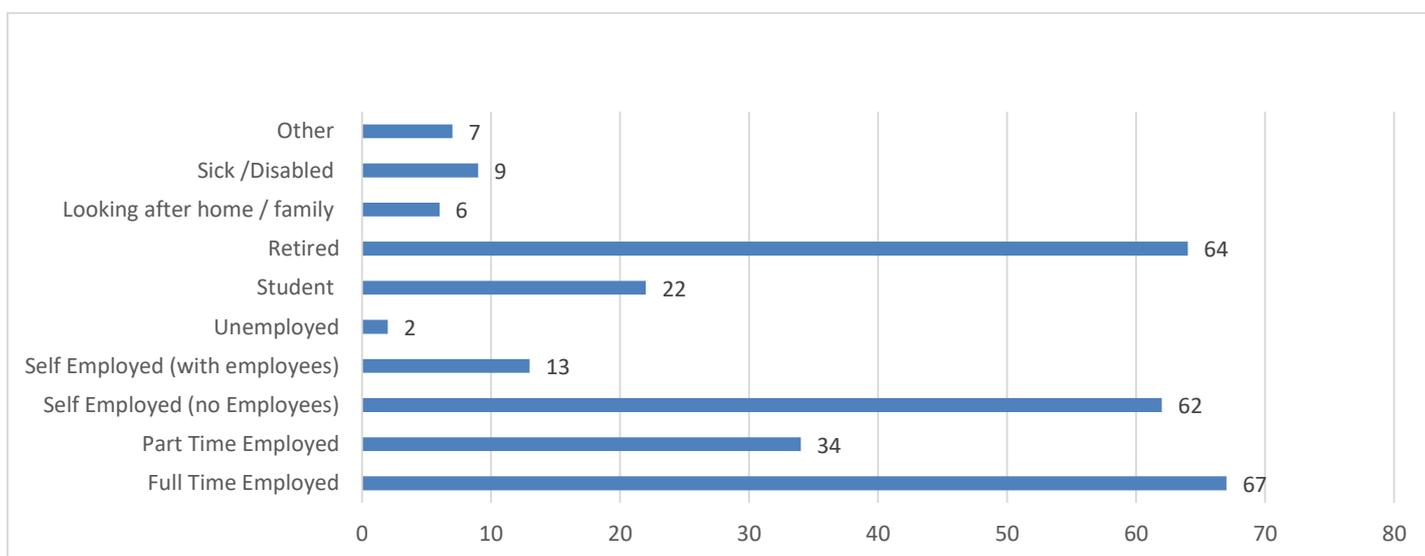
6.1.3 The census figures showed that 41% of the local population were in employment. This is lower than both the Highland average of 54.7% and Scotland average of 52.9%.

6.1.4 The respondents classed as self-employed in this survey (43%) is significantly higher than the census (22.8%) which is higher than averages in both Highland (11%) and Scotland (7.5%).

6.1.5 Retired people accounted for the third biggest group of survey respondents (22%). This is slightly lower than the census figure of 22.8% but higher than both the Highland (16%) and Scottish averages (14.9%). This further supports the evidence of an ageing population in the area.

6.1.6 A full breakdown of respondents is provided in the Table 14 below:

Table 14: Respondent Employment Status

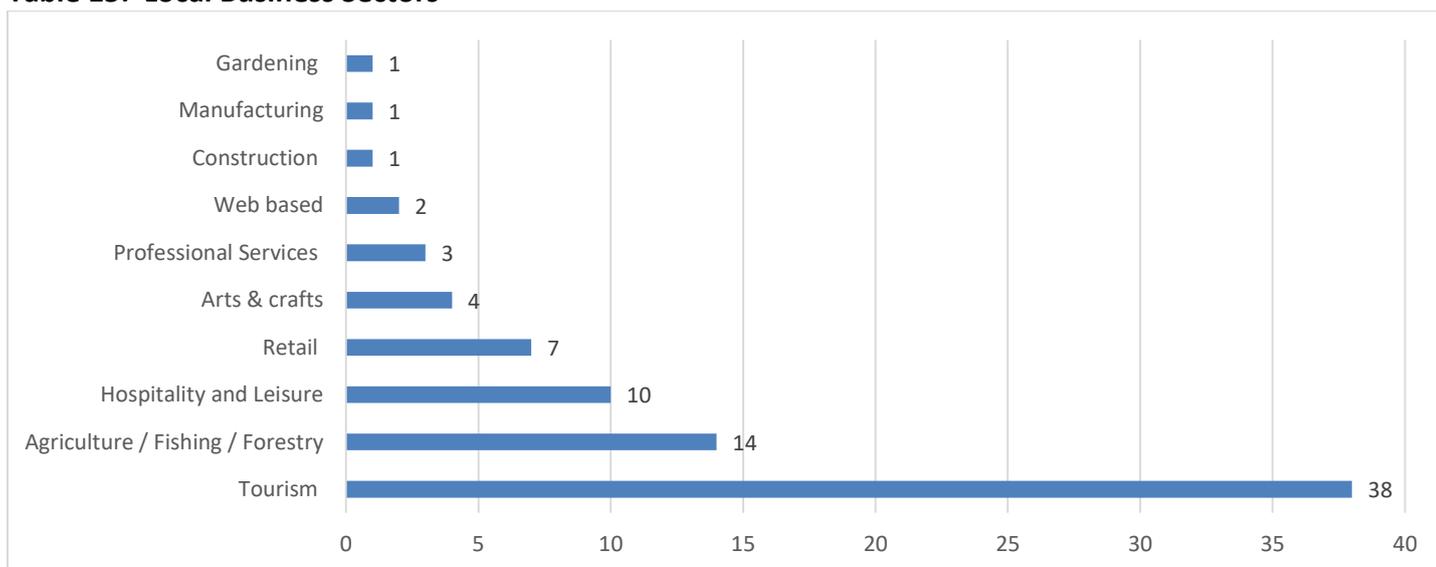


6.1.7 Those employed or self-employed were asked if they worked in the community or the surrounding area to which 40% of respondents said 'Yes'. A further 26% said that they worked at home, 5% outwith the area and the question was not applicable to 28% of respondents.

6.1.8 When asked 'What employment sector do you work in?' the majority of respondents work in the tourism sector (25%). Other popular sectors of employment included: agriculture (8%), public sector (11%) and retail (11%).

6.1.9 A large number of respondents 60 (36%), currently run a business in the area. Most of these business operate in the tourism sector and Table 15 below shows a breakdown of all business sectors:

Table 15: Local Business Sectors



6.1.10 Most of the businesses do not employ any employees (46), suggesting that they are sole traders or self-employed. Of the 14 that do employ employees, 9 operate in the tourism / hospitality sector.

6.1.11 Only a small number of respondents (14) said "yes" to experiencing problems when setting up their business. There were a range of problems listed such as lack of funding, phone / broadband problems and planning objections.

6.1.12 When looking at setting up a new business in the area, 50 respondents said that they would like to set up a new business. 23 already have an existing business in the area and most suggested new businesses were in the tourism industry. It is unclear from this survey how many of these business opportunities would be viable business opportunities and how many are aspirational.

6.1.13 The top 3 measures identified for helping to establish a new business were: funding / grants, improved broadband and business planning advice and support.

6.1.14 Respondents were asked what businesses they would like to see in the community and popular answers included: more restaurants and cafes, more local trades people and improved range of shops and takeaways.

6.1.15 Apprenticeships and training were identified as the two most important things that would keep young people in the area. There was a common theme from respondents however that any training / apprenticeships should run alongside job opportunities and a few select comments are below:

I think the focus should shift to improving the employment opportunities for young people. At present if you are attracted to a career which isn't in tourism, fishing or public sector there is very little opportunity without moving away.

I don't think it's a lack of training as such, but rather a lack of lifestyle based activities and work opportunities.

Low numbers prevent training within the area, Subsidise transport for people to go on courses, Apprenticeships.

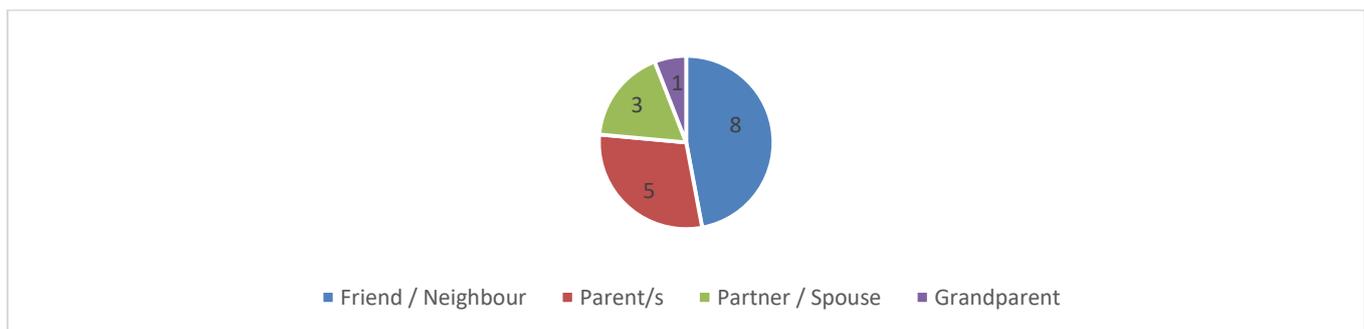
7. Community Attitudes and Priorities

7.1 Community Care and Support

7.1.1 A number of respondents (18) provide unpaid care or practical support to someone living the community. Most providing between 0 - 10 hours a week care / support (12). However, 3 provide over 31 hours of care / support a week.

7.1.2 Most of the care / support is provided to friends / neighbours (8) or parents (5). The chart 2 below provided a full breakdown of all respondent answers:

Chart 2: Support provided in the community



7.1.3 Over half of the respondents households (77) 52% volunteer in the community, with most households devoting 0-10 hours a month to volunteering.

7.1.4 When asked to select what category best described the activity they are involved in, most (35) selected the option of community representative group.

7.1.5 Other popular options for volunteer activities included: sports or pastimes clubs (18), older peoples activities (16) and youth and children activities (12).

7.2 Community Attitudes and Priorities

7.2.1 Respondents were asked to express their views on a series of statements related to the provision of affordable housing in the community. In broad terms the survey demonstrates that the local opinion is supportive of the need for additional affordable housing (both for renting and homes to buy) and is strongly in favour of priority being given to local people for any new affordable housing allocations as set in Table 14.

Table 16: Community Views on Affordable Housing

	Strongly Agree	Generally Agree	Don't know/ not sure	Generally Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Our community needs more affordable homes for rent	81	29	33	11	1
Our community needs more affordable housing options to buy	72	42	30	9	0
Local people have had to leave the area because they could not find suitable housing	44	36	51	16	5
Most people who live in our area want to stay permanently	39	60	46	9	2
People who live and work in the immediate surrounding area should get priority for new affordable homes	96	40	16	2	1
People who have a family connection should get priority for new affordable homes	26	58	47	14	8
Local people with children of school age or younger should get priority for any new affordable housing in our community	77	54	21	3	1
People from outside our community area with children of school age or younger should get priority for any new affordable housing	12	61	51	17	11
The people of our community welcome newcomers from other communities to live here permanently	56	61	26	8	3
Our community needs more smaller accessible homes to meet changing needs	37	42	56	9	8

7.2.2 There is only a small degree of opposition to the proposition that more affordable housing for rent is needed with 12 people disagreeing while 110 agreed / strongly agreed. Similarly, only 9 disagreed/strongly disagreed with the need for more affordable housing for sale whilst 114 agreed.

7.2.3 A large number of respondents (136) strongly/generally agreed that local people who live and work in the area should get priority for affordable housing and that local people with children or school age or younger should get priority for any new affordable homes (131).

7.2.4 In the survey, householders were also asked about the local facilities that they deemed to be important to their community. They were asked to rate the importance of each facility ranging from an excellent to poor provision and rated them as follows:

Table 17: Local Amenities Rating

	Excellent Provision	Good Provision	Adequate Provision	Poor Provision	Not sure
A local primary school	36	44	42	21	12
A local post office	23	48	45	39	1
Local medical facilities	82	43	22	7	2
Locally available childcare services	6	10	14	57	66
Practical support at home for older residents	16	29	35	24	52
Locally based employment opportunities	1	10	29	94	20
Local clubs and activities	8	43	59	31	15
Attractive tourist accommodation / facilities	20	60	48	19	6
A local footpath / cycle network	14	32	36	54	17
An active community council	14	39	48	14	35
Local places of worship	9	28	51	15	49
Good public transport	2	9	34	101	10
Local shop	19	46	58	30	3

7.2.5 Only one provisions stood out as being rated as excellent, and that was local medical facilities.

7.2.6 The primary school, attractive tourist facilities and the post office all rated highly as providing a good/excellent provision

7.2.7 Two provisions were mainly rated as “poor” and these were: local employment opportunities and public transport. Both of these services are a common concern in most rural communities and many respondents highlighted both in the general comments section (Appendix 1).

7.2.8 When asked “what do you believe are the 5 best things about living in your community?”

The top five answers were:

- the scenery
- community spirit
- the people
- The peace and quiet
- Safe area with low crime

7.2.9 Popular suggestions on what could make the area better included;

- Improved public transport
- Faster Broadband
- More jobs and year round employment opportunities

8. General Comments from household survey respondents

8.1 Finally, respondents were asked to leave general comments. A few select comments are below and all comments can be viewed in Appendix 1:

Better provision of housing with residential care for older people would be great, whether a care home or separate housing units, to mean older people can stay in Assynt rather than have to move a big distance away once having high care needs.

Assynt is a stunningly beautiful place, I hope the community can thrive here despite the remote location. This will depend on tourist services not being eroded and plenty of local investment

We need more affordable family homes. There is plenty of land available so....

For our area to be sustainable with a thriving population we need to be to have jobs or self employment opportunities particularly for young people and suitable affordable housing

Like any rural area houses that come on the market are so expensive that young people cannot afford them. there are a lot of holiday homes ...We need full time employment and affordable houses to rent

This is a desirable place to live, but is maimed by the lack of jobs.

The preservation of the natural environment is more important to me than anything else and I do not see the point in even thinking about building more houses when there are quite a few that have been for sale for a very long time, some of them at a very low price!

9. Recommendations

- Discuss the report with Assynt Development Trust and create a housing strategy to establish a clear way forward for delivering new homes and housing options.
- Survey evidence shows that homes for sale on the open market currently are all in excess of £200,000. The average household income in North West and Central Sutherland is £29,788 and these homes currently for sale would probably be out the reach of most average local households to purchases. A mix of housing options should therefore be fully considered for the community.
- Following the inaugural meeting, consider setting up a small steering group to inform future development and identify appropriate support mechanisms.
- Liaise with Highland Council to identify suitable sites for future provision of social rented housing as this was the tenure with the highest demand.
- Carry out a land audit in the area to try and establish if there are any landowners willing to sell land.
- Review current Scottish Government funding initiatives (e.g. the Rural Housing Fund, Scottish Land Fund and the Infrastructure Fund) to develop new targeted options which are specific to the area e.g. smaller homes to rent or buy, self-build support mechanisms, low-cost home ownership, home improvements, social rent or community-owned rented housing and empty homes initiatives etc.
- A review of the wide range of housing options should be carried out by the steering group to establish a broader range of options that may be relevant to this area and also consider what new models may be required
- As the community has an ageing population discuss the options for providing or freeing up housing for families and for older people who wish, or need to downsize into more suitable properties.
- Explore the options for partnership working with local service providers and businesses to meet their current and future housing needs.
- Create a strategy for direct engagement with local businesses and service providers
- As self-build is a more traditional way of creating homes and has declined in recent years, investigate how this sector could be reinvigorated.
- A review is required of how to enable improvements and adaptations to take place in existing households given the need for this identified in the study. Due to limited available public funding for such measures consideration could be given to other potential measures.
- Be mindful of the changes to the private rented sector which came into effect on 1st December 2017 and the introduction of Universal Credit on low income households who rent homes.

10. Conclusion

There are many challenges in delivering housing in rural communities such as Assynt although there is a window of opportunity now to support community-led initiatives. There are current funding routes available for community-led housing through the Rural Housing Fund and Scottish Land Fund and communities have the opportunity to address their local housing needs. Prior to embarking on a development project, a full risk assessment and financial appraisal should be carried out. Identifying suitable development partners to assist in this process can provide relevant expertise.

The Housing Needs Survey clearly demonstrated housing need for a variety of housing tenures, with the highest demand for social rent. By providing a continuing range of housing locally, this will help to sustain

the community into the long-term and it is essential to retain and improve local services and to rebalance the demographics.

11. References

http://www.ros.gov.uk/shp_info.html

www.ons.gov.uk Final Population Definitions for the 2011 Census

www.scotland.gov.uk

<http://www.rightmove.co.uk>

http://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/16355/highland_housing_register_prospects

Appendix 1 – All General comments:

- I wish to have a better connections with the new modern technologies . Starting with better broadband.
- People and young ones move away as they are working differently now - people don't settle for working in shops and hotels. Lots of people want to work as surgeons, forensic, travel agents, you cant do that in Lochinver. Too many people living here on benefits and not working. There are plenty of seasonal jobs just don't want them as they can live on benefits better!
- Stop giving houses to people moving up here on benefits. Most of younger (under 60) move here and never do a days work. And seem to know how to work the system.
- Proper banking facilities - 4/5 hours per week from RBS van in freezing car park is ridiculous. Visitors cannot use the van unless they have an account with RBS. Cash can be withdrawn from the ATM but any other business which a visitor with a different bank account may wish to conduct is impossible. A little tearoom where the coach parties and N500 visitors could have a quick and reasonably priced refreshment 7 days per week would be a benefit.
- Lived here all my life, many changes and certainly not all for the better. Some want to come here because they like it and then go about trying to change things for their benefit. Not good.
- Better provision of housing with residential care for older people would be great, whether a care home or separate housing units, to mean older people can stay in Assynt rather than have to move a big distance away once having high care needs.
- The volunteers to be local groups, are over stretched. Same people in a small place after in groups and losing energy making money to keep going. A regular or even small share of HIGHLAND REGIONS EXTRA MONEY would be fair!!
- Assynt is a stunningly beautiful place, I hope the community can thrive here despite the remote location. This will depend on tourist services not being eroded and plenty of local investment
- We need more affordable family homes. There is plenty of land available so....
- On the whole (like us) most folk choose to live / stay here - we do not have to make the Highlands like everywhere else. True Highland values now in short supply.
- Would benefit from more real life and less tourism.
- There is enough accommodation for people wishing to move here and bring something positive to the community. More affordable housing will just encourage more "benefit" people to come and sit back and do nothing. Employment is what we need.
- This is a desirable place to live, but is maimed by the lack of jobs.
- In order to attract both tourists and local young people to stay we must have accommodation for people to buy premises much more cheaply

- Fantastic area, friendly people, amazing possibilities for local artisan businesses to flourish all year round if people created them (Lochinver)
- Too many houses are given to incomers who do not contribute anything to our community and claim all the benefits that they can
- Like any rural area houses that come on the market are so expensive that young people cannot afford them. There are a lot of holiday homes and it is usually people that have retired that move in. They usually leave the area once they reach a certain age or have grandchildren. We need full time employment and affordable houses to rent
- The NC500 route should not come down the Drumbeg/Stoer route but stay on the A road. Local roads, livestock and people do not wish this disruptive invasion for very marginal benefits, if at all
- Too many holiday homes
- Without professional jobs created the infrastructure can't develop!
- New homes should also include live/work space and also be part of a croft and an affordable new home. This would produce a limited income that could then be further topped up with part time employment and self employment
- For our area to be sustainable with a thriving population we need to be able to have jobs or self employment opportunities particularly for young people and suitable affordable housing. Otherwise Assynt will become a theme park for tourists. The Highland Council should be able to charge much higher Council tax for second homes which lie vacant for most of the year not contributing to the local economy.
- The preservation of the natural environment is more important to me than anything else and I do not see the point in even thinking about building more houses when there are quite a few that have been for sale for a very long time, some of them at a very low price!
- I would say about a third of the local population are over 65 - are their needs going to be met in the next 10 plus years?
- The people as a community need to take individual responsibility instead of wanting to be a "nanny state". Do things to support themselves instead of just wanting others to do it for them.
- There's room for everyone to bloom in this place!
- Filling the local accommodation with people who want to live here would be wonderful. Seeing houses that are for sale being bought by those who want a holiday retreat saddens me. The price of local housing is relatively cheap for those who live in more affluent areas, but still prohibitively expensive for many who live and work here. Communities are disintegrating in the smaller areas as the houses empty of those who actually live here. If there was a way to allow these holiday homes to subsidise the local community somehow, that would be welcome.
- I understand that the HC have few resources to assist fully with planning questions for the inexperienced so it would be great to have access to local and relevant advice on steps to self building in this area.
- Broadband Housing
- I feel very privileged to live here, but the water is toxic and undrinkable due to pollution. Bad road services
- Never fairer system. Honestly doesn't get you a house in Lochinver easily. People playing the system do!
- The internet could be better in places.
- Any improvements/changes made to the area should first and foremost respect the current eco system and its natural beauty. Changes already made/ and or in discussion eg the street lights in Stoer, we feel detracts from what appeals to the area and risks suburbanising it.
- We think it is brilliant that Assynt has a development trust.

- Possibly tax any non-local vehicles to help the cost of road maintenance. Cycle routes Update machinery at local recycling depot.
- Public toilets to remain open
- Better bus service
- Assynt could generate its own electricity from wind or water power. What a shame we missed out on our Community Benefit Funding.
- Good internet and mobile facilities are key for small businesses. Apart from emphasis on super fast speed, the robustness of the system is also important to ensure very high reliability/availability, particularly in light of the harsh weather that can be experienced.
- Too many holiday homes, not enough people live here
- Better transport links
- We are both 70+ and can see us changing accommodation in the next 5 years. There are no questions for such an outcome. I know of others in the same situation. Do you go or stay?
- Given the communities ageing population, there is an acute need for tradesmen able to undertake tasks impossible for older people. Typically, we need a plumber, electrician, window cleaner, handyman etc. This would provide employment for any young person willing to do an important, perhaps menial but gainful job!
- Having only recently moved here I have felt very welcomed by the community and there is loads to do!
- The population is declining and desperately need affordable houses, New people may also need land for a workshop or large garden
- There would not have been a problem had the council houses not been sold!



The Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust,

7 Ardross Terrace, Inverness, IV3 5NQ.

01463 233 549

www.hscht.co.uk

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