



Affric Highlands

Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2030



Executive summary

Affric Highlands is an ambitious initiative to rewild over 195,000 hectares of the Scottish Highlands, achieving significant nature restoration across the area in thirty years. The vision is for a landscape, where woodlands and peatlands are restored and regenerating, keystone species are thriving, and natural processes are driving change across large parts of the landscape.

Rewilding in this landscape will bring many benefits including a surge in biodiversity, contribution to climate change mitigation, social and economic benefits to the communities within the landscape and health and wellbeing benefits to locals and visitors.

The successful delivery of this strategy will result in the following outcomes by 2030:

- At least 75% of the landscape's estates are delivering nature restoration on their land using rewilding principles, resulting in a patchwork of woodland regeneration and peatland recovery affecting at least 10,500 ha and 20 km of streams and rivers.
- Natural processes will be restored over at least 60,000 ha of the landscape, including collaborative deer management in and around 'pioneer estates' such as Dundreggan, Corrimony, West Affric, Bunloit and Glen Affric.
- At least two other pioneering estates will be undertaking large-scale nature restoration, including new business/revenue models, across their land holdings, and will serve as examples for other estates.
- Beaver will be living wild in the landscape, tauros will be living semi-wild in three localities and discussions will be advanced about the return of pearl mussels, wild cat, wild horses and lynx.

With nature recovery will come a reviving of the communities in the landscape such that:

- A network of at least 20 'Affric Highlands' branded local, nature-based businesses are thriving.
- Natural capital investments deliver community benefits as well as verifiable biodiversity positive and carbon negative impacts.
- High value, locally created nature-based products and services support a circular economy where financial resources remain in the landscape.

These beneficial impacts and the collaboration with local people, partners and interest groups will increase support and pride in the rewilding the Affric Highlands. We will know this initiative is being successful for local people when:

- More young people choosing to stay and live in the area instead of moving to cities for work.
- Affric Highlands is becoming an easier place to live and work through, for example, government agencies investing in affordable housing and transport connectivity.
- More and more landowners and estates join-in and offer new opportunities for local people.

The remainder of this document sets out the strategy in more detail.

2050 Vision

The vision of Affric Highlands is a restored and functioning mosaic of habitats where natural processes are evolving at scale, reconnecting pockets of habitat across the rewilding landscape – providing more corridors for wildlife movement across the whole area. A more complex grassland and scrub ecology is emerging, aided by the grazing of a diverse guild of large herbivores. Natural regeneration of native woodland is taking place over extensive areas, with more vegetation attracting pollinating insects and songbirds. Fences are being removed where possible – and not added – to avoid further fragmentation of the landscape.

Rewetted peatlands are becoming a haven for invertebrates and rare flora, while soaking up enormous amounts of carbon. Rivers have become more wooded, with branches providing more shade for species such as salmon, and debris from the trees is making its way into the water – boosting nutrient levels. More meanders have been introduced to slow the flow and give rivers the space to carve out more riparian habitat. Beavers are an increasingly common sight. Their dam-building and felling of trees is helping to retain more water upstream and lessen the impacts of flooding events. Deeper, cooler pools are forming that benefit juvenile fish and provide a vital source of water during the summer months. And the waterlogged woodland they create is speeding up the process of decay – providing much needed nesting holes for a variety of birds. The largest dams are integrating themselves into the landscape and becoming crossing points for many other mammal species. The debris they bring into the rivers is also helping to trap harmful sediments and improve the water quality.

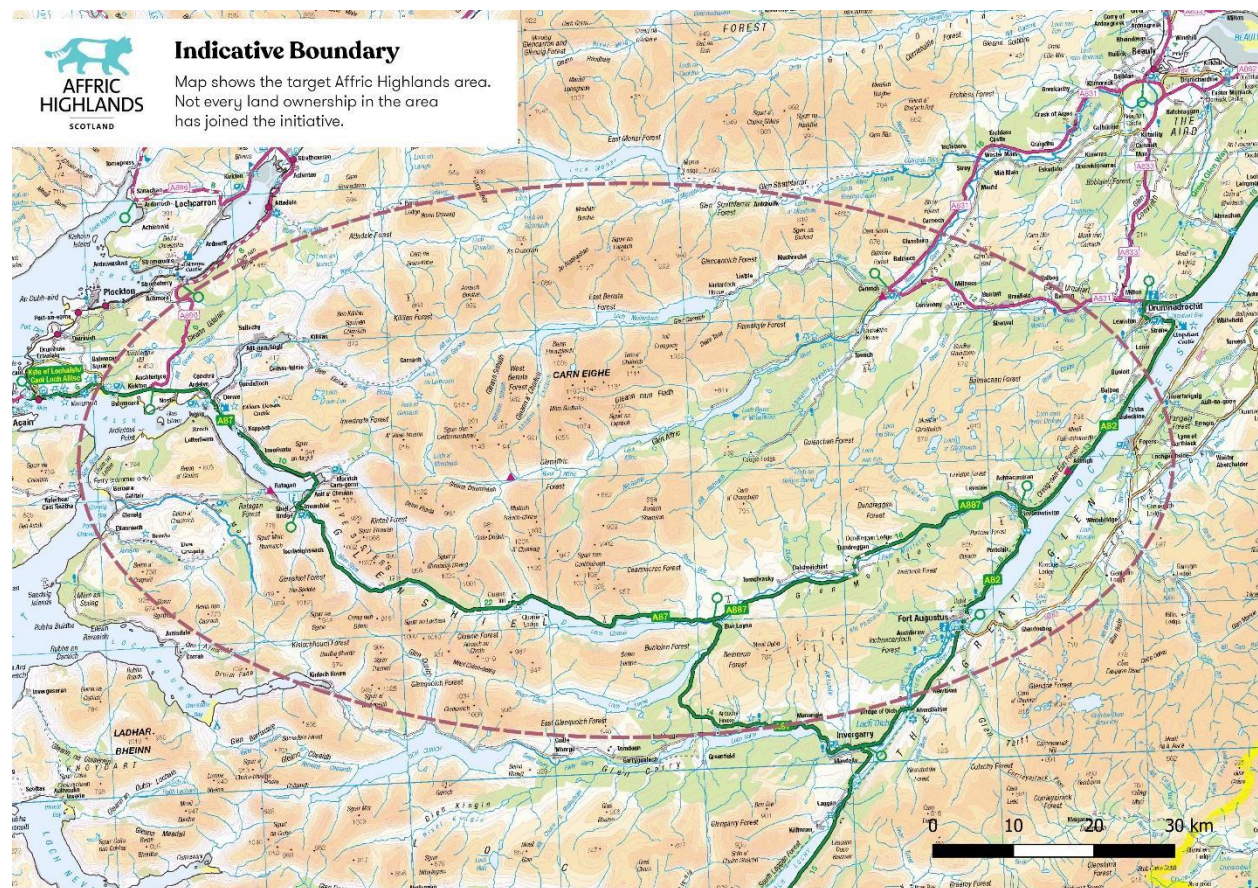
A more functional landscape will emerge, where natural processes are the driving force, shaping a promising new setting for nature and people. The expansion of nature is strengthening existing land-based livelihoods and presenting new economic opportunities. A local economy built around nature's recovery and wildlife tourism, connected with the unique local culture, has become firmly established within communities.

Communities are enthused and deeply connected to the more natural and wild landscape and the wildlife around them. They are growing in size, developing new nature-based skills and Affric Highlands has become a hub for sustainably harvested natural materials such as timber and venison that add value to local businesses. Carbon capture has become a viable income for landowners, with a proportion of the revenue reinvested in the local communities, in turn providing new incentives for further rewilding actions.

The landscape

The Affric Highlands rewilding landscape was launched in September 2021 after an extensive preparatory phase initiated after the landscape’s nomination by Trees for Life was accepted by Rewilding Europe in 2019, making it one of the iconic landscapes within their portfolio where rewilding is being demonstrated at scale. Since then, the landscape has continued to be incubated by Trees for Life while support from landowners and other key stakeholders was being sought by dedicated staff. In 2024, a dedicated charity will be established to continue this effort.

The landscape is centred on Glen Affric, where native woodland restoration was pioneered by Trees for Life in the 1990s. Almost thirty years on, these original areas are now alive with Scots pine and other trees. In 2008 Trees for Life purchased its own 10,000-acre estate at Dundreggan, in Glenmoriston, which is now regarded as an exemplar of rewilding in the Highlands. Scotland's first Rewilding Centre was opened there in 2023. Dundreggan is one of over 45 different estates that own most of the land in the landscape.



The mission of Affric Highlands is to rewild this landscape, allowing nature to connect and thrive across large areas, creating a place where people return, and communities flourish supported by a resilient nature-based economy.

Key partners and stakeholders

Rewilding the Affric Highlands can only be done by working with partners and engaging with stakeholders.

Partner	Why they are important	How are we going to work with them and what do we want to achieve
Trees for Life	Trees for Life incubated the Affric Highlands landscape (2018-2023), building on its pioneering work in Glen Affric and Dundreggan estate.	On its Dundreggan estate, and through its 'Rewilding Centre', Trees for Life showcases rewilding and its benefits. Trees for Life will also promote the wider rewilding agenda in Scotland, improving the enabling environment for Affric Highlands and will partner in fundraising efforts.
Rewilding Europe	Rewilding Europe is the pacemaker to all rewilding landscapes, including Affric Highlands	Rewilding Europe provides network support, bridges between the rewilding landscapes, brings experience and expertise on a wide range of topics, sets baselines in scientific and operational rewilding issues, offers exchange of knowledge with other rewilding landscapes in Europe, provides communication and marketing assets and guidelines, supports funding.
Estate owners	Partnerships with landowners are the key to landscape scale restoration across the Affric Highlands. This includes private individuals, NGOs and GOs.	By offering ecological surveys, the Affric Highlands team will gather baseline data for individual estates to consider their rewilding potential, develop bespoke nature restoration options and support the implementation of these.
Scottish Rewilding Alliance	The Scottish Rewilding Alliance was established to bring together rewilding organisations to help mainstream rewilding and influence policy in Scotland.	Membership of the Scottish Rewilding Alliance will support efforts to scale-up rewilding in Scotland.
Rewilding Climate Solutions (RCS)	RCS is a specialized firm that is developing commercial investment opportunities in peatland and forest restoration in Europe, including Scotland.	Although most woodland and peatland restoration projects in the Affric Highlands will likely be delivered by local service providers and natural capital developers (see below) using the existing Woodland and Peatland Carbon Codes, there may still be opportunity to collaborate in scaling up private sector financing of restoration work.

Partner	Why they are important	How are we going to work with them and what do we want to achieve
Community Councils and Communities	Community Councils within the Affric Highlands act as a voice for the wider communities that they represent.	Within the Affric Highlands, community councils exist in Glen Urquhart, Strathglass, Fort Augustus & Glenmoriston and Glenelg and Arnisdale. Collaboration with the councils is the most direct access to local communities.
Local Businesses	Local businesses within the Affric Highlands form the backbone of the economy in the landscape.	The creation of a business network will connect small, local businesses with each other. Support can be offered to the network to develop and implement new nature-based business ideas.
Regional Deer Management Groups	Deer Management Groups provide an entry point to landowners and are important in monitoring deer numbers across the landscape.	Where the team is invited to the DMG meetings, this provides an opportunity to share news about the progress of the initiative, offer training for estate staff and offer the Wild Tree Survey to estate owners.
Fisheries Trusts	The Beaully and Ness District Fishery Boards are responsible for monitoring and improving waterways for fishing interests.	By collaborating with Fisheries Trusts to develop riparian restoration opportunities, we may be able to approach estates where the focus is not on deer but on salmon.
Private and corporate funders	The financial support by funders allows us to implement interventions and we may benefit from their internal and external promotions.	Communications with funders will be open, honest and timely.
Natural Capital Developers	These companies have the expertise to market natural capital and have access to investment partners to finance restoration proposals. Rewilding Climate Solutions is one of them.	Developers will be approached to understand their processes and alignment with the vision of Affric Highland, with the perspective to involve them in the business network and support rewilding at scale in the landscape through funding resulting from natural capital development.

Theory of Change

Rewilding will only be successful and long-term in Affric Highlands if it provides economic and social benefits to the people that live, or aspire to live, in that landscape, making our ecological goal inseparable from nurturing thriving communities and businesses around nature's recovery. Our theory of change is therefore dependent on the close involvement of the key stakeholders, especially private and public landowners, and communities, in initiating and delivering change.

Most of the landscape is owned by a limited number of landowners, through estates that cover several hundred to several thousand hectares. Rewilding the Affric Highlands is dependent on these landowners adopting rewilding principles in the management of their land. To achieve this, the main ‘power’ that Affric Highlands has in this landscape is to showcase how rewilding can deliver real benefits for nature, climate, communities, and the economy.

Achieving change in this landscape is therefore dependent on

- (1) communicating this new narrative for the landscape, bringing new perspectives for local people.
- (2) building partnerships and alliances and creating a ‘rewilding constituency’ that creates an enabling environment to make rewilding happen at scale.
- (3) demonstrating real rewilding impact through existing or new interventions with willing landowners and showcasing their benefits.
- (4) if the occasion is there and if it is supported, purchasing land, or securing management rights, in partnership with local communities, to demonstrate rewilding hands-on.

This is what will enable the initiative to grow and be more and more successful in convincing landowners to adopt rewilding principles themselves, and also for the dedicated entity to take a showcasing role by itself, or in partnership with a current landowner (or as a custodian). Therefore, the team’s role is to both undertake rewilding interventions (demonstration) and position itself as a guarantor and organiser of the restoration efforts of others, at scale (replication).

Scalable rewilding models are what connects demonstration and replication. In the AH, as well as ‘**Rewilding Private Estates**’, the following rewilding models will be prioritized:

- **Rewilding Forests** and in particular expanding natural woodland through natural regeneration (and planting, where necessary) achieved by decreasing deer densities and temporary fencing.
- **Restoring Natural Grazing** by diversifying the herbivore guild with large herbivores (horses, bovines) in areas where more diverse vegetation has recovered.
- **Rewilding Rivers** by restoring in-stream and riverine habitats, particularly by expanding riparian woodland (“riverwoods”) and bringing back beavers.
- **Rewilding Peatlands** by undoing the local effects of drainage and slag erosion and, over time, the widespread effects of compaction.
- **Rewilding Hunting Concessions** by improving the management of wildlife, deer in particular, on behalf of landowners and/or in partnership with them.
- **Creating Coexistence Corridors** through dialogue with local communities on living with wildlife (beavers, wild boar, lynx, etc.).
- **Restoring Trophic Chains** by bringing back predators to the landscape such as wild cats and lynx.
- **Removing infrastructure** that limits natural processes, including fences, dams, drainage systems, and increase connectivity where possible.

The only path to scaling up the adoption of these models is through the cooperation of those with a stake in this land and its future. Landowners are central to this and plans for the future can only fail if they do not offer financially viable options and if they allow important estate activities to continue. Scotland offers an enabling environment for investments in restoration through direct subsidies (partial cost coverage) and by regulating the certification of land-based carbon credits through the UK Peatland Code and the Scottish Woodland Carbon Code. In addition, there are promising perspectives for Scottish regulations fostering investments in biodiversity improvements (net gain). These opportunities will be seized to incentivize landowners to rewild their land, and for local businesses to invest in delivering the necessary goods and services.

Communities are also affected by changes in the land around them and can benefit from rewilding if the right relationships with landowners can be forged. Generating tangible benefits for local communities, not just landowners, is also paramount. After all, communities are well placed to help estate businesses develop through the skills and labour local people can offer, so balanced and mutually beneficial relationships can be imagined and built. New business models around rewilding will need to provide people with attractive employment and entrepreneurial opportunities. Local businesses will be incubated and supported through e.g. training and mentoring, improved market access through networking around a strong 'Affric Highlands' brand, loans or equity from Rewilding Europe Capital, and partnerships with Rewilding Climate Solutions.

Overall Goals and 2030 Targets

Our long-term goal is that natural processes like regeneration and species mobility have become the main influence over a significant proportion of the landscape. Human intervention may be needed to support the return of these processes, but this should only take place where necessary. By 2030, this means:

- 75% of the landscape's estates are formal partners in the Affric Highlands initiative.
- All Affric Highland partners are undertaking restoration interventions for native woodlands, including riparian woodland ("Riverwoods") and/or peatland restoration. In total, at least 10,500 ha will have been restored across the partnering estates.
- Pioneer estates (e.g. TFL Dundreggan, RSPB Corrimony, NTS West Affric, Bunloit and FLS Glen Affric) will be explicitly prioritising natural processes over human intervention.
- At least two additional estates will be undertaking large scale nature restoration across their whole landholdings, possibly following a purchase or custodial partnership with the Affric Highlands entity itself.
- At least three clusters of landholdings will be undertaking collaborative restoration on over 60,000 ha, particularly through improved deer management.
- Issues relating to wildlife coexistence are being resolved such that beaver is living wild, tauros is semi-wild and wild cat, wild horses and lynx are being actively considered for reintroduction.
- Options for marine rewilding will be explored for later implementation.

Building on the social and economic benefits of today's land management, we also aim for thriving communities and businesses around nature's recovery, with more young people choosing to stay and live in the area. A more diverse set of rewarding, high quality nature-based business and employment opportunities will create a positive cycle of opportunity and forge closer connections between communities. By 2030, this means:

- A network of at least 20 local, nature-based businesses is brought together under a strong brand. The network will provide support and connect new and existing businesses within the landscape that add value to nature-based products and services locally and retain money within the communities, with an emphasis on quality, local distinctiveness, and pride.
- Affric Highlands delivers a high integrity natural capital product which demonstrates community involvement and benefit as the gold standard in carbon, biodiversity, and other environmental markets among stakeholders. Nature restoration projects by landowners within AH will follow this approach thanks to the involvement of natural capital development partners.
- The profile of the Affric Highlands landscape is recognised for nature returning at scale. Success will be determined by the number of businesses adopting the Affric Highlands brand over time.
- Local people are supportive of Affric Highlands and rewilding having built positive relationships with the initiative and begun to feel the benefits of its work. This will be monitored by surveys with communities in the landscape.

Increased collaboration, energy and innovation will play a positive role in addressing some of the specific problems associated with Highland living (e.g. of affordable housing, transport connectivity and rural economy).

Governance

An independent and dedicated charitable entity will be established to implement this strategy for rewilding the Affric Highlands. This entity will be established in early 2024 with the goal of being fully operational and staffed by mid-2024. As soon as it is registered, it will sign the Network Agreement with Rewilding Europe.

As this entity is developed, clarity will be provided about:

- a) The role of the independent board of the charitable entity;
- b) Board Terms of Reference (skills and composition);
- c) The on-going role of the founding partners - Trees for Life and Rewilding Europe;
- d) Relationships between the (non-executive) board and (executive) director and his/her team; and
- e) How stakeholders interact with Affric Highlands at a strategic level.

The involvement of local people that live and work in the landscape is also crucial to the initiative's success. Communities are more than vital stakeholders in this initiative and over time they will have an important role in shaping the direction of Affric Highlands as well as directly benefiting from it

economically through the development of new nature-based businesses and emotionally and psychologically through living in a wilder landscape.

The new Affric Highlands entity's branding will be aligned with that of other landscape partners of Rewilding Europe. It will carry the logo of Rewilding Europe with the entity's name. By connecting it with a powerful European movement, this logo gives the entity credibility, international recognition and credibility.

Team

The team needed to successfully operate the initiative will include the following profiles:

- Executive Director: someone who drives the initiative forward with an entrepreneurial approach and can build trust and manage relations with stakeholders. As the executive director or CEO of the Affric Highlands entity, he or she reports to its board.
- Operations Manager (OM): someone to support the TL by coordinating rewilding activities across the landscape.
- Financial & Admin Officer (FO): someone to support the TL in accounting, financial planning, managing assets and grants and reporting to donors and partners.
- Field officers (FO) with practical experience in ecological restoration, wildlife management, GIS and data management, among other relevant fields to engage with landowners and other stakeholders to plan and deliver rewilding outcomes on the ground
- Delivery Officer: someone to take the development of preferred interventions from the field officers and work out and go through with financing and implementation.
- Enterprise Officer (EO) to build a growing portfolio of business partners and provide support and opportunities for local people to benefit from rewilding.
- Communications Officer (CO) to prepare, update and implement a communication strategy that builds local engagement, showcases the landscapes' achievements on local, national and international level, and inspires others to replicate its approach.
- GIS and data officer: someone to support the field team with the data collection, analysis and storage as well as production of maps and data output.

Other support staff (e.g. administrative assistants) and technical staff (e.g. on the "Change Makers" programme), as needed.

Terms of reference will be prepared for the hiring of these different profiles, starting with an experienced Executive Director) that can then build his or her team. This will aim to:

- Clarify roles and responsibilities;
- Ensure the right people have the right jobs; and
- Secure employment of staff for the long-term.

The Executive Director will further detail and use this strategy to set interim objectives and targets, and work with their team to prepare the following planning documents in a timely manner:

- Framework for decision-making for internal and external transparency and clarity.
- Costed 5-year strategic plan and fundraising plan that sets interim objectives and describes how they will be achieved (see below for an initial drafting of this); this will include some multiyear grants to allow progress to be made over the necessary timescales for longer-term results.
- Communication strategy and plan.
- Monitoring and evaluation plan.
- Annual work plans and budgets to meet objectives and targets.

Values and Ethics

We are groundbreaking: We are ambitious with a big mission. We want to bring innovation and we continue to strive for new and ground-breaking ways to rewild Affric Highlands.

We are collaborative: We are open, friendly and cooperative. We welcome and encourage collaborative working with other organisations, landowners and the wider community. We believe we can always achieve more through teamwork.

We are pragmatic: We seek prudent, sustainable solutions in everything we do. We are always mindful of our duty to our staff, partners and community and above all to nature. Seeking a pragmatic approach safeguards our organisation and the work we undertake.

We are practical: We make things happen on the ground and we work with partners to ensure everyone is focused on taking the right actions to make change happen.

Operational Plan 2024 - 2030

The following work needs to be undertaken once the strategy has been approved and will be included as an annex to the agreements between the new Affric Highlands entity and Rewilding Europe. The plan will include clear, achievable targets that have a definite timeframe and for which the initiative will be accountable.

1. Wilder Nature – Functional ecosystems

In order to deliver at least **70 000 ha of land under rewilding agreements** and achieve a **30% increase in the rewilding score** across the whole landscape, the following activities will be undertaken:

1.1. Scaling-up pilot restoration interventions targeting peatland, woodland and riverwoods:

- AH will offer landowners a no-obligation assessment of their options for restoring woodlands, peatlands and riverwoods on their land. These will be based on Trees for Life's Wild Trees principles, which stress the advantages of building out from existing seed sources and mycorrhizae, favour natural regeneration over planting, and consider the importance of carbon-rich soils.
- Each option presented to a landowner is linked to a delivery package that will implement quality work on the ground, with short-term exemplars prioritized at first to gain know-how and establish credibility, and later, ideally combine grant income with high integrity natural capital investment through an Affric Highlands certification and branding process that incentivises ecological and community benefits.
- AH will develop a monitoring system to track ecological change and inform natural capital products at the relevant scales, from management units within estates to the whole landscape. This will connect with the Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) systems adopted by landowners and natural capital developers.
- Developing, distributing, and monitoring community benefits will require the active participation of local communities.
- We will develop capacity to deliver this work at scale without compromising on quality, including supporting the development of skills and businesses to support nature restoration from concept and funding to delivery and monitoring.

1.2. Creating clusters of land holdings that are effectively managing deer populations to enable native woodland regeneration at scale:

- AH will proactively engage with landowners and Deer Management Groups to identify and support willing landowners and other stakeholders in collaboratively achieve lower deer numbers and so enable natural regeneration in the landscape.
- Data on deer behaviour and impact as well as tools such as DeerMap will be used to support efforts to engage landowners and stakeholders in landscape-scale deer management.

2. Wilder Nature – Wildlife comeback

At least 3 missing keystone species will be brought back to the landscape and successful coexistence achieved through the following activities:

2.1. Bringing back missing keystone species:

- AH will contribute to developing effective, positive models for discussing wildlife comeback with stakeholders and for coexistence after reintroduction, in line with IUCN guidance and the Scottish Code on Conservation Translocations.
- AH will support the return of beavers to several new catchments, including Glen Affric, by working with partners and local communities in ensuring successful coexistence, and thereby contribute to the creation of a viable metapopulation of beavers in the Scottish Highlands.
- AH will support the establishment of herds of rewilded horses and cattle (incl. Tauros) where a clear ecological benefit can be demonstrated and where grazing pressure from other herbivores is under control. This will include Dundreggan as a pilot, with the goal to enable them to range naturally across a wide area.
- AH will support efforts to restore wildcat and lynx populations, if this is supported by local communities, and is considered appropriate and ecologically feasible.
- AH will work with partners to ensure the presence of wild boar in the landscape has become more accepted by local communities through dialogue and discussion as well as practical coexistence interventions.

3. Nature for People - Economic benefits

Based on a landscape business plan, replicable business models for rewilding will be piloted and rolled-out in the landscape by engaging with private estates and businesses in (6) sectors such as carbon and other natural capital investments, (slow) tourism, nature-friendly forestry, regenerative farming and crofting, local venison processing and distribution, and renewable energy. This will be achieved through the following activities:

3.1. Fostering nature-based businesses and livelihood opportunities:

- A landscape business plan will be co-developed with input from local businesses and entrepreneurs and the support of agencies including Highlands and Islands Enterprise and the Highland Council.
- Nature-based business opportunities will be identified and supported with both existing businesses and emerging entrepreneurs benefiting (among others) from training opportunities, finance from Rewilding Europe Capital, natural capital investments from Rewilding Climate Solutions and business development opportunities through Rewilding Europe's tools for nature tourism development; potential opportunities currently include:
- A network of at least 20 suitable nature-based businesses will be brought together and 'badged' with the Affric Highlands brand to support marketing and ensure high standards are met.

- AH will provide training opportunities, co-developed with communities, to enable local people to take advantage of the opportunities created through nature-based enterprise in Affric Highlands, including structured training on ecological survey techniques and delivering land restoration activities on the ground.
- AH will ensure new nature-based business opportunities are embedded in local communities to ensure employment and money stays within the Affric Highlands area.

3.2. Ensuring high-standard Natural Capital investments in rewilding

- AH will engage with landowners and natural capital developers to generate opportunities for high integrity natural capital investment to scale up restoration and rewilding outcomes across the landscape.
- An Affric Highlands certification and branding process will be developed that incentivises ecological and community benefits through a suitable Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) system that is cross-compatible the systems adopted by landowners and natural capital developers.
- AH will ensure communities benefit financially from the natural capital investments in private estates through benefit sharing mechanisms and the involvement of local communities in the development, distribution and monitoring of community benefits.

4. Nature for People - Wider benefits

Rewilding the AH will empower communities to shape the future of their environment and thereby gain new prospects, strengthen their social coherence, enhance their sense of identity and pride, health, and well-being. This will be achieved through the following activities:

4.1. Empowering local people through rewilding's wider benefits

- Public access to nature will be enhanced wherever possible, to enable everyone to benefit from a more vibrant and richer natural environment.
- Young people (under 30) are specifically supported to articulate their long-term aspirations for their communities, to be able to deliver on their own goals and/or develop their own nature-based livelihoods.
- Community-led organisations and initiatives are supported and enabled to develop and deliver nature recovery where they have agency to deliver (includes farm clusters, community councils and development trusts in Fort Augustus, Invergarry, Glenmoriston, Glenelg etc).
- The benefits of rewilding as a nature-based solution to climate change mitigation and adaptation are clearly articulated and communicated, highlighting the important role the landscape and its people can play in addressing global environmental challenges.
- Communities are empowered to define and secure the benefits they desire from natural capital investments through benefit-sharing mechanisms and community shares.

5. Building Engagement – Local support for rewilding

While Affric Highlands began as an initiative led by Trees for Life with strong support from Rewilding Europe, it will become its own entity with a governance structure that ensures it focuses on delivering rewilding while is also sensitive to the views and expectations of stakeholders. To achieve this, stakeholders and communities will need to see rewilding actions and results as relevant and valuable enough for them to participate in. Stakeholders across the landscape will engage with Affric Highlands to further its aims for nature, communities, and livelihoods through the following activities.

5.1. Engaging local communities and stakeholders

- AH will deliver a roadshow across the landscape, in partnership with community councils, to invite people to consider how they could use Affric Highlands to generate action in their communities.
- AH will collaborate with Trees for Life on the effective use of the Rewilding Centre in Dundreggan to engage with local people and showcase rewilding.
- AH will ensure young people have a strong voice in the planning and execution of its activities, and as a route to engagement of the wider community.
- AH communications will focus on the voices and stories of local people (see below), and showcase the diverse benefits that rewilding brings to local people.
- Community stakeholders will be involved in advising decisions about the Affric Highlands initiative (alongside the independent board of the dedicated entity).

6. Building Engagement - Effective communication

As a contribution to building a European rewilding movement, the Affric Highlands initiative, its aims, and achievements, need to be effectively communicated to and supported by external actors. This will be achieved through the following activities.

6.1. Building a strong local and national brand

- A communication strategy and plan will be developed that explains clearly how local, national, and international communications needs will be met and links smoothly with communication efforts by partners such as Rewilding Europe, Trees for Life, and members of the Scottish Rewilding Alliance
- The communication strategy will develop a narrative that focuses on the multiple benefits of rewilding including nature recovery, climate change mitigation and community development and a sustainable circular economy.
- The communication strategy will ensure its communications are people centred and focused (telling real stories about real people) and progressively increase their reach on diverse media, including a dedicated website and social media accounts.
- Affric Highlands branding will be used to promote the initiative wherever possible, through its communication as well as through partner estates, natural capital developers and other businesses.

- The Affric Highlands emblem is part of a designed series for each rewilding landscape in Rewilding Europe's portfolio. The emblems of all landscapes together form a consistent set. The unique emblem for Affric Highlands is meant to create a rewilding landscape identity and is used to connect partners in the landscape and to promote the landscape in the wider region and internationally.

7. Scaling up

Affric Highlands will support the scaling-up of rewilding in Scotland and Europe through the following activities:

7.1 Working with partners in Scotland

- AH will support the Scottish Rewilding Alliance, and particularly its #RewildingNation campaign, by acting as an exemplar and demonstrating the benefits of rewilding.
- AH will seek and foster opportunities for learning and exchange with other rewilding initiatives in Scotland.
- Communications with key decision-makers, especially members of the Scottish parliament (MSPs), local stakeholders and influencers, will be proactive.

7.1 Working with partners in Europe

- AH will contribute to the identification of potential members of the European Rewilding Network (ERN) and European Young Rewilders (EYR) in Scotland and the UK.
- AH will join and support the European rewilding coalition coordinated by Rewilding Europe

Monitoring and Evaluation

A monitoring methodology to analyse impact of activities needs to be developed in alignment with Rewilding Europe's monitoring framework and the specific requirements of different donors. This will include indicators relating to ecology and socio-economic results and impacts.

Funding

A 5-year budget estimate and fundraising plan will be developed for Affric Highlands that:

- a) Identifies in aspirational terms how the strategy will be implemented;
- b) Identifies the resources required to deliver it;
- c) Provides a budget for the initiative;
- d) Identifies where core funding will come from; and
- e) Identifies possible funding sources and how they will be approached.