

# Community Led Tourism

## NHI “PRESS PAUSE” PROGRAMME



# BRORA

## Report and Recommendations

July 2024

**BE LOCAL**

**SCOTO**  
Scottish Community Tourism



# COMMUNITY LED TOURISM BRORA

SCOTO visited BRORA and facilitated a Press Pause Community Led Tourism workshop on 21 February 2024. We met with various local interests – business and community. Time was taken to experience the village and explore local sites and features of interest. A report was produced and a follow up meeting then took place on 30 April to review and prioritise the findings and recommendations.

This report sets out the context and the key findings and a number of recommendations for the short and longer term.

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*North Highland Initiative (**NHI**) is a non-profit organisation established in 2005 as a direct result of His Majesty King Charles III's commitment to support the people and businesses of the north Highlands of Scotland.*

*Today NHI's goals remain the same with a focus on supporting and funding community building, food and farming, education, conservation and tourism, seeking to foster innovation, create employment and enhance quality of life for the people living in this unique and beautiful part of Scotland.*

*NHI provides grants to support projects across three key sectors; community, food and farming, and tourism. In 2020 NHI set up their Community Infrastructure Support programme for community led initiatives.*

[www.northhighlandinitiative.co.uk](http://www.northhighlandinitiative.co.uk)

***SCOTO** (Scotland's Community Tourism Network) was established in 2022 as a forum for individuals and enterprises across Scotland involved with or interested in developing community led tourism.*

*SCOTO's energy is focused on peer-to-peer support and learning, providing online resources, sharing best practice and supporting the growth and development of community led tourism across Scotland.*

*SCOTO's ambition is for every community in Scotland to embrace community led tourism as a force for good which enables their community to be an even better place to live, work and visit. SCOTO is seeking to recalibrate tourism in Scotland to deliver for Scotland's communities and environment first*

[www.scoto.co.uk](http://www.scoto.co.uk)

[www.belocal.scot](http://www.belocal.scot)

# NHI & SCOTO

## PRESS PAUSE PROGRAMME 2023-24



**In 2023 NHI approached SCOTO to scope out a more community focused approach to tourism development, management and promotion in the North Highlands.**

**SCOTO devised Press Pause as a workshop based programme to deliver in individual communities across the area. NHI agreed to fund a Press Pause Pilot and then a Programme - and also to provide an additional grant to participating communities to support early actions and quick wins.**

In the North Highlands, even prior to Covid, various marketing initiatives and the social media explosion had attracted significant numbers to the area and while many businesses were benefitting and new businesses emerging some communities were feeling overwhelmed by the sheer numbers and others were feeling they were missing out as traffic passed through.

Post covid there has been a major focus on recovery – but by getting off the hamster wheel and collectively exploring what is actually happening and what could be different individual communities can determine a new and better future for themselves where tourism doesn't just happen to them – tourism actually helps tackle priority issues within their community. Tourism can be a force for good and make a significance difference.





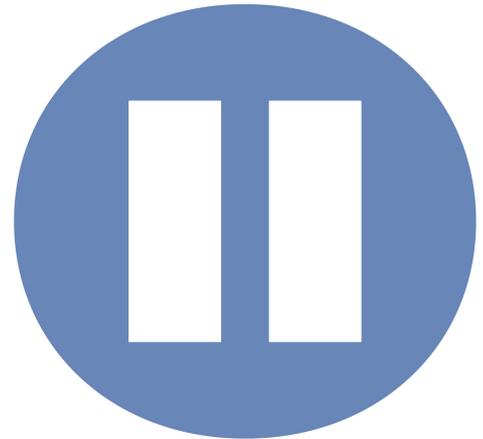
# Press Pause Initiative

SCOTO's Press Pause Initiative has been designed to support geographic communities in taking time to review their current situation and reflect on what could be done differently or better with the community's interests to the fore.

Press Pause takes place in destination and facilitates reflective conversations with individuals at a half day workshop. Key business and community interests are invited and various topics are explored which consider tourism over time and appraising the current situation. Topics include the changing visitor profile, comparators and competitors, destination competence and sense of place and branding.

Each workshop generates key findings and SCOTO then analyse and develop these outputs to provide a series of different recommendations on next steps and opportunities for community led tourism services and experiences.

In the North Highlands Thurso and Lochcarron were pilot communities and a Programme approach has now been instigated with Brora, Plockton, Wick and Durness and Tongue engaged.



## PRESS PAUSE

*A place-based approach to destination development, management and promotion ...*

*... with business and community interests at the same table.*

SCOTO  
PRESS PAUSE

# What is Community Led Tourism?



*Historically many communities have felt that tourism happens to them - rather than with them. It was traditionally promoted by tourist boards, larger attractions and businesses - and more recently through numerous digital touch points – TV, film, social media, Online Travel Agents, bloggers, travel trade, VS and DMOs.*

*But as more and more communities across Scotland form local development trusts, take ownership of assets, and are providing visitor facing services and experiences.... there is a growing sense of tourism being not just something that can happen with the community but also something that can deliver many positive benefits and can help address priority issues such as social isolation, retaining young people, showcasing local producers and crafters and preserving artefacts and assets.*

*For SCOTO & NHI community tourism is where a geographic community is directly involved in managing the tourism offer in their area and ensuring tourism derives tangible benefits at a local level.*

*SCOTO believes there are two types of community tourism in Scotland.*

- Community Led Visitor Services and Experiences*
- Community Led Destination Development and Promotion*



# What is Community Led Tourism?



## A: Community Led Visitor Services and Experiences

## B: Community Led Destination Development & Promotion

**WHAT** Travel, events and visitor services and experiences that are owned, managed and/or delivered by the local community

A geographic community makes a conscious choice to come together to manage their tourism offer and how their area is promoted

**WHY** Ensure tourism as a means to an end – wider benefits are realised for the community addressing local priorities

To avoid tourism just happening – tourism becomes a force for good. Business and community interests work together

**WHO** Social Enterprises – Cooperative, CIC, SCIO, Charitable Trust with trading arm

Community Development Trusts, Community Associations, Cooperatives, village/Village/Area DMOs

**HOW** Asset transfers, service level agreements, partnerships, change of use, added value

Community led destination competency appraisals and action plan  
Community led place branding and visitor proposition



# What is Community Led Tourism?



## **A: Community Led Visitor Services & Experiences**

This is typically where the community has set up a social enterprise which delivers a visitor facing service or experience which derives important benefits back into the community as well as servicing the needs of visitors. The service may not be totally visitor facing and equally tourism may not be seen as the primary driver. But the interface with visitors brings in much needed spend and other social benefits and helps the community deliver against priority issues and opportunities.

## **B: Community Led Destination Development & Promotion**

This is where a geographic community – a village, an island, a village, a city neighbourhood or a glen, for example – come together to consider and then manage their tourism offer and how their area is promoted. This involves local business and community interests collaborating to better understand how the area presents itself as a destination and jointly agree what could be done better or differently that can make the place an even better place to live, work and visit



# Why Press Pause?

## A New Era



- Tourism and travel is changing – it already was and this has rapidly accelerated with the pandemic
- Everyone is much more conscious of their wellbeing
- We are increasingly aware of the climate emergency and the need for individual action
- Technology is revolutionising travel and tourism
- Our inspiration for travel is coming from multiple often digital sources
- And visitors are seeking to slow down, meet local people, have authentic experiences

Meanwhile ...

- Scotland is focusing on Community Wealth Building [NSET – National Strategy for Economic Transformation)
- Scotland is seeking a 'wellbeing' economy [NSET]
- Scotland is seeking 'responsible tourism for a sustainable future' [Scotland Outlook 2030]
- Scottish Communities are being empowered to do more for themselves - to own assets and strengthen their voice



# Why Press Pause?

## Global Context



In 2015 all United Nations Member States adopted the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**. This provided a shared blue print for peace and prosperity for people and planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the **17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** which are an urgent call for action by all countries – developed and developing – in a global partnership. They recognise that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand in hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.

**#SDG11** is the most relevant to Community Led Tourism – Sustainable Cities and Communities. **#SDG11 is all about making cities and human settlements**

- **Inclusive**
- **Safe**
- **Resilient**
- **Sustainable**

**Press Pause seeks to review and address how tourism is actively contributing to the achievement of all SDGs and specifically #SDG11 within individual host communities following the pandemic and in light of the climate emergency.**





# Why Press Pause?

## Strategic Context

The National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET) has a vision ***“to create a wellbeing economy: a society that is thriving across economic, social and environmental dimensions, and that delivers prosperity for all Scotland's people and places. We aim to achieve this while respecting environmental limits, embodied by our climate and nature targets.”***

Scotland Outlook 2030 – the national tourism strategy – is seeking ***“responsible tourism for a sustainable future”***. Responsible tourism considers four themes – reducing carbon, inclusion, biodiversity and communities.

The strategy focuses on four priorities –

- Our passionate people
- Our thriving places
- Our diverse businesses
- Our memorable experiences

**Scotland has provided the strategic context for a new way of doing tourism with communities to the fore.**



# Why Press Pause?

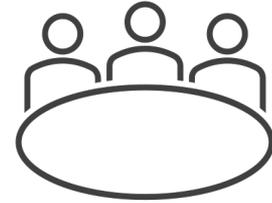
## Local Context

In Scotland communities have been undertaking **Community Action Planning** for many years. Community Action Planning seeks to identify **the priorities that the community feel are important to them** and set out **how they wish to pursue their goals and aspirations**. This process is ensuring that **local people have a real voice** and can **influence the decisions** which **impact on their communities**.

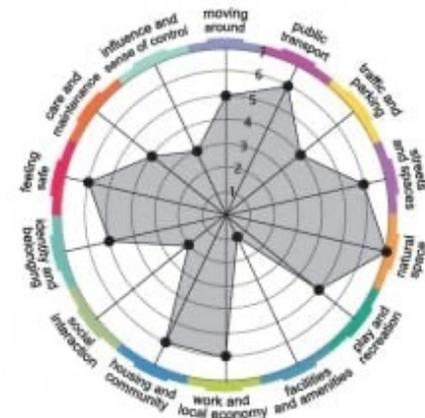
More recently **Place Planning** has been introduced by the **Planning (Scotland) Act 2019**, which contains a new right for communities to produce their own plans as part of the new Scottish planning system. Local Place Plans contain the **community's proposals for the development and use of land**, and provide a new opportunity for communities to feed into the planning system with ideas and proposals.

**Many communities who have undertaken community action or place planning at either an individual community level or an area level do identify tourism as a theme requiring action either to better manage pressures or optimize opportunities.**

**Press Pause enables an individual community to properly understand what tourism is delivering at present – good and bad – and to collectively explore what could be done differently or better in the interests of the community.**



Place Standard –  
How good is Our Place?



# Why Press Pause?

## Key considerations



The Press Pause Initiative facilitates conversations on

- What is the Destination in the eyes of locals as well as visitors
- What's working, what's not working, and what could be done differently/better
- Competitors and Comparators
- Visitor Profile – Past, Present and Future
- Community Led Destination Competency Appraisal
- Community Led Place Branding – USPs, POPs and PODs
- A Community Led Visitor Proposition
- Reflections ... and Actions



# BRORA

## 'PRESS PAUSE' REPORT

APRIL 2024

**BRORA, SUTHERLAND**





# BRORA

## Scene Setting

SCOTO was commissioned by the North Highland Initiative to undertake a pilot community led tourism initiative. The communities of Lochcarron and Thurso, agreed to be pilot communities in the SCOTO 'Press Pause' programme taking place in June/July 2023. The pilots were both well received in each community and NHI agreed to a second phase of Press Pause with Brora being the first community in Phase 2.

Brora is on the east coast of Sutherland and SCOTO was initially approached by Brora Development Trust in Autumn 2023 keen to explore if a Press Pause workshop would help them define the best way forward for tourism development and promotion in and around Brora. Following a scoping meeting in late November 2023 and further discussions with NHI Brora was welcomed as the first community to undertake Press Pause in Phase 2 of the NHI funded programme. A date for the workshop was set for 21 February 2024 and Brora Development Trust set up an invite list of local business and community interests and issued invites to the Press Pause workshop which took place in Cocoa Skye. A follow up meeting to review the findings took place on 30 April in the marine Hotel.

This Press Pause Report sets out the key findings and lists a number of recommendations for the community to consider as part of their journey in community led tourism.



# BRORA

## An Overview



- Located in Sutherland in the North Highlands of Scotland on the east coast
- Rural village with key visitor services
- Population of c1765 in the KW9 postcode area – 1200 in Brora village
- Rail access – on the Far North Line
- On the A9 and NC500
- 58 miles from Inverness
- Has a community development trust





# BRORA

## Community Structures

Brora has a long-established Development Trust established in 2013. It was set up by local people passionate to establish a grass roots approach to making their community a better place to live work and play. It is known as Brora Development Trust since 2021 and is constituted as Brora and District Action Group. It is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SC043968).

Brora Development Trust helps facilitate social, economic and environmental growth in Brora and the district of Clyne. It is managed by a voluntary Board of Trustees and currently employs a full time Development Manager, Lead Youth Worker and four sessional Youth Workers. Current projects:

- **Discover Brora** with a website, social media platforms and a visitor information point within the Otter's Couch. A Discover Brora brand has been developed and the website showcases local businesses.
- **The Otter's Couch** arts and crafts social enterprise which provides earning opportunities for over 40 local people
- **Brora Youth Initiative** which is a community partnership initiative which runs twice weekly youth group sessions for secondary school aged young people in Brora
- **Happy School Holidays Project** providing food relief support for children and young people living in Brora during school holidays
- **Food Share Shed** providing support for two local food share units



# BRORA

## Tourism Structures



Brora sits within Sutherland. Venture North is the local DMO – Destination Management and Marketing Organisation - covering Caithness and Sutherland and which emerged in 2013 as a cooperative body of tourism businesses and entrepreneurs. Venture North is a membership organisation and operates [www.venture-north.co.uk](http://www.venture-north.co.uk) as well as contributing to policy and advocating for members.



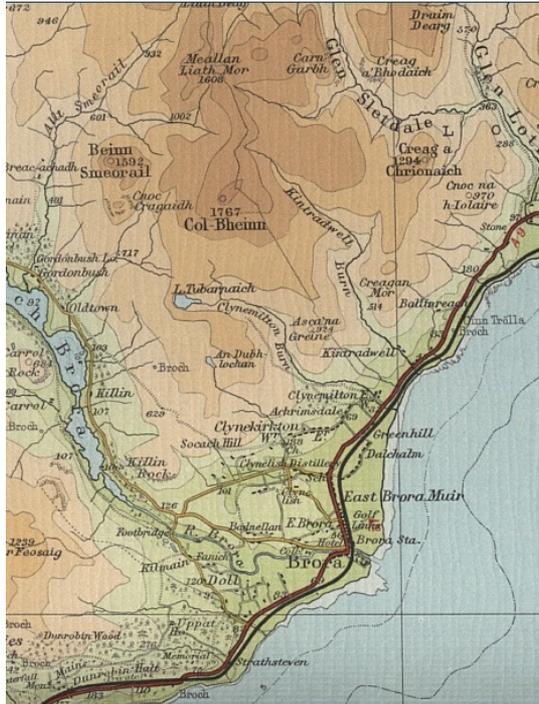
Their current strategy is the Tourism Destination Recovery Strategy 2021-2024 for Caithness & Sutherland. This has seven strategic tourism aims.

1. Effective **capacity building** for the tourism sector
2. Ensure a strong regional and sector **representative voice**
3. Raise the **profile** of Caithness and Sutherland as a high quality sustainable and responsible year-round tourism destination
4. Better **manage the visitor and community experience** across the region
5. Position tourism as a **career of choice** for all ages and to help to address staff shortages across the sector
6. Establish a **tourism baseline** for the region and be able to measure and demonstrate progress and impact against this
7. Build the **capacity and engagement** of Venture North across the region



# BRORA

## Observations



- Brora is a historic village on the east coast of Sutherland in the North Highlands
- The A9/NC500 and the Far North railway line weave through the village
- Brora has a well known golf course and 2 distilleries
- Brora has a heritage centre
- Brora has a historic harbour at the mouth of the River Brora which is tidal
- Brora has 2 beaches including the award winning stretch of beach next to the golf course
- Brora Loch and the river are known for salmon and sea trout fishing and stalking takes place on local estates
- Neither the beaches, Loch or harbour are immediately apparent from the A9/NC500
- Dunrobin Castle is 5 miles to the south
- Brora has a significant industrial past which is no longer evident



# BRORA

## THE VILLAGE



# BRORA

## VILLAGE CENTRE



## CLYNE WAR MEMORIAL



# BRORA

THE OTTER'S COUCH



BRORA HARBOUR



# BRORA

## BRORA BEACH



## BRORA GOLF COURSE



# BRORA

BRORA HERITAGE CENTRE / CLYNE HERITAGE SOCIETY



# BRORA

## CLYNE OLD SCHOOL AND FUTURE MUSEUM SITE



# BRORA

## BRORA RAILWAY BRIDGE



# BRORA

## LOCH BRORA AND PADDLEBOARDING



# BRORA

DUNROBIN CASTLE – SOUTH OF BRORA



# Press Pause Conversations



## Engagement at Workshop

- Brora Development Trust – Trustees and Staff
- Clyne Heritage Society
- Sutherland Inn
- Cocoa Skye
- Brora Golf Club
- Clynelish Distillery - Diageo
- Ard Beag Ceramics
- Brighter Brora
- Friends of Clyne War Memorial
- Scarecrow Festival
- Local artists

## Topics Explored

1. Defining the BRORA Destination as a visitor and as a local
2. What's working, what's not working, and what could be done differently/better in BRORA
3. BRORA'S Competitors and Comparators
4. BRORA'S Visitor Profile – Past Present and Future
5. BRORA'S Destination Competency Appraisal
6. BRORA'S Place Branding – USPs, POPs and PODs
7. Reflections ...
8. CLT Recommendations for BRORA



# BRORA

## Introductory Remarks

The round table introductions revealed valuable perspectives on the area and the value/opportunity tourism offers.

- There is a significant amount of interest in the immediate and wider area which visitors don't know about or expect – Brora has scope to be much more of a hub
- The golf course and distillery are seeing people from all over – how can these people be encouraged to spend more time in and around Brora – what would be the hook?
- The golf course recognises the importance of tourism for survival and has new activity planned – very keen to work together and collaborate with other businesses and the Trust
- The Clynelish Distillery has a new team and a much stronger focus on tourism
- The council owned Brora Heritage Centre at Fascally was originally operated by the council and is now operated by the Clyne Heritage Society – it is a significant detour from the A9/village which restricts numbers
- The Old Clyne School has been acquired and is being redeveloped as the new museum by the Clyne Heritage Society (target opening 2025) – on A9 to the north of the village. A Learning and Engagement Officer is in post.
- Brora has a lost some significant heritage buildings – including Hunter's Woollen Mill which was demolished and is now housing called 'Mill Way'
- Mainstream businesses are very seasonal – the locals are vital support over winter
- Brighter Brora have done several displays eg floral and Xmas lights plus the painted bikes
- Scarecrow Festival, Yarn Bombing – plans to bring back in 2025



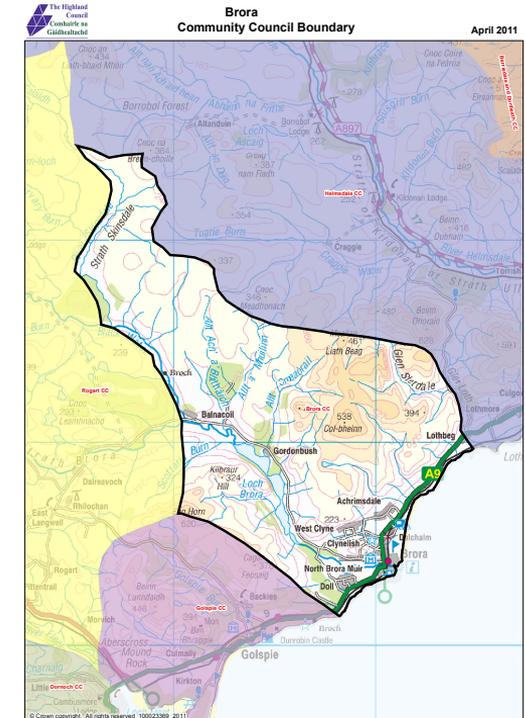
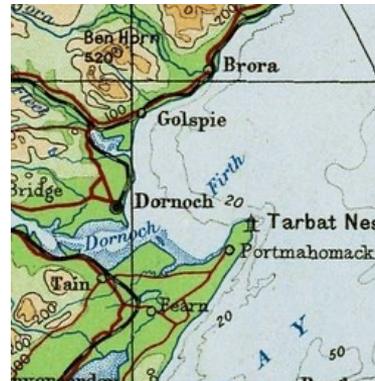


# 1. Defining the Destination

Brora sits within Sutherland region and is located immediately north-east of Golspie.

The Brora Development Trust's area of interest is a good footprint for managing and developing community led tourism – covering the village and the surrounding district known as Clyne which has many features of interest.

This covers the KW9 postcode area and mirrors the footprint of the Brora Community Council and also the Clyne Heritage Society.



# 2. What's working/not working

Comments shared at the workshop by individuals:

- Trust activity and the dedicated staff
- Otter's Couch and Visitor Information Point
- Do have public toilets so people stop
- Brora Distillery reopened
- New team at the Clynelish Distillery with a renewed focus on visitors
- New distillery visitor centre
- Clynelish Distillery is busy in summer – expecting more travel trade and cruise visits
- Golf course – well known and popular – overseas golfers visit as part of touring a number of courses
- NC500 does bring people to the area
- The war memorial is distinctive and a landmark on the A9
- Events list on website and displayed in various locations
- A lot of Brora businesses are dog friendly
- Heritage Trail – could be better promoted
- Getting people to stop
- Poor uptake in business listings on Discover Brora website – low engagement
- Businesses too busy to network
- Toilets at Coop are dark and dank
- Discover Brora events calendar needs better promoted – village what's on page on FaceBook isn't visitor facing
- No sense of what is in the area – and there is a lot
- 2 mile walk from the train to the distilleries – no taxis
- Distillery is not well signposted (plans to improve this)
- Seasonality – distillery is busy in summer but not winter
- Commercial reality of cost of living
- Low numbers of adult staff available (can get young people but move on quickly)
- Fountain Square needs a facelift
- Lack of affordable housing for people to move with a job offer
- Dunrobin attracts a lot of young people and restricts availability for other local businesses
- Tourism jobs are seasonal and not seen as a good job – antisocial hours and dealing with difficult customers
- Neither beach nor Loch is visible from A9
- Lack an identity – what is Brora – what does it offer?
- Brora has been and still is a working village – first impression
- Low female use of the golf course – seeking to address
- Brora Castle is referred to on a tourist map – doesn't exist
- Caravan site has capacity issue for waste disposal



# 2. What could be done better

## Initial ideas



- 'Destination Brora' – village to be recognised as a hub and gateway to numerous surrounding activities and sights
- More engagement in Dev Trust and tourism group with reps from the outlying areas of Clyne district
- More business to business activity and events – WhatsApp group now set up following first Press Pause workshop
- Cross selling between businesses and attractions
- Better connect the village with Dunrobin Castle, the golf course and the Distilleries – good footfall compared to the village itself
- Shuttle transport for distillery – local bus company
- Develop the collective identity of the Sutherland east coast villages on NC500 (Brora, Golspie and Dornoch)
- Sutherland Sessions - further develop the calendar and venues – make more of what does happen
- Differentiate between touring visitors and those seeking short breaks
- Stronger creative collaborations and open studios
- A village map that highlights things to see and do, parking and walks
- Refurbishing the Millennium Mural



# 3. Competitors & Comparators



A useful exercise is to think of similar communities that are either local competitors and can be attracting the visitors you would like to see or comparators which are communities that are similar but located elsewhere and have achieved success and therefore could have valuable insights to share. Learning exchanges can be very worthwhile.

**JOHN O'GROATS** – major draw – is Brora considered too close to be worth a stop?

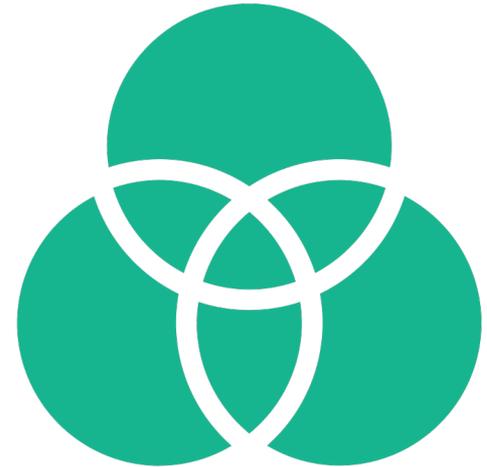
**DORNOCH** – recognised as a destination and people plan to stop – is Brora too close to be worth a stop?

**WEST COAST OF NC500** – seen as more appealing – east coast doesn't get as much visitor activity

**TYNDRUM** – busy village on A82 which has a strong food and refreshment offer and is a recognised stopping point

**GIRVAN** – village on A77 and Ayrshire coast which has reinvented itself through a simple 'dog friendly' campaign

**CULLEN** – Discover Cullen which provides visitor information and manages the toilets with an umbrella structure that helps coordinate everything



# 3. Competitors & Comparators



## So What?

**JOHN O'GROATS** – Brora is a good distance away and has a different appeal – the beach and Loch, heritage trail. Better promote what is on offer and present it as a hub with several experiences.

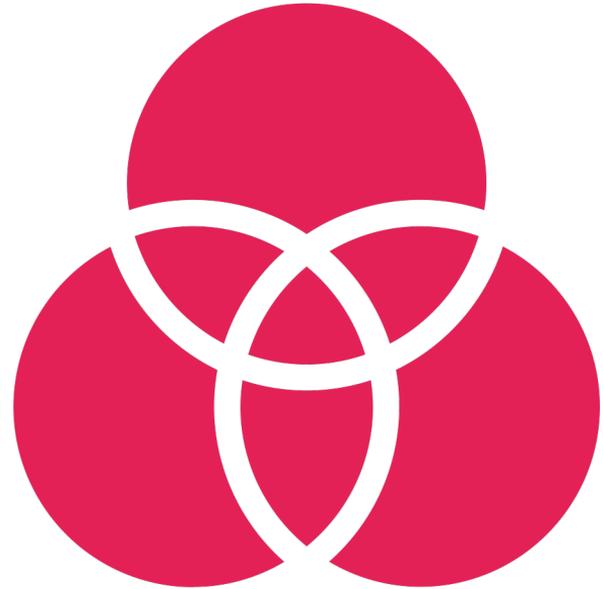
**DORNOCH** – has a similar appeal with the golf course and beach – retail and eateries are different. Doesn't have the inland Loch experience. Better promote Brora's surroundings and circular walks. Encourage more collaboration between golf courses and promote secondary activities – eg distillery tours, heritage talks

**WEST COAST OF NC500** – Consider much more collaboration with Dornoch and Golspie – create an east coast identity which celebrates the contrasts and depth of experience to appeal to the tourism market and also the short stay market. Build on the active travel credentials of the east coast (rail link)

**TYNDRUM** – busy village on A82, on WHW and has rail station – has critical mass of reasons to stop and offers services that get people to break their journey. Green Welly and Real Food Café – choice of food, plenty parking, toilets, fuel, shops,. Advance signs of services.

**GIRVAN** – village on A77 and with train station that had a strong tourism tradition relating to the beach which was a casualty of Mediterranean holidays 1970s onwards. Bad press for run down main street and decided to tackle this by promoting their strengths to a lucrative market – dog friendly – awarded UK Dog Friendly destination in 2023.

**CULLEN** – recognised too many groups and businesses doing their own thing. Set up Discover Cullen as an umbrella to encourage networking and collaboration and one voice on social media. Host the Cullen Skink World Championships and operate the visitor info centre.





# 4. Visitor Profile

## Past, Present & Future

### PAST

Long tradition of 1 week family holidays  
Come back each year  
Camping and caravanning  
UK golfers



### PRESENT

1 nights stays  
Groups – eg golfers  
Notably less families  
Camping, caravans and motorhomes  
Overseas and UK golfers – often touring



### FUTURE

Two nights plus  
Families and young couples/groups of friends  
Active and outdoor  
Cultural and creative



# 5. Destination Competence

## An Introduction



Being a successful destination is a function of many factors and how they interplay.

SCOTO has devised a competency appraisal for geographic communities to undertake as part of the Press Pause conversations.

Through conversation and discussion at the workshop the community are asked to describe their current offer under each of 16 criteria and then rate it in terms of

**Red – things are really not working/don't exist**

**Amber – things do need improved**

**Green – things are functioning well.**



This rating is generated by all present and helps facilitate collective thinking and also trigger ideas for improvement





# 5. Destination Competence Appraisal – 16 Criteria

1. Tourism Traditions and Timelines
2. Sense of place and Visitor Proposition
3. Features and attractions
4. Accommodation
5. Activities and Experiences
6. Food, Drink and Refreshments
7. Events and Festivals
8. Makers and Producers
9. Travel and Connectivity
10. Amenities and Infrastructure
11. Visitor Management, Signage and Interpretation
12. Digital Presence and Marketing
13. Biodiversity and Net Zero
14. Community Assets
15. People and Players
16. Destination Collaboration



# 5. Destination Competence



NO	CRITERIA	CURRENT APPRAISAL	RAG	COMMUNITY LED TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES
1	<b>TOURISM TRADITIONS. TIMELINES &amp; SEASONALITY</b>	Strong destination over time with the railway, beach and caravan and camping parks		To help adapt to the changing marketplace and interests (touring and outdoor) – bunkhouse / hostel /pods Motorhome/Campervan aire stop over provision and waste management services (hub for off grid tourers) Better advance signage of local services for touring traffic.
2	<b>SENSE OF PLACE</b>	Well known for the golf course and beach  From questions asked at VIP and Distillery many people don't know the wider area and what is on offer		Brora and Clyne have significant history that is not overly evident – strong material to work with in product development, events and trails – see later section
3	<b>FEATURES &amp; ATTRACTIONS</b>	Brora Golf course Clynelish Distillery Brora Distillery Brora Loch Brora Bridges Brora Beaches Brora Heritage Centre  Need a more prominent attraction directly accessible from the A9 that can then disperse visitors		The attractions are spread out and not necessarily seen as part of an overall destination – scope for more joined up promotion. Local map of features and attractions plus services and facilities. Shuttle service.

# 5. Destination Competence



NO	CRITERIA	CURRENT APPRAISAL	RAG	COMMUNITY LED TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES
4	<b>ACCOMMODATION</b>	<p>Good range but not enough (used to have 5 hotels and now only 2)                      Marine Hotel has been refurbished                      No budget overnight accommodation                      Did see more self catering via Air BnB but a number have closed following short term let changes                      2 caravan and camping sites                      Informal aire at Fascally – ask for donations for Brighter Brora</p>		<p>Formal campervan aire – need land – could start small and grow (ensure not competing with caravan touring sites)                      Bunkhouse/Hostel social enterprise – good demand from NC500</p>
5	<b>ACTIVITIES</b>	<p>Paddleboarding on Loch Brora – Sutherland Adventure Company                      Pay to play golf                      Walking                      John O’Groats Trail                      Childrens play parks</p>		<p>Walking routes – develop previous map of trails and circular routes from the village and better promote the inland experiences at the Loch                      Potential bike and e-bike hire enterprise for exploring the coast and inland                      Footgolf/frisbee golf</p>
6	<b>FOOD &amp; DRINK</b>	<p>Reasonable offer with hotels, restaurants and cafes                      Gap between 4-7pm</p>		<p>Have eating out info (times, types, booking info) on an info board at the car park and Otter’s Couch – could be interchangeable sign so can be easily updated                      Develop a new Be Local Brora FaceBook page for businesses to promote offers and opening times for locals and visitors</p>

# 5. Destination Competence



NO	CRITERIA	CURRENT APPRAISAL	RAG	COMMUNITY LED TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES
7	<b>EVENTS &amp; FESTIVALS</b>	<p>Seen as a big opportunity</p> <p>Only 2 golf events per year and gala week which is community facing</p> <p>Had a Harbour Festival – volunteer burn out</p> <p>Social events at Brora Rangers club and social club</p> <p>Sutherland Sessions could be better promoted (limited capacity to do more)</p> <p>Scope for marine events</p> <p>Marine Hotel and Clynelish Distillery do events – comedy and music</p>		<p>Work with local artists to develop an open studios weekend</p> <p>Consider small scale themed events in shoulder months linked to sense of place/place branding</p> <p>Consider small scale outdoor heritage festival with guided walks and talks</p>
8	<b>MAKERS &amp; PRODUCERS</b>	<p>A lot of creatives making and producing but very few have local outlets / are visible</p>		<p>Consider possible premises for pop up and/or artists cooperative with studio space, shelf rates and rota to operate it</p> <p>Develop bespoke collaborations – eg whisky and handmade chocolate pairings – make your own chocolates</p> <p>Significant potential given the numbers of makers in the area</p>
9	<b>TRAVEL</b>	<p>Rail link – infrequent and not reliable</p> <p>Bus – infrequent and not reliable</p> <p>No taxi service – casualty of Covid - nearest taxi is Golspie</p>		<p>Explore Community Rail Partnership possibilities for the Far North Line – new development officer role. Scope to differentiate each station and stop in terms of what to see and do</p>

# 5. Destination Competence



NO	CRITERIA	CURRENT APPRAISAL	RAG	COMMUNITY LED TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES
10	<b>AMENITIES &amp; INFRA-STRUCTURE</b>	Public toilets (council run) Fuel Coop Pharmacy Health services ATM at Coop Parking in village centre Parking at beach / golf course		Better advance signs on services available and welcome signs at entries to Brora and A frame signs in the village itself to highlight .  Better differentiate the parking provision linked to different activities and attractions – eg signpost parking for beach, harbour and loch
11	<b>VISITOR INFO &amp; SIGNAGE</b>	Information point at the Otter's Couch is valued by visitors who stop There is some signage but do need more to help visitor orientation Signage on the trunk road is a major issue for individual businesses and general amenities		Review and refresh existing info and signage. Develop local info boards with maps at loos and at Coop – elsewhere? Provide map info with key attractions, opening hours and parking provision. Better signpost the heritage trail Highlight local (circular) walks. Include interchangeable frame for events and local eating options/times/booking info. Create eye-catching welcome to Brora signs/installation on the A9 incorporating place branding (trunk road consent needed). Advance signs listing key services available. Tear off maps for the info point and at hotel receptions etc

# 5. Destination Competence



NO	CRITERIA	CURRENT APPRAISAL	RAG	COMMUNITY LED TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES
12	<b>DIGITAL PRESENCE &amp; MARKETING</b>	<p>Website has been created by the Trust – <a href="http://www.discoverbrora.com">www.discoverbrora.com</a> but businesses are not adding listings – uphill struggle</p> <p>Algorithm concerns</p> <p>Golf Couse is about to embark on social media and web investment plus video content – keen to work with others</p>		<p>Explore collaborative working with Golf Club and others – who has the reach and how can others benefit from this.</p> <p>Develop place brand and ensure consistent use of it by al. Curate more characteristic and experiential imagery to share with VS and others using place brand outputs as inspiration.</p>
13	<b>BIO-DIVERSITY &amp; NET ZERO</b>	<p>Aware of need for action and a number of things are happening – but don't promote or shout about it.</p> <p>There are a number of special wildlife sites which could be much better promoted</p> <p>Distillery is pursuing Net Zero 2030 targets</p> <p>2 food share hubs</p> <p>Local interest in biodiversity – aware terns on beach are reducing – also aware of more birds of prey in the area</p>		<p>Develop a Brora NetZero activity plan – collate all that is already happening with individual projects, groups and businesses and promote online. Source content from project partners. Develop a section of the Discover Brora website to profile net zero activity and biodiversity assets</p>

# 5. Destination Competence



NO	CRITERIA	CURRENT APPRAISAL	RAG	COMMUNITY LED TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES
14	<b>COMMUNITY ASSETS</b>	<p>New heritage centre buildings owned by the heritage society Scout Hall Social club Bowling Club War Memorial</p> <p>Golf Club is owned by private members</p> <p>Community Centre owned by THC - NB no village hall Public toilets are still run by THC</p> <p>Option on the station buildings and recreation ground</p>		<p>Undertake a review of assets and opportunities</p> <p>Seek to rationalise and ensure visitor facing uses are in best locations. Explore potential of station buildings for visitor facing uses – possible franchises/pop up space for artists and crafters</p> <p>Significant opportunity offered by the new community run heritage centre on the A9 – encourage people to stop and then orientate them to other activities and attractions</p>
15	<b>PEOPLE &amp; PLAYERS</b>	<p>Aware good discussions taking place but not everyone who should be there did attend – need to engage and give them a voice</p> <p>A lot of different community groups in the area – although same pool of people</p>		<p>Community social event to share findings of Press Pause and highlighting opportunities and capacity challenges and highlighting volunteer opportunities. Explore umbrella and glue structures to streamline community endeavours</p>
16	<b>DESTINATION COLLABORATION</b>	<p>Good relationship with Venture North but not clear on specific benefits for Brora.</p> <p>No relationship with VisitScotland although the golf course does work with them</p> <p>Brora is profiled on NC500</p> <p>Aware this could and should be much better</p>		<p>Review with NHI and others the potential to develop NC500 web as a pan NH resource and developing the place listing side of the site with community input. Develop Brora and digital assets content to share with VS and others</p>

# 5. CLT Opportunities

## Ideas to Explore in Brora



CRITERIA	COMMUNITY LED TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES WORTH EARLY EXPLORATION
Sense of place	Brora place branding – considerable opportunity
Accommodation	Community run bunkhouse/hostel esp for NC500 and John O Groats Trail walkers
Activities & Attractions	Waymarked walks and self guided trails to connect features and attractions – map and signpost existing circular walks and possible new routes
Events & Festivals	Scope out small scale activity and test the market – monthly art/craft fairs, open studios, heritage festival and events - explore existing events eg at Distillery and connect to activity in the village
Visitor Information	Install local map and information board at loo and Coop, harbour and beach car park – include interchangeable panels for up to date info on opening times, events etc
Digital Presence	Develop a Discover Brora working group to agree and implement best approach to engaging everyone in the development of the site. Create digital assets for all businesses to use that links to DB website
Community Assets	Strategic review of all existing assets and invite ideas from within the community. Identify land or building for bunkhouse/hostel. Scope out wider role for new heritage centre as an orientation facility
People & Players	Appoint tourism/development officer and consider themed working groups – eg events, activities, digital. Open day/social events to attract new players – reach out to new residents.

# 5. Community Led Tourism Inspiration from Elsewhere



Findhorn Campervan Aire

[https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/fsqnta50/scoto\\_findhorn-case-study.pdf](https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/fsqnta50/scoto_findhorn-case-study.pdf)

Callander Youth Project/Callander Hostel

[https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/f3oerevm/scoto\\_callander-hostel-case-study.pdf](https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/f3oerevm/scoto_callander-hostel-case-study.pdf)

Loch Ness Hub, Drumnadrochit

[https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/ylepaaos/scoto\\_loch-ness-hub\\_case-study.pdf](https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/ylepaaos/scoto_loch-ness-hub_case-study.pdf)

Wild Skies Shetland

[https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/xgzchqln/scoto\\_wild-skies-case-study.pdf](https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/xgzchqln/scoto_wild-skies-case-study.pdf)

Callander Visitor Information Centre

[https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/ogmnlyxl/scoto\\_cvic-case-study.pdf](https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/ogmnlyxl/scoto_cvic-case-study.pdf)

Tweedsmuir The Crook Inn Plus

[https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/bznbqgqx/scoto\\_tweedsmuir-case-study.pdf](https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/bznbqgqx/scoto_tweedsmuir-case-study.pdf)

Isle of Eigg Camping Pods

[https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/zy4lzkkt/scoto\\_eigg-camping-pods\\_case-study.pdf](https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/zy4lzkkt/scoto_eigg-camping-pods_case-study.pdf)

Lewis Point & Sandwick Trail

[https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/31khsd2p/scoto\\_point-sandwick-case-study.pdf](https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/31khsd2p/scoto_point-sandwick-case-study.pdf)

Strontian Oakwood Tourism & Crafts

[https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/yppgkurp/scoto\\_oakwood-case-study.pdf](https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/yppgkurp/scoto_oakwood-case-study.pdf)

Moray Walking and Outdoor Festival

[https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/341kukao/scoto\\_moray-walking-festival-case-study.pdf](https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/341kukao/scoto_moray-walking-festival-case-study.pdf)



# 5. Managing Expectations

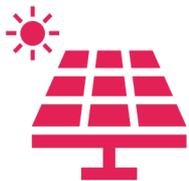
A key consideration for any destination is managing visitor expectations.

Visitors don't always do their research and can arrive in a community with preconceived ideas of what to expect.

This can be anything from getting a mobile signal to finding toilets, being able to use credit cards and not need cash, get an Uber, order a takeaway for delivery or having a sit-down meal in the evening.

To avoid disappointment and frustration communities can do a lot to manage expectations in general but also if there is a specific and short-term issue affecting a service.

A valuable resource is an open access 'what's on' group page on FaceBook where information can be posted (and pinned) and also visitors can ask questions. Local business should be encouraged to join and post regularly and also invite questions. Many communities have these pages. A key pointer is to reserve this for local information posts and not use it to moan about public services



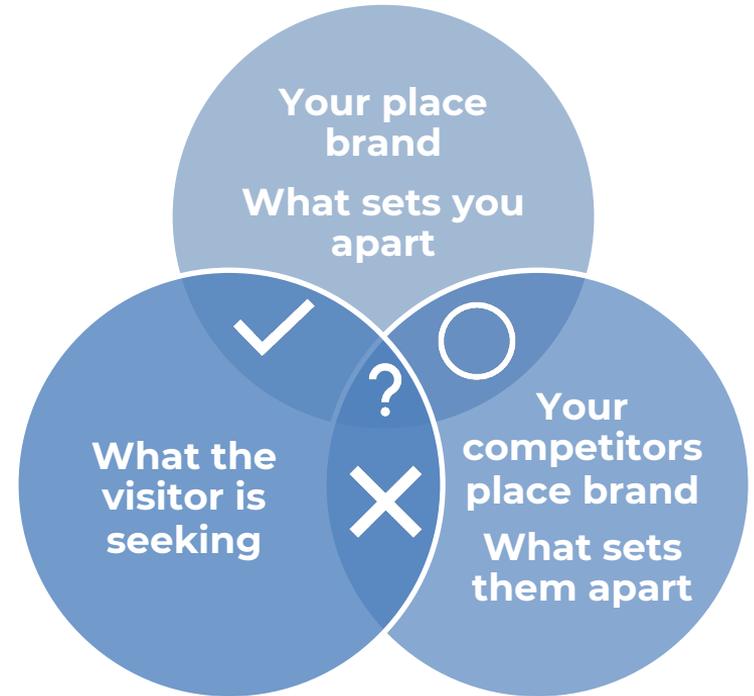
## BRORA

- Develop a tear off map for the area showing key features and attractions plus facilities and make available at the hotels, distilleries, golf club house, heritage centre, Dunrobin Castle etc – include a QR code so people can easily find opening times, booking info
- Refresh the info board at the Coop with the map of all features and attractions - and with interchangeable events and opening times info – similar at toilets
- Coordinate on a regular basis the different eatery opening hours and booking info and provide a collated list to all accommodation providers.
- Display this list at the info points
- Develop the existing 'DiscoverBrora' Facebook page for all businesses to post updates, special offers and features for locals and visitors and pin a post on the eatery opening times/booking. Encourage all local businesses and organisations to promptly respond to visitor enquiries and queries
- Provide local transport information on Discover Brora website for buses and trains - and state no local taxi/Uber service – provide Golspie taxi contact information
- Ensure anywhere that only takes cash (or has a temporary card reader issue) has visible information on where to find the ATM at the Coop



# 6. Place Branding

- Place branding is the idea that **a place, a village, a city, or a region can be branded** – given an identity with a value proposition for a target market and have branding techniques and marketing strategies applied to drive a marketing campaign. Much in the same way a product, service or business can.
- In essence, place branding is "**a strategy for projecting images and managing perceptions – and expectations - about places**". **Authenticity.**
- Place branding seeks to form **a meaningful relationship between person (locals and visitors) and place.**



# 6. Place Branding Community Led

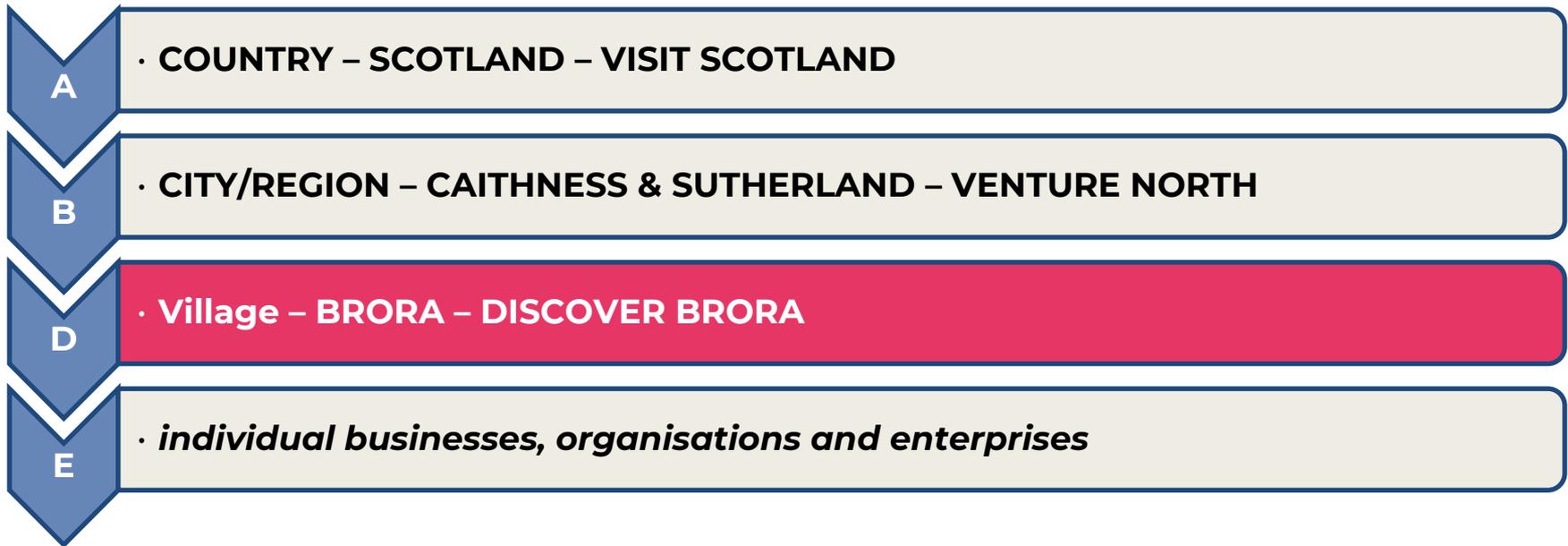


- We now live in a rapidly developing digital world
- Visitors are influenced by multiple sources of inspiration before, during and after travel – Visitor Touch Points
- Much of this content lacks a proper sense of place and rarely is the host community's voice asserted
- To ensure authenticity and integrity, host communities need to assert themselves – scope out and own their place brand – differentiate their community and then influence other visitor touch points to use the place brand and help target appropriate visitors
- Host communities can readily develop products and experiences to bring their place brand to life





# 6. Place Branding Hierarchy



# 6. Place Branding



“To see ourselves as others see us”

## **BRORA**

villages & Villages

**Placed perfectly on the magnificent east coast of Sutherland, the small village of Brora boasts a prime golf location.**

This small village between Dornoch and Wick is a great base for a number of superb golf courses in the area, and for touring Caithness and Sutherland.

Brora beach is a small golden sandy beach with Jurassic rocks and sloping sea front. This rural and unspoilt beach is great for wildlife watching. You'll find regular appearances of dolphins, minke whales, and grey and common seals off the coastline and it's an ideal place for walking and picnics too!

# 6. Place Branding

“To see ourselves as others see us”



The NC500 website does not specifically mention Brora (or provide town/village listings). It does have six business listings in the town

## SUTHERLAND

Europe’s “last great wilderness”



Experience the most incredible landscapes and seascapes. Sutherland makes up a large part of the North Coast 500, and will leave a lasting memory too. From the dramatic north-western scenery, where the mountains meet the sea, to the varied lands of the east – with scattered fishing communities, award winning golf courses, fairy tale castles, archaeological wonders and quaint harbours. Unspoilt, naturally stunning landscapes and seascapes with stretches of sand to rival those abroad, welcome to Sutherland.

### Discover the North Coast 500

Scotland’s ultimate road trip

Bringing together a route of just over 500 miles (516 to be exact...) of stunning coastal scenery, white sandy beaches, rugged mountains, remote fishing villages, hidden gems, and a wealth of unforgettable experiences; the North Coast 500 is one of the world’s most beautiful road trips.

Whether you’re looking for an action-packed break, a chance to relax or simply want to see more of the North Highlands’ breath-taking scenery, you will find it on the NC500. Start planning your next adventure today.

[EXPLORE THE ROUTE](#)



# 6. Place Branding



“To see ourselves as others see us”

## Brora

Brora is a stunning Highland village surrounded by lochs, hills and gorgeous beaches. Perfect for any outdoor lover or history enthusiast this village has so much to offer its many visitors with world class attractions, accommodation options, cafes, restaurants, local shopping and more.



# 6. Place Branding



## “To see ourselves as others see us”

### ACTIVITIES AND ATTRACTIONS

#### Local **activities** and **attractions** in Brora

The name Brora is derived from ancient Norse meaning 'river with a bridge' and the **Brora River** is still a key feature of the village today. Walks along its banks will show a wealth of wildlife, including otters, flora and fauna, and the famous **salmon fishing** which hooks visitors back year after year.

The **clock tower of Brora** is one of its most memorable features and it was unveiled on December 25th 1922 as a memorial to fallen soldiers lost in the Great War. Alongside the clock tower is the bridge crossing the River Brora which makes an excellent spot to admire both the clock tower and the river.

Just down from the bridge is **Brora Harbour** which is home to many of the local fishing boats and a healthy population of wild ducks. Be sure to enjoy a stroll by this traditional harbour and even enjoy a fish supper or ice cream while watching the waves crash in.

Brora is lucky to have **two excellent beaches** with very different characteristics. The beach north of the harbour is a long wide stretch of open sand, ready for swimming, sandcastles and kite flying. The beach south of the harbour has long rocky stretches of pools perfect for rock-pooling, exploring and seal watching.

### THE VILLAGE

The village of Brora is situated directly on the A9 route from Inverness to the north as is a perfect place to stay for your trip to Caithness and Sutherland with excellent road and transport links around the area.



#### Village Centre

There is plenty of parking available in the centre of Brora making it a great choice to stop and explore on foot. Discover the many excellent local shops, cafes and restaurants and enjoy strolling along the beautiful harbour and beach areas.

#### Eating Out



# 6. Place Branding



“To see ourselves as others see us”

## **BRORA HERITAGE CENTRE**

The Centre contains an eclectic mix of artefacts, images and stories of Brora's unique Highland industrial history, courtesy of the geological occurrence of coal, which has been used since at least 1529.

You will receive a friendly welcome – hot and cold drinks and cakes are served – and you will leave amazed at the exceptional stories Brora has to offer.

Having Britain's most northerly coal mine, this rich resource fuelled a range of spin-off industries, including the making of bricks, whisky, tweed and salt. Nowhere in the Highlands is there a place like Brora and the centre tells the story of this remarkable hidden gem in Scotland's north.

Please come along – turn off the A9 at the bridge over the River Brora and be transported back in time at the centre. Take a trip down a reconstruction of the coal mine – it's everybody's favourite!

The centre provides fun for all the family; there's a children's play area inside and the safe recreational area outside is a great place to take in the views and mull over the fascinating history of the parish. All ages will be enthralled and your enjoyment is guaranteed!

Clyne Heritage Society took over the operation of the Highland Council-owned Brora Heritage Centre in 2016 and has quadrupled the visitor numbers. Our history will not let you down!



# 6. Place Branding



“To see ourselves as others see us”

The name Brora is associated with three high end brands

- A luxury cashmere and clothing brand – based in the Scottish Borders with family connections to Hunters of Brora, which was a 100-year-old tweed mill in Brora
- One of Diageo’s malt whiskies – with the distillery recently re-opened near the village and next to Clynelish Distillery and visitor centre
- Brora Golf Course – which is an original James Braid course established in 1891 and is also home to the James Braid Golfing Society. James Braid also designed Gleneagles and Carnoustie golf courses.



# 6. Place Branding

## Brora



- Neither Brora or the wider Clyne area currently have a strong identity and clear visitor proposition – people don't necessarily know where it is and don't necessarily know what is on offer
- Nearby Dornoch and Wick are better known and are readily associated with the north east
- The descriptions used by VisitScotland and Venture North plus others don't strongly differentiate the village - what is referred to could be describing many other places in Scotland – Brora's sense of place is not conveyed
- Brora however has a fascinating industrial heritage and its history is worth telling – it is also associated with high end/luxury brands
- Brora and Clyne have coastal and inland interest providing a variety of things to see and do





# 6. Place Branding

## Using USPs, POPs & PODs

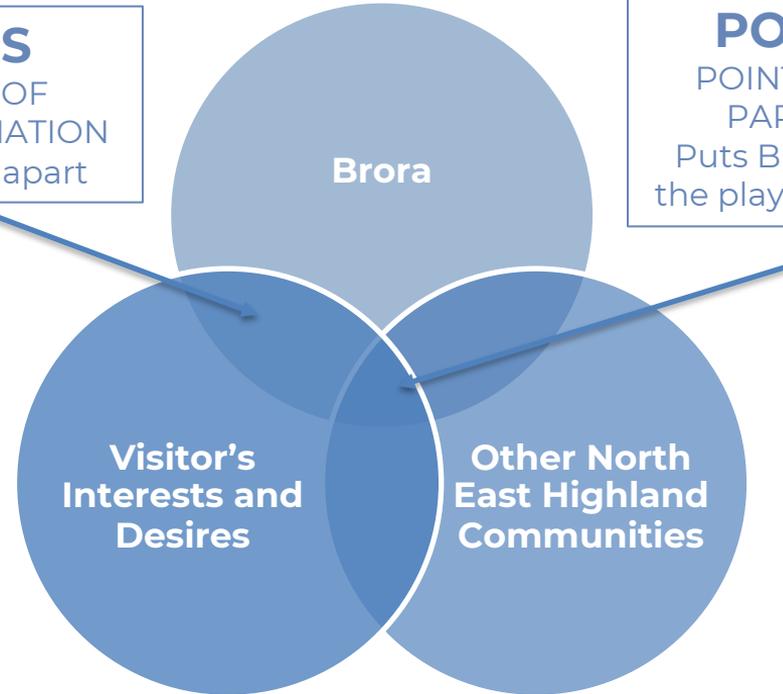


### USPS

UNIQUE SELLING POINTS  
What is unique about Brora that  
no other destination can claim

**PODS**  
POINTS OF  
DIFFERENTIATION  
Sets Brora apart

**POPS**  
POINTS OF  
PARITY  
Puts Brora on  
the playing field





# 6. Place Branding

## Brora's USPs, POPs & PODs

**USPs – what would the world miss if BRORA didn't exist?**

**POPs – what gives BRORA a right to be considered by visitors to the north east coast?**

**PODs – what sets BRORA apart for visitors from other north east coast destinations?**



# 6. Place Branding

## Brora's USPs, POPs & PODs

USPs – what would the world miss without Brora?	POPs – what makes Brora a viable destination?	PODs – what sets Brora apart?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Most northerly coalmine in UK – Brora Coal</li><li>• Coalmine fuelled tweed, whisky, salt and brick making which were exported</li><li>• Unique industrial heritage unlike anywhere else in the highlands of Scotland</li><li>• Only highland wildlife rescue centre in the UK</li><li>• Megan Boyd – salmon fly dresser to Prince/King Charles</li><li>• War memorial commemorates females as well as males (Poet Laureate wrote about this)</li><li>• Brora tidal harbour where they landed herring (other ports bigger but Brora was tidal and very productive)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Castle and gardens</li><li>• Golf</li><li>• Beaches</li><li>• Wildlife spotting</li><li>• Fishing</li><li>• Heritage centre</li><li>• Distilleries</li><li>• Award winning restaurants</li><li>• Ice cream</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Brora is associated with quality brands</li><li>• Brora's industrial heritage is unusual in a highland setting</li><li>• 2 mile long sandy beach</li><li>• Jurassic rock beach</li><li>• Tidal harbour – not accessible at low tide</li><li>• Clynelish Distillery is linked to the Johnnie Walker brand and the new visitor centre in Edinburgh</li><li>• 7 brochs visible within the area</li><li>• Sids has been awarded second best curry house in Scotland</li><li>• 2 distilleries in one village</li></ul>



# 6. Place Branding

## Brora's USPs, POPs & PODs

USPs – what would the world miss without Brora?	POPs – what makes Brora a viable destination?	PODs – what sets Brora apart?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ James Braid designed golf course</li><li>▪ One of the first communities in Scotland to have mains electricity available for residents (surplus from industry)</li><li>▪ One of the earliest communities in Scotland to have electric street lights - locals called it Electric City</li><li>▪ Largest fishing catch in the region per boat consistently</li><li>▪ Longest golf drive in history – sliced onto the train and landed in London!</li><li>▪ 1908 Olympic high diving champion dived from Brora Bridge into the river below</li></ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Brighter Brora painted bikes</li><li>• Scarecrow festival</li><li>• Community wreath laying takes place on 1st January - not 11th November - with fireworks</li><li>• Capaldi's ice cream</li><li>• Many businesses are dog friendly (more so than Golspie)</li></ul>

# 6. Brora Place Branding

## A Point of Clarification

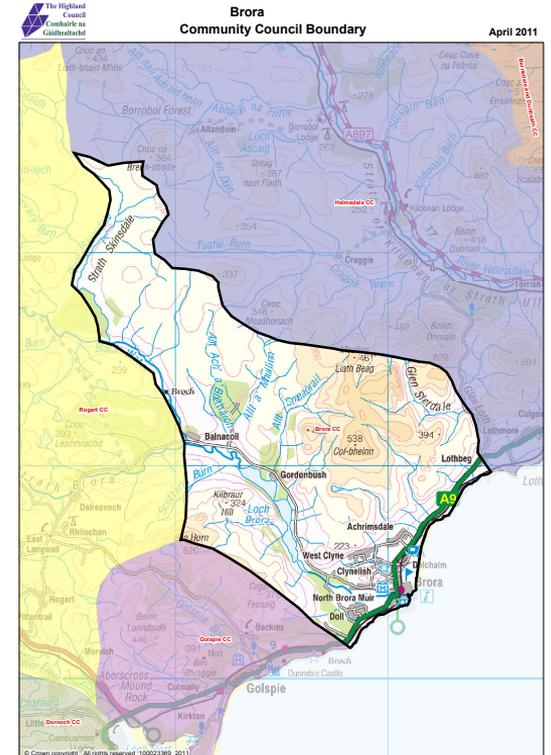


An initial point to clarify is if we are place branding Brora or Clyne?

Clyne is the name of the parish and also the name adopted by the heritage society and for the war memorial. Brora is the name of the town and is derived from Old Norse meaning 'river with a bridge'. Of note, as a place name Clyne is possibly better associated with the castle and outstanding gardens near Swansea.

Brora although not very well known is associated with the actual place and provides the name the coal, brick yard, whisky (for example) from the area and also is the name of the well known golf course so arguably has a stronger sense of place. The Brora cashmere brand is not based locally but has heritage links - which could be developed.

The discussion about the geographic extent of the destination for development management and promotion concluded the Clyne Parish or Brora Community Council area was the best basis. On balance Brora makes much more sense as the name for the place brand and referring to the wider area covered by Brora Community Council.



# 6. Brora Place Branding

## Points of Inspiration



There are several interesting and unique attributes and points of differentiation about Brora. Two key aspects that resonated with SCOTO are its incredible but relatively unknown industrial heritage which evolved over several centuries and is in many ways much more evocative of the central belt. And the more recent association it has with numerous brands of distinction - yet with very little immediate evidence on the ground when travelling through. There is so much more to Brora than is immediately obvious!

**Brick Red BRORA**

**BRORA – The Highland’s Historic Workhorse**

**BRORA – Experience Scotland’s Finest**

**BRORA – More than Meets the Eye**



# 6. Brora Place Branding

## Points of Inspiration



### **BRICK RED BRORA**

The brick red colour used by both the heritage society and now Discover Brora in their logos has been deliberately chosen to celebrate their industrial heritage, the original brick works and Brora Bricks. This celebrates sense of place and more extensive use of the colour by businesses and in the public realm should be encouraged. Brora is the only North Highland community to have had a brick works.

### **BRORA – The Highland’s Historic Workhorse**

The area has a long standing history of industrial activity originally triggered by the discovery of coal which in turn fueled several other industries and exports that were shipped far and wide. The new heritage centre planned to open in 2025 will have a key role in telling this fascinating period of Brora’s history.

### **BRORA – Experience Scotland’s Finest**

Of note, the brand associations with Brora are high end Scottish brands – cashmere, fishing, whisky and golf for example. And each brand has specific claims – eg the golf course is one of James Braid’s finest golf courses, and Brora single malt is a cult whisky. The Brora cashmere brand isn’t based in Brora but has direct connections.

### **BRORA – More than Meets the Eye**

Brora when viewed from the train or the A9 doesn’t really tell much of its immensely rich history or give an immediate sense of discovery and exploration. ‘More than meets the eye’ plays to this and introduces a sense of intrigue and also plays to some of the visual and creative work by Brighter Brora plus the recent Scarecrow Festival.

# 6. Brora Place Branding

## Points of Inspiration



### BRICK RED BRORA

The significance of the Brora Bricks has already been identified both by the Heritage Society within their logo and the heritage trail symbol and more recently with the Discover Brora logo.

The alliteration of Brick Red Brora works exceptionally well and the phrase could be developed for various purposes and the colour itself used much more extensively, for example on planters, fences and further Brora Bikes. The phrase could name a new Heritage Festival and also be developed with symbology for merchandise. The symbology could also be developed further in the way it already has for the heritage trail and used to highlight features and also be central to the redesign of the millennium mural, which in turn can become a nodal point.

Examples of using a colour as an identifier include the Kintyre Way who have a distinctive blue which they use to paint way markers and are now using for other purposes including coloured tags on fence posts to supplement the waymarkers. They have the colour code held at local paint suppliers and their volunteers can simply ask for a tin of the Kintyre Blue for maintenance. Agreeing what is the Brora Brick Red is key!



# 6. Brora Place Branding

## Points of Inspiration



### **BRORA – The Highland’s Historic Workhorse**

The industrial connections are not immediately relevant to tourism and the visitor economy but the story is significant, and not one typically associated with the Highlands of Scotland. It differentiates Brora from most other North Highland communities. The imagery and scale of the previous operations has a much more central belt feel and this in itself has significant intrigue as to how it all came about and what was manufactured and also as so little remains today.

The story links directly to the highland clearances in Brora and the people who were moved to the coast and then worked in industry - and left numerous abandoned townships inland. There is also a powerful story given the proximity to Dunrobin Castle which was the home of the Earls and Dukes of Sutherland responsible for much of the industrial developments in Brora over the centuries – and also the highland clearances. Dunrobin attracts significant numbers and making a much stronger connection with Brora would be a worthwhile ‘both sides of the coin’ initiative and also one that could encourage much more people to stop in Brora to explore the new heritage centre, the heritage trail and other attractions. The Heritage Centre will be key to this.

The Heritage Society have provided guided walks that could be further developed and have the self guided Brora Secret Heritage Trail which could be further promoted and developed especially the ‘spy’ element plus refreshing the information boards.

A new Brora Heritage Festival which features and connects each of these important eras in Brora’s history and their national significance could be explored especially when the new Centre is complete and operational. Finding a very distinct angle to this could appeal to niche markets who will travel. How could the Brora Brick feature in this? Could there be Lego brick based competition – with all bricks in the Brora colour?



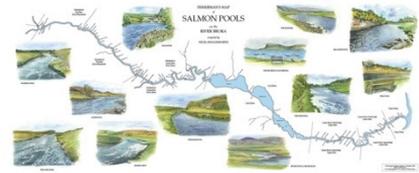
# 6. Brora Place Branding

## Points of Inspiration



### **BRORA – Experience Scotland’s Finest**

The brand associations of golf and whisky connect Brora with other parts of Scotland and provide a great platform for appealing to specific ‘bagging’ and ‘tour’ markets. Brora is already part of these tours but so much more could be done to really put Brora on the map. And possibly of most relevance – there is the opportunity to package this to mean something to everyone and not just the aficionados. The key here is developing additional experiences in and around Brora that are inclusive and inspire people to spend time here. Pay to play experiences which people can book ahead and also experience when they opt to stop off



The two obvious examples are whisky and golf.

The Clynelish Distillery is part of the Johnnie Walker Four Corners of Scotland Tour which celebrates their art of whisky blending and will have even greater appeal since the opening of the award winning Johnnie Walker Experience on Princes Street in Edinburgh. Providing Johnnie Walker experiences and also connecting whisky tasting with local food providers/producers/premises could be developed. This is very much in the hands of Clynelish Distillery but there could also be scope for them to work with other local businesses to provide experiences in their premises.



Brora Golf Course is one of a handful of James Braid courses which include Gleneagles and Carnoustie. It also already features on golf tours and there could be scope to both develop these tours and also link in other local experiences to increase dwell time – eg with the distilleries. There is scope for the community or a local business/landowner to consider fun golf related activities that will appeal to non golfers - like frisbee and football golf based on the beach and around Loch Brora. There are great examples of both which have become very popular businesses – eg Broadlees Footgolf in South Lanarkshire which has a dedicated 18 hole course which appeals to the younger generation. It is also the home of the Glasgow Footgolf Club. [www.broadleesgolf.co.uk](http://www.broadleesgolf.co.uk)



# 6. Brora Place Branding

## Points of Inspiration



### **BRORA – More than Meets the Eye**

With visitors travelling to and through Brora not getting an immediate sense of the area's rich history and landscape setting there is scope to raise awareness and intrigue by building on Brighter Brora's work plus the music and other creative work in the area. If some of this can be themed to interpret the village's significant history this would really increase awareness and also intrigue to find out more.

Brighter Brora has already developed some great displays and installations with the painted bikes, floral displays and Xmas lights. The Scarecrow Festival and yarn bombing pre Covid are also good examples of installations that are fun and quirky – which has media appeal. Even more emphasis and prominence can be placed on this activity throughout the year and could specifically be prominent on the A9 and instigate intrigue to encourage people to stop. Reworking the Millennium Mural would tie in directly with this and building on the Brick Red Brora theming suggested. This could also be quirky with the scarecrows and yarn bombing for example having local heritage themes to really cement the sense of place.



**SCOTO** Scottish  
Community  
Tourism

A growing network of Scottish  
community run tourism enterprises  
inspiring visitors to be temporary locals.

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# 7. Reflections ...

TO do to help?

at no-one else is



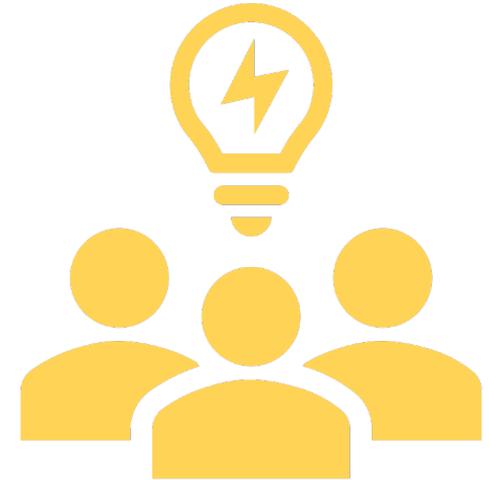


# 7. Reflections

An overarching comment is that having taken time out to meet there was strong consensus on the urgent need for more collaboration and cross selling. An umbrella structure that brings all community and business enterprise interests together has strong merit – eg Brora Together.

Additional reflections from SCOTO

- Brora has a tourism tradition spanning many decades but things have changed markedly– shorter stays, much more touring, visitors seeking activities
- Brora is one of a number of villages on the Sutherland east coast that would welcome more short break visitors staying in the area, and for touring visitors to include this area as a stopover – a strategic place branding initiative bringing Dornoch, Golspie and Brora together is definitely worth exploring
- Brora has a train station but the service is not deemed reliable – is there more can be done via the Community Rail Partnership especially with their new funded role
- Brora has a significant industrial heritage which is not overly evident but is fascinating and could be interpreted in quirky ways
- There are a number of creative people but there is very limited event, craft fair and open studio type activity to encourage visitors to stop – what more could be provided ?



# 8. Recommendations

## Embracing Community Led Tourism



**Brora has been active in community led tourism over recent years with a number of notable developments and achievements.**

**These include the Discover Brora website, the visitor information point and staff member, the Scarecrow and other festivals and management of the existing (and of note, development of the new) heritage centre. This has scope to transform tourism in the area when it opens in 2025.**

This appraisal has demonstrated that Brora has several opportunities to much better position itself as a visitor destination for short breaks and a great place to stop off/over when touring. There is a variety of accommodation and things to do. The existing community led tourism activity is an excellent foundation for next steps – but these do need continued support and development to achieve their full potential.

The key opportunities relate to Brora's role as a visitor service hub with many services and facilities available, and also experiences. However, as many of these are off the main road signage and awareness are key. In addition, the significant variety of things to do locally need better profile and also cross promotion. These include paid for and bookable experiences at Dunrobin, the Distillery, the golf course and at the Loch, and also numerous free attractions and experiences in the great outdoors.

Marketing and cross selling are key to driving interest, as is every business and organisation being up to date and fully aware of what each other offers – and stimulating new collaborations. Networking was highlighted as a priority and creating a relatively informal enterprise group 'Brora Together' which meets regularly face to face at each other's premises, plus online, could reap significant results.



# 8. Recommendations

## Embracing Community Led Tourism

**A new place brand and visitor proposition is strongly recommended to help visitors better appreciate Brora's significance and profile what visitors can experience.**

**This simply needs to be intriguing and not necessarily all encompassing. It needs to put Brora on the north east coast map as a must visit location for specific interests, and the community and businesses in turn need to embrace this and exploit opportunities to create new products, events and collaborations which reinforce it.**

**The industrial heritage of the area is notable and not well known. Celebrating this in creative ways has strong merit through events and festivals and also focusing on a signature event that only Brora can host. Easdale is an excellent example where they created the World Stone Skimming Championships using their slate quarry waste and hosting it in one of their quarry ponds. People travel from all over. Cullen has its annual World Cullen Skink Cooking Competition.**

**What could Brora's equivalent be?**

Better signage is a key priority in advance of and within the village and in both directions. An imaginative approach is needed given the restrictions on trunk road signage – costs and timing to get consent. A creative solution would have merit but planning permission may still be required. The millennium mural urgently needs upgraded and has significant potential to be eye catching and a nodal point.

Brora has a lot to offer already which better signage will highlight as would a tear off map with key features, walks and services set out and available at different reception points, the Otter Couch and outlets in the area.

There are also many opportunities to provide more activities for visitors – craft fairs, low key events, themed walks and trails and new experiences that will draw people to the beach, the harbour and the Loch, as examples. Frisbee and football golf are good examples of experiences created elsewhere which appeal to locals and visitors and encourage them to move around and explore an area. The Loch and the north beach could be good locations and perhaps the golf club or Otter's Couch could host and provide the equipment?

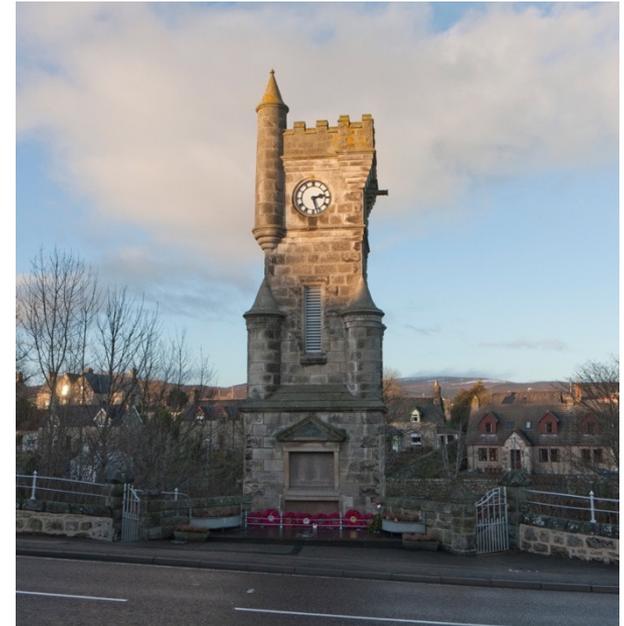


# 8. Recommendations

## Embracing Community Led Tourism in Brora

Based on this review, there are several immediate opportunities for Brora to consider

- Develop 'Brora Together' as an informal umbrella group to aid collaboration and cross selling.
- Set up a Brora Together Whats App group
- Arrange a learning exchange to Cullen (for example) to learn about their Discover Cullen umbrella structure and collaborative activity
- Refine the Place Brand and visitor proposition ideas with associated products, events and online content
- Consider a signature Brick Red Brora event/festival to put Brora on the map and using local talent where possible
- Enhance visitor information provision at attractions and hotel receptions with tear off maps
- Actively manage visitor expectations (eg information on eating options/opening times/booking)
- Provide local walking information and directional finger posts to encourage exploration and dwell time
- Provide advance information and welcome signage at entrance points
- Explore Community Rail Partnership possibilities for the Far North Line
- Explore with others a community led active travel NC500 itinerary which – on the east coast - focuses on stops along the Far North Line

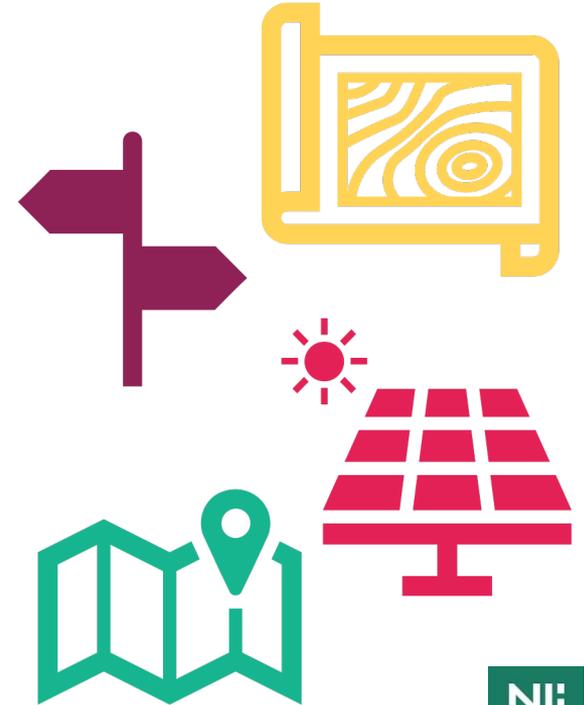


# 8. Recommendations

## Suggested Quick Wins



- An open day event in the community to share the Press Pause findings, gather interest in project ideas and recruit new volunteers for specific initiatives
- A follow on display in the library for people to learn more about Press Pause and sign up to be involved in different things
- Establish Brora Together tourism group and Whats App group
- Immediately engage with the Brora Golf Course digital content project
- Produce a tear off map with all key features, attractions and services
- Rework the millennium mural to boldly portray the place branding
- Develop open Discover Brora FaceBook page for businesses to post day by day inspiration and for visitors to ask questions
- Refresh, rebrand and better promote the existing heritage trail
- Refresh, rebrand and republish the previous self guided walks leaflet
- Clearly signpost motorhome aire/parking provision

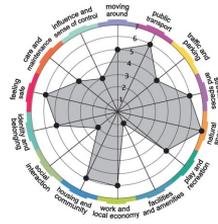


# 9. Recalibrating Tourism

## Measuring Impact in Brora



Place Standard –  
How good is Our Place?



Tourism in Scotland is traditionally measured by footfall, overnights stays, spend and employment. This only tells part of the story and doesn't consider impact. SCOTO seeks to recalibrate tourism and measure what is important to the individual community. Many communities have developed Community Action Plans and/or are taking part in Place Planning activity.

These plans highlight priority themes and issues for the individual community. By measuring impact of tourism activity in relation to local priority issues the benefits can be clearly articulated – eg young people retained/ attracted to return, permanent jobs created, local crafters and producers supported, heritage assets retained, local traditions celebrated, volunteer hours provided and succession addressed. This measurement demonstrates tourism as a force for good within the community.

In addition identifying which UN SDG's are being supported by individual enterprises is an effective way of demonstrating the local contribution to global priorities. SCOTO is currently working on a SDG framework.





# 9. Recalibrating Tourism

## Measuring Impact in Brora

*“What we measure affects what we do. If we measure the wrong thing, we will do the wrong thing. If we don't measure something, it becomes neglected, as if the problem didn't exist”.*

**Carnegie UK**

Brora, like other communities in Highland Council, has the opportunity to take part in Place Planning with the council which would identify priority land related issues to then agree measures against. Brora has not as yet embarked on this but does recognise the importance of community action planning and place planning to help identify priority issues and actions.

Current activity demonstrates that young people are a priority as is conserving local history and heritage, extending the season and attracting more people travelling through Brora to stop, spend and explore the wider area.

Community Led Tourism measures can be identified that respond to these priorities and progress can then be monitored. These measures can become drivers of success by encouraging businesses and community enterprises to all focus on these key themes - eg permanent jobs (move to annualised hours), support small businesses (stock local crafts and produce), extend the visitor dwell time (cross promotion and collaborations).

Business to business networking was identified as a clear priority within Brora and by identifying it as something to tackle and also measure through time, effort can focus on making this happen effectively. Number of networking meetings and social events can be measured, as well as numbers taking part, new joint projects and products created.

# 10. Press Pause BRORA

## Closing Thoughts



### **SCOTO's Vision**

*“for every community in Scotland to embrace and be ambassadors for localness and to develop community led tourism as a force for good which enables their community to be an even better place to live, work and visit”.*

The Press Pause initiative seeks to help individual geographic communities take time out to consider tourism and how it could be much more of a force for good within their community. This involved business and community interests – everyone with a stake in the game. Post pandemic there has been a focus on recovery, but this can't be to pre-pandemic conditions. We are in a new era in tourism and this presents many exciting opportunities at a local level.

**This reports seeks to set out what was discussed together, highlight what could be done differently to help the community be a better place, provide a range of ideas for consideration and inspiration from elsewhere. The community is the driver and can establish which ideas to pursue or explore further.**

**Whatever action is taken the primary aim should be for tourism to deliver real benefits that address local issues at an individual community level - and which will make it an even better place to live, work and visit.**

# Community Led Tourism

## NHI “PRESS PAUSE” PROGRAMME



# BRORA

## Report and Recommendations

July 2024

**BE LOCAL**

**SCOTO**  
Scottish Community Tourism