



INTERPRETATION

Applecross/A'Chomraich community interpretive plan



September 2011



Plan contents and appendices

Executive Summary



The mesolithic rock shelter at Sand

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Coast road pool

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Executive summary



Panorama of Applecross Bay

1. Background & ALPS project content

Interpretation was commissioned by ALPS (Applecross Landscape Partnership Scheme) to facilitate a community interpretive planning process within the community of Applecross. This planning process links strongly to existing themed ALPS projects, most of which already included some requirement for interpretation before this contract began:

- Worship and burial

Interpretation within this theme focuses on the use of interpretation to encourage more respectful use of the Head of the Bay area much loved by the community and the removal of some outdated interpretive signage and structures with more appropriate replacement

- People and places

Interpretation at the top of the Bealach was seen as desirable. This is likely to consist of an extremely low-impact dry stone wall providing a gentle boundary to the car parking areas. This will incorporate stone seating and routed stones giving the name of the pass in Gaelic and in English, plus a ground-set stone toposcope feature to replace the existing concrete one.

Applecross Broch needs an interpretive panel which shows in some detail, ideally using a cutaway drawing technique, what the broch looked like when complete and how it was used. Headers should be translated into Gaelic.

Carnoch Woods and Roundhouse are linked to a need for improved waymarking of walking routes throughout the peninsula, see below.

- Trails and thoroughfares

There is a need to interpret the distance and access level of new and improved walking routes within the peninsula and to improve waymarking generally. There is also a need to provide itineraries within the peninsula which will encourage people to walk and stay longer, increasing the benefit to the local community.

- Woodland, grassland and wildlife

Interpretation of wildlife within Applecross needs to be interpreted both on site where appropriate and more frequently as detailed downloadable information from an interpretive website. The wooden bird hide at Milton Loch in particular could be improved using interpretive carving.

- Drystane dykes and historic buildings

The use of skills developed through drystane dyke restoration training has been taken into consideration throughout the plan. Clachan Church, Applecross House and its policies, Lonbain Thatched House and the Hebridean Barns are all assessed for interpretive requirements within the plan.

2. Location and access



North-east side of Bealach na Ba Pass

Applecross is a remote peninsula on the west coast of Scotland. A wide range of people live there who are united by their desire to reside in such an isolated place. To outsiders in good weather Applecross can seem like an idyllic paradise: to people who choose to live there, much as they love it, life can be hard, especially in the winter.

Access to Applecross was once by sea, but is now almost exclusively by road, both via the iconic Bealach na Ba (The Pass of the Cattle), a high mountain pass, and the newer, meandering and longer coast road. Many visitors come to Applecross primarily to drive the Bealach and drive out again – and this is not seen as a good thing by many people who live within the peninsula. There is a general desire to encourage more meaningful visiting which is of greater benefit to Applecross people.

People who live in Applecross were invited to a series of community consultations via personal invitation, posters and media coverage. These revealed that while people did not necessarily share the same views of or background to life in the peninsula, they were all equally concerned about the potential negative impact of overdoing interpretation, and particularly interpretive panels, on the ground.

These discussions have greatly shaped this plan, as has a survey carried out during April/May 2011.

3. *Interpretive media*



Appropriately low-key and home-grown interpretive sign for a local standing stone

There has been keen local interest in using appropriate interpretive media and also in using web-based and portable interpretive media rather than on-site panels.

Key media recommended for use at Applecross within this plan fall into three categories: on-site, printed and virtual:

On-site media

There was a clear preference to avoid interpretive panels where possible and to remove any outdated panels without necessarily replacing them in situ (salmon panels at river for example, and panel by Clachan Church). A limited number of new orientation or interpretive panels with headers translated into Gaelic could be installed where desirable and unobtrusive, for example at the broch site or potentially a car parking area for Coillegille and Ard Ban.

Locally-made interpretive benches in both stone and wood were welcomed as an idea both because of their practical use, allowing people to have a 'breather' along walks and trails, and because they could portray pictorially certain aspects of the human and natural history of Applecross without the need for on-site panels. Located carefully, they can also play a subtle role in defining particular areas for particular uses, such as wild camping at the Head of the Bay. A special interpretive bench is under consideration for the Walled Garden, possibly using poetry in what is a highly poetic setting.

Again, using some Gaelic poetry and translating headers into Gaelic is desirable.

Simple waymarking in stone and wood would be required for start, end and junction points of new and existing paths and trails.

The precise location and quantity of interpretive benches, panels and waymarking is at the discretion of local people and will not be 'written in stone' within this plan.

Portable media

The Applecross Peninsula currently has a Scenic Walks leaflet popular among those who supply services to visitors and among visitors itself. It has a good map but is currently focused on things to see piecemeal: a revised and expanded version based on themed

visiting and things to do which includes greater detail on the eateries and craft outlets of the peninsula would be beneficial. Revised photography would be advisable. Headers and title should be translated into Gaelic.

Virtual media

Applecross already has a diverse range of websites linked to specific services or sites and there was resistance to the thought of an additional one. There would however be an advantage in one interpretive website (which evolves perhaps from the existing ALPS website) which could be independent of any site or service but supply interpretive material centrally.

Website content would include downloadable step-by-step walks and trails leaflets, itineraries, sound file downloads (oral history, human 'views', Gaelic placename pronunciation) and more as time goes on, and multimedia capabilities develop.

An Applecross APP would be a logical progression from an interpretive website in a few years' time once content has been trialled online, ideally using a local company experienced in bilingual multimedia work.

4. Holistic interpretation



Outdated interpretive/orientation panel at Applecross Bay

Previous interpretation in Applecross has developed piecemeal. For maximum benefit all new interpretation needs to be closely linked.

All three forms of interpretation outlined above will be closely linked. Panels will carry website addresses. The revised Walks Leaflet will offer itineraries which can be supplemented with information online.

On the ground, the Heritage Centre becomes an interpretive hub supplying visitors with 'the full story' of any Applecross theme they choose. The Visitor Centre provides internet access and ready-printed website downloads which encourage visitors to stay longer – plus the revised Walks Leaflet. Applecross eateries and craft outlets, very much

part of the motivation to visit Applecross, will feature more heavily within the revised Walks Leaflet and will reciprocate by supplying the leaflet to visitors and advising them if necessary. They will be supplied with Gaelic language sheets encouraging their clients to try pronouncing Gaelic placenames and phrases while they wait for their food.

The design of interpretive benches, signage and waymarking created from natural materials wherever possible will be unique to Applecross and beautiful in its own right.

On-site design will reflect the design of the interpretive website and the revised Walks Leaflet.

5. *Interpretive content*



Fishermen from Ard Dhubh packing the catch for transport to Inverness

Tales of the sea, islands and fishing

The ALPS projects, while laudable, are felt by many to have stopped short at the shoreline, and Applecross is as much a story of the sea as of the land.

Applecross access, roads and transport

There is a desire to interpret Applecross as more than a nice spot for lunch to get to via some spectacular roads. The human story of the creation of those roads is worth the telling.

Applecross natural life (animals, plants, fish, insects etc)

People feel that the story of natural life in Applecross is hard to tell to car-borne visitors and that walking is the key to connecting with wildlife and nature. It's also greener and more healthy.

Life and work for people who live here all the year round

There is a strong feeling that an honest story of life in Applecross needed to be told, so that people realise that it can be hard.

Applecross history, prehistory and geology (Rock Shelter at Sand and Heritage Centre at Clachan mentioned)

People want to see the stories of Applecross told in a more inter-connected way, allowing people to build a more meaningful visit around themes and to stay a little longer to the benefit of all.

This content can be then filtered through the following agreed themes and sub-themes:

Main theme:

This is a remote Highland peninsula of scattered coastal townships, home to people of diverse origins united by a common desire to live in Applecross

Sub-theme A:

Down the centuries successive waves of invaders and settlers have adapted and integrated into life here just as the indigenous community has adapted to them - and these changes continue today.

Sub-theme B:

All visitors to Applecross are welcome, but those most appreciated locally are those who stay longer than just a day, respect the environment and local culture, adapt to the pace of the community and who value their visits as personally meaningful.

Sub-theme C:

The best way for anyone to savour the natural and cultural heritage of Applecross is on foot.

6. *Implementation*



Current road signage at the foot of the Bealach na Ba

Location, content, timescale and outline costings are contained in the Appendices to this plan.

7. Conclusion



Not every corner needs interpretation!

Once this plan is fully implemented, visitors will not arrive in Applecross and remark on the new interpretation. Applecross itself is and must always be the 'star attraction'.

Instead visitors should have an improved visit without knowing precisely why, commenting perhaps on the useful leaflet, the attractive benches or fascinating trails they have enjoyed there, and trying the taste of Gaelic on their lips.

If they also commented how one person, site or experience seemed to lead them on to the next and encouraged them to stay just a little longer, then this plan will have worked.

A simple postcard-based survey to monitor the impact of interpretation would be desirable and could be carried out similarly to the surveys during planning.

1. Background



Panorama of Loch a' Mhuillin, Milton Loch

1.1 What is interpretation?

Interpretation is often (mistakenly) taken to mean solely interpretive media: the stuff on the ground, like panels and features, or portable/off-site media such as leaflets and web content.

The Scottish Heritage Network instead defines interpretation as:

'...the process of communicating messages and stories about our cultural and natural heritage, providing the audience with inspiration and a wider understanding of our environment. Or quite simply, interpretation is about telling stories.'

For the purposes of this plan, we therefore define interpretation as ***the communication process between people (Applecross visitors and residents) and place (the Applecross Peninsula and the sea and islands visible from it).***

The plan will consider in detail the appropriate media (both off-site and on-site) to optimise this definition but will also set out the process of selection.

It is worth stressing that interpretation is not the same thing as marketing, although there may be a small degree of overlap. The aim of interpretation is *not* to promote Applecross in order to increase visitor numbers but to enable the community to communicate stories and messages which it decides will be meaningful to visitors and to themselves.

The end result of this plan is unlikely to be any increase in visitors to Applecross, but the plan may make recommendations which could impact on visitor stay times, for example.

1.2 Original aims and objectives of this interpretive plan as defined by the contract (i.e. what we were asked to do by ALPS on behalf of the community)

"The project centres on developing an interpretive plan for the Applecross Peninsula, created with the participation of the local community and aimed at:

*making the natural and cultural heritage of Applecross more accessible to local people and visitors
setting Applecross in context, to show how its history, archaeology and geology has influenced the way it looks today
interpreting modern-day Applecross (and, perhaps, the Applecross of the future)*

improving the overall experience of visitors to Applecross production of an interpretive item based on the Plan's recommendations.

The final plan developed will identify:

how local people would like to interpret their area - by agreeing:

overall interpretive objectives (learning, emotional and behavioural)

key interpretive messages

a unified style/identity

an interpretive approach to the area's strong **Gaelic** language and cultural heritage

The use of **innovative approaches**, such as the use of **art, sculpture and poetry** in interpretation should be investigated with local people.

worked-up details of a number of interpretive projects for implementation (looking at media, location, style etc)

The process of developing the plan will be based on **community workshops and discussions with key interest groups**, with the following key stages:

discussions aimed at developing interpretive objectives and key messages based on this "**sense of place**"

discussions as to the most **appropriate media and locations** for interpretation

discussions as to the most **appropriate style** of interpretive features."

1.3 General methodology

In preparing to write this plan, we have:

- Visited Applecross and had initial discussions with the key interest groups
- Issued press releases describing the planning process and inviting people to participate
- Audited every feature of interest listed on the current Applecross Scenic Walks Leaflet
- Walked a number of paths featured on the same leaflet
- Gathered information and images for a future revised version of the same leaflet
- Talked informally with many local people, especially local craft workers and visitor service providers
- Talked with local school children of both primary and secondary school level
- Surveyed both visitors and local people (see Appendix F for sample survey forms)
- Reviewed existing ALPS projects and the interpretive content outlined in them

- Reviewed information on Applecross currently available online and from shops/information points in surrounding area
- Reviewed the HLF audience development plan prepared for ALPS in 2008
- Held formal consultation sessions in the community hall (4th/5th April, 20th May) exploring interpretive media, interpretive planning, 'sense of place' and theme-writing with interested members of the local community
- Held informal consultation sessions with those who have requested it, e.g. representatives of the Bealach Group and of the Walled Garden

2. Applecross people



At work in the Walled Garden, tending vegetables destined for the Potting Shed Restaurant

Applecross people fall into the following main categories:

- Indigenous families (those who have lived here for several generations), some Gaelic-speaking
- Those strongly connected to indigenous families who may now live elsewhere but who return frequently
- Long-standing incomers
- Recent incomers
- Frequent visitors who return to the same B&B/self-catering house/hotel year in year out, for whom Applecross is a significant place within their lives

Within these categories, there are both full-time and part-time residents. Some part-time residents may have a family connection to the area. Because it is difficult to define 'local' people we have therefore tried to avoid the term 'local' within this plan as far as possible:

2.1 Applecross as home

It is often easier for people who have chosen to live in a particular place to explain why they have done so. For people whose family belong to the area, it is often much harder to put a sense of belonging into words, as they have been born there and have 'hefted' - without ever needing to discuss it.

For many people who visit Applecross, 'home' may mean their own four walls or, at most, a village or town. For many who live in Applecross, home means a peninsula of scattered but inter-connected townships contained within many miles of open mountainous scenery. This concept of idea of miles of apparent 'nothingness' constituting home may be hard to grasp by those from an urban area.

Applecross reflects many areas of the Highlands in that sweeping changes have taken place within the local area over the past 200 years. Applecross is a scattered yet closely bonded fishing/crofting community, but the basis of these economic activities is changing. Its small coastal townships are occupied in part by families who had lived here for generations.

200 years ago it was more easily accessible by sea than by land, but the coming of the roads (Bealach na Ba road in 1822, and to a far greater extent the Coast Road in 1976) began a process of distancing the community on land at Applecross from the sea which continues to this day.

Now accessible by road from two different directions, Applecross no longer has a ferry link into Toscaig and although there is a three-times-weekly bus service to Inverness, visitors almost invariably come by car. It attracts many different visitors (see ALPS Audience Development Plan [ADP] for a more detailed breakdown of visitor types), some more beneficial to Applecross than others.

Affordable housing both for young families and local elderly people is an issue within Applecross. This is a highly desirable place to have a holiday home and people who come from outside Applecross can generally afford to pay more for the houses than those who are already part of the community here.

Permanent population in the Applecross Peninsula shows a steady decline (from 222 in 1991 to 182 in 2001 (-17.6%), which compares with growth of 2.5% in Highland and 1.3% in Scotland. [c.f. ALPS ADP]

The 2008 ADP shows 36.6% of the housing stock in Applecross consisted of holiday or second homes, compared with just 6.2% in Highland and 1.3% in Scotland. As elsewhere in the Highlands, Eastern European and other migrants have come to work in Applecross in recent years. 28.6% of Applecross residents in 2001 were not born in Scotland, compared with 17.8% of Highland residents and 12.9% of Scottish residents. [c.f. ALPS ADP]

This rapid evolution of the community at Applecross will impact on its interpretation. There is a strong desire among many residents to tell its story in an honest and 'real' way.

2.2 Applecross as a place to work

The 2008 ADP comments that there is low unemployment in Applecross, but in reality this employment may be seasonal and part-time. Any opportunities for training or new lines of part-time employment are likely to be popular (see recommendations in Appendix A).

Most people have more than one role or occupation within the community and there may be some acceptance of a lack of work over the winter months followed by a busier visitor season.

Crofting is no longer really a viable full-time occupation anywhere in the Highlands, with those living in Applecross being no exception to this. Those who croft will also usually undertake other economic activity too: fishing, providing holiday accommodation or craftworks for example. Any practical addition to this diversification should be welcomed.

A few people are employed by QinetiQ at the MOD base at Sand. Applecross seafood is a major motivator in people coming to Applecross, but it is in increasingly short supply though over-fishing, often by boats from outwith the area. The MOD torpedo-testing range provides an unlikely safeguard for seafood stocks in the local area. There are real concerns that occasional periods of low productivity may spell the beginning of the end for local seafood.

There is a steady flow of young people, often from Eastern Europe, into the area for contract work in the hotel/catering establishments but the lack of accommodation for these is a limiting factor.

The Applecross Trust still provides some traditional employment for those with skills in stalking, keeping and land maintenance and management (e.g. path construction).

2.3 Applecross as a place to visit

Applecross has a large and increasing population of what one might call permanent visitors – another way of looking at part-time residents who own accommodation locally. Why settle in Applecross and not somewhere else?

A' Chomraich means 'the sanctuary' in Gaelic, and for some this connects to spirituality and St Maelrubha, seen as second only to St Columba in terms of the early Church. Maelrubha's sanctity is not upheld by some, but the fact that 'Maelrubha of Applecross' founded a monastic settlement here and lived to a venerable age is not in dispute.

For some the sanctuary aspect of Applecross is too personal an aspect of Applecross to attempt to define through interpretation.

For others willing to discuss it, it is more a sanctuary in a physical sense. Others have sought psychological sanctuary here, actively seeking out a slower and calmer way of life. For many others who do not live here permanently, Applecross is still a regular and significant place of sanctuary. Perhaps there is a family connection, and they have access to a house here. They may come to a favourite self-catering cottage and spend a week or two each year walking, painting or composing. Some may simply treat themselves to an annual weekend staying at the hotel or a local B&B. The high number of repeat visitors shows that Applecross has personal significance to many more than actually live there.

There is often availability of accommodation for visitors during the 'shoulder months' of March/April/May and September/October. November – February are seen as risky months to visit Applecross, which gets snowed in regularly. In the best weather, June, July and August can see Applecross rapidly becoming congested with cars and running out of beds for would-be overnight stays.

There is currently no formal tourist information centre in Applecross although the new visitor information centre at the old shop on Shore Street is taking on this role in part. Relying on finding a bed in Applecross after a spontaneous drive over the Bealach in summer on a fine day is a risky strategy, but no current visitor information (online or published) appears to state this clearly and this is addressed in the recommendations section of this plan (see Section 10).

Accommodation providers agree that extending the stay time of visitors would be beneficial. A visitor who drives in one day and can be persuaded to park and walk on the second will effectively fill a bed space without adding to the traffic. A 'one day is never enough' slogan could be one worth exploring.

2.4 Applecross as a day trip

During consultation with Applecross people for the planning process we asked whether there was any such thing as a 'bad' visitor for Applecross. Some were shocked by this and felt strongly that everyone who comes should be welcomed. After some discussion, however, it was agreed that some visitors are perhaps more beneficial to Applecross than others.

What constitutes positive visiting at Applecross?

- Those who come particularly to Applecross as their destination, not those who are just passing through
- Those who choose to buy things here: meals, crafts, fuel, accommodation
- Those who stay more than one night, and ideally a week
- Those willing to leave the car and walk
- Those who want to savour the place and absorb its culture
- Those who keep coming back for a personally meaningful visit

And negative visiting?

- Those who don't respect the place (for example insensitive camping at the Head of the Bay)
- Those who only stay one night on a longer journey and don't really *look*
- Those who drive through without spending any money here all because of the latest TV show (c.f. Top Gear, Monty Hall etc)
- Thoughtless drivers of any vehicle

Of course a visitor who comes to Applecross for the first time on an unscheduled day trip may develop into someone who wants to come back. Applecross is one of those rare places which can enchant on first acquaintance, leading, for some, to a lifetime's affinity.

In such an exceptionally beautiful place as Applecross, which can reach capacity in terms of visitor numbers so easily, using subtle interpretation to encourage positive visiting qualities (and discourage negative qualities) has to be a sensible move.

See Section 8 for how this feedback has influenced overall interpretive objectives.

2.5 Schools

Old schools are a feature of the peninsula. Only one (in Camusterrach) remains in use as a local school, but many others can still be seen, such as the one used as the stained glass workshop at Arrina.

The Primary School at Applecross currently has 11 children on the school roll with just one in the nursery class. While this is not as low as some other isolated community schools, the school roll is falling. Children who go to primary school in a particular area become hefted to place, even if they do not begin their school lives there. The presence of the school provides much of the heart and distinctiveness of this small and remote community and it is important that outside stakeholders who may influence future policy are aware of this.

Although 31% of the population said they spoke Gaelic in the 2001 census there is no Gaelic-medium learning in Applecross and the language is under threat, an issue being addressed by the local Gaelic interest group Bealach (see Appendix E). The closest other primary schools are Shildaig (which feeds Gairloch High School) and Lochcarron (which, like Applecross, feeds Plockton High School). Shildaig may be the logical choice for parents living north of Cuaig as the drive to Shildaig is a slightly better prospect in winter than the drive along the coast south from Cuaig. Lochcarron has a healthier school roll of 44.

Older children have always gone away for their secondary school education, with older residents recalling boarding at Dingwall Academy. They now board weekly at Plockton High School.

One of the target audiences for new interpretive approaches in the peninsula is likely to be families and children. It would be good if the local primary school and secondary school pupils could become involved in the development of these, enhancing their own knowledge of and pride in Applecross as they do it, possibly connecting to the Curriculum for Excellence through local studies.

In other areas where we have implemented interpretive planning, local children have developed their art and communication skills by working with professional interpretive designers and craftspeople in activities which link to the Curriculum for Excellence.

2.6 Community-based special-interest groups

Within ALPS the following groups are represented:

- The Applecross Trust
- Applecross Community Council
- Applecross Crofters
- Applecross Historical Society
- Applecross Archaeological Society
- Applecross Walks and Traditional Crafts Group
- Bealach Group

All these groups have been represented at one or more of the consultation activities which have taken place during interpretive planning. As in any small community, there is a certain degree of overlap between the groups, but they all have their own agendas.

To work well, interpretation needs to help create connections between special interest groups, encouraging reaching out and sharing of expertise to the benefit of all. There is already some very good interpretive thinking within Applecross, but it tends to be done in isolation rather than holistically.

Many of the recommendations of this plan suggest building better connections between Applecross places, activities and groups through the implementation of this plan.

2.7 Interpretive interests group by group

In terms of interpretation, the **Applecross Trust** would be likely to oppose strongly anything which would impact negatively on its landscape.

The **Community** seeks to improve community facilities and services and take forward community development projects.

The **Crofters Group** would be keen to communicate the realities of crofting at Applecross to those who visit and would be interested in any other activities which could supplement a diversified croft income.

Applecross Historical Society is an organisation which has achieved a great deal in terms of interpreting Applecross already. Its objectives are:

“to advance the education of the public by research, collation, recording, publication by any means, dissemination and promotion of the history of Applecross and the surrounding area.” [www.applecrossheritage.org.uk]

Considerable overlap therefore with the aims and objectives of this plan, although interpretation is less tightly focused on education. Not all visitors come to Applecross to

be educated. While some may enjoy educational activity, others may not, especially while on holiday. Within interpretation the learning can often be accidental.

The Heritage Centre opened in 2003 and has until recently been solely run by volunteers.

Local people are proud of their Heritage Centre and rightly so. Well-established and respected, it can offer the 'complete story' of many aspects of Applecross Heritage.

The Heritage Centre is also busy building its collections of oral history recordings to ensure that modern-day heritage is documented for the future. Some audio work will be recommended as part of this plan, and the Heritage Centre and Historical Society are the ideal partners to do this. Further comments on this future crucial changing role of the Heritage Centre within interpretation of Applecross as a whole can be found in Appendix B.

Applecross Archaeological Society is another extremely active society instrumental in highlighting and protecting the many archaeological sites around the peninsula. They have led on the excavation of the broch, organised a very impressive broch conference (over 120 attendees in Oct. 2010); and are developing an Archaeological Trail to showcase and help safeguard all archaeological sites. Part of their remit is the provision of archaeological training within the community.

Further comments on the interpretation of the broch and roundhouse can be found in Appendix B.

The development of new and enhanced footpaths is a key part of the ALPS programme. Future interpretive leaflets need to give some idea of the duration and grading of walks so that people have more idea of what they should wear on their feet and how long they need to allow.

Applecross Walks and Traditional Crafts Group already produce a good standalone art and crafts leaflet, but better details of walks and crafts availability in the peninsula should also be carried on the next Scenic Walks leaflet.

A craft and produce market took place in the Community Hall during one of the consultation days and was well supported by the community and visitors alike. Other than at these craft markets there appears to be no single place where craft workers in the peninsula can come together to show off and sell their work other than their individual outlets, although the former coal shed is being converted into a craft shop.

If some general agreement were possible on the timing of this event (e.g. the last Friday every month between April and October) then this could be mentioned in the new Scenic Walks leaflet, greatly increasing the chances of visitors attending.

Substantial crafts such as reveted stonework and carved benches could also become a unique product for Applecross – see recommendations in Section 10 and Appendix A – and could also become a craft taught locally through workshops open to visitors.

Art and craft in the peninsula can add an unexpected dimension to any visit. It was a bonus to stumble on a celebration of nettles at the Weaver's Workshop in Cuaig on a day of rain and howling gale.

These craft sites should collectively be given equal status to historic sites in terms of interpretative planning as they can enhance a visit just as much for many visitors.

Bealach Group

31% of people living in Applecross speak Gaelic, a very high percentage compared to the Highland average. Most of the placenames in the area are Gaelic in origin, often highly visual and descriptive. The bulk of visitors coming to Applecross will not speak Gaelic but may well be very interested in it, and a substantial number of visitors from north America and Australia with Highland roots cite Gaelic as being significant in their motivation to visit Scotland.

Fully bilingual material in English and Gaelic can sometimes feel unwieldy: a Gaelic translation of the new Scenic Walks leaflet for example (which is aimed at non Gaelic speakers) would be undesirable as it would double its size before any expansion of its content took place. Greater coverage of the significance of Gaelic within a revamped walks leaflet would however be highly desirable, especially a focus on Applecross Gaelic in particular and the meanings of some local placenames.

For on-site features (such as interpretive benches), a pictorial/artistic approach which avoids language issues altogether is desirable (pictures speak louder than words).

The sound of Gaelic is beautiful and also gets across to non-English speaking visitors better than written Gaelic that for all its challenging spelling, is still an Indo-European language.

Milton Loch is a prime example of this: its township is given as Milltown on site, but Milton has been even further anglicised. The Gaelic is beautiful Loch a' Mhuilinn, linking straight into the French *moulin* and Italian *molino*. Even trying to pronounce that one placename would allow a day-tripper to try rolling some Gaelic around his/her tongue – and may plant a seed which turns into a desire to learn more.

A future Bardic School could perhaps be devoted to new and old work which interprets only the landscape visible in and from Applecross, providing direct inspiration for the implementation phase of this plan. Audio of new and old landscape-inspired Gaelic poetry with a good translation would be a popular download to make available from a new Applecross interpretive gateway website (see also recommendations in Section 10 and Appendix A).

For further detailed comments on the use of Gaelic within interpretation at Applecross please see Appendix E.

Local private companies providing visitor services play a huge role in attracting visitors to Applecross. The Applecross Inn, the Applecross Campsite and the Potting Shed Restaurant plus Mountain and Sea Guides plus an array of craft workers all provide a reason for people to come and reasons to extend a visit on site. Many already fulfil an interpretive role for visitors but may not realise it. Interpretation can comprise information sheets in hotel/B&B bedrooms, locally sourced food being served, stained glass showing local wildlife or a kayaking adventure across the Bay: all this is part of communicating 'essential Applecross'.

Events and festivals run by local people – ranging from sponsored cycle races to a celebration of St Maelrubha or the Bardic School - will also benefit from an integrated approach to interpretation. This may just mean having an awareness of the interpretive objectives within this plan (see Section 8), or may involve the forging of new links between the organising group or individual and other groups or private enterprises within the community.

Greater co-ordination of interpretation within the peninsula among all these groups and companies will be of benefit to all.

3. The sense of place at Applecross



Dawn at Toscaig, stags bellowing

Working out a 'sense of place' statement for any locality helps those who do not know it start to understand what kind of place it is and how those who live there feel about it. However, a sense of place is hard to define as it is often intensely personal and it can be hard to find broad consensus. It assumes one can encapsulate all the disparate community views into one over-arching truth. This is not necessarily the case and some inhabitants in Applecross feel that a sense of place can't be defined, only experienced. The words 'love' and 'magical' occur in many visitor's descriptions of their feelings for Applecross, but people born here seldom use this kind of vocabulary. 'Spiritual' occurs too - but not always in a Christian sense.

Applecross was perceived as a sanctuary long before Maelrubha visited. The children recognise this instinctively, with 'safe' featuring strongly among their describing words as well as 'remote'. It is most striking from the sea and the gold sand and green grass and trees of the bay must have drawn seafarers like a magnet.

'Fragile' also occurs frequently, applied both to the natural environment and the evolving community. 'Home' is used as though home here means more than just the four walls of a house. A broader sense of home than for example in an urban context means that people will be far more protective of the landscape in general.

During consultation people have also said:

- *It's a very difficult place to live*
- *Applecross should be interpreted honestly*
- *People should have a realistic experience*
- *Applecross is not idyllic – full stop!*
- *Visitors come here to escape*
- *This is somewhere I need to escape from regularly*

- *There's something spiritual about Applecross – maybe not religious, but spiritual*
- *Gaelic and the sounds of spoken Gaelic are significant here*
- *Quality of life is probably the best in the world if you don't base it on material possessions*
- *The most recent 'dream' was Monty Hall on BBC*
- *People often just discover the road and not the place*
- *Nobody visits from November through to February*
- *Not enough people come in spring and autumn*
- *The sea connected this community for centuries before the roads did*
- *If it wasn't for the MOD range, there'd be no local seafood for visitors to eat*
- *We can play here safely (child)*

Sense of place statement for Applecross

In Gaelic A'Chomraich - Applecross - means sanctuary, but its sanctuary today means many different things to different people here.

Those who dwell in Applecross choose to do so for many different reasons. It is not an easy place to exist, but if you can adapt to the realities of a remote rural community then it can be a good place to live. This is a community sprung from deep historical roots and surrounded by some of Scotland's most glorious natural scenery.

The sea dominates the early tales of Applecross. The first settlers survived among the rocks and the caves, their population changing over the centuries as successive waves of new peoples arrived. Vikings, the Lords of the Isles and adventurer monks among others all reached 'the sanctuary', either to settle and integrate or to plunder and move on. Successive families owning the Estate at Applecross have greatly influenced the fortunes of Applecross people right up to the present Applecross Trust ownership.

From the early nineteenth century onwards roads (the Bealach na Ba and the more recent Coast Road) connected Applecross to the rest of the Highlands by land and the community's links to the sea weakened. Today Applecross people still look to the sea with their backs to the land.

People visit Applecross for its sense of peace and wildness. Those for whom it is becomes personally meaningful tend to stay for longer and return, to the greater benefit of the community. Some speak of an Applecross magic, others of inspiration and a feeling of deep spiritual connection found here and not elsewhere.

Those who come to live and work in the peninsula are welcome and the community of Applecross has always survived by adapting to change coming from the outside.

This statement has contributed to the themes drafted in Section 6.

4. Detailed Methodology



Applecross Bay is a maze of channels at low tide: consultation highlighted its significance to the people of Applecross

4.1 Community consultation

Being 'outsiders' the local community was understandably suspicious of us when we were commissioned, as for many interpretation only meant panels on the ground. Due to this concern, we went out of our way to secure newspaper coverage of our consultation activities in advance to ensure that the maximum number of people knew about them and had some idea of the scope of what it involved.

The ALPS team also went out of their way to encourage participation throughout the planning process and we are very grateful to them.

We then visited Applecross (on 4 April) and had an initial discussion with key interest groups at the ALPS office (all the groups listed in 2.6 were represented). Discussions even at that early stage were very much concerned with which interpretive media we might recommend on site.

A draft interpretive plan outline was circulated, amended after comments and has been used to structure this plan.

Our first community consultation (billed as a community mapping/story gathering day, which is less alienating than the more unfamiliar interpretive planning label) took place in the Community Hall on 4/5 April. We put together a display of interpretive approaches, including panels, which had been used elsewhere. People picked out the interpretive benches and stone interpretive features as being approaches they particularly liked. Large area maps and satellite photos were laid out on the tables and consultees annotated them.

This exercise was repeated with a representative of the Applecross Trust's Trustees on 15 April.

Later consultations took place on 19/20 May and centred on the sense of place at Applecross and discussing themes (see Section 6) and visitor issues (see Section 2). Key issues highlighted across these two consultations included:

- Lack of interpretation of the significance of the sea to Applecross (mention of island connections, the Vikings, pressures on local seafood, the rise and fall of the herring, the MOD range, sea as transport in the past and the local kelp industry)
- The sensitivity of the Bealach area to visitors and the perceived dangers of over-interpretation there and across the peninsula as a whole
- The pressure of car parking at some 'trailheads', especially the paths to Ard Ban and Coillegille and the longer routes from Toscaig
- The lack of accommodation as the limiting factor for Applecross visiting
- The benefits of extended stay times and more visiting spread into the shoulder months
- Local respect for the Head of the Bay area and concerns over disrespectful use and wild camping
- The dominance of estate owners in the fortunes of the Applecross peninsula: Mackenzies, Middletons, Wills families
- Concerns of future sustainability of tourism as part of the economics of the area
- Concerns over affordable housing for people in Applecross

A variety of written survey forms were used during the planning process, including:

Story-gathering survey forms

These were returned in person (14 in total). We used them to check how people felt about different forms of interpretation and also what kinds of people from within the community were attending the consultation, as it is important to try to get a balance.

Applecross – your story survey

These were issued from Applecross 'hubs' – the shop at Camusteel and the three 'eateries'. They were returned to the hubs. Some were sent direct to Interpretation. In all, 67 were returned, allowing some quantitative findings (see Appendix D).

This was issued during April/May 2011 and those issued in April were incentivised with a prize draw – the winner opted for £30 of locally made jewellery.

Interpretive planning feedback sheets

These were used to capture people's feelings surrounding the Applecross sense of place and their thinking on themes and visitors. 16 were returned in total across three separate sessions, but more beneficial was the verbal discussion which took place at these planning workshops.

These helped shape the draft themes in Section 6.

We also visited the primary school at Camusterrach and spent an hour talking with the children about ‘their’ Applecross and recording their views. Many of them said how ‘safe’ they feel here. Some remember a life elsewhere which was less safe. The Carnoch Woods are a favourite place for local children to play, and they also mentioned swimming in the river in preference to the sea.

4.2 Existing interpretation audit

We visited every feature of interest listed on the current Applecross Scenic Walks Leaflet (a full listing of these with comments is to be found in Appendix B) plus more recent features such as the new shop and visitor centre.

We walked a section of the Milton Loch path plus the Coillegille/Ardban path.

During this process we gathered information and images which can be used for a future revised and expanded version of the same leaflet.

During the audit we talked informally to many people, especially visitors, local craft workers and visitor service providers.

4.3 Review of existing Applecross coverage online

See Section 7.3

5. Interpreting Applecross



Panorama of Applecross looking towards Raasay and Skye

5.1 Key stories

The community at Applecross needs to tell its story in as direct and honest a way as possible. Key stories identified in the ‘your story’ survey (in order of preference) consist of:

Tales of the sea, islands and fishing

The sea and the islands beyond are still an everyday part of life for many within the local community.

Applecross access, roads and transport

For many this means the story of the making and use of the Bealach but this has strong links to the Coast Road and the sea (through ferry services) as well. There is also a link to local dry stone work skills.

Applecross natural life (animals, plants, fish, insects etc)

The 'wildness' of Applecross is significant to many even though the hand of man has influenced every inch of the local landscape in the Peninsula in some way.

Life and work for people who live here all the year round (fishing and craft work mentioned)

Life for people who live in Applecross all year round is challenging but many visitors fantasise about living here themselves.

Some in the local community see this as a dangerous fantasy which pushes up local house prices beyond the reach of many. Interpretation of the realities of life and work in Applecross can gently communicate the realities of life in Applecross. In telling this story there is a need for realism and honesty. This needs to be balanced with the need to maintain the image of Applecross as a visitor destination.

The history of fishing cannot be separated from sustainability issues, but care would be needed in interpreting this story so that it does not undermine local livelihoods.

Applecross history and prehistory (Rock Shelter at Sand and Heritage Centre at Clachan mentioned)

At present the history and prehistory of Applecross is interpreted in an isolated way, but past and present connect very strongly in terms, for example, of invaders and settlers.

5.3 Key techniques for Applecross interpretation

Given a wide variety of options, people surveyed felt these stories could best be told:

- By people from Applecross rather than outsiders (mention of guided tours led by local people, audio)
- Through local arts/crafts (mention of need to promote local craft work)
- Through displays linked to Applecross Heritage Centre (mention of new Curator)
- Through waymarked trails
- Through interpretive benches
- Through interpretation with some Gaelic content

to There was also significant opposition expressed to any kind of on-site panels which some felt constitute 'Disneyfication'.

5.4 Key features

See comments in Appendix B which assesses all the key features listed in the Applecross Scenic Walks leaflet site by site, adding a list of new features for inclusion when the leaflet is redesigned.

5.5 Key community and visitor hubs

Key existing hubs for the community of Applecross are:

- The shop at Camusteel
- The Churches
- The Applecross Inn
- The Community Hall (particularly the lunch club)
- The Primary School
- The Walled Garden and Potting Shed
- The Campsite and Flower Tunnel

For the local community, hubs are places where people meet, news is exchanged and where events can be promoted.

Key existing hubs for visitors to the community of Applecross are:

- The shop
- The Applecross Inn (food and accommodation)
- The Campsite and Flower Tunnel (food and accommodation)
- The Potting Shed (food)
- The Heritage Centre (the full story)
- The new Visitor's Centre

For visitors, hubs need to be somewhere they can ask basic orientation questions (where can I find a B&B? I've only got two days here, what should I do?) but also, for the future, where they can download information on Applecross to their iphones, for example. Some but not all the above offer this facility and it is going to be key to future interpretation at Applecross.

The new Visitor Centre at Shore Street, run by the experienced campsite team, could play a key role in advising visitors on itinerary planning for their visit for example and supply access to the Internet or hard copies of downloads.

It would also be advisable to have a new visitor hub site on the coast road, a possible role for one of the existing craft outlets in Kenmore or Arrisa, where the provision of toilet facilities is an issue.

5.6 Designations

Designations are covered in detail as part of the Applecross Landscape report at <http://www.applecrosstrust.org.uk/alps.html>. Significant designations in terms of interpretation are the Special Area of Conservation to the East of the Bealach (which is also a SSSI) and the Wester Ross National Scenic Area. There are also several areas of IALE (Ancient and Long Established Woodland) including Carnoch Woods.

5.7 Interpreting future Applecross

Like most other places Applecross will have to adapt as fuel prices rise. As it does, life will become increasingly difficult as the cost of living and visiting rises. It is possible that as it becomes harder to reach places, those who make the effort will stay longer. Touring holidays may become much less the norm.

Applecross already has a trading arm of the Community Company to run its petrol pumps. The same company is looking at installing a hydro scheme on a local river. These kinds of innovative community-managed projects will help Applecross to adapt to changes, continue to be self-reliant and survive. Applecross is a community used to adapting to change.

The Community Company website would be the most appropriate vehicle for highlighting social and economic issues in Applecross and presenting new innovations within the community.

6. Themes and topics to lead interpretation of Applecross stories



Like Applecross otters, themes work largely below the surface rather than in full view

6.1 Core theme

Themes and sub-themes are not statements for use with the public. Instead, agreed themes will help the community make sure that future interpretive implementation helps communicate exactly what they want it to.

This is a remote Highland peninsula of scattered coastal townships, home to people of diverse origins united by a common desire to live in Applecross

6.2 Sub-theme A

Down the centuries successive waves of invaders and settlers have adapted and integrated into life here just as the indigenous community has adapted to them - and these changes continue today.

Topics:

Prehistory, Maelrubha, Vikings, Clearances, Crofting, Fishing, Applecross Estate, Traditional crafts, Gaelic.

Possible Media:

Detailed online information sheets on each topic connecting to Heritage Centre displays.

Laminated Applecross Gaelic sheets in the restaurants

Themed itineraries connecting to the Heritage Centre encouraging those who have come for a day to stay longer, and those who know Applecross already to find out more.

Wooden, hand-carved time-line trail leading people from the new car park towards the Heritage Centre, designed to pose questions (rather than make statements) which can then be answered in the Centre.

Historically or naturally themed stone and/or wooden interpretive benches (locally made), , individually themed, with variations within a beautiful yet simple standardised design inspired by the landscape of Applecross, words other than placenames kept to a minimum).

Suggested locations (with the final decisions to be made by the community):

- One or more viewpoints on Coast Road
- The Head of Applecross Bay (Beechwood trail)

- Associated with Clachan Church and the Heritage Centre
- Associated with the Applecross House Policy Walks (including the River Crosan walk)
- Associated with an area of outstanding wildlife and beauty (e.g. Milton Loch/Carnoch hazelwood)
- At the old Ferry pier at Toscaig

6.3 Sub-theme B

All visitors to Applecross are welcome, but those most appreciated locally are those who stay longer than just a day, respect the environment and local culture, adapt to the pace of the community and who value their visits as personally meaningful.

Topics: Exploration & discovery, good driving, the Bealach, the Coast Road, 'Applecross basics', crafts

Possible media:

New expanded version of Scenic Walks leaflet

Detailed online information sheets on each topic connecting to Heritage Centre displays where appropriate

Themed itineraries (including both access roads) which connect to the Heritage Centre encouraging those who have come for a day to stay longer, and those who know Applecross already to find out more

One or more interpretive features incorporating stone seats at the Bealach viewpoint. These could comprise elements of the following:

A low stone wall, traditionally built and reflecting the techniques used in revetment offering a little shelter to motorists parked up there. In the wall facing the views, there could be a stone slab (revetted to the ground as a bench) allowing people to sit and look at the view. Stone slabs could be laid in the ground with toposcope features, distances and placenames marked in both Gaelic and English, plus the name of the pass itself.

On the north-west side a similar wall and bench would contain a higher section holding a vertical stone slab engraved with a simple image of cattle and drovers crossing the pass, plus the name of the pass.

6.4 Sub-theme C

The best way for anyone to savour the natural and cultural heritage of Applecross is on foot.

Topics:

Exploration on foot and at sea, lochs, fishing, geomorphology, climbing, caving, wildlife, environmental management (including deer), plantlife, animal life, sealife and seafood, Carnoch woods, Milton Loch (Loch a’Mhuilinn)

Possible Media:

New expanded version of Scenic Walks leaflet

Themed self-guided tours (e.g. Archaeological Trail; Wildlife Trail etc.)

Detailed online information sheets on each topic connecting to Heritage Centre displays where appropriate

Historically- or naturally-themed interpretive benches (locally made, hand carved from stone or wood/stone combination, variations within a beautiful yet simple standardised design inspired by the landscape of Applecross, words other than placenames kept to a minimum, Gaelic used as appropriate) located at:

- One or more viewpoints on Coast Road
- The Head of Applecross Bay (Beechwood trail)
- Associated with Clachan Church and the Heritage Centre
- Associated with the Applecross House Policy Walks (including the River Crosan walk)
- At viewpoint halfway along Coillegille/Ard Ban path
- Associated with an area of outstanding wildlife and beauty (e.g. Milton Loch/Carnoch hazelwood)
- At the old Ferry pier at Toscaig

7. Interpreting historic significance and context



Ruined crofts at Lonbain

7.1 Interpreting historic significance

Interpreting historic significance and context has been very much the remit of Applecross Historical Society and its detailed heritage centre displays and collections can provide the 'whole story' of most aspects of the past in Applecross.

Making stronger themed connections between the Heritage Centre and sites around Applecross will encourage more visitors to go to the Centre and will provide them with a more meaningful experience of Applecross. This increased inter-connectivity will be beneficial to the Heritage Centre.

Hand-constructed stone/wooden interpretive benches will be widely used to communicate particular aspects of the natural and human history of Applecross.

Themed itineraries combining both driving/cycling and walking routes which look at different aspects of Applecross past and present, human and natural will play a significant role in ensuring that visitors have as meaningful an experience of Applecross as possible.

Where possible, visitors will be encouraged to pronounce Gaelic, especially through local placenames. This will be included in all interpretive media as far as is practicable.

Media summary:

- Revised and expanded 'Scenic Walks' leaflet
- Themed itineraries linking driving routes to walks
- Strengthened links to and from Heritage Centre
- Locally produced interpretive benches
- Audio and/or information sheet downloads available from the Historical Society or the Trust websites

7.2 Interpreting the story of the people of Applecross

There is a strong desire to have local people tell their own story, but all stories are different. One way to avoid the minefield of attempted consensus is to allow many voices to be heard. They will often be contradictory. Local voices and choice of words are important and better if not watered down by an interpretive writer!

The Heritage Centre already has audio of oral history recordings made with people from the local community. Many of these are historical. These could be expanded for possible use (in highly edited format) either from a listening point at the Heritage centre itself or as free downloads from the Historical Society website. A programme of professionally recorded interviews with local people in both Gaelic and English on themed topics (linking to the new itineraries) would supplement the audio archive of the Heritage Centre with a rich archive for the 21st century.

Each interviewee could be photographed and the photograph used as an image on which to click from the website.

Media summary:

- Themed interviews with local people
- Library of images of local people

- Audio available from Heritage Centre or as downloads from the Historical society website

7.3 Interpreting the natural environment

The best place from which to experience the natural environment of Applecross is by foot. Every effort will be made to encourage people to park (ideally wherever they are staying) and walk. Interpretive benches at intervals along popular paths encourage people to walk further than they otherwise would.

Milton Loch could be interpreted by carving some of the animal and plant species present in the loch into the wood of the current bird hide railings and path.

Waymarking could be more discreet and interpretive in places. The feeling of walking through a wild place can be compromised by using standard designs. This could be linked to the etymology of placenames in Gaelic. For example, the current Milton Loch walk waymarkers could be replaced with a low roundwood marker carved with a small image of a mill on the loch.

More active special-interest activities within the natural environment (e.g. kayaking, ice climbing, caving) need to be interpreted as information sheets online with contact details of companies, clubs or groups who provide them.

Media summary:

- Revised and expanded 'Scenic Walks' leaflet
- Themed self-guided tours (e.g. Wildlife Trail etc.)
- Themed itineraries linked to drive routes
- Strengthened links to and from Heritage Centre
- Hand-made locally produced interpretive benches
- Downloads from Historical Society/Trust websites
- Interpretive waymarking

7.4 Interpreting the geology and underlying landscape

The landscape and geology of Applecross is outstanding but is poorly interpreted. Notable features include the raised beaches of the Lonbain area, outcrops of ancient Lewisian gneiss on the north coast, beds of Torridonian sandstone forming the mountains, limestone, glacial features and deformities related to the nearby Moine Thrust event. In addition, the summit of the Bealach provides stunning views to Skye and the Cuillin Ridge.

The Bealach is a particularly good place from which to interpret the timeline of the landscape's formation. This should not be done 'on the ground' but as part of an optional download from a website. Interpretation could include interviewing local people at the Bealach viewpoint who understand the geomorphology of the area and asking them to describe what they see today and how it came to look that way.

The Bealach is also a good place to celebrate local craft skills in working the local stone into walls and revetments.

Geology walks/talks are also an area worth encouragement.

Media summary:

- Themed itineraries
- Strengthened links to and from Heritage Centre
- Hand-carved locally produced interpretive benches
- Downloads from the Historical Society/ALPS websites

8. Interpretive media appropriate to Applecross



Local stone is the most significant interpretive material for Applecross

8.1 General principles

Generally speaking interpretive options for Applecross should either be entirely optional and offsite (portable leaflets, an Applecross App or a web download), or made locally from appropriate materials or be focused at existing interpretive hubs such as the Heritage Centre. This reflects the instinctive response from a majority of those surveyed that interpretive panels are not a good way to interpret the landscape, wildlife and history of Applecross.

There are growing concerns about the environmental footprint of panels which can be made of plasticised boards and other substances which may be toxic in production and take a long time to biodegrade. An existing illustration of this issue is the panel next to the churchyard which is now almost illegible but is still intact in spite of the weather conditions locally.

There are craftspeople within the local community and expertise in dry stone walling skills is part of the ALPS project training. Any onsite interpretation should be made in stone or wood so that it reflects local skills and traditional materials in keeping with the landscape. Even

then the locations for any on-site features should be carefully selected with the zero option always being considered first.

8.2 Existing interpretive media – on site

On site interpretive media have been developed piecemeal and with little thought to their overall impact on their surroundings.

Salmon river panels

Along the river Crosan a series of interpretive panels tell the story of salmon. The life cycle of salmon is a fascinating story to tell but it is not one exclusive to Applecross: as such it should be questioned whether it merits on-site interpretation. We would recommend the removal of these, interpreting the salmon of the river instead through a salmon-themed carved interpretive benches at a good rest points along the river. There may be place for information on the attempts to restock the river with salmon, with such information available through wildlife leaflets.

Any restrictions imposed by the estate on activities in the river (such as swimming) should be reviewed under SOAC and phrased clearly and directly to have any chance of influencing behaviour.

Clachan Church panel

This elderly panel has become almost illegible and should be removed. Any replacement should be planned within overall interpretive planning for the Applecross Bay Bay/Clachan/Heritage Centre area. The interpretive bench approach recommended within the peninsula as a whole could work well here, providing seating associated within but outside the graveyard, and interpreting the tombstones and history of the church pictorially.

See also Appendix B.

8.3 Existing interpretive media – off-site (online and portable)

The Scenic Walks leaflet is the backbone of current interpretation within the peninsula and requires updating rather than replacement.

The leaflet needs to connect sites of interest with places visitors can find out more (like the heritage centre, the visitor centre with their different yet complementary roles defined).

It also needs to feature more practical information such as the location of the Applecross Inn, the Flower Tunnel and the Potting Shed, plus the shop in Camusteel and the Medical Practice. Craft outlets could be marked (with one generic symbol rather than individually).

Detailed comments on the sites of interest featured in the leaflet can be found in Appendix B.

The responses from the 'your story' survey highlighted some confusion among visitors regarding Applecross websites (see Appendix D):

Google Applecross and this produces the following list of ten sites:

www.applecross.uk.com – good commercial site run jointly by the Applecross Inn, Applecross Campsite/Flower Tunnel restaurant, local holiday accommodation and the Applecross-based Mountain and Sea guides company. It includes a listing of local B&Bs.

The next four listings all take you back to the same website.

Below a series of Applecross images you then have:

www.applecross.info – comprehensive but a little uninspiring. Without any contact page it is difficult to say who manages it, but it does include information on many of the sites, crafts and activities available at Applecross. This could be one to develop further.

Next comes the first page controlled from outwith the area:

www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/applecross/applecross/index.html

A page of historically-leaning information about Applecross with some inaccuracy and misspelling.

[Hollys House self catering, **Applecross Scotland**, bed and breakfast](#)

A private B&B/self catering cottage site.

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Applecross

The Wikipedia page for Applecross is detailed, mainly accurate and chronologically laid out.

Finally, www.applecross.co.uk takes you straight into an advert for new-build firm Eskgrove homes. Their connection with Applecross (if they have one) is unclear.

No wonder some visitors become confused.

Simply by googling Applecross in this way (as most visitors will do at first) there is no sign of either the Applecross Trust website, or the ALPS website within it, or any of its useful interpretive offshoots like the walks web pages.

Much of the content of the Trust could be retargeted at visitors. However, the site itself does not currently feature in the top 10 listing on the search engines giving it a low web profile.

There is great scope for improving the provision of information about and interpretation of Applecross through websites such as those of the Historical and Archaeological Societies, the Trust and ALPS. There is also greater coherence needed between existing websites with improved virtual waymarking between them.

A single Applecross website, created perhaps out of an evolving ALPS site, which complements all existing and future service- or site-linked websites by becoming place to access and download high-quality interpretation of Applecross could be a useful avenue to explore.

See also Appendix B.

9. Audience objectives



Visitors browsing in the Coalshed craft shop

9.1 Definition of audience groups

Through interpretation it is possible to influence the way people relate to Applecross.

Specific target audience groups are:

- A. Families and children (both local and visiting)
- B. Those who could stay longer on this visit, or return on another occasion
- C. Those who do not currently visit Applecross in a way which benefits the local community
- D. Those for whom Applecross is already a meaningful part of their life, who want to understand it better

9.2 Learning objectives

- ***We want to encourage all visitors and new settlers to understand something of the past in Applecross and in particular its relationship with the sea, but also to think about the realities of its present and future (General)***
- We want families and children to understand that Applecross is a peninsula of many townships of inter-connected histories, rather than a single village, and that it is somewhere unique (A)
- We want people who return to do so because they have understood on their first visit that Applecross is somewhere welcoming with a unique cultural and archaeological heritage and outstanding natural heritage (B)
- We want those who come here by car to be encouraged to stop and learn something about the local community and landscape before they leave (C)
- We want those who already visit Applecross regularly to be able to find out as much as they want about the peninsula, its community, history and wildlife in a variety of inter-connected ways (D)

9.3 Emotional objectives

- ***We want all visitors and new settlers to experience a sense of wonder and respect for how past, present and future connect in Applecross, notably through the responsibility of current Applecross people living within its fragile natural environment (General).***
- We want families and children to relate to realities of life in Applecross both today and through history (A)
- We want day trippers to be provoked into reflecting on community life in the peninsula, not just seeing it as a pretty place to visit in fine weather (B)
- We want those who park or wild-camp (especially at the head of the bay) to do so respectfully and with due regard to the cultural and religious significance of the area. (C)
- We want those who come here regularly to forge a stronger sense of understanding of the local community and to feel they belong here too for the duration of their visit (D)

9.4 Locational objectives

- ***We want all visitors and new settlers to feel that Applecross is a place they can find their way around easily, especially on foot, and where there is always more to see (General)***
- We want families and children to explore Applecross widely on foot as far as possible(A)
- We want day trippers to drive a circuit of the Peninsula (using the Coast Road) rather than driving the Bealach twice, spreading the benefit to the craft businesses on the coast road and alleviating some pressure on the Bealach (B)
- We want those who come for rallies to use the roads with an improved awareness of others (C)
- We want regular and long stay visitors to try new walking routes and learn about contemporary and historical life in Applecross in more detail (D)
- We want regular and long stay visitors to spread the custom across Applecross eateries and shops

9.5 Behavioural objectives

- **We want to see increasing numbers of visitors park their car and walk rather than drive everywhere within the Applecross peninsula (General)**
- We want families and children to explore Applecross on foot and find special places of personal significance, especially where they can connect to the natural world (A)
- We want day trippers to stop within the peninsula, buying accommodation, a meal, fuel and/or a locally-made souvenir before they leave for home (B)
- We want those who stay only one night to stay for longer if they choose to come back, and for the right reasons (C)
- We want regular visitors to have their sense of connection with Applecross as a community reinforced through their activities during every visit (D)

10. Mapping, routing and placenames on site



Plethora of signage at the junction between the hill and coast roads

10.1 The Bealach na Ba

The Bealach na Ba Until 1976, when Princess Margaret unveiled the final section of the Shialdaig to Applecross coastal road, the Bealach – or simply ‘the Hill’ to many, see above – had been the only way in and out of Applecross by land since the construction of the Bealach road in 1822. Doubtless people had been walking it as a rough track for centuries before, but prior to the road construction, the sea would have represented the easiest route in and out of Applecross.

The Bealach is a narrow mountain pass, often compared to an alpine *col*, with a steeper climb on the east side between Fear Bogha and Meall Gorm than on the west side descending into Applecross - but not by much.

Some drivers love it and come to test themselves against its challenges: it is often the focus for formal and informal rallies of motor-cyclists, cars and cyclists, see a classic example at http://www.streetfire.net/video/topgears-greatest-roads-applecross-pass-scotland_689006.htm.

Other less gung-ho drivers arrive in Applecross pale and shaky, staying longer than they had at first intended to recover from their ‘ordeal’. It is not a road for the nervous or inexperienced.

People who live in Applecross sometimes need to drive it twice daily, weather permitting, and can become frustrated by anti-social driving behaviour of visitors whether through ignorance, nerves or a simple inclination to hog the road.

The Bealach na Ba or Pass of the Cattle (formerly known as Bealach nam Bo, cow in the singular in Gaelic) is an unforgettable climb to over 2000’ up a series of hairpin bends. In the droving past, cattle fattened on the sweeter lands below would be driven up and through the Bealach and down again to market further south. The story of droving is an interesting one but it is not unique to Applecross. What is unique about the Bealach is its construction in the first place and subsequent maintenance. Its narrow bends are defined by highly skilled stonework revetments which gives a flat faced, often undulating unmortared dry-stone reinforcement to the bends. Less visible are the culverts leading off and under the road at an angle, designed to take away the run-off.

Due to the hair-raising nature of the Bealach drive and the lack of parking places on the ascent, few people have the opportunity to admire the handiwork of the revetments and culverts close at hand.

Two parking areas have been cleared at the summit of the Bealach where people have pulled over to catch their breath and take photographs over time.

A small poorly-sited toposcope presented by the AA in the 1970s and two concrete-ended urban benches do little to enhance the car parks which can be very full in summer. On a sunny day, no-one would notice, as the breathtaking view takes hold and makes the newcomer gasp. On a grey wet day when the clouds are down, it makes for a grim confirmation of having 'made it'. Surely this special place deserves better? See recommendations in Appendix B.

10.2 The Coast Road

The coast road allows the Applecross community virtually year-round access to Lochcarron and beyond. Although enjoying superb views to Raasay, Rona and Torridon its many undulations and curves is a cause of travel sickness for many. Although not as famous as its sister access route, the Applecross Coast Road is celebrated for its beauty.

The creation of the Coast Road has affected the dynamic of visiting Applecross. While some visitors are likely to either arrive by the Coast Road and leave by the Bealach, or vice versa, many choose to take the Bealach twice (NB this is based on word of mouth comment from those consulted, not any car count statistics).

The Coast Road winds through or past the townships of Kinloch, Doire Aonar, Inverbain, Kenmore, Arrina, Fearnbeg, Fearnmore, Feaulay, Cuaig, Callakille, Lonbain, Salacher and Sand before reaching Applecross Bay. All these tiny communities have stories to tell, some still visible in their buildings, like Lonbain Thatched House and the old schoolhouse at Arrina, one of many. A number of craft outlets are located along this coast road, more than in south or central Applecross.

There are two formalised viewpoints and many more informal ones along the coast road. None of these would benefit from anything other than perhaps (at the more formal viewpoints) an interpretive bench giving some idea of what can be seen from there.

10.3 Applecross south of Shore Street

The South Applecross road meanders through Shore Street and on to Milltown, Camusteel, Camusterrach, Culduie (where there is a junction the Ard Dhubh) and Toscaig. Both the medical practice and the shop are located in this area of Applecross.

A number of footpaths are accessed from the south Applecross road: those to Coilegille and Ardban (which have parking issues during the summer in particular), plus the longer, rougher routes across from Toscaig down to Uags or across to Airigh Drishaig.

Milton Loch is a delightful surprise on the road south, and could benefit from a better defined small car parking area. Its animal and plant-life are worth interpreting, but not necessarily on site. Its bird hide and access ramp could be carved with interpretive images (see also comments on its name in Section 2.7 - Bealach Group).

10.4 OS Map

The Ordnance Survey map of Applecross (no 24 in the Land ranger series) covers the Island of Raasay as well as Applecross. Most shops and visitor outlets stock the OS map, and anyone planning to stay

and walk in Applecross for any length of time is likely to acquire one. Areas of woodland and forest are clearly marked, although many visitors unfamiliar with Highland usage of the term 'forest' in stalking may be confused by the words 'Applecross Forest' across a large area of open moorland.

In showing Raasay and a hint of Skye, it also reflects the close connection between Applecross and the Inner Hebrides in general. In the past, when the sea was the equivalent of the open road, intermarriage between islanders and Applecross people was common. It is also logical for people who visit Applecross today to know what they are looking at, and this is the only major flaw in the current Scenic Walks leaflet.

10.5 Placenames

Generally, Gaelic placenames should be translated into English where possible, giving an insight into its vivid imagery (see also detailed comments on Gaelic in Appendix E).

Pronunciation of placenames is sometimes tricky even for people who have settled in Applecross and a download (perhaps from the Historical Society website or the Heritage Centre) giving the local Gaelic pronunciation of all significant local placenames and their meanings would be highly valuable.

See also comments for Milton Loch in Section 2.7 – Bealach Group.

On both the OS map and the Scenic Walks map, The Street (also known as Shore Street) is shown as Applecross, with Applecross Bay marked separately. This issue is quite an emotive one among the local community, with some feeling that it is less confusing for visitors if Shore Street becomes clearly identified as 'Applecross Village', which does not, technically, exist.

The majority however feel that there is insufficient focus on Applecross as a peninsula, and as such Applecross should be marked as the peninsula name, but not as a 'village', and that traditional names such as The Street should be maintained.

The story of Applecross as a community is very much bound up with its being comprised of inter-connected and mutually supporting townships. Its shop is no longer in The Street and nor is its school. It has no convenient central village, but given that umpteen road atlases, the OS map and several Visit Scotland publications and currently the Applecross Trust website all pinpoint The Street as 'Applecross Village', it would be hard to reverse this way of thinking completely.

One strong argument is that the presence of the Applecross Inn has meant visitors perceive Shore Street (which is an odd name for a settlement to outsider ears) as the village of Applecross. It would indeed be confusing for visitors to the peninsula not to know where this was located, as arguably all three Applecross eateries are destinations as well as facilities. A suggestion and subtle change is that arrival signage could read not Applecross, but Applecross Bay. This change in emphasis would require some alterations to signage on the ground. It is a small change but would help disconnect the association of The Street as being 'Applecross' and would help interested visitors to understand the historically inter-connected nature of the peninsula townships.

The Head of the Bay is a frequently used term for the green land area there. Boost this usage by marking the locations of the Flower Tunnel, the Potting Shed and the Applecross Inn (all located in the Applecross Bay area) on the next Scenic Walks leaflet: there are only these three full-time and permanent eateries and they act as hubs too - it would be good for visitors to know exactly where all three of them are.

11. Conclusions and summary recommendations



Nose-to-nose encounter with young red deer, Carnoch woods

Applecross combines both a geographical area and the community which lives there. It is a , remote and unique part of Scotland and has been a sanctuary and home to both Gaelic- and English-speaking peoples over the centuries. The story of its community and of its wild and remote land and sea need to be told in such a way that the media used in the telling does not intrude on or detract from its subject.

Not every view requires interpretation, not every path junction merits a signpost. Interpretation needs to be implemented in an holistic way, helping the community pull together different strands of its story in a way which will benefit both visitors and local people

Many visitors access the Internet before they come (see survey response summary in Appendix D). Some interpretation will be provided online with existing Applecross websites such as those of the Historical and Archaeological Societies, the Trust and ALPS the appropriate fora to download themed itineraries, information sheets and audio tracks. However, greater coherence is required between existing websites with improved waymarking between them.

At present, Google searching on Applecross leads to a confusion of sites and a first time visitor will find it hard to navigate to find the information they are requiring. An interpretive website for Applecross (which may well evolve out of the existing ALPS website when the ALPS project reaches the end of its time) has nothing to sell and is not specific to one body - and may therefore complement all established Applecross websites, enhancing them without competing with them.

Implementation may also mean the removal of some existing interpretive/orientation structures on site without direct replacement.

Interpretive media will fall into three main categories:

- practical on-site features such as interpretive benches and waymarking which are made by local people from appropriate local and natural materials such as local timber and stone, with limited use of the written word, but using Gaelic where appropriate
- portable printed media, specifically an expanded and updated and possibly re-titled version popular 'Scenic Walks' leaflet (suggested title: 'Walks and places to explore in the Applecross Peninsula') and complementary walking/cycling/driving itineraries, which will include headers translated into Gaelic

- online information made available through existing websites, with improved linkages between them, which clearly waymarks all existing Applecross sites of interest and facilities in a more holistic way.

Implementation will fall into two main phases: Phase 1, 2011 for 2012 and Phase 2, 2012 for 2013.

12. Appendices



Coast road point of sale!

See separate documents

Plan written by Verity Walker (with much input from the people of Applecross) during 2011

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