

# Community agency and Joint Ventures

Highlands Rewilding follows a **nine-goal roadmap** for the relationship between a nature-recovery company and the communities where its teams work. Tayvallich is a case study of the exemplar of the model. We aim to replicate the roadmap nationally and globally as we scale, improving it as we go. The nine goals are not necessarily sequential: most can be worked on in parallel.

**To date** (May 2023 – April 2024)

**1. Identify issues of most concern to the community** – In Tayvallich, consultation showed very early that the top items are affordable housing and jobs, which – in combination – help to keep young people in the community and encourage re-population.

**2. Build a community-based operational team** – In Tayvallich, five members of the Highlands Rewilding team live in the community, actually as tenants on the land we own or lease. (Three are new jobs.)

**3. Build support for a core quid pro quo.** Highlands Rewilding furthers the community prosperity emphasis in its purpose by promoting and enabling community development and joint-venture work while also pursuing the company's goal of ethical profitability.

**4. Codify the company / community relationship.** In Tayvallich this entails a Memorandum of Understanding between the company and Tayvallich Initiative, one of the community organisations, specifying 24 action items and including an objective with community benefit provision.

 Example of current practice  
**Tayvallich Initiative**

## Collaboration for community ownership and agency

When Tayvallich Estate was placed on the market in 2022, the local community came together in the form of Tayvallich Initiative to consider the implications of the Estate sale and to reflect on future aspirations in the community, including whether they could purchase any of the advertised lots to support the ongoing viability and sustainability of the area. The outgoing estate owners agreed to gift some land and, in parallel with support from Highlands and Islands Enterprise and an application to the Scottish Land Fund, the community submitted bids for lots near the village where the community could develop some much-needed affordable housing, workspaces, and growing space.

A number of bids were received, and the owners decided to sell the estate as a whole to **Highlands Rewilding**, who wished to purchase the land for nature recovery and rewilding along with community prosperity and re-population. Highlands Rewilding and Tayvallich Initiative met to discuss their aspirations for the area and the estate and realised there was alignment in what they wanted. Highlands Rewilding agreed to sell land to Tayvallich Initiative to support them to pursue their plans to strengthen the community. Highlands Rewilding and Tayvallich Initiative negotiated and have now signed a landmark management **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)**. This **Memorandum** forms an embryonic framework, which aims to deliver a unique triple-win partnership for community prosperity, nature restoration and the delivery of ethical profit to shareholders.

 [find out more](#)



Highlands Rewilding's Tayvallich Model was recently cited by the Scottish Land Commission and used as a case study for 'Collaboration for community ownership and agency', in their guidance on [Delivering Community Benefits from Land](#).

**To come** (May 2024 and onward)

**5. Create agency in the community.** In Tayvallich, this is led by a Local Management Board with six community representatives and three company representatives (with alternates). This group develops operational plans for the estate in pursuit of the quid pro quo. The main Highlands Rewilding board sets company-wide strategy (and takes legal responsibility for it), but the strategy and operational tactics are shaped by the considerable soft power that the Local Management Board holds.

**6. Sell land to the community.** Agree with the community that uses of the land will be congruent with national policies on nature recovery and re-peopling, including applying a Rural Housing Burden (RHB) on any plots or properties sold and mirroring a locally developed allocations policy. Sell land at the cost the company incurred to buy it in the first place. In Tayvallich we have already done this.

**7. Seek to protect this modus operandi in perpetuity.** In Tayvallich, this has been achieved for circa half the estate via a sale-and-lease-back to a local charity, the Barrahormid Trust. This entity exists only to protect nature recovery and community prosperity in perpetuity, the basis for its charitable status. Its lease with Highlands Rewilding allows the company to manage land and monetise natural capital long term just as it would if it had owned the land (with a win-win share of net profits between the company and the charity). Highlands Rewilding will seek other such arrangements, in Tayvallich and at other estates it currently owns. As it scales it will aim to proliferate this very-long-term protection for its purpose to the maximum extent possible.

**8. Bring funding to the community.** This the company will seek to do, for each community where it operates, via a not-for-profit Community Impact Investment Fund (CIIF). This is a pot of capital used to start-fund joint ventures with organisations and individuals in the community. In Tayvallich, we have identified more than 30 enterprise themes that could qualify. Initially Highlands Rewilding will seek philanthropic funding for the CIIFs. Once the company is profitable it will donate a small share of net profits to the CIIFs, aiming increasingly to displace philanthropic funding. (Note that Solarcentury, a company founded by a core of the Highlands Rewilding team, donated an element of net profits to communities in Africa, for solar lighting entrepreneurs, via a charity it set up, SolarAid).

**9. Show leadership in the rural housing crisis.** Unless the rural housing crisis can be fixed - in Tayvallich and in other rural settings across Scotland - a viable future is not possible for either communities or the company. The communities will wither by aging. The company will have no way to house a team on the ground large enough to execute nature-recovery land management at landscape scale. Plans will be progressed to enable development of plots for possible housing/smallholding developments.

