



## **North Sutherland Community Forestry Trust**

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### **Rationale for partial acquisition**

The Rosal Feasibility Study & Business Plan assesses the viability of acquiring the Rosal clearance village site and surrounding forest area from Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS).

It demonstrates that addressing the significant forest management liabilities presented by the site would undermine community aspirations for the site, and presents two options for mitigation: acquiring the full site but with FLS retaining responsibility for successfully restocking the felled areas; and a partial acquisition focussing on the clearance village site.

NSCT's clear preference is for the latter option.

There are some longer term advantages to acquiring the full site but in the short term, as the Business Plan shows, there is little difference in the level of community activity or benefit between the two options.

Additionally, it is unclear whether a satisfactory agreement could be reached with FLS over management of the felled areas. Even if this is achievable, ownership of the full forest site would likely be more of a distraction during the first period of community ownership, when our focus will be on developing and implementing plans for the clearance village.

We note that, if FLS retain the remainder of the site, NSCT may seek to acquire this as a "phase 2" project in the future.

### **Statement on budgets and long term financial position**

As detailed in the Rosal Feasibility Study & Business Plan, preserving and enhancing the historic environment is the key driver of community aspirations for ownership of Rosal. Following acquisition NSCT will work closely with Strathnaver Museum, Historic Environment Scotland, Highland Council and other stakeholders to develop a comprehensive project plan to research, preserve and enhance the clearance village and other historic sites.

It is anticipated that the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) will be the key funder for this project, through the Grants for Heritage programme. The Business Plan identifies the main elements of this project: research, access, interpretation, education, building reconstruction, etc., but does

not attempt to cost these, as their scale (and appropriateness) will be considered and agreed during the project development phase. The actual size of this project could vary across a considerable range, however, as it is expected that any approved project will be fully funded, the absolute cost does not have any material impact on the overall balance of income and expenditure.

We also anticipate that the NLHF project will assess and determine the long term level of activity at Rosal and the scale and likely sources of revenue required to support these activities and maintain the visitor infrastructure on-site. We have not therefore produced a longer term (20 or 25 year) cashflow as the information required for this is not yet available.

We do not expect that future land management and maintenance costs will be high and are confident that sufficient resources can be secured, whether from income generated on site, grant aid or NSCFT's earnings elsewhere, to ensure the long term sustainability of the site. If NSCFT is able to acquire the remainder of the forest at some later date this will bring additional options for revenue generation.