



Friends of
the Earth
Scotland

Green living

in the highlands



Friends of
the Earth
Inverness
and Ross

Ideas for **living** and **campaigning**
for a **sustainable** way of life



A guide for **community**
and **campaign groups**



Scotland's champion
for our environment.

Scotland has a **world-leading Climate Change Act** and a government that has pledged to **cut** Scotland's **carbon emissions** by 42 per cent by 2020. By making this sort of change as a country, we can help to ensure a more positive, **sustainable future** for the next generation, as well as for people across the world who are already struggling with changes in weather caused by Climate Change.

This guide is designed to help you and your friends or community group to take action to live a sustainable lifestyle, as well as encouraging others to do the same.

The Highlands and Islands have higher carbon emissions per head of population than the rest of Scotland, so the role people here can play in reducing emissions cannot be underestimated.

There is a vibrant, friendly and active scene of community and environment groups in the Highlands and there is always a need for another pair of hands. So please get involved!

Friends of the Earth Scotland is part of the world's largest grassroots environmental network. Our colleagues across the world, often in the poorest countries, are already experiencing adverse effects from climate change. Knowing that the cause of climate change is rich countries' historical and current green house gas emissions, we think seeking to live a low carbon lifestyle is the only fair response. Sometimes changes we suggest make financial sense; sometimes they might be inconvenient. Either way, we think they are an important step towards environmental justice.

Please contact us with your own thoughts and ideas (info@foe-scotland.org.uk or call us on 0131 243 2700) on anything in this guide. We would love to hear from you.

Food

The cost of food is more than the price that appears at the bottom of a supermarket receipt. The food supply chain has become so long, and most consumers so removed from the source of food, that we tend to not think about where our dinner comes from.

Looking beyond the label, we find a story that calls into question the freshness, quality and fairness of our food. Freight and tanker ships loaded with sealed containers bring products that have been packaged and re-packaged between continents.



Supermarkets are part of daily life, but what are their impacts?

Our food industry often entails mass scale, intensive farming of animals for meat which compromises their welfare. Recent reports have found that the production of soya beans for animal feed in European factory farms is causing destruction of rainforests in South America.

(See www.foe.co.uk/what_we_do/fix_food_chain_20576.html.)

There is a better way of feeding ourselves, which can result in fresher, healthier food; a more vibrant local economy, and, most importantly, an end to practices that are hard on people and eco-systems. Here are a few ideas.

Grow your own food

Growing your own food is rewarding, healthy and it means you know exactly where it's come from. You don't need a lot of space so you might be able to do it at home. You can grow herbs, tomatoes, peppers and chillies in pots or grow bags as well as strawberries in barrels.

Planning a vegetable plot begins with choosing a good site and drawing a plan of what you'll plant where. Your site needs to have good drainage, receive sunlight during spring and summer, be near a water supply and preferably be flat. It should also have good air circulation without being too windy and exposed.

One single plot works fine, but you can also make raised beds from large boxes, railway sleepers, wooden crates or bricks. Fill these with soil and compost. You will need to dig over your plot and remove weeds. Next, level the patch and mark out the beds. Potatoes are a good first year growing food, as are courgettes and runner beans. See the links at the end of this section for more information on growing.

Keep chickens

Chickens need to be looked after all year round but will provide you with a ready supply of fresh, free-range eggs. You'd need to have a bit of space, and to buy or build a chicken coop. This could be done with neighbours or friends to share the responsibility.



Chickens can be kept in a simple A-frame and moved around the lawn.

Get an allotment

If you don't have your own space to grow food, you could apply for an allotment. There is likely to be somewhere nearby where you could grow your own food.

Start an allotment association in your area

If there is a big waiting list for allotments in your area, you may wish to get together with others and form an allotment association. The Council should lease promising council-owned land to an allotment association, and can offer guidelines of how to set one up.

Join your community garden

A community garden is a great way to work with others in your street or neighbourhood to grow food. See the links at the end of the section for details of existing gardens in your area.

Start a community garden

If there is unused land in your area, you may be able to start a temporary or permanent community garden. The Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens can provide a starter pack.

Buy local food

If growing food isn't your thing, you can support farmers and food growers in your area by buying locally. This reduces the need for food to be transported, and gives you fresher food too.



*Residents of Wardieburn in Edinburgh on a community gardening day.
Photo: Tom Kirby*

Helpful links

Find out more about buying local food

www.localfoodadvisor.com/

www.foe-invernessandross.org.uk/local-food-directory

<http://tinyurl.com/cairngormsfood>

Growing your own food

Transition Black Isle – growing veg. www.transitionblackisle.org

Transition Town Forres – gardening skills workshops www.ttforres.org

Friends of the Earth Scotland www.foe-scotland.org.uk/growyourownfood

The Poultry Pages – keeping hens www.poultry.allotment.org.uk/ -Allotments:
Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society www.sags.org.uk find contact details of
the Allotment Officer for your Council and view active allotment sites.

'Allotment Growing' ideas and advice www.allotment.org.uk

The Highland Council's allotment policy <http://www.highland.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/028E39AC-7FCB-44FD-9F71-52506021DA37/0/Item5AllotmentsPolicy.pdf>

Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens: www.farmgarden.org.uk.

'Local seed sharing project: <http://thehighlandpeoplesfoodseedbank.webs.com/>

Community gardens near you

Culbokie and Muir of Ord on the Black Isle www.transitionblackisle.org

Forres: contact Transition Town Forres TTForres@Gmail.com

Shieling Project at Good for Ewe www.goodforewe.org/theshieling.asp

Inverness: The REAL Project. Inverness High School - Montague Row, Inverness, IV3 5DZ;

Lochaber: Lochaber Rural Education Centre: An Clachan, Lochaber Rural Complex, Aonach Mor Road, Fort William, PH33 6SW, www.lret.org

Lochaber: Sunny Lochaber United Gardeners: Cow Hill, The Plantation, Fort William, Highlands, PH33 2RA, www.slugallotments.co.uk

Golspie: www.grean.co.uk/index.php/community_garden

You can also check with the Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society www.sags.org.uk for other gardens near you.

Make your home more energy efficient

Making your home more energy efficient is a great way to reduce your energy use, and bills. By insulating as many parts of your house as possible, you ensure that it stays warmer for longer, reducing costs and the amount of energy required.

Draught-proof all doors, windows, loft hatches, pipes leading outside, letterboxes, and chimney openings. A DIY store will provide draught-proofing materials for windows; for the letterbox try a letterbox flap or brush. An inflatable chimney balloon reduces loss of heat up the chimney when the fire isn't being used.

Loft Insulation. Cover the loft floor with either quilted mineral wool, blown mineral wool or blown cellulose. Mineral wool and brown cellulose should be installed by a professional. Quilts are sold in flexible blankets of different thicknesses and can be installed without a professional - remember to keep ventilation access and wires uncovered. The recommended depth for loft insulation is 270 mm for glass wool, 250 mm for rock wool or 220 mm for cellulose. The Scottish Government is offering discounted and in some cases free, insulation for lofts. Contact the Energy Saving Trust for more advice on this.



Insulated copper pipes

Replace your old boiler with an A-rated energy efficiency boiler, and the Energy Saving Trust estimates that you could save as much as £300 a year. The **Boiler Scrappage Scheme** from the Scottish Government means you can claim back £400 when you upgrade an inefficient boiler to an energy-efficient model. Apply for a voucher first at Energy Saving Trust's website.

Insulate your hot water tank and keep water hotter for longer. Effective insulation should be at least 8cm (3 inches) thick. Fitting a British Standard jacket (cost around £15) around your water tank will cut heat loss by over 75 per cent. If the tank has a thermostat, make sure it is set between 60°C and 65°C (140°F and 149°F).

Insulate hot water pipes with foam tubing, especially if you've just fitted loft insulation, as your loft will get colder. It will cost around £10, which will be recouped after a year. Check the diameter of your pipes before visiting the DIY shop.

Install a wood burning stove or boiler. To be sustainable, wood for your stove needs to be sourced from a local and sustainable supply. Highland Birchwoods is a charity working in sustainable forestry and can offer advice on wood fuel supply sources and wood burning stoves www.highlandbirchwoods.co.uk

Boiler systems are suitable for pellets, logs or chips, so you could heat your home from renewable technology. **The Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI)** is a UK government scheme offering financial incentives to households, businesses and communities installing renewable heating technology.

Helpful links

The Energy Saving Trust provides individuals with independent and free advice on everything mentioned above. Contact them at www.energysavingtrust.org.uk or 0800 512 012

See www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_62386.html for a check-list of energy-saving advice for the home.

Go to www.foe-invernessandross.org.uk/keep-the-heat-in-campaign for helpful advice on saving energy at home and work

Micro-power: Power to the People

Micro generation, or micro-power, is the production of energy for individual homes or communities. The Highlands is particularly well suited to lead the way in micro-generation because many areas are unable to be supplied by mains gas. This means they are currently reliant on expensive and environmentally damaging oil, Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) or electrical heating.

Most of the electricity and the majority of the heat used by households in Scotland is provided by large power stations, which waste energy and emit harmful greenhouse gases.

In contrast, micro power technologies emit no carbon dioxide, and the carbon dioxide used in their manufacture is often made up for in a few months.

What are the benefits?

- **Security of supply:** Micro-generation will give individuals and communities energy security and the ability to insulate themselves against the worst of the increases in global fuel prices.
- **Employment:** Micro-generation could help to provide jobs for local people.
- **Planet:** It's better for the environment as many technologies produce zero carbon emissions.

Feed-in Tariff. If you install low carbon or renewable electricity generating technology you will be eligible to benefit from the Government's "Feed-in Tariff" scheme. This means:

- You receive a monetary value for each unit of electricity produced regardless of whether you use it.
- Any electricity that is "exported" to the grid will be paid an export tariff.

Micro power is more realistic than you might think...

We installed 15 solar panels on our roof in November 2010. It cost £13000, and we predict the system will pay for itself in 8.7 years. This is because we are eligible for 'feed in tariffs' at 41p per kWh we generate, and an extra 3.1p for every kWh we export, for 25 years. We are currently producing more electricity per month than predicted.

Feed in Tariff rates for domestic solar have recently been cut to 21p per kWh, but prices of panels have fallen and they have become more efficient since we installed them. This means that pay back times of around 10 years are realistic. Considering that the Feed in Tariffs go on being paid for 25 years, it's a good investment. Although there is less sunlight this far north these solar panels are most efficient at 20 degrees centigrade, so the cooler climate makes up for this to some extent. New hybrid 'PVT' panels are now coming onto the market that take the heat away and use it, making the panels more efficient in the process. They are eligible for both Feed in Tariffs and Renewable Heat Incentive payments.

-Anne Thomas,
<http://renewables.drumsmittal.org.uk/>



Helpful links for installing micro power in your home

For information on Feed in Tariffs we suggest: www.electricity-guide.org.uk/home-power-generation.html

Visit the Micro-generation Certification Scheme website at www.microgenerationcertification.org/ to find an accredited supplier in your area.

Talk to Community Energy Scotland about a community micro generation project in your area. www.communityenergyscotland.org.uk/

Advice from the Energy Saving Trust www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/Generate-your-own-energy

Solar power www.solarguide.co.uk

Friends of the Earth Scotland would like to see:

- Easier, better grant funding
- Fair prices
- Ambitious targets.

Transport

Due to the rural nature of many of the communities in the Highlands of Scotland emissions from transport are above the average for Scotland and make up about a quarter of our total greenhouse gas emissions. This means reducing the environmental impact of your travel is one of the easiest ways to reduce your carbon footprint and save money.

Reduce your journeys

The simplest and easiest way to reduce your carbon footprint is to reduce the number of journeys you make.

Instead of travelling to meetings, use video and conference calling. Skype and Powowow both offer free services. If your travel is essential try to coordinate it with another event, meeting or errand.

Car Share Schemes

Sharing your journeys with a friends, neighbours or colleagues is a great way to reduce fuel costs, reduce your carbon footprint and make driving more fun. Go to www.ifyoucarshare.com to make contact with people you could car share with in the area.

Eco-Driving

Changing up a gear when your rev's get to 2000rpm and ensure your tires are correctly inflated to reduce your fuel consumption. The Transport Advice Specialist for Highlands and Islands is Gregor Yule based in Inverness. Gregor can give advice on eco driving and lower emission vehicles. gregor.yule@hi.energysavingscotland.org.uk.

Visit <http://www.ecodrive.org/> for more information.

Public Transport

To plan your journey, or to check the feasibility of a public transport journey in your area visit www.travelinescotland.com

Unfortunately many areas in the Highlands have insufficient public transport services. If your community is one of them you could contact Sustrans at www.sustrans.org.uk/ to get help for a community transport scheme. The Community Transport Association may also be able to assist you with training and support www.ctauk.org/.

You could also get together with others and campaign for better public transport provision in the area. This is the sort of issue Friends of the Earth Scotland groups often work on, so it's worth getting in contact if you'd like to see a change in this area.

Active travel



Photo: Crista Richert

Most car or bus journeys are under two miles. Cycling or walking these journeys helps reduce pollution, and keeps you fit! Here are a few tips to help you get on your bike:

Choose the style of bike that is right for you at www.cyclingscotland.org. Once you have chosen a bike you might want try www.gumtree.com/highland or www.freecycle.org/ for cheap and free second

hand bicycles. New Start Highland, a highland based charity, repair and sell donated bikes for reasonable rates. Visit www.newstarhighland.org/ for more information.

Plan your route. Visit www.sustrans.org.uk for routes in your area.

Spread the word. Bicycle clubs or community bicycle schemes can make it easier for less confident cyclists to get going. Cycling Scotland has a range of services available to help communities get on the saddle. More information is available at www.cyclingscotland.org. Talk to your employer about starting a cycle to work scheme. This can help with costs. www.cyclingscotland.org/

Campaign for better transport

Lobby your councillor, MP or MSP for greater provision of public transport, and more support for cyclists and walkers in the Highlands

Join us

Friends of the Earth Scotland believe more should be done to promote green transport within the Highlands and Scotland as a whole. Join us and campaign to make it happen (www.foe-scotland.org.uk/join).

Waste prevention

Every year in the Highlands thousands of tonnes of waste is sent to landfill or burned in incinerators. Not only is this a waste of valuable resources; landfill and incineration contribute to greenhouse gas emissions and reduce local air quality. We can prevent a lot of resources becoming waste by changing the way we live.



Much of what we throw away ends up in landfill sites

Refuse

To really reduce waste, we need to start at the beginning. Refuse to buy things that you don't need. It can be refreshing to simplify your life. This reduces the need for the energy it takes to recycle things.

Reduce

When buying something you need, try to choose products with minimal packaging. Try to buy fruits and vegetables loose; and refuse plastic carrier bags by taking your own re-usable bags or asking for cardboard boxes. Stop unwanted junk mail by visiting www.mpsonline.org.uk

Reuse

Buy products that will last and can be repaired, and try to avoid 'disposable' products. Lots of everyday items can be reused around the house or garden. Using rechargeable batteries and washable nappies, instead of single-use items, helps to minimise waste too.

You can buy or donate books, clothes, electrical items, furniture, toys and clothes at charity shops. This helps us all to reuse items instead of creating demand for new products. Also try Gumtree.com to buy second hand, and Freecycle online for free second-hand goods.

Recycle

Recycling your waste helps to reduce the amount of resources going to landfill.

The Highland Council will collect items for recycling alongside your household waste. Services vary from region to region. The Highland

Council website will tell you what you can recycle in your area. There are a number of staffed recycling centres across the Highlands where you can take materials which are not collected with your household waste, such as batteries and electrical appliances.



Biodegradable waste such as food and garden waste can be composted. This provides excellent nutrients for your garden. Before you compost leftover food check out www.lovefoodhatewaste.com/ for some excellent recipes.

Help others to reduce waste

You could volunteer to help with local waste reduction schemes in your area or set one up. Volunteer run groups work throughout the Highlands to raise awareness of waste reduction.

Visit the Highland Environmental Network's website www.highlandenvironment.org.uk to find a local group in your area.

Helpful links

Highland Real Nappy Project www.hmp.org.uk

Newstart Highland will collect furniture and bikes to re-use.
www.newstarthighland.org/

The Greenhouse environmental charity shop in Dingwall
www.thegreenhousedingwall.co.uk/

Freecycle <http://uk.freecycle.org/>

Kerbside collections and recycling centres and points are available at
www.highland.gov.uk/

The Community Resource Network www.crn.org.uk offer advice and resources to local recycling organisations .

Information about community waste reduction can be found at
www.zerowastescotland.org.uk/ and. www.rowan.org.uk/

Friends of the Earth Scotland are campaigning to turn the tide on Scotland's waste mountain. Visit www.foe-scotland.org.uk for ways to help us.

Get together with others to take action

Making adjustments to our own ways of living is a first step in living more prudently. Further change comes about when we work together and take action collectively. Significant change is the result of sustained, collective action and campaigning on the issues discussed in this guide.

Take action within your community

➡ **Join your local Friends of the Earth campaign group.** Now is the time to be part of a bigger movement. By joining a Friends of the Earth Scotland local campaign group you would be part of an international grassroots network, join in campaigns for environmental justice, and be supported in taking up issues of local environmental concern alongside others. There are active local groups in Inverness and Ross and Moray. If those aren't near you, you can get support to start a local group. Visit www.foe-scotland.org.uk/localgroups.

➡ **Join a Transition Initiative in your local area.** Transition groups run projects on food, transport, energy and waste. Visit www.transitionscotland.org to learn more and find out about local initiatives.

➡ **Support the use of horticulture to improve health and well-being with Trellis.** Trellis is a network of therapeutic gardening projects across Scotland. There are many existing projects already up and running in the Highlands, from the Isle of Skye's Rubha Phoil Forest Garden to the Furrow of L'Arche in Inverness. Visit www.trellisScotland.org.uk for more.

➡ **Join Lochaber's Environmental Group.** This Scottish charity has projects on community composting, recycling, reducing waste and has been awarded funding for an initiative on fuel and energy. Visit www.lochaber-environmental-group.org.uk/index.asp for more.

➡ **Join the Green Homes Network.** If you do fit your home with green technology, go to the Energy Saving Trust website: www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/scotland and submit your house as a case study of how green technology can be used.

Start a new project in your community

➡ **Apply for project funding from the Climate Challenge Fund.** The Climate Challenge Fund gives grants to communities across Scotland to take action on climate change. You could take an area explored in this guide and use it as the basis of a project. The Scottish Government has confirmed that the fund will be available each year up to 31st March 2015. To find out about projects and how to apply for funding visit <http://ccf.keepsScotlandBeautiful.org>. In addition, the organisation, Changeworks www.changeworks.org.uk/, can provide support and advice throughout the application stages.

➡ **Apply for project funding from Highland Leader** Highland Leader is aimed at developing economic and community development in the rural areas across the Highlands. Visit www.highlandleader.com for information on how to apply, past projects and contact details.

Share your own experiences

Organise a workshop or tutorial. If you already grow your own vegetables, have installed solar panels, or know the basics of composting, you could help others to do the same at your house, village hall or community centre.

Stay Informed

➡ Sign up to a free Friends of the Earth Scotland monthly newsletter at <http://www.foe-scotland.org.uk/takeaction>.

➡ Visit the Highland Environment Network website www.highlandenvironment.org.uk for information on events and training taking place across the Highlands on environmental issues.

Friends of the Earth Scotland
A Scottish charity SC003442
5 Rose Street, Edinburgh EH2 2PR
0131 243 2700

Get involved.

www.foe-invernessandross.org.uk/

or search 'Friends of the Earth Inverness and Ross' on Facebook

Join us. www.foe-scotland.org.uk/join