



Cairngorms
National Park
Pàirc Nàiseanta a'
Mhonaidh Ruaidh

Dalwhinnie Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030

Compiled Summer 2023

Supported by

Dalwhinnie Community Council

Dalwhinnie Community Development Trust

Dalwhinnie Village Hall

Dalwhinnie Businesses

Facilitated by Voluntary Action in Badenoch and Strathspey



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I. Summary

In Spring 2023, Dalwhinnie Community Council, together with Dalwhinnie Community Development Trust, Dalwhinnie Village Hall and Dalwhinnie businesses (The Apiary, Dalwhinnie Service Station, Balsporran Guest House, Dalwhinnie Hostel), decided that they wished to carry out a review of the community action plan for the village, which had been previously undertaken in 2009. The purpose of revisiting and updating the plan was primarily aimed at giving these key community organisations, along with a range of other groups in the village, plus public and private sector stakeholders, a strong mandate to move forward with tackling current and emerging issues, as well as leading on new community projects, identified as priorities by the residents and businesses of Dalwhinnie during the process in spring 2023.

With support from Voluntary Action in Badenoch & Strathspey, the community-led steering group, comprising representation from the organisations listed above, agreed that they would seek the views of local residents and businesses on a number of key questions. This was achieved via a survey which was personally delivered to every household by volunteers - as a paper copy, which was also accessible online. In addition, the questions contained in the survey were also raised with some targeted groups that were identified as being harder to get accurate/quality information from. This was undertaken by members of the steering group going out with the survey questions to places and events where it was considered that individuals or groups falling into this category might be approached.

The process was entitled **Dalwhinnie Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030**. In previous action planning carried out by the community, the focus was on activity mostly lasting up to a 5-year span. Given the increased need now to also focus on longer-term goals, particularly in relation to the environment and the economy, residents and businesses were asked to consider where they and the community wanted to be by 2030, so generating, more or less, an 8-year set of plans and aspirations.

Examples of **Dalwhinnie's recent successes** with community projects and action planning include:

1. Improvements/Activities at the Village Hall
2. Café in the village
3. Better water quality & supply & screening
4. More trees planted
5. Better (visitor) information via Dalwhinnie.org
6. Winter lights upgraded
7. More dog fouling bins
8. Old café demolished
9. Recycling area cleaned up

To help add to these achievements, residents were encouraged to take part in the community action plan review in 2023. However, this time round people were invited to think not only about what might be achieved together, but that the projects the village was being asked to consider, would be ones that would help Dalwhinnie develop a more sustainable future. This

is set against a backdrop of life post-Covid, the challenge of finding new volunteers plus the changing economic and climate situation we find ourselves in.

The Dalwhinnie community action planning process adhered to the National Standards for Community Engagement to ensure all of the following elements were fully taken into account during the community-led initiative:

Impact, Communication, Methods, Working together, Planning, Support and Inclusion.

See [Section 4. Community Engagement](#) for further details on the 7 Standards.

2. The Community

Dalwhinnie is a small village of around 80 people, situated at the southern end of Badenoch, at an altitude of 351m, near the foot of Ben Alder. It lies in a glen with the Monadhliath Mountains on one side and the Forest of Atholl, the Cairngorms and the Grampians on the other. Its wide, open wilderness provides a healthy environment that residents value highly and also encourages many visitors to return to the area year after year. Dalwhinnie is recognised as one of the coldest villages in the UK, having an average annual temperature of 6.5°C, which makes it ideally suited to winter walking and mountaineering. This special natural environment also allows for a wide variety of other recreational activities such as mountain biking, fishing and white water kayaking which serve to attract the many tourists that pass through the village in the summer months.

Distinguished as having the highest working distillery in Scotland, Dalwhinnie is steeped in a rich history created over many generations. The population of this settlement is small, yet actively committed to community life, maintaining a strong sense of independence partly owing to their 'bracing' geographic location.

Dalwhinnie enjoys close links with the Ben Alder Estate which provides a mainstay of employment for the area and the estate's sustainable approach to managing the surrounding landscape is highly regarded by the local population. Residents are aware that their local amenities are limited and vulnerable and in response to these particular issues, Dalwhinnie would like to see new housing initiatives introduced, which will allow young families to move into and remain in the area long term. Better transport links to other communities both north and south of the village, are seen as additionally necessary to improve Dalwhinnie's chances of remaining a viable 'lived in' community, providing work and leisure opportunities to help it thrive as a location of choice.

New initiatives are continually being taken forward by committed community members, such as the refurbishment and activities at the village hall, better facilities and information for visitors to encourage them to stay longer in the village and ongoing care for the environment, both in and surrounding the community. These are just some of the ways in which the residents themselves feel they can help to support the fragile tourist trade and consequently the ongoing future wellbeing of the village.

Community Organisations

There are a number of community organisations/groups which work for the benefit of the community and are almost entirely run by volunteers. These include:

Dalwhinnie Community Council, Dalwhinnie Community Development Trust and Dalwhinnie Village Hall amongst others.

Community Assets

Village Hall

Village website

Local Businesses

There are numerous local businesses, across many sectors, operating in the village, although there is currently no local business/tourism association to represent the commercial activity in the village.

Dalwhinnie businesses include the whisky distillery, hotel, hostel and self-catering accommodation, garage, food and gift outlets. These, along with a number of tradespeople, farmers, people employed on estates and carrying out other kinds of environmental work, make up the working heart of this community.

3. The Process

The Dalwhinnie community consultation period ran from March to June 2023 and during this time, the way in which the community action planning process was carried out, broadly fell into four stages. These were:

- 1) Gathering Information
- 2) Data Sorting and Collation
- 3) Involving People & Refining Ideas
- 4) Community Action Plan (CAP) document production

Within the four stages of the process, the following questions were asked by the steering group.

Gathering Information

- What do we want to know?
- What questions will we ask?
- What methods will we use?
- How will we do it?

Data Sorting

- What does it involve?
- How will we do it?
- Who will do / assist with this?
- In what form will we present it back to the community?

Involving People & Refining Ideas

- What stakeholder groups do we need to involve?
- How (& where) will we present the information gathered so far?
- How will people in the community help refine the information?
- Who will assist with this?

CAP document production

- What will it include?
- Who will put it together?
- How will it be presented to the community?
- What happens to it next?

In addition, the steering group also considered what timescales and key dates they wanted to aim for and how they would deal with communications & publicity - ensuring that these elements were robust, so the process was as inclusive as it could be.

The fifth and most crucial stage of the whole action planning initiative, involves delivery of the plan by the Dalwhinnie community and other stakeholders. Essentially this deals with questions such as:

- Who will take responsibility for the CAP?
- How will it be driven forward?
- How will it be monitored and evaluated?

There is more detail on how this can be achieved in [Section 7. Next Steps](#).

Gathering Information

There was a lot of discussion about the nature and precise wording of questions in the survey, as the steering group wanted to revisit questions asked in previous community-led action planning, to re-establish what specific things people liked about Dalwhinnie and wanted to keep in the community. They also wished to encourage the community to look to an 8 to 10-year horizon, and consider how it might tackle some of the trickier issues such as care for the environment, supporting younger and older residents, employability and transport. So questions were employed which were broadly framed, to allow responders to bring up a wide range of issues and ideas without being led.

The paper version covered just two sides of A4 and the survey asked 3 questions:

- 1) *What do you like about living in Dalwhinnie?*
- 2) *What changes would you like to see for Dalwhinnie by 2030?*
(Perhaps consider how as individuals, or as a community, we can improve the environment, address the climate emergency, develop our local economy, increase social and leisure opportunities and widen local cultural experiences)
If you could improve just ONE of these things, what would it be?
- 3) *Are there any new projects (large or small) that you would like to see happening in the community? Or any existing projects that need to be sustained?*

The survey also asked:

Would you be willing to get involved in any projects you are interested in? YES / NO
If Yes, please provide contact details.

This last additional question was included to try to encourage more people to come forward to help with projects that were of particular interest to them, in order to counteract the reduction in volunteer numbers, that had come about in recent years and especially following the pandemic.

It was decided that all 50 households would receive a paper copy of the survey through their letterbox and this was carried out by a team of community volunteers, who over a period of a few days, delivered copies out into the community. This method helped to deliver an inclusive process of community engagement, where everyone had the opportunity to respond to the survey if they wished and they were able to do this via hard copy, which could be deposited back into one of the centrally located survey boxes, or online via QR code which enabled the community to access the survey on a range of devices.

Data Sorting

All of the responses came in either online via Survey Monkey, by hard copy into CAP-branded boxes left at locations in the village, or from information collated at events put on for specific groups in the village. Surveys were returned from the community's school pupils and these responses highlighted the ideas and opinions of young people living in the area.

Every comment was recorded and categorised, so that everyone would be able to 'see' their voice in the displayed results. The information was sorted into 3 main themes: Social, Environmental and Economic and the number of times a particular issue or idea was mentioned was noted, so priorities could rise to the top of the lists in each themed category. These lists were then prepared for display (see [Section 6. Action Plan – what the community wants](#) and [Section 9. Appendices](#)), so every member of the community could see what had been said and get involved in the next stage, when ideas were refined and solutions to issues sought.

Involving People & Refining Ideas

The process culminated in ***Dalwhinnie's Big Conversation***, which took place during an evening in June 2023 at the Dalwhinnie Village Hall. At this drop in event, the results were offered back to the community and time given for reflection and discussion around the topics. During the event, all of the residents who attended were asked to consider the top priorities that had been identified from the process under the headings of Dalwhinnie:

- A Socially Connected Community
- A Climate Conscious Community
- An Economically Thriving Community

They were asked to look at those areas of particular interest to them and write on action plan templates aimed at refining ideas by looking at questions such as: *What specific action needs to be taken to achieve this priority* and *Who needs to be involved?*

CAP document production

All of the comments and pieces of information given by the public during the Big Conversation event were collected and incorporated into this report, which now belongs to the Dalwhinnie community and will be used as the basis for ongoing community

development in the village over the next 10 years, with support from the community's organisations and all other relevant stakeholders from the public, private and voluntary sector.

Also a list of all those who came forward offering to volunteer their help with certain projects was compiled and will be held by the team taking the action plan forward (referred to as **Team Dalwhinnie** for the purposes of this report).

4. Community Engagement

The National Standards for Community Engagement are good-practice principles designed to improve and guide the process of community engagement.

They are clear principles that describe the main elements of effective community engagement. They provide detailed performance statements that everyone involved can use to achieve the highest quality results and the greatest impact.

The standards are particularly helpful for communities - their organisations and groups - to help them involve their members or the wider community in shaping the services and changes they need, and to make sure they accurately represent members' or the community's views in the decision-making processes.



5. Survey Responses

Thanks go to the 34 residents and businesses in Dalwhinnie who contributed so meaningfully and thoughtfully to the community survey – this number represents 42% of the community's population and includes responses from school age residents. Also to the people who attended the Big Conversation drop-in event at the village hall.

For a full list of what came out of the survey responses, see [Section 9. Appendices](#) (list of appendices below). These show all comments made by the community in answer to the survey questions, prioritised in order of the number of people who mentioned them.

[Appendix i](#) What do you like about living in Dalwhinnie?

[Appendix ii](#) What changes would you like to see for Dalwhinnie by 2030?

6. Action Plan – what the community wants

Project Themes and Priorities

The CAP sets out the community's vision for the longer term (up to 10 years) with more detailed activity across the 3 specified themes:

- A Socially Connected Community
- A Climate Conscious Community
- An Economically Thriving Community

itemising priority outcomes and actions which are shown in the relevant tables below.

It is important to note that some of the project outcomes will be a “quick win” whereas others will sometimes take significantly more time to plan and execute. To achieve results and outcomes in the short, medium/longer term each high priority project/outcome will have its own activity plan which will be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely (SMART) and determined and agreed in the first part of the CAP implementation.

The 3 themes were taken and put into separate groupings, showing what the priorities are for each theme. Within each priority, projects have been listed that have been drawn from the high priorities that came out of the survey data. Further views and information for each priority were sought from those who attended the drop-in events and suggested actions, together with any additional information are outlined below each section.

DALWHINNIE: A SOCIALLY CONNECTED COMMUNITY

Priority: Sustainable public transport provision to get people out of cars more

- Lobby for more train stops at Dalwhinnie station
- Improve bus services with bus stops in village
- Explore a community link minibus option, working with Laggan so we can connect to Newtonmore and more frequent service
- On demand stop for Megabus/Gold bus services at A9 Dalwhinnie stop

Priority: Address speeding in village

- 30mph speed limit through whole village, or at least from cycle path to distillery
- Interactive Speed camera signs at north and south ends of village, (showing speed of passing vehicles for traffic calming measure)
- Speed limit of 40mph to be extended to rail bridge at north of village from village hall

Priority: Improve village's amenities/facilities

- More community use of the village hall
- ATM facility
- More EV charging points

PRIORITY: SUSTAINABLE PUBLIC TRANSPORT PROVISION

Continue lobbying for better provision of bus & train services for the community

- More train stops
- Investigate bus services in village and with Megabus

Explore a community link minibus option, working with Laggan so we can connect to Newtonmore and more frequent service

- See if Laggan organisations would be willing to try and get a joint project going for both communities' benefit

PRIORITY: ADDRESS SPEEDING IN THE VILLAGE

30mph speed limit through whole village, or at least from cycle path to distillery

Interactive Speed camera signs at north and south ends of village, (showing speed of passing vehicles for traffic calming measure)

Speed limit of 40mph to be extended to rail bridge at north of village from village hall

- Community Council to work with Police, PKC and others to implement as many of these traffic calming measures as possible (including 'police' mannequin)

PRIORITY: IMPROVE VILLAGE'S FACILITIES / AMENITIES

More community use of the village hall

- Offer taster sessions of different activities including talks?
- Increase facilities to enable locals to enjoy more / different activities in the hall
- Provide internet connection

ATM facility

- Explore if this is something one of the local businesses might offer

More EV charging points

- Work with PKC and CNPA to increase coverage in the area

DALWHINNIE: A CLIMATE CONSCIOUS COMMUNITY

Priority: Reduce energy consumption as a village / for households

- Local green waste recycling plot for locals' garden waste
- Advice on household fuel alternatives
- Turn off street lights to create a dark skies destination

Priority: Improve village's visual appearance

- Keep village tidy and litter free (Main St, behind RSG yard, behind garage)
- More planting in village: trees, shrubs and flowers
- Replace damaged young trees along main road
- More litter bins & dog waste bins, emptied more frequently

Priority: Active Travel

- Find solution to reinstall ancient drovers' route across Ben Alder Crossing
- Cycle track link to Laggan
- Path out of Dalwhinnie leading to the Pitlochry cycle track / bus stop on A9
- Defined walking path around village for locals & visitors to appreciate village

PRIORITY: REDUCE ENERGY CONSUMPTION AS A VILLAGE / FOR HOUSEHOLDS

Local green waste recycling plot for locals' garden waste

- Investigate viability of this initiative – contact similar projects in Highland/CNP/Scotland to see what's involved in potentially setting up

Advice on household fuel alternatives

- Investigate advice/support available – set up an information event at hall for local residents and businesses to drop in. Work with Laggan CC who want to do similar.

Turn off street lights to create a dark skies destination

- Talk with other communities who have gone this route eg Tomintoul
- Get advice from CNPA and PKC on possibilities

PRIORITY: IMPROVE VILLAGE'S VISUAL APPEARANCE

Keep village tidy and litter free (Main St, behind RSG yard, behind garage)

- Reduce number of signs around village where possible
- Tidy up garage, Green Shed site, road verges

More planting in village: trees, shrubs and flowers

- Plant wild flowers and bulbs
- Replace damaged young trees along main road

More litter bins & dog waste bins, emptied more frequently

PRIORITY: ACTIVE TRAVEL

Find solution to reinstall ancient drovers' route across Ben Alder Crossing

Cycle track link to Laggan

- Talk with CNPA and Laggan Active Travel group, to explore possibilities

Path out of Dalwhinnie leading to the Pitlochry cycle track / bus stop on A9

- Create a cycle lane between garage and existing Route 7

Defined walking path around village for locals & visitors to appreciate village

- Explore with landowners and get support for path routes from them and community

DALWHINNIE: AN ECONOMICALLY THRIVING COMMUNITY

Priority: Increase opportunities to attract tourism and business to the local area

- Set up a local business forum to support businesses in the village
- Find a site for designated campervan/motorhome parking, with relevant support facilities
- New village website

Priority: Improve opportunities for local development

- Address planning issues for the village to help proposed business and residential development in and around A889
- Fibre broadband to be installed throughout village, for improved homeworking and business use

PRIORITY: INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES TO ATTRACT TOURISM & BUSINESS TO LOCAL AREA

Set up a local business forum to support businesses in the village

- Bring local businesses together to see what form of group might work best to benefit all
- Agree on scope of any forum and what its key purposes are eg mobile bank visit, tourism signage on A9, parking facilities in village

Find a site for designated campervan/motorhome parking, with relevant support facilities

- Talk with community and CNPA planning re Local Development Plan about possible sites and facilities

New village website

- Seek support from partners to access funding and be informed on best practice to develop a new website

PRIORITY: IMPROVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

Address planning issues for the village to help proposed business and residential development in and around A889

- Engage with CNPA and THC planners together, to resolve the issues that are contributing to planning being denied for development of housing and business use

Fibre broadband to be installed throughout village, for improved homeworking/business use

- Investigate options and potential funding routes

7. Next Steps: Delivery

Steps to deliver the Dalwhinnie Community Action Plan

The next steps to start working with the action plan and looking at how parts can start to be delivered will be subject to some discussion within Dalwhinnie's community organisations, but broadly involves **collectively**:

- Setting up a *Team Dalwhinnie* (see below) to take the plan forward. Agreeing a chair for a specified period at a time, so will rotate after X months or after X meetings
- Agreeing to adopt the Values and Principles laid out below
- Agreeing what priorities will be taken forward initially
- Managing the project volunteer list that has come out of the process
- Involving all key stakeholders (organisations & individuals) in co-design of project delivery
- Drawing up a more detailed delivery action plan for each prioritised project, identifying aims, actions, milestones, who needs to be involved, key deliverables. (VABS has a template for this.)
- Communicating progress with the community
- Reviewing progress on a regular basis
- Revisiting the action plan as required

Values and Principles

The following values and principles will underpin the way in which this action plan is rolled out and implemented:

- 1) A plan for all - it is the responsibility of the whole community (individuals and groups) to unite and work together for project ambitions to be realised
- 2) Transparency - all ideas should be planned and researched openly with a commitment to co-production where groups contribute to the ideas as they develop

- 3) Partnership - working together with a shared agenda will be at the heart of any activity arising from this plan
- 4) Inclusion - everyone is invited to participate and everyone benefits, regardless of age and ability
- 5) Impact - the success of this plan will be judged on activities which have a positive influence on people and communities
- 6) Involvement - ensuring the community is meaningfully involved in decisions that affect their lives.

Team Dalwhinnie

It is very important to ensure the effective delivery of this action plan, for the whole community to work together to implement it, ie a full village approach not just one or two organisations. This approach has been called *Team Dalwhinnie* in this report, but of course the community will decide on its own name for these purposes.

Team Dalwhinnie will be the forum for agreeing on how the Steps at the start of this section are taken forward, as well as where responsibility will sit in terms of delivering on the Values and Principles outlined above. It will not have a separate legal identity, but simply be a forum called maybe two or three times a year, perhaps by a rotating chair. It should comprise as a minimum, representatives from the organisations who initially steered the action planning process, together with any other community groups who wish to be involved.

Ongoing community engagement

A process for securing community mandates for projects at key milestones is advisable, so that projects can enjoy broad community support, follow best practice in terms of co-design and allow for those who will be most impacted by a project's deliverables to be involved in the activity.

Volunteer lists

A list of people who have come forward to volunteer in general or for specific projects, has been compiled from a question in the survey and also information given by residents at the Big Conversation event. The Dalwhinnie CAP Volunteer list is a vital part of delivering on the action planning process and those on the list need to be kept informed of how things are being progressed and what part they might be able to play in that.

Levels of Support

The surveys have given the key community organisations in Dalwhinnie, a lot of detailed information coming from a wide sector of the community, regarding their thoughts on issues and ideas for projects that they would like to see taken forward on their behalf.

The priorities fall into two main groups and will require to be tackled in a different way:

- projects which, although some are mid to longer term, are possible for the community to take forward themselves, with some minimal support from the relevant key agencies or support organisations.

- large, complex issues around employment, housing, transport, business support and infrastructure, where the community will require a great deal of long term assistance from various public, third and sometimes private sector organisations in order to take these forward and make a notable difference.

Monitoring, Auditing and Evaluation of the Community Action Plan

Monitoring, auditing and evaluation are essential requirements of any Community Action Plan to ensure it is being implemented. **Team Dalwhinnie** will meet regularly to review progress on the plan. Keeping records against each theme and project will be a useful tool to ensure progress is being maintained. These meetings will be open and accessible to all groups and individuals. Evaluation provides an opportunity to reflect and learn from activities, assess the outcomes and effectiveness of a project and think about new ways of doing things.

8. Thanks & Acknowledgements

Thanks for all their involvement and hard work in helping to make the process a success must go to:

- * Dalwhinnie Community Council
- * Dalwhinnie Community Development Trust
- * Dalwhinnie Village Hall
- * Local Businesses, especially The Apiary, Dalwhinnie Service Station, Balsporran Guest House, Dalwhinnie Hostel.
- * All the delivery volunteers who put surveys through every household's door

Voluntary Action in Badenoch and Strathspey (VABS), as an independent community and volunteering development charity, supported the Dalwhinnie community through this community action planning process and facilitated the steering group meetings, but always following the community's lead in how they wished to proceed.

Community Action Planning (CAP) is carried out with all of the Cairngorms National Park communities on a regular basis at the community's request.

Funding to VABS to facilitate the communities' CAP process is provided by the Cairngorms National Park Authority.

9. Appendices

Appendix i

What do you like about living in Dalwhinnie?

- Village with spectacular scenery and views
- Natural environment, wild and yet beautiful, close to lochs and mountains
- Hills and trails right on our doorstep
- Good access to any part of Scotland via A9, train, long distance cycle route
- Safe & peaceful village with strong sense of community, pleasant for all ages
- Fantastic wildlife
- The outdoor life
- Community feel and spirit: friendliness of people, great neighbours, lovely residents and friends
- The local businesses
- Proximity to other parts of the National Park
- Peaceful rural living
- Local GP surgery
- The Apiary café

Appendix ii

What changes would you like to see for Dalwhinnie by 2030?

ECONOMIC

- Set up a local business forum, so there is a route to support businesses in the village.
- Address planning issues for the village to help proposed development in and around A889.
- Place for designated campervan parking
- Faster broadband (fibre)
- New village website

ENVIRONMENTAL

- Local green waste recycling plot for locals' garden waste.
- Find solution for reinstatement of the ancient drovers' route across the Ben Alder Crossing and resolve lack of access for all persons (Network Rail to unlock).
- Walk and cycle paths for all levels:
 - cycle track link to Laggan
 - path coming out of Dalwhinnie leading to the Pitlochry cycle track / bus stop on A9
 - a defined walking path around the village for locals and visitors to appreciate the village.
- Advice on household fuel alternatives.
- Turn off the street lights, so saving energy and creating dark skies.

- Carry out more tree planting in the village to help obscure the industrial units, yard and water works.
- Solar light or form of on-demand lighting at bus stops on A9.
- Negotiate with Ben Alder as a community, to use the ground immediately west of the railway tunnel as a car park for walkers and cyclists.
- Replace the damaged young trees along the main road.
- EV charging points.
- More litter bins & dog waste bins emptied more frequently.

SOCIAL

- Upgrade Dalwhinnie's public transport links to help get people out of their cars more:
 - lobby for more train stops at Dalwhinnie station
 - improve bus services. Explore a community link minibus option, working with Laggan so we can connect to Newtonmore and more frequent service
 - On demand stop for Megabus/Gold bus services at A9 Dalwhinnie stop.
- Re-assess and improve speed limits in village:
 - 30mph speed limit through the whole village, or at least applied from the cycle path to the distillery
 - Interactive Speed camera signs at north and south ends of village, (showing speed of passing vehicles for traffic calming measure)
 - Speed limit of 40mph to be extended to rail bridge at north of village from village hall.
- General clean and tidy up of the village, especially Main Street, behind RSG yard and behind garage. At the minute it's not looking anywhere near its best.
- Fibre broadband to be installed for better service.
- Local shops and more houses, to extend the village!
- Try to find more community use of the village hall.
- New village website.
- ATM facility.
- A squat rack in the gym along with some free weights.