Narratives from the Scottish Living Lab

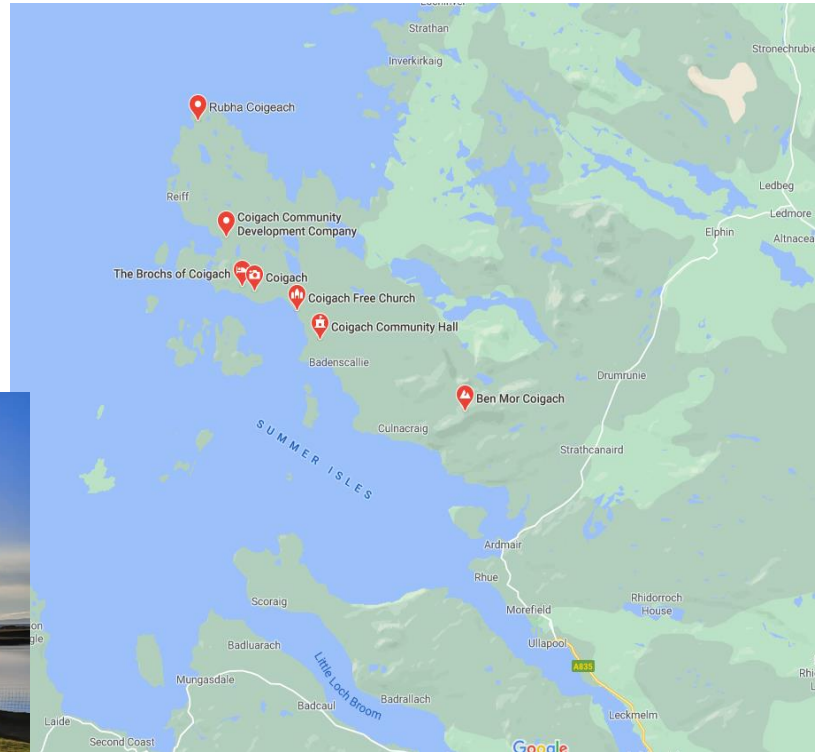**Leanne Townsend and the James Hutton Institute team**

#DESIRA2020

Coigach crofting community

- North West coast, Ross and Cromarty region

- Crofting, fishing and tourism

- Population 228

- Conservation area, supported by CALLP project

Narrative 1 (worse not worst):

"Digital clearances"

- being left behind, ageing, being exploited and not seeing digitalisation as a silver bullet.

- Increasing digital economy means less demand for local
- School populations drop, schools close, young people move away
- Over-romanticised notion of the area, thanks to Instagram etc.
- Absentee landlords, land going to ruin/increase in pollution
- The crofting way of life dies out
- Lack of diversity, loss of the heart of the community
- Fears around privacy
- Rise in extreme weather events
- Rise in pandemics
- Loss of resilience of the local community

Narrative 2 (better not best):

"Gross domestic happiness"

- **more diverse, vibrant, empowered and thriving community enabled through digitalisation.**

- Large corporations reject profits as marker of success, in favour of more social measures
- Improving mental health and wellbeing
- Funds going back into rural communities
- Rising employee satisfaction levels
- Flexible working
- Increased resilience of community to respond to future shocks (e.g. Covid, Brexit)
- Idea for a 'central hub' for info, services, and produce – all in one place connecting producers and community members