DIGITALISATION IMPACTS FOR A CROFTING COMMUNITY IN SCOTLAND

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The Scottish Living Lab works with a crofting community on the West Coast of Scotland.

The focal question is: **How can digital technologies promote opportunities for crofting communities in Wester Ross?**

The Living Lab is situated in a remote rural region of Scotland. Crofting is a form of small-scale agriculture typical in Scottish Highland and Island communities. Crofters are pluri-active – they have multiple economic roles, because crofting itself is not a viable means of making a living for a household. The **needs assessment** considered diverse community needs, not only those relating to crofting. The needs identified were: fast broadband for all and access to digital tools to empower local community actions and economic activities. Participants highlighted a need for support to enable more inclusive digital participation.

Living Lab
Scottish Crofting Community
Key Digital Technologies
Digital connectivity, digital platforms
Keywords
Digitalisation; rural; crofting; community
More info: https://www.coigach-assynt.org/, https://desira2020.eu/rural-scotland-united-kingdom/

Social entities of the Living Lab include crofters and members of the wider community, as well as structures including community groups and a local development trust. **Cyber** entities include smartphones, laptops, PCs and other everyday digital devices. **Physical** entities relate to remoteness; environmental aspects (mountains, local wildlife); crofting aspects such as livestock; and human-made elements such as sparse local housing, roads and other infrastructures.

Digitalisation impacts relate mostly to using "low-tech" tools including digital platforms that allow social connectivity. The community are at an early stage of "digital readiness". The installation of reliable broadband arrived just before Covid-19 struck. This motivated the community to embrace digital tools for connecting at a relatively fast pace. The ability to access digital tools and services has been transformational for some, enabling community networking and action, empowering local businesses, and giving residents access to e-health services. The benefits of this rapid digital transition have not reached all members – the older members of the community are most likely to be marginalised from these services and opportunities.