

# STRENGTHENING THE HIGHLANDS

*The Programme of The Highland Council - 2011-2012*

# A' NEARTACHADH NA GÀIDHEALTACHD

*Prògram Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd - 2011-2012*

*Revised May 2011*

*The Aims of*  
**The Administration of The Highland Council**  
*Amasan*  
Rianachd Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd

**The aims of the Administration of The Highland Council are to:**

- λ Make the Highlands one of Europe's leading regions;
- λ Create sustainable communities with more balanced population growth and economic development across the Highlands; and
- λ Build a fairer and healthier Highlands.

**The Administration will achieve this through five main areas of action:**

- λ What we will do for children and families.
- λ What we will do for communities and older people.
- λ What we will do for the economy.
- λ What we will do for our environment.
- λ What we will do to make The Highland Council more effective and efficient.

# 1. What we will do for Children and Families

## 1. Na nì sinn airson Clann is Teaghlaichean

### **We will:**

1. Work with the Scottish Government to develop an ambitious 10-year capital programme to provide modern schools for Highland's children and we will ensure the completion, on time, of the current 5-year programme of three new and five refurbished schools.
2. We will continue to improve and better integrate services that enable us to 'get it right' for Highland's Children, including into employment.
3. We will be good corporate parents of Highland's 'looked after' children and, by working with our partners, help them to reach their full potential as they move into adulthood, including into employment.
4. Provide better support for foster carers, including kinship carers, by investing an additional £420,000 over two years from 2009-10. – **completed 2009/10**
5. We will implement the Scottish Government's Early Years Framework, and continue support for wraparound childcare across Highland.
6. Continue to raise levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy for pupils in pre-school, primary and secondary provision and maintain high levels of achievement in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework and achieve the outcomes in a Curriculum for Excellence.
7. Improve the quality of learning, teaching and leadership capacity in our schools and communities.
8. We will increase the number of young people leaving school moving into education, training or employment (including activity agreements) to 90% by end March 2012 and we will achieve 450 Activity Agreements by March 2014.
9. Place all schools at the centre of our communities and work to secure their long term future by developing community schools with a wide range of activities and services extending beyond the traditional school day.
10. Continue to develop Gaelic Medium Education in pre-school and primary schools as well as expanding Gaelic Medium Education in the secondary sector and increase the number of Gaelic learners in our schools.

11. Continue to provide opportunities to enjoy the arts, sport and cultural and enhance and promote the events, festivals and cultural programme of the Highlands.
12. Give a high priority to Highland's children being healthy and active and implement the Highland Play Strategy.
13. Support civic engagement of Highland's young people through pupil councils, the post of youth convener, developing Highland Youth Voice and representation in the Scottish Youth Parliament. We will work with community councils to lower the voting and candidate age to 16 years for community council elections.
14. We will ensure a youth worker is active in every Associated School Group area.
15. We will roll out a single smart card to all young people by 2013, giving access to leisure, libraries, arts and culture activities, youth information and school meals.
16. We will achieve Eco School status or better for all Highland Schools by 2012.
17. Focus on safe school transport, encouraging more healthy and environmental options such as "walk to school" pathways, safety support and safe cycle tracks.
18. Work with the Scottish Government and partners to reduce the numbers of fatal and serious road casualties and use 20 mph speed limits to improve road safety for more vulnerable road users, particularly children and older people.

**We will also represent the interests of the Highlands by working with partners, including the Scottish and UK Governments to promote services for children and families.**

**We will:**

19. We will work with the Bòrd na Gàidhlig and Higher Education institutions to address the issue of supply of Gaelic medium teachers and continue to seek funding for 2 new Gaelic Medium Primary Schools.
20. Work with the Scottish and UK Governments to maintain the principle of providing accessible, affordable childcare to all. – **integrated into 1.5**

## 2. *What we will do for Communities and Older People*

### 2. *Na nì sinn airson Sgìrean is Daoine Nas Sine*

#### **We will:**

1. Ensure sustainable, quality social care services for older people in the five communities involved in the care homes project.
2. Work with partners and all levels of Government to alleviate poverty by:
  - λ increasing benefit uptake;
  - λ advising more people how to maximise their income through advice on welfare rights and benefits;
  - λ encouraging use of free or concessionary priced services; and
  - λ providing specialist money advice.
3. Commit a further £100,000 to promote benefit uptake across the Highlands from 2009-10 – **completed 2009/10**
4. We will work alongside NHS Highland to reduce the length of time that people are delayed in hospital, and to shift the balance of care to community services including better integrated services.
5. Secure an increase of 600 houses suitable for older people and people with disabilities.
6. We will increase the support to community based organisations that provide social, learning and health promoting activities for older people.
7. We will provide services to adults who need support that maximises their independence, help promote and retain their dignity, and enable them to contribute to decisions about their care.
8. We will work with the Scottish Govt and our partners, especially NHS Highland, to meet the health and care needs of our population and reduce inequalities in health. This will include reducing alcohol and drug misuse, suicide prevention, smoking cessation, reducing obesity and tackling poverty with particular emphasis on changing attitudes and behaviours towards alcohol and supporting those in need with better prevention and treatment services.
- 8b. We will Ensure that adults who may be at risk of harm are better supported and protected.

9. We will improve Council houses by investing £28m to improve energy efficiency in 4000 houses and £9m to replace 1200 kitchens and 600 bathrooms over the next 4 years from 2008-9. We will set out a plan to ensure that all Council owned houses meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard by 2015.
10. We will work with the Scottish Government and partners to prevent and reduce homelessness and provide responsive services to homeless people.
11. Work with partners, especially the police and the Scottish Government, to improve community safety by working to reduce crime and fear of crime; anti-social behaviour; alcohol and drug related crime; reconviction rates; violence against women and hate crimes. We will work also to improve levels of safe driving.
12. We will deliver the Highland Archive Strategy and work to sustain a network of local archive facilities, by working with partners where appropriate.
13. We will encourage use of the Council owned Highland Museum and Art Gallery in Inverness, the Highland Folk Museum, and support a range of community run museums across the Highlands with advice, training and grant aid.
14. Endorse the 'Year of Homecoming' in 2009 and develop a Highland strategy to ensure we play a major role in the celebrations – **completed 2009/10**
15. With our partners, develop an Events and Festivals Strategy and continue to support a range of initiatives such as Am Baile, the Fèis Movement, the Blas Festival and the Royal National Mod.
16. With our partners provide opportunities for Life Long Learning.
17. Implement the Gaelic Language Plan and review it annually. We commit ourselves to the principle of equal respect for Gaelic and English languages and we recognise the diversity of indigenous language and dialects within the Highlands.
18. Support the development of sporting activities and, in particular, encourage the development and growth of shinty.
19. We will continue to strengthen the Compact with the Third sector, recognising its value for Highland communities.
20. We will support the roll out and transition to the new Community Council Scheme and provide support for Community Council elections in 2011.

21. Use the national standards of community engagement. – **integrated into 5.01,5.03 & 5.07**

**We will also represent the interests of the Highlands by working with partners, including the Scottish and UK Governments, to promote services for communities and older people.**

**We will:**

22. We will work with our local authority partners to campaign for fair and equitable fuel prices across the Highlands and Islands, and promote alternative renewable fuels to replace hydrocarbon based fuels. We will support the development of a strategic network of rural filling stations across the Highlands
23. Seek the support of the Scottish and UK Governments for the removal of the remaining discount on Council Tax for Second Homes.
24. We will transfer the delivery of Community Learning and Leisure to an Arms Length Organisation (ALO).

### **3. What we will do for The Economy**

### **3. Na nì sinn airson Na h-Eaconamaidh**

**We will:**

1. We will work with the Scottish Government, the business community, HIE and the third sector to promote sustainable business growth through the development and promotion of business gateway and other Council support.
2. Work with the Scottish Government, HIE and the private sector to promote national key sectors namely energy, food and drink, life sciences, financial services, tourism and creative industries through engagement in strategy development and a range of initiatives.
3. We will work with the Scottish Government, local partners and the private sector to enable 6,000 new houses, with appropriate amenities to be built in the Highlands by 2012, with 2,000 of these affordable houses for rent and low cost home ownership of which 600 will be for older people and people with disabilities.

4. We will complete the business case for committing to a new programme of building over 700 council houses.
5. Develop Highland tourism - our most significant industry - in partnership with the business sector, VisitScotland, EventScotland and HIE. We will focus on opportunities such as Gaelic, green tourism, events and activities. We will improve the Council's own services for visitors.
6. We will recognise and support the importance of the Cairngorm National Park to the Highland environment and economy.
7. Work with HIE, Scottish Development International and statutory infrastructure providers to make the Highlands one of the most attractive places to do business in Scotland.
8. We will work with the Scottish Govt, HIE and the private sector to extend and improve the provision and use of high speed broadband services for our businesses and communities.
9. We will complete the Highland Development Plan and 3 Aquaculture Framework Plans by 2012.
10. Prepare three new Local Development Plans, which will provide detailed planning guidance and will ensure full community participation in their preparation.
11. Recognise the world class skills of the workforce at Dounreay and work in partnership with HIE, the Nuclear Decommissioning Agency and the Scottish and UK Governments to safeguard and enhance the social and economic environments of Caithness and North Sutherland during the Dounreay decommissioning.
12. We will pursue initiatives to support sustainable procurement, including the procurement of local products and services by the Council and others.
13. We will work with Community Land Scotland, HIE and the Scottish Government to ensure support for communities in the formation of local trust groups to buy, manage or have a stake in land, property or other assets on behalf of their community.
14. We will work with the Scottish and UK Governments and partners to prevent and reduce poverty by supporting more people towards sustained employment.
15. We will work with employers, further education colleges, Skills Development Scotland and HIE to increase the training and apprenticeship opportunities across the Highlands and maintain the number employed by the Council at 200 into 2011-12.

16. Continue to decentralise Council jobs throughout the Highlands and work with partners to identify opportunities for further dispersal of public sector jobs.
17. We will work with the UHI to explore closer relationships with secondary schools to expand course options for senior pupils and ensure the development of its academic research capability as the basis of economic development.
- 17b. We will support the development of a new, high quality Inverness campus as an essential part of the UHI network.
18. Work with Sabhal Mòr Ostaig - Scotland's Gaelic College - to develop partnership projects which will support the Council's objectives for Gaelic.
19. Continue implementation of the Council's Memorandum of Understanding with Nova Scotia to ensure collaboration on a range of mutually beneficial language and cultural projects.
20. Invest £54 million over the next three years to maintain the quality of our road network and carry out improvements to our lifeline roads and bridges.
21. Work with the bus operators to enhance, develop and promote the bus network in both rural and urban areas, improving the quality, frequency and accessibility of buses.
22. Promote the development of an integrated transport network.
23. Implement by 2009 an agreed £6 million programme of traffic management and streetscape improvement measures in Inverness City Centre and consider other arrangements which will reduce traffic congestion and improve the quality of the environment – completed 2009/10.
24. Recognise the multi-cultural society we live in and welcome migrants and their families settling in our communities and increase English language tuition to assist their integration.
25. Work through the Highlands and Islands European Partnership and the Scottish and UK Governments to secure the maximum benefit for the Highlands from the European funding programmes for the region and play a full part in key European organisations.

**We will also represent the interests of the Highlands by working with partners, Scottish and UK Governments, to develop our economy.**

**We will:**

26. We will work with the Scottish Government and Transport Scotland to deliver key trunk road improvements on the A82, A9, Nairn By Pass and the new trunk link road between the A96 and the A9 which will provide access to the UHI campus site.
27. We will work with the Scottish Government, Transport Scotland, British Waterways and other key stakeholders to examine and agree solutions for completing the link road between the A9/A96 and the A82 trunk roads, including crossing the River Ness and the Caledonian Canal.
28. We will work with the Scottish Government, Transport Scotland and other local agencies to promote local improvements to the trunk road network at locations including Berriedale Braes and Torgoyle Bridge.
29. Work with Highlands and Islands Airports, HIE and partners to attract new and enhanced air services into the Highlands at all airports. We will continue to work to safeguard Inverness to Gatwick flights, campaign to reinstate the Inverness to Heathrow flights and develop Wick Airport.
30. Work with partners to improve local, national and freight rail services including shorter journey times.
31. Continue to engage with Scottish Water and others to ensure that lack of infrastructure does not hold up housing and other developments – **completed 2009/10.**
32. Press for the UK Government to write off the council's housing debt and seek the support of the Scottish Government to make the case for debt write off.
33. We will monitor any further temporary closures of Post Offices in the Highlands and support communities contesting any further reduction in the network to 2012.
34. Continue to seek a strategic shift in the ownership of marine resources by working with the Scottish Government and pressing the UK Government to conduct a full review of the Crown Estates.

## *4. What we will do for Our Environment*

### *4. Na nì sinn airson Na h-Àrainneachd*

#### **We will:**

- 1a. We will reduce carbon emissions from the Council's operations by 12% by 2012 (from a 2007/8 base-line); covering emissions from buildings, business travel, internal waste, street lighting, fleet and water consumption.
- 1b. Introduce a programme across the Highlands to reduce energy use in street lighting.
- 1c. Promote the Highland Climate Change Declaration and encourage 30 new organisations to share information and best practice, and to commit to reduce carbon emissions by 3% per year.
- 1d. In adapting to the impacts of climate change we will map the opportunities and threats facing Highland and develop appropriate actions to build resilience to such impacts by 2012.
2. We will continue to work with the Scottish Government, UK and EU partners to promote and enhance forestry, farming, fishing and crofting in the Highlands.
3. We wish to see by 2012, a total of 1640 megawatts installed capacity in suitable locations in Highland with improved capacity of grid connections and as part of the implementation of the Council's Renewable Energy Strategy, support the potential for marine energy in the Pentland Firth.
4. We will adopt and implement a new policy, following wide consultation, to ensure a greater degree and more equitable and widespread disbursement of community benefit, including community control and ownership, for Highland communities from renewable energy developments.
5. We will adopt updated Council sustainable design guidance and publish measurable commitments on energy saving by promoting higher standards of thermal and solar efficiency for new buildings.
6. Ensure that all of our building projects, for both new and refurbished facilities, will comply with best practice in sustainability to ensure the Council is seen as an exemplar organisation in sustainable design and facilities management.
7. As well as improving the energy efficiency of our Council housing stock, reduce the Council's energy use and carbon emissions from our buildings by 15% by 2010-11, from a baseline of 2005, by reducing or avoiding energy costs - **completed 2009/10.**
8. We will increase the use of renewable microgeneration technology sources to provide energy in the Council estate, with appropriate integration of Wind Turbines, Biomass fuel boilers, combined heat and power (CHP) and

solar energy, increasing the overall output from 1800kW in 2008 to a minimum of 8000kW by 2012.

9. We will complete the Inverness South West Flood Relief Channel by 2012-13.
10. Allocate resources appropriately between winter maintenance to drainage and watercourse maintenance, as well as local small scale flood prevention schemes, in recognition of the effects of climate change, with a minimum of 10 small scale flood prevention schemes completed each year.
11. We will develop 24 green travel plans for Council and partner sites, install active travel equipment and achieve the Cycle Friendly Employer Award for six sites by 2012.
12. Develop sustainable options for waste treatment within the Highlands and put measures in place to reduce the amount of residual waste disposed of in landfill outside the Highlands by 26,500 tonnes by 2013.
- 13a. We will increase the amount of waste recycled in the Highlands to 50% by 2013.
- 13b. Introduce a programme of alternate weekly collection of municipal waste by April 2012.
14. Limit the amount of biodegradable waste going to landfill.
15. We will purchase less paper for Council offices and provide recycling facilities in all offices by 2012.
16. Give a high priority to community works, ensuring our communities are well looked after through grounds maintenance, litter picking, street cleaning, education and awareness and by the use of enforcement measures to support zero tolerance on littering and fly tipping.
17. Work with our Local Access Forums to draw up and implement a system of core path plans for the Highlands.
18. We will continue to support allotments where there is demand, with 8 new allotment schemes supported by 2012.
19. The Council will work with the Highland Biodiversity Partnership and Local Biodiversity Groups to promote and enhance biodiversity within the Highlands.

**We will also represent the interests of the Highlands by working with partners, Scottish and UK Governments, to protect and enhance our environment.**

**We will:**

20. Oppose any proposal for new nuclear power generation in the Highland area. We will continue to support the above ground storage of intermediate level waste from Dounreay until a Scottish waste strategy is agreed and implemented and object to the use of Dounreay or any other site within the Highlands for a national nuclear waste repository.
21. Actively support a GM-free Highland.
22. Work with the Scottish Government and SEPA to introduce the requirements set out in the Flood Risk (Scotland) Act 2009 and continue to progress Flood Prevention Orders for areas where there is a history of flooding affecting residential properties.
23. Work for a review of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 with a view to improving the legislation.
24. We will continue to work with the Scottish and UK governments to seek effective control and monitoring of the movement of hazardous cargoes in the Minches and the Pentland Firth and work to retain the presence of Emergency Towing Vehicles and the Coastguard facilities in Stornoway and Lerwick.

## *5. What we will do to be More Effective and Efficient*

### *5. Na nì sinn airson A Bhith Èifeachdach*

**We will:**

- 1a. We will continue to pursue best value for our residents and service users, seeking efficiencies in the way we work and continuously review the Council's spending programmes. We will modernise our services to achieve an annual 2% efficiency savings target and deliver at least £17.629m million savings from the Corporate Improvement Programme 2010/11 to 2012/2013.
- 1b. We will bring the Council's budget in on target for the financial year 2011/12 and ensure that a balanced budget is achieved in 2012/13, and that preparations are put in place for sound financial management for future years.

- 1c. We will commit to no compulsory redundancies in the workforce wherever possible, by managing any reduction in staff numbers using redeployment, vacancy management, flexible working and targeted early severance, where appropriate.
2. Commit the Council to the principle of appropriate additional decentralisation of political decision-making within the Council.
3. Continuously review our performance to improve the way in which Council services are designed and delivered. We will do this by measuring our progress, reporting on it publicly and listening to our customers and communities.
4. Fulfil all of the Council's duties to promote equalities and to tackle discrimination and disadvantage - as an employer, in providing public services, in community leadership and partnership working.
5. Make Council decision-making more accessible by webcasting Council meetings and by other means.
6. We will make it easier and more convenient to contact the Council (through telephone, internet and other technology).
7. We will continue to develop Ward and city Forums for every council ward which will enable the public and community representatives to be informed of and to scrutinise Council activities and service delivery, including community planning.
8. Develop our asset management plan to ensure that the Council owns or occupies only the appropriate number of buildings and that these are fit for purpose.
9. We will value and consult with staff and trades unions through joint consultative committees between the Council and trades unions Council and trades unions, as well as through other forums established to consult on corporate change programmes including the Corporate Improvement Programme and Pathway to Integration with Health.
10. Work with the trades unions to deliver modernised working conditions and a single status workforce by 2010 – completed 2009/10.
11. We will continue to agree an annual training and development programme and personal development plans for councillors.
12. Review the Council's programme and report progress against it each year.