

The Highland Council's Magazine

Spring 2016

Issue 4

Highpoints

Sàr Phuingean



Inside this issue: City-Region Deal - Performance Indicators 2014/15

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Highpoints will be published online and some hard copies will be made available in service points and libraries. The magazine is produced in-house by our Corporate Communications Team and printing costs are sponsored by advertising.

Welcome

Welcome to the Spring edition of our magazine Highpoints (Sàr Phuingean).

This issue highlights the substantial Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal and progress on some other key developments in Highland including Inverness West Link and new Gaelic schools.

The City-Region Deal is a real watershed moment for the Highlands. The Deal aims to position Inverness and the Highlands as a region of digital opportunity. UK and Scottish Government funding of over £188 million together with £127million of further investment by the Council and public partners will deliver a step change in digital connectivity, digital healthcare, skills, business development and infrastructure within the region. It is anticipated that the UK and Scottish Government and Highland investment will, over the lifetime of the deal, lever in around £1 billion of investment.

The Highland Council has worked closely with partners over the past two years to develop proposals to

establish the basis for a City-Deal and to make this possible.

The announcement of the City-Region Deal for Inverness and the Highlands is extremely welcome given the very difficult decisions that Highland Council Members had to make at the Council's budget meeting on the 25th February. The full impacts of the Council's budget settlement are yet to be experienced, but it is clear that former levels of service and performance cannot be sustained by the Council.

In this edition you can find out how Highland Council performed in the last financial year 2014/15 as we publish our Local and National Statutory Performance Indicators.

Localism and community participation also feature in this issue as we report back on the peoples' votes on the successful participatory budgeting events that took place in Caithness and Lochaber and we encourage young people to join our Citizens' Panel.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue of Highpoints.



Isobel McCallum Highland Council Convener

Listening ~ Open ~ Valuing ~ Improving ~ Supporting ~ Partnering ~ Delivering

INVERNESS & HIGHLAND CITY - REGION DEAL

Region of Digital Opportunity

Introduction

The vision behind the Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal is to position the Highlands of Scotland as a region of digital opportunity.

The city of Inverness and the wider Highlands offers a unique environment to live, work, study and visit and is a globally recognised location. This Deal provides £315 million of investment which will make a significant contribution to the long term productivity and economic growth of the region by promoting it as the best digitally connected rural region in Europe.

The Deal also focuses on the attraction and retention of young people in a region which has traditionally seen the out-migration of young people.

The majority of the business base in Inverness and the Highlands is made up of small and micro businesses and this Deal is focused on enabling them to expand and develop as well as attracting new high skill, high value businesses to the area. To do so, requires effective broadband and mobile coverage so that businesses can fully exploit the commercial opportunities and expand their markets internationally. It also requires a step change in the area's approach to innovation and the proposal for a Northern Innovation Hub seeks to deliver a holistic programme designed to build on the sector strengths of the City and Region.

The City-Region Deal also seeks to fully exploit the commercial opportunities from the University of the Highlands and Islands, through the development of a centre of excellence in rural and digital health care, focused on the Inverness campus, but active throughout the region.

The City-Region Deal contains a number of projects that seeks to deliver this vision under three broad headings.

- Enabling the Economy
- A Growing Economy
- A Skilled Economy

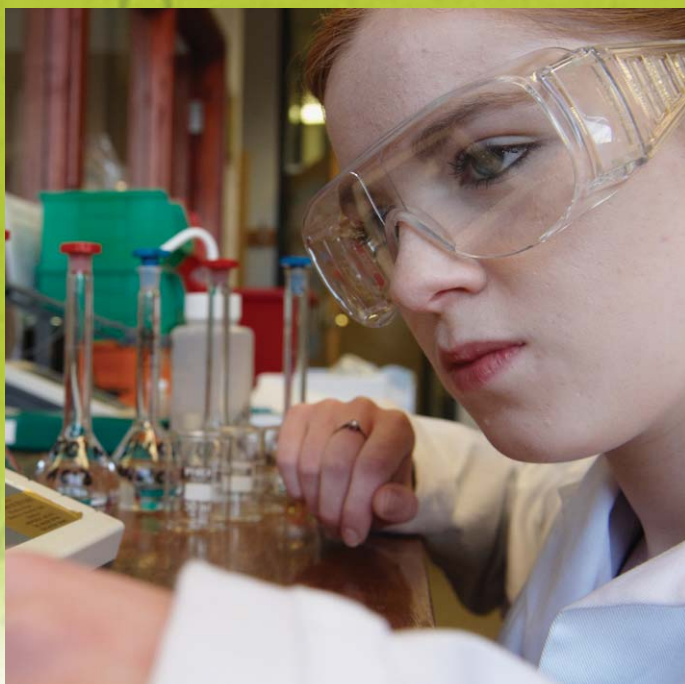
Enabling the Economy

- Establish a Joint Digital Highland Action Plan to accelerate provision of effective broadband and mobile coverage throughout the region;
- Improve the connectivity of the City and region through the construction of Eastlink and Longman Interchange to complement the Council funded Westlink. This will open up land for housing and commercial development across the City and Kessock Bridge into the Black Isle and the north;
- Provide 6,000 new homes of which 1,800 will be affordable; and
- Recognition by Government of the importance of regional air links and a commitment to explore a mechanism which promotes improved access.



A Growing Economy

- Develop the University of the Highlands and Islands School of Healthcare and Life Sciences to support the commercialisation of new medical products and technologies;
- Deliver an innovative approach to assisted living with applicability across the UK providing an initial 40 units across the Highlands;
- Establish a Northern Innovation Hub to support businesses to develop new products and services and encourage growth in exports from the region; and
- Capitalise on the Highlands as a globally recognised location, by developing Inverness Castle as a key tourist destination.



A Skilled Economy

- Pilot a joint Highland Employability Programme to bring about transformational change to employability services; and
- Deliver five innovative learning centres through the Science Skills Academy to promote STEM/D learning.



Impact of the City-Region Deal

The City-Region Deal will have a significant impact in securing the long term productivity and economic growth of the region and position it as a region of digital opportunity.

City-Region Deal funding from the Scottish Government (£135 million) and the UK Government (£53 million) and local partners (£127 million) will realise £1 billion of investment.

Specifically the Deal:

- Creates 1,125 direct jobs as a result of City-Region Deal projects with a further 2,200 additional jobs in the construction sector;
- Helps up-skill the labour market and contribute to moving towards a high skilled high wage economy;
- Establishes a centre of excellence in rural and digital healthcare with sufficient mass to attract research and investment and fully exploits the commercial opportunities;
- Enables business growth through effective digital connectivity and promotion of innovation;
- Improves productivity and real wages, which are estimated to increase by almost 1.3 per cent and bring £100m per annum to the regional economy;
- Helps rebalance the population with the aim of retaining and/or attracting 1,500 young people in the 18-29 age group over the initial 10 year deal period;
- Creates 6,000 new houses over 20 years of which 1,800 will be affordable homes; and
- Delivers private sector leverage from housing building and, through opening up land for commercial development, which would see a return over a 20 year period of around £800 million being invested in the economy of the city and region.



Partners



Contract awarded for first stage of Inverness Westlink

The Inverness West Link project has reached another very important milestone in its delivery. Highland Council has awarded the Inverness West Link Stage 1 and the Canal Parks Enhancement contract to Wills Bros Civil Engineering Ltd with a value of £22.5M. The Council is content with the award value as it represents an extremely competitive price and relates well to estimates prepared in advance of the tender.

Arrangements are in hand with Wills Bros to allow an early start on the works to be progressed. The works are scheduled to be completed in late 2017.

Welcoming the award of the contract Cllr Audrey Sinclair, Chair of Highland Council's Planning Development and Infrastructure committee said:

“ This award of contract is a major step which will see the construction of the final phase of the Inverness Southern Distributor Road linking the Dores Road roundabout to Glenurquhart Road. It will provide an alternative east-west route across the city of benefit to locals and the wider Highlands. It will also help relieve city centre congestion and provide new active travel routes across to the sports facilities at the Bught Park from the east of the city. ”

Welcoming the award of contract, Provost and Leader of City of Inverness and Area, Cllr Helen Carmichael added:

“ This road has been in plans for Inverness for over 40 years and will help to facilitate the city's continued growth. The new facilities at Canal Park will provide state of the art facilities for rugby and other sports to the benefit of Inverness and the wider Highlands. ”

WEST LINK Connecting our communities
A' ceangal ar coimhearsnachdan



Leader of The Highland Council Cllr Margaret Davidson said:

“ This will provide a welcome boost to the local economy at a time when there are job losses in other sectors such as Oil and Gas. The Council's £1Bn capital programme will continue to support the Highland economy and create the conditions for future prosperity. The West Link project is a key part of helping deliver infrastructure for growth as part of the Council's Highland First commitments. ”

Cllr Audrey Sinclair, Chair of Planning, Development and Infrastructure Committee; Provost and Leader of City of Inverness and Area, Cllr Helen Carmichael; Jonathan Wills, Wills Bros Civil Engineering Ltd; and Colin Howell, Highland Council's Head of Infrastructure at Dores Road roundabout Inverness.

Local and National Statutory Performance Indicators 2014/15



The latest year's Statutory Performance Indicators for 2014/15 demonstrate improved performance on the year. This is a positive report of improving performance overall. 74% of our Statutory Performance Indicators have improved by 5% or more in the year 2014/15 which compares to 54% in the previous year's figures. There is improvement across all Council services and High Life Highland.

Indicators that have shown a change of:



Care & Learning

- The cost per museum visit has reduced from **£2.32** to **£2.10**
- The number of offence based referrals to Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) reduced from **417** to **343**
- The proportion of children on the child protection register who were previously registered has fallen from **5.31%** to **3.67%**

Community Services

- The average time to complete an emergency council house repair reduced from **14.5 hours** to **9.1 hours**
- The percentage of rent lost through time between tenancies (voids) reduced from **1.2%** to **0.9%**
- The number of Anti-social Behaviour cases reported and resolved increased from **67.5%** to **76.3%**
- The percentage of tenants satisfied with the quality of their home increased from **70.9%** to **78.8%**
- The percentage of council house repairs completed at first visit increased from **73%** to **83%**
- The percentage of council housing at or above national energy efficiency ratings (NHER/SAP) increased from **75.7%** to **86.7%**

- The percentage of council housing meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standards (SHQS) increased from **70.2%** to **85.2%**

Development & Infrastructure

- Asset management – the percentage of council buildings in acceptable condition increased from **58%** to **79.3%**
- The cost per archaeological consultation reduced from **£16.53** to **£14.42**

Finance and Corporate

- The cost per dwelling of collecting Council Tax reduced from **£14.22** to **£11.83**
- The percentage of women managers in the top 2% of earners increased from **35.8%** to **40.2%**

Indicators that have shown a change of:



Care & Learning

- The percentage of adults satisfied with leisure facilities declined from **87%** to **77%**

Community Services

- The average time people are in temporary/emergency accommodation increased from **11 weeks** to **16 weeks**
- The average time taken to re-let council homes increased from **37.6 days** to **42 days**

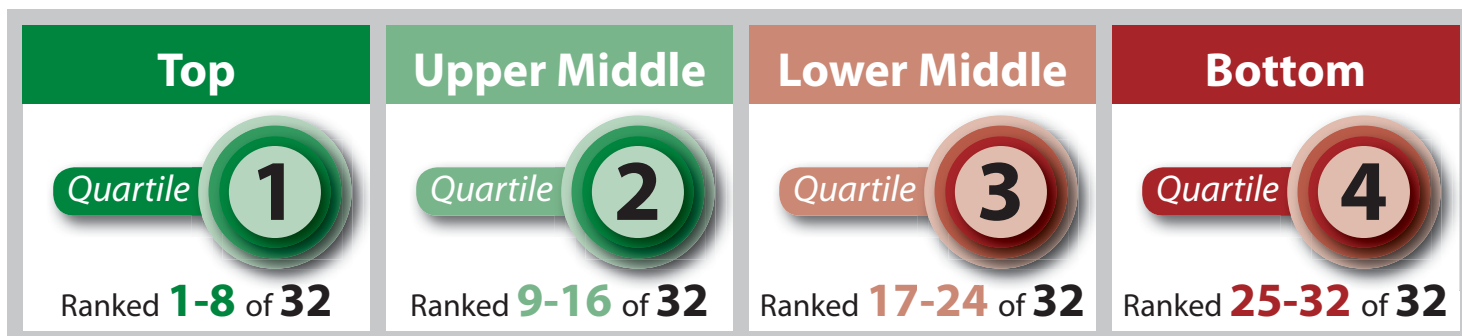
Development & Infrastructure

- The percentage of unemployed people assisted into work reduced from **7.4%** to **6.56%**

Benchmarking

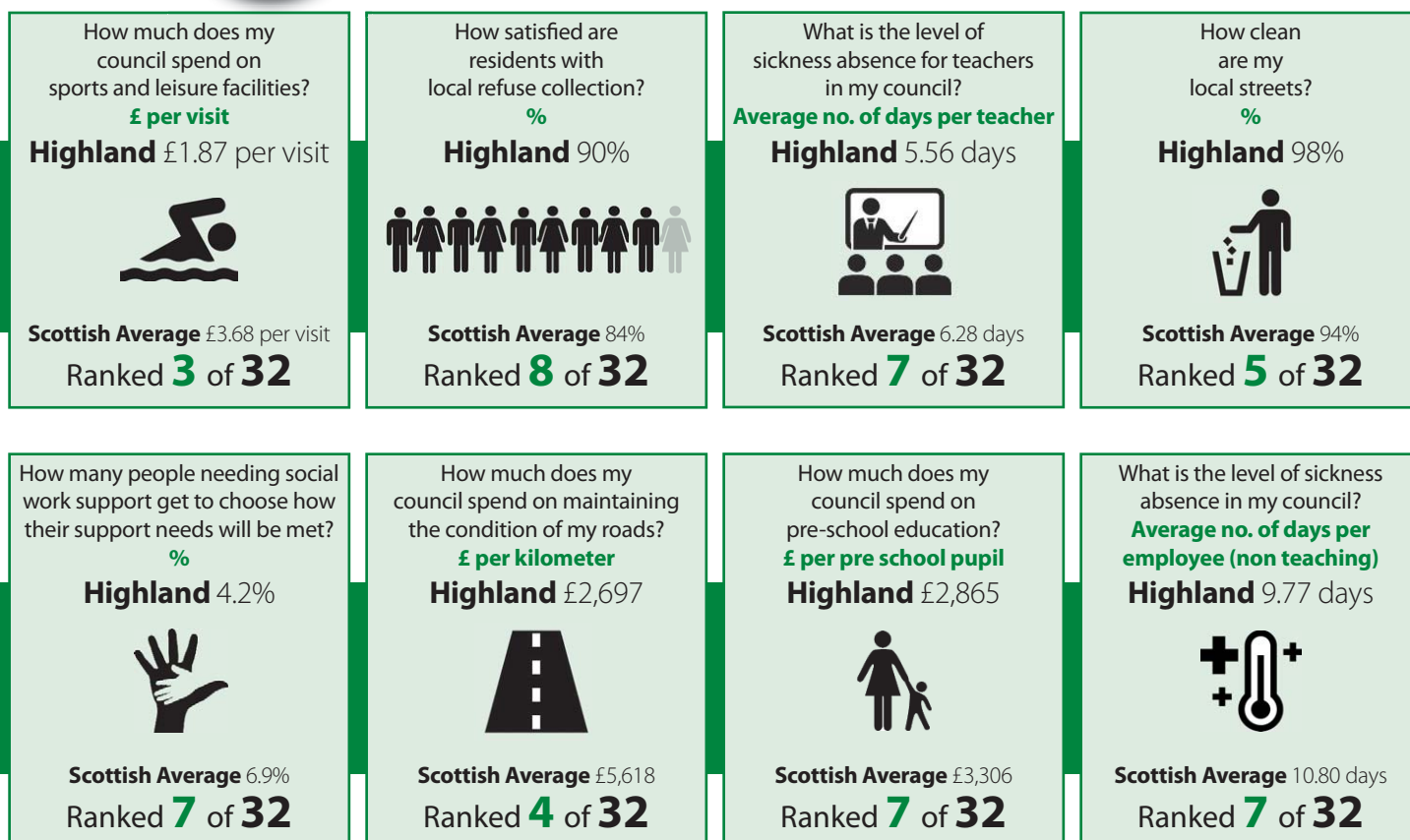
What is the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF)?

Local councils across Scotland are required to publish their performance information using the LGBF each year. This ensures that councils report standard information on the services councils provide to local communities across Scotland. The indicators within the LGBF were selected through a wide consultation process to cover the major service areas of local authorities. The performance between all **32 Scottish Local Authorities** is reported in quartiles.



For the LGBF indicators the Highland Council is in the top quartile (ranked 1-8) for 14 indicators and in the bottom quartile (ranked 25-32) for 13 indicators. It should be noted that there are a wide range of factors that influence these indicators including geography, service delivery models and budget priorities.

Quartile **1**



Quartile

2

How efficient is my council at paying invoices on time?
%

Highland 94.3%



Scottish Average 92.5%
Ranked **10** of **32**

What percentage of pupils enter a positive destination after leaving school?
%

Highland 93.7%



Scottish Average 92.9%
Ranked **14** of **32**

How much household waste is recycled by my council?
%

Highland 46%



Scottish Average 43%
Ranked **15** of **32**

How many of my local A class roads are in need of repair?
%

Highland 25%



Scottish Average 29%
Ranked **14** of **32**

Quartile

3

How efficient is my council at collecting council tax?
%

Highland 96%



Scottish Average 96%
Ranked **17** of **32**

How satisfied are residents with local schools?
%

Highland 83%



Scottish Average 79%
Ranked **17** of **32**

What is the current gender balance in more senior posts?
%

Highland 48.2%



Scottish Average 51.7%
Ranked **22** of **32**

How satisfied are residents with local leisure facilities?
%

Highland 77%



Scottish Average 76%
Ranked **17** of **32**

Quartile

4

How much does my council spend on secondary schools?
£ per pupil

Highland £6,956



Scottish Average £6,593
Ranked **25** of **32**

How much does my council spend on refuse collection (net)?
£ per premise

Highland £97.95



Scottish Average £65.17
Ranked **31** of **32**

How many unemployed people have been assisted into work by my council?
%

Highland 6.6%



Scottish Average 14.2%
Ranked **27** of **32**

How much does my council spend on providing care to support older people to live at home?
£ per hour

Highland £31.18



Scottish Average £20.01
Ranked **32** of **32**

To access to the full Statutory Performance Indicators report and the national benchmarking portal go to:
www.highland.gov.uk/performance

Aged 16-25 & want to help shape public services?

We're looking to recruit a number of 16 to 25 year olds from across the Highlands to join our Citizens' Panel.

The Panel is made up of around 2,300 residents who have agreed to take part in consultations to help us find out what people think about Council services and ensure communities are involved in shaping services for the future. To ensure the panel matches the Highland population we recruit new members every year and would love to hear from 16-25 year olds.



The topics you will be consulted upon will be very varied and could include education, services in the community, recycling, the environment, transport, and roads. Some surveys may be short with only a few questions, others may be longer requiring up to 30 minutes to complete.

If you are interested in applying, please complete the Young Persons 2016 Citizen Panel Recruitment form.

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/JJK5BBG>

Or call the Highland Council Policy Team during 9am and 5pm on 01463 702006.

“ To ensure the panel matches the Highland population we recruit new members every year and would love to hear from 16-25 year olds. ”

New Gaelic Schools

Highland Council has recently officially opened Scotland's fourth Gaelic school and awarded a contract for the construction of Highland's third standalone dedicated Gaelic Primary.

At the official opening of Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar on Friday 4 March, a plaque was unveiled at the new school. Located in Caol, Fort William, the school is Scotland's fourth and Highland's second dedicated Gaelic Primary School.

The current pupil roll is 70 Primary and 15 Nursery pupils. The school offers wrap around care until 6pm for children through the medium of Gaelic.

Councillor Drew Millar, Chair of the Council's Education, Children and Adult Services Committee said:

“ This marks another achievement by Highland Council in its commitment to Gaelic Education which is further demonstrated by Highland Council's announcement of its award of contract to Robertson Construction for an £8.7 million new Gaelic Primary School in Portree. ”



Artists impression of Portree Gaelic Primary School

Chair of the Council's Gaelic Implementation Group Cllr Hamish Fraser said:

“ This award of contract is a major welcome leap forward for the development of the Gaelic language in the Highlands and the Gaelic heartland of Skye. I have absolutely no doubt that the new standalone school in Portree will prove a great success and nurture many more Gaelic speakers. ”

The contract is part of an overall capital investment programme of £14.8 million in Portree which also includes a new access road to the school, refurbishment of the former Elgin Hostel to create a new pupil residence at Portree High, and the demolition of the former Boys' and Margaret Carnegie residence buildings. The Scottish Government has contributed £4.75 million to the school project.

The new residence will open after the Easter holidays and the first phase of demolition works will start in March. Construction work on the new school will begin later this year and the building will open in late 2017.

Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar



The official opening of Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar



Local Community Decisions

Following two successful pilot events held in Lochaber and Caithness last year, other Highland areas are now embracing the opportunity for communities to decide which local projects receive funding support from the Council.

The latest **Participatory Budgeting** event – Nurturing Nairnshire – took place in Nairn on Saturday 12th March. With £25,000 available from the local Ward Discretionary Fund, representatives from 29 projects gave a short pitch to over 120 people who had come along. After listening to all the presentations, the public cast their votes to decide what ideas they thought were the best for the area. Following the vote, 14 groups received money to put their ideas into action.

Each event is organised locally and overseen by a planning group made up of representatives from the Council, local third sector groups and the community.

The next three opportunities where decision making will be handed to the community and local people will decide how money is spent will take place in May with events held in Sutherland, the Isle of Skye and Caithness.

- In Sutherland £15,000 is available and the public will be able to decide on who gets what at an event held in Lairg on 21st May.
- Up to £15,000 will be available for groups in Skye and Raasay to apply for and the public are invited to an event in Portree on Saturday 28th May to find out about the projects and cast their votes.
- Also on 28th May there will be another participatory budget event in Caithness. This time the event will be held in Thurso and £30,000 will be available.

Any local community, voluntary or non-profit organisation – even informal groups – can apply for funding through these events. Groups are encouraged to come up with ideas that add value to their day-to-day activities and then local communities will decide for themselves which projects are needed in their area.

Community and Democratic Engagement Manager, Pablo Mascarenhas said:

“ There has been a great response locally to the participatory budget events. Not only are local groups putting their projects forward and local people juggling local priorities but groups from these areas are deciding how the process works, the rules of the event and the criteria for applications. The process seeks to go beyond being a mechanism for awarding money by empowering the community to consider local needs and priorities and by doing so should support community networking, better target resources and engage groups not normally involved in decision-making.”

For further information on how to get involved, please contact the local ward manager:

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@highland.gov.uk
for Caithness

Willie.Mackinnon
@highland.gov.uk
for Skye and Raasay

Garry.Cameron
@highland.gov.uk
for Sutherland



Earth Hour celebrated in Highlands



On Saturday 19th March, for the ninth year in a row, the Council took part in the WWF's annual Earth Hour which saw the lights at some of the Highland's best known landmarks joining the likes of the Eiffel Tower and Sydney Opera House in switching off for an hour

In the lead up to this global event, representatives from WWF visited the Highlands to present pupils at Muirtown Primary School in Inverness with Scotland's Earth Hour Local Authority Runner-up Award in recognition of the work done by the Council to make last year's event a success. WWF Scotland Director, Lang Banks, said:

“ I'm absolutely delighted to be able to recognise Highland Council for all their ongoing efforts in support of our annual Earth Hour initiative. This award clearly demonstrates the massive commitment of the Council and its residents to tackling climate change and protecting our brilliant planet. ”

Earth Hour was created as a way of raising collective awareness across the world on the need to focus on reducing carbon emissions and this year over 167 countries across the globe took part. The pupils and staff at Muirtown Primary were delighted when the WWF Panda visited their school to hand over the Award. The school's Eco Committee had been busy raising awareness of Earth Hour and classes were learning about how climate change affects our planet. Each class at the school also made a pledge explaining what they would do for Earth Hour, and beyond.

A new new car for a lot lot less



A brand new benefit is launching soon for employees at the Highland Council



in
partnership
with

Tusker.

£5.7 million redevelopment in Fort William

The Council has awarded a £5.7 million contract to Robertson Northern for a major project that will bring The Highland Council's administrative and professional staff from different locations across Fort William into the one building, providing a year-on-year revenue saving of around £400,000.

Work will start at the end of April 2016 on the redevelopment of the former Fort William Secondary school site. The project breathes new life into the empty listed building, owned by the local authority, which is set to be transformed into new Council offices to serve not just Fort William but the whole of Lochaber. Space within the new building will be created for other public sector partners in a move to help with revenue costs.

The new offices are expected to be completed by the end of July 2017.

This latest project takes the total spend invested in Fort William over the last five years to over £40 million.



Are you ready

for the May 2016 election?



On Thursday 5 May 2016 voters across the Highlands will go to the polls for the Scottish Parliament election. If you're not registered to vote you can't take part and won't be able to have your say.

The good news is that if you're not registered you can apply online at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote it only takes a few minutes.

For the first time in a Scottish Parliament Election, 16 and 17 year olds will be able to vote if they are registered. The deadline to register is Monday 18 April so make sure you don't miss out on polling day.

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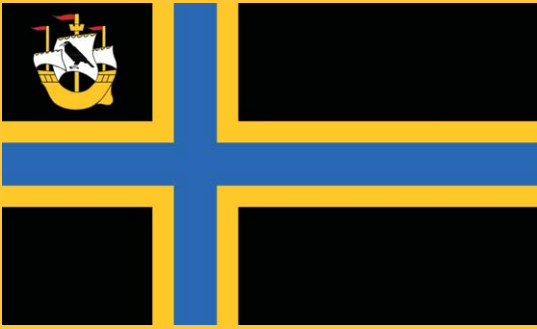
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Flying the **new** Caithness flag

With the support of the local community, we ran a competition last year to design a flag for Caithness.

Four designs from the 327 entries received were shortlisted by a judging panel and then the public were invited to vote for their favourite.



At the end of January the winning design was unveiled by the Lord Lyon during a ceremony held in Wick. It features the Nordic cross which symbolises the ancient ties of Caithness to the Vikings. The black recalls the county's geology with the famous Caithness flagstone, while the gold and blue refer to the beaches and sea to reinforce the maritime nature of the county and its heritage. In the first quarter is a galley, which is the traditional emblem of Caithness, including a raven upon its sail as it appears in the county's former civic arms.



Ward Manager David Sutherland was delighted both with the number of entries received and the feedback now the flag has been unveiled. He said:

“ *The flag is the first registered area flag on the Scottish mainland and as well as expressing pride in our local community, it celebrates the heritage and culture of our corner of the country. The competition really grabbed people's attention and I'd like to thank everyone who submitted entries and those who voted. It is great to see our new flag flying and becoming our public symbol of Caithness.* ”



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