

Highpoints

Sàr Phuingean

£12m to kick start
City-Region Deal
projects

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Nesswifi
a sweet success

Pg3



How did we do?
How do we compare?

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Newton Rooms for
Caithness and
Lochaber

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

Welcome

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

This issue highlights the substantial progress underway with the Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal with over £12million funding released for three important projects. One of these projects will see the development of Norwegian style Newton Rooms across the Highlands providing opportunities for young people to stimulate their interest in scientific and digital skills. This is a real investment in the future of the Highlands as a region for young people and business development.

The free Ness WiFi project is a terrific bonus for Inverness city centre and it is hoped to see this free internet access rolled out in other towns in the Highlands.

The City-Region Deal aims to position Inverness and the Highlands as a region of digital opportunity and the public sector funding is estimated

to attract around £800million of additional private sector investment.

In this edition of Highpoints, you can find out how Highland Council performed in the last financial year 2015/16 as we publish our Local and National Statutory Performance Indicators. Reducing budgets and increasing costs mean that we can't expect to see the same levels of performance sustained into the future. That is why we set up the Redesign Board to look at how we can make our services more efficient and pursue a more commercial approach. We have made a number of recommendations for the new Council to consider. I feel we have learned a lot from the enormous work which has been done and I want to thank staff and members for their support and hard efforts in this task.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue of Highpoints and wish you a pleasant spring season.



Isobel McCallum Highland Council Convener

City traders celebrate as Ness WiFi is officially launched



CITY market traders and local businesses are celebrating the official launch of Ness WiFi, a free WiFi service across Inverness city centre, providing access to fast, efficient internet connectivity.

The Ness WiFi network is free for all users and has no restrictions on time.

The first phase of the Inverness City WiFi project, branded Ness WiFi, is providing fast internet coverage in a pilot area including the Victorian Market, Falcon Square and surrounding streets. The £500,000 project is funded by the Inverness and Highlands City-Region Deal and led by The Highland Council (in partnership with Rapier Systems Ltd). The Pilot will help shape the main city WiFi rollout by providing data and understanding of the project.

Ness WiFi was previewed by Lord Andrew Dunlop, UK Government, in December and has been undergoing a period of testing, with excellent feedback to date. A full city centre roll out will follow later this year in the summer.

It is intended that the free WiFi service will benefit businesses, residents, students and tourists, and encourage visitors to the city.

The Victorian Market was chosen to be included in the pilot project to encourage footfall into the market and benefit local businesses. To celebrate, Harry Gow's Bakers baked a special batch of Ness WiFi cupcakes to mark the occasion.



Jo Chenhall from the Mhor Collective, (funded by the SCVO), was on hand at the Business Gateway shop in the market to give digital advice.

Provost of Inverness, Helen Carmichael said: "I am delighted to see this exciting project get underway. The benefit of easy access to free, fast internet connection will be enormous for shoppers, tourists and businesses in the city centre. So much of what we do depends on the

internet, whether you are looking for directions, checking emails, searching for accommodation, booking a restaurant or show, or chatting with friends or colleagues. The vision behind the City-Region Deal is to position the city and the Highlands as a region of digital opportunity. Inverness will be one of the few cities across the UK with free WiFi and a project like this will truly help us towards the ambition of making Highland a place of digital opportunities."

Mike Smith, Manager of Inverness Business Improvement District (BID) welcomed the initiative. He said: "On behalf of the local businesses, we welcome the launch of the WiFi project which will add even greater value to the city centre offer for visitors and residents alike. We thank all involved in developing and funding this important project."

More information about the project and how to get Ness WiFi can be found at:

www.nesswifi.co.uk
www.highland/cityregiondeal



Mike Smith from BID and Provost Helen Carmichael try out free Ness WiFi in Victorian Market

Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal - A Region of Digital Opportunity

Sealing the Deal

Funding was released for 3 projects as the Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal was signed on 30th January

The £315million Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal was formally signed in Invergordon on 30th January, sealing the Deal for the release of funding for a number of business cases.

The Heads of Terms document for the Deal, worth £315million, was signed in March 2016, paving the way for business cases to be submitted to the UK and Scottish Governments for approval.

The City-Region Deal sets out

the areas where the Scottish Government will commit investment of up to £135million and the UK Government will commit investment of up to £53.1million, which, together with £127million of further investment by the Council and partners, will deliver a step change in digital connectivity, digital healthcare, skills, innovation and infrastructure.

The impact of the Deal on Inverness and the wider Highland region will be significant in securing the long term productivity and economic growth of the region and position it as a region of digital

opportunity. Regional partners estimate that the City-Region Deal funding of £315million could unlock up to an additional £800million of investment by the private sector.

The release of £12.25million of Scottish and UK Government funding was also announced for three approved business cases which will allow the project work to begin on the Science Skills Academy STEM D, the University of the Highlands and Islands School of Health, Social Care and Life Sciences, and on land remediation in Inverness.

The investment will begin with the release of over a quarter of a



The Deal was signed by Minister Andrew Dunlop, Councillor Margaret Davidson and Keith Brown MSP



City-Region Deal Cùmhnant Baile-Roinne

million pounds in this financial year.

The Deal was signed by Councillor Margaret Davidson, Leader of the Highland Council, Keith Brown MSP, Cabinet Secretary for the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work, The Scottish Government, and UK Government Minister Andrew Dunlop. The signing took place at the premises of Carbon Dynamic, Invergordon, a partner in a ground-breaking assisted living scheme, led by Albyn Housing Society.

future of Inverness and the Highlands, through investing in skills, business development and innovation, digital connectivity, transport infrastructure, housing and tourism.

“The Inverness and Highland City Region Deal was seen as hugely important for the Highlands, however given the economic challenges and uncertainty that we face, from a number of quarters, I would suggest that the City Region Deal has never been as important to us as now

communities and drive economic growth.

“City Region Deals are all about unlocking the economic opportunities for a region and the UK Government is proud to play its part in the Inverness and Highland City Region-Deal by investing more than £50million.”

Keith Brown MSP said:

“The signing of the Inverness City Region Deal shows our clear and strong commitment to investing in Inverness and the



“ ...the City Region Deal has never been as important to us as now in helping to sustain and develop our economy.”
Leader Margaret Davidson

Leader of The Highland Council, Margaret Davidson said:

“The signing of the Inverness and Highland City Region Deal marks the start of turning our ambition into reality, of delivering real and meaningful benefits to the Highlands. This aims to secure the sustainable economic

in helping to sustain and develop our economy.”

UK Government Minister Andrew Dunlop said:

“City Region Deals are a fantastic example of the UK and Scottish governments working together alongside The Highland Council and local partners to improve

wider Highlands region, and the crucial contribution they make to Scotland’s economic growth.

“Our £135million investment will improve access to jobs, education and healthcare which will deliver significant long-term benefits for the city, region and Scotland as a whole.”



www.highland.gov.uk/cityregiondeal

[@cityregiondeal](https://twitter.com/cityregiondeal)

Science Skills Academy STEM D

£3 million approved by the Scottish Government for the Science Skills Academy.

An estimated 1,000 new high-quality jobs in biosciences and up to a further 5,000 in renewable energy are anticipated in the next five to eight years. Developing a suitably skilled workforce is essential to ensure employers of these jobs locate in the Highlands and Islands.

“ Young people in Caithness and Lochaber will be among the first in Scotland to benefit ”

Keith Brown MSP

To that end Science Skills Academy (SSA) is planning five Newton Rooms across the region to help ensure there are sufficient numbers of young people with the skills needed for future economic growth in the region. The academy is a long term, innovative and ambitious project which will increase the number of young people able to take advantage of the growing opportunities in life sciences, renewable energy and digital technologies.

This project is being led by Highlands and Islands Enterprise

(HIE) to help engage more young people in the fields of science, technology, engineering and maths/digital skills (STEMD), in partnership with The Highland Council, the University of the Highlands and Islands, Skills Development Scotland, Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE) and others.

SSA will operate from a hub based at Inverness Campus which will pilot a tailored approach for the Highlands. Learning centres modelled on the Norwegian Newton Rooms delivering inspirational, practical STEM D education in partnership with schools in the most remote parts of Norway, will be developed across the Highland region. The centres are aimed at helping young people pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, maths and digital (STEMD) and will work with schools and local employers to provide inspirational education. These are very well equipped science rooms providing students with state of the art educational equipment with a focus on hands-on experiments and practical activities.

Young people in Caithness and Lochaber will be among the first in Scotland to benefit from the new Norwegian style Newton Rooms.

The centres will provide resource

support for practical STEM D activity in schools and an accessible base for extracurricular projects. Five Newton Rooms across the Highlands will be in place by the end of 2019.



Andrew Johnston is project director for SSA.

He explained how the project would create new jobs. “New high-quality jobs in biosciences, digital skills and renewable energy are anticipated in the next five to eight years. Across the sectors, computer science and digital skills are becoming crucial to their operations. Developing a suitably skilled workforce is essential to ensure employers of these jobs locate in the Highlands and Islands region.

“There are some excellent examples of STEM D activity happening around the Highlands and Islands. The aim of SSA is to take the best examples of these, develop them and make them widely available to spark the interest of all young people in the region.”

Welcoming the progress, **Cabinet Secretary for the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work, Keith Brown, said:**

“These new facilities for Caithness and Lochaber will address the shortage of skills related to science, technology, engineering and maths/digital to help us meet current and future needs of the



STEM labour market.

“This is a great example of how the Scottish Government’s £135 million investment in Inverness and the Highlands through the City-Region Deal announced last month will improve access to jobs, education and healthcare and support our commitment to bring economic prosperity to all parts of Scotland.”



Andrew Johnston added:

“We are working with partners in the field to provide a coherent STEM learning experience throughout a young person’s education. This in turn will provide opportunities for young people to pursue careers in some of the emerging and future technological developments.

“It’s great to be able to confirm the locations for the first learning centres. There are several potentially suitable sites in both Caithness and Lochaber. We will be exploring these options in detail in order to maximise the benefits the centres will bring.

“Whatever specific locations are chosen the centres will be there for the benefit of all young people across the whole of Caithness and Lochaber.”

SSA hopes to have the first STEM learning centre in place by the end of 2017.

Longman Land Remediation

The first tranche of the £10 million business case for the Longman Land Remediation project, led by The Highland Council, has been released. Initial funding of £250,000 from the UK Government will allow site investigations and monitoring of the land to assess suitability for economic development to progress the £10m project.

The project aims to ensure that there is sufficient land supply to enable Inverness and the Highlands to expand its economic activity and productivity by bringing into use large brownfield contaminated sites. Through remediation of a redundant landfill site and carrying out site servicing works, the Council will be able to release a strategic site to the market to meet the needs of both small and medium size businesses and the needs of larger inward investment companies. This will enable 18 hectares of development-ready land for light industry/commercial use to provide employment opportunities and ensure the continued economic growth and success of Inverness.

Director of Development and Infrastructure Stuart Black said:

“The Longman site has excellent transport links to the A9, the harbour, the railway and the airport and is in close proximity to the Inverness Campus with a growing skilled workforce. The project has the potential to regenerate a large area of unused land in a highly strategic location for commercial and industrial use which could in return bring enormous benefits to the regional economy through private sector investment.”



“...a highly strategic location for commercial and industrial use.”

Director Stuart Black

Further information on the City-Region Deal and all the projects can be found on our website:

www.highland.gov.uk/cityregiondeal

 @cityregiondeal

University of the Highlands and Islands School of Health, Social Care and Life Sciences



University of the
Highlands and Islands
Oilthigh na Gàidhealtach
agus nan Eilean

The university has been awarded £9million from the UK Government, as part of the City-Region Deal to establish commercialisation, academic and clinical capacity to deliver projects in health, social care and life sciences.

A custom-built facility on the Inverness Campus will operate as a flexible open access unit supporting the interaction

Inverness Campus, it will support developments around the region.

A key focus is to expand the range and scope of the commercial life science sector in the Highlands and Islands, providing the infrastructure and personnel to draw in new investment and create jobs.

Development areas will be linked to the regional economy, demography and geography including disease management

immediately and will develop over the next two and a half years. The new facility should be occupied towards the end of 2019.

Professor Clive Mulholland, principal and vice-chancellor of the University of the Highlands and Islands welcomed the partnership opportunities the City-Region Deal will bring.

He said: "We're delighted to get the go-ahead to progress our exciting plans for this aspect of our new School of Health, Social Care and Life Sciences. This is a tremendous opportunity to deliver economic growth through collaborative and commercial research.

"This investment, combined with other developments in nurse education, research investment and our participation in the Scottish Graduate Medical School, will enable us to deliver economic impact and help our NHS colleagues address the challenge of recruitment and retention of clinicians in the Highlands and Islands by providing tangible commercialisation and research opportunities."

“...providing tangible commercialisation and research opportunities.”

Professor Clive Mulholland

between the health service, the academic sector and commercial partners. Resulting projects will generate new products and services, business start-ups and licensing deals, as well as service quality improvements and new models for clinical delivery for the NHS.

The new School will be co-located with a proposed NHS elective care centre and a new life science building owned by Highlands and Islands Enterprise. Although it will be physically located on the

and prevention, rural health, digital health, integrated health and social care and technology assisted living.

This initial investment will help to recruit technical and business specialist staff to design and operate the proposed facility. At the same time, the university will work closely with NHS Highland to build capacity in clinically active research staff who will work in partnership with university research teams.

Recruitment of staff will begin



Assisted Living Project - The 'fit' house

Carbon Dynamic, Invergordon, is a partner in a ground-breaking assisted living scheme, led by Albyn Housing Society. An outline business case for the project is currently under review as part of the City-Region Deal.

Built of modular construction, by Carbon Dynamic, the 'fit home' will host various levels of sensing equipment enabling the capture of data and associated predictive health analytics which could potentially help prevent episodes or events leading to ill health. It will also include flexible spaces and walls for storing medical equipment.

The unique collaboration, which also includes NHS Highland, will use the latest digital technology to enable vulnerable people to live independently in their communities for longer as well as preventing hospital

admissions and enabling early hospital discharge.

**Calum Macaulay,
Chief Executive at Albyn
Housing Society, said:**

"The central concept of these high-quality, sustainable homes is that they will include ambient, physiological and building sensors to collect data that can be monitored and responded to by a variety of agencies – potentially transforming the way health and social care is delivered.

"The collaboration has already included potential residents, doctors, nurses, occupational

therapists, health and social care managers, technologists, enterprise executives – anyone who can offer experience, expertise and insight to ensure this project results in a sustainable and successful model for the future.

"We're very excited to be progressing this unique initiative as part of the Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal given its enormous potential to develop a Highland, UK, even Global, solution that encompasses housing, health, care, digital technology and economic growth."

“ ...a Highland, UK, even Global, solution. ”

Calum Macaulay



2017/2018 Council Tax

How will the changes affect you?

From 1st April 2017 the Scottish Government is changing the basis on which properties are assessed for Council Tax and this will increase the charge for Council Tax properties that are banded E to H. The Highland Council has no discretion in this matter and must apply these increases to the Council Tax charges from 1st April 2017. Households living in properties in Bands A-D are not affected by these increases.

Further information on the Council Tax increases by the Scottish Government can be found on their website: www.gov.scot/Topics/Government/local-government/17999/counciltax

If you would like to check what band your property falls under you can check on the Assessor's website: www.saa.gov.uk (external link).

Queries relating to Council Tax Bands must be made to the Assessor by emailing: assessor@highland.gov.uk or by phoning **01463 703311**.

In addition to the increase in Council Tax set by the Scottish Government on properties falling within Bands E to H, The Highland Council has been given the flexibility to increase Council Tax on all properties, Bands A to H, by up to 3% from 1st April 2017. Council Tax legislation, set by the Scottish Government, determines any increase must be applied to all Bands in A to H.

At the meeting of The Highland Council on 16th February 2017 it was agreed to increase Council Tax on all properties by 3% from 1st April 2017.

If households would like support with their personal budgeting they should contact the Council's Welfare Support Team at: welfare.support@highland.gov.uk or by phoning **0800 0901004**. This support includes checking and claiming your entitlement to all benefits. Alternatively households may wish to contact their local Citizens Advice Bureau which provides a service on behalf of the Council to help individuals and households manage debts.

Financial assistance is available for those on low incomes to reduce their Council Tax bills. This is called Council Tax Reduction. A leaflet providing details of this relief can be found at: www.highland.gov.uk/counciltax

Households already in receipt of Council Tax Reduction will have their entitlement automatically recalculated.

Households can check whether they are eligible for assistance by completing The Highland Council's innovative 'Apply Once' online application form at: www.highland.gov.uk/applyonce

This form will also automatically identify any other entitlements that are administered by the Council based on the individual's circumstances. Households supply their details only once and the Council will put into payment all entitlements that are legitimately available to them.

The 82,000 households who are currently paying their Council Tax by Direct Debit do not need to cancel or change their existing payment amount as this will be updated automatically from 1st April 2017. Households who wish to set up a Direct Debit for payment of their Council Tax can do so at: www.highland.gov.uk/counciltax

Council Tax 2017/2018	2016/2017	2017/2018	Increase	Increase per the Scottish Government	Increase per The Highland Council
BAND	£	£	£	£	£
A	775.33	798.67	23.34	0	23.34
B	904.56	931.78	27.22	0	27.22
C	1,033.78	1,064.89	31.11	0	31.11
D	1,163.00	1,198.00	35.00	0	35.00
E	1,421.44	1,574.04	152.60	106.61	45.99
F	1,679.89	1,946.75	266.86	209.99	56.87
G	1,938.33	2,346.08	407.75	339.21	68.54
H	2,326.00	2,935.10	609.10	523.35	85.75

Badenoch and Strathspey has had its say

Local people had the chance to cast their votes on Saturday (25th February 2016) at the first ever 'Building a Better Badenoch & Strathspey' participatory budgeting event held in the Carrbridge Village Hall, and, as a result, a wide range of community projects are now set to benefit.

Around 140 people took part in deciding which projects should be supported from the £30,000 funding pot. £15,000 was made available by the Badenoch and Strathspey Councillors from their Ward Discretionary budget and this was matched with £15,000 from the Scottish Government Community Choices fund.

Participatory budgeting is a process of allocating funding by empowering local people to decide how funding should be spent. All applicants gave a 2 minute pitch to make their case for funding and then attendees were asked to vote for the 7 projects that they thought would make Badenoch and Strathspey a better place. A total of 26 out of the 35 projects put forward by community groups have been successful and will now receive funding to help them put their ideas into action.

Area Chair, Councillor Bill Lobban said: 'The community has decided which projects they think will help make Badenoch & Strathspey a better place and the whole process has been a great way to support community empowerment. This is the first time we have tried anything like this in the Ward and the feedback from those who attended the event was overwhelmingly positive.'

The successful bids were:

- Young at Heart Group - Afternoon Teas in Nethybridge
- Badenoch & Strathspey Community Transport Company - Learn 2 Help IT
- Grantown Beaver, Cub & Scout Association - Renovation of Grantown Beaver, Cub & Scout Hall
- Carrbridge Ahead - Carrbridge Playpark Improvements
- Grantown Grammar Parent Council - Music in the Community
- Grantown Health Centre Equipment Fund - Medical Equipment for Diagnosis
- Deshar Primary School Parent Council - School Grounds Improvement
- Laggan Community Association - A Helping Hand
- Cairngorm Biathlon & Nordic Ski Club - Growing Feet, Growing the Club!
- Grantown Grammar Parent Council - Strength Equipment for Beginners
- Carrbridge Village Hall - Equipment for New Kitchen in Village Hall
- Abernethy Golf Club - Go Shed & Equipment
- Aviemore Scouts - The Future of Scouting for Aviemore
- Dulnain Bridge CC - Dulnainbridge.com
- Grantown Swim Club - Club Championships and Coaching
- B&S Society of Artists - Workshops - Making Art in the Park
- Nethybridge Winter Lights - Repair of Vandalised Lights
- Kingussie High School Parent Council - Duke of Edinburgh - Outdoor Access and Inclusion
- Friends of Dulnain Bridge - Start Up Equipment for Social Events
- Active Schools for Aviemore Kids Shinty - Portable Shinty Goals
- Newtonmore Community Woodland & Development Trust - Wildcat Trail and Wildcat Experience Promotion
- Castle Roy Trust - Siege Works - Castle Roy
- Speysound Radio - FM Coverage Improvement
- Aviemore & Vicinity Community Council - Village Green Xmas Lights
- Grantown Initiative - Rail Bus to Grantown
- Kincairg Junior Shinty Club - Coaching and Equipment



SPACE JUNK LANDS IN INVERNESS

My World of Work Live!

New cutting-edge careers spaces aimed at inspiring youngsters have opened in Inverness.

Careers Lab and The Digital Studio are home to hi-tech interactive kit designed to inspire and improve people's knowledge of careers in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM). The kit, which is mainly aimed at young people aged 10 to 15-years-old, is available for free.

The Careers Lab was built in partnership with technology education firm Immersive Minds. It focuses on developing technology skills across six computer stations, including a chance to play SDS's Minecraft Careers World and get to grips with 3D printing.

The Lab's Virtual Reality headsets mean people can experience what it's like to work in industries such as construction. Virtual Reality Careers in Construction was developed with partners Heriot-Watt University, the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) and Animmersion UK Ltd.

Flexible workshop and cinema space – The Digital Studio – will be used for group sessions with activities focussing on the future of STEM careers. These include Space Junk, which looks at how satellites navigate space debris and Cracking Cryptography which tests ethical hacking skills.

Teachers and parents can also expand their knowledge of STEM opportunities, with events and specialist continuous professional learning sessions.

The Studio is also home to the Lab Rats, an after-school club for 10 to 15-year-olds.

My World of Work Live! complements the work of qualified SDS careers advisers offering free, impartial, career information, advice and guidance from the Church Street centre.

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) Chair John F. McClelland CBE and Leader of Highland Council Margaret Davidson unveiled the free My World of Work Live! facilities at SDS's Church Street careers centre on Friday 10th February.

John F. McClelland CBE, SDS Chair, said: "My World of Work Live is cutting-edge STEM career learning. The Highlands and Islands have so much to offer young people, and I hope the community hub we've created here at Church Street helps to open their eyes to that wealth of

opportunity.

"My World of Work Live! not only complements the work of careers advisers in the centre and in schools, but fits in perfectly with the wider STEM agenda across the region."

Margaret Davidson, Leader of Highland Council said: "Many young people are still exploring ideas and options for when they leave school. Hopefully SDS's My World of Work Live career spaces will help to inspire youngsters who have an interest in STEM subjects to see how they can transform that interest into future career paths."

John Keenan, Partnerships Manager at CITB Scotland, said: "We are committed to showcasing the fantastic opportunities that a career in construction can provide young people. With its emphasis on digital technology, which is being used much more in construction these days, My World of Work Live! is the ideal vehicle to get that message across."

Sam Harrison, Director of Animmersion UK Ltd said: "Working on this project with the three partners was a very rewarding experience. We were able to develop innovative new ways of bringing educational messages and content to a young audience and the results are truly remarkable. The use of virtual



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“ With its emphasis on digital technology, which is being used much more in construction these days, My World of Work Live! is the ideal vehicle to get that message across. ”

John Keenan

reality as a means of educational and training engagement offers boundless possibilities.”

Find out more about STEM industries and careers at: www.myworldofwork.co.uk and check for local updates on [facebook.com/SDSHighlands](https://www.facebook.com/SDSHighlands)

If you're a parent, carer or teacher and want to find out more about The Careers Lab, The Studio or Lab Rats contact: kirsty.wright@sds.co.uk



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ICT in schools

The Highland Council is the largest local government area in the UK. The council manages 225 schools across the Highland region teaching around 30,000 students and employing 4,000 teachers.

Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence aims to enable each student to be a successful learner, a confident individual, a responsible citizen and an effective contributor. The council's goal is to provide more students with internet-enabled devices, so they use modern and flexible technology to learn and develop.

“...we want to make sure that pupils, who want to learn about astrophysics but don't have a professor specialising in that, can access the resources 150 miles away...”

Louise Jones

The region needed an affordable solution which could enable shared resources and improve the learning experience for every student and teacher, especially as schools are spread across a huge geographical area.

Louise Jones is the ICT in Learning Manager of The Highland Council. She said: “At any point, we want to make sure that pupils, who want to learn about astrophysics but don't have a professor specializing in that, can access the resources 150 miles away at a school that does.”

Louise and colleagues worked with teachers, students, parents. They spoke to instructional technology experts and researched technology and approached that work well elsewhere.

Their strategy focused on addressing five key pillars: infrastructure and networks, appropriate technology, supporting leaders to expand their technology use, staff training opportunities and the Council's teachers.

Chromebooks were chosen as they provide students with the ability to guide their own learning and improve their communication and collaboration skills.

The Highland Council launched a Chromebooks pilot in May 2015 with one secondary and two primary schools in Tain.

At the same time, the schools introduced Google Apps for Education and Google Classroom. Once other schools saw how Google Apps for Education improved the learning and teaching experience, they wanted to use it as well. The council now has over 14,500 Google Apps for Education users.

Many of the Highland Council schools still use legacy devices, and Google Apps for Education allows them to access the same information, and use the same cloud technology, as students and teachers using Chromebooks through the Chrome Browser.

Louise created the Highland Chrome Pilot blog to share the



council's experience forming a strategy, rolling out the technology and using the devices to build on the four educational areas. She said: “Google Apps for Education is the glue that binds it all together because it's device neutral so students can use different devices to collaborate on a creative writing story.”

With Google Apps for Education, students have the resources to learn independently and take responsibility for their education. Louise said: “Students are motivated to do the work and will have the resources to truly put self-guided learning into action. Students also have the tools to reflect on and critique their own work. For example, students can see their writing progress using the revision history Draftback in Google Docs. Since there's unlimited storage with Google Apps for Education, a student working on a drum solo can record practicing and can see areas for improvement. In the past, this type of self assessment was limited by storage space on school servers.

Having the right technology frees up classroom time so teachers can focus on providing personalized instruction and students can learn from their peers. Since students have the ability to work on assignments at home, students and teachers



have more personalized discussions during class time. Chromebooks are helping students voice their opinions and ask teachers for more instruction on certain topics. For example, students can use a Pupil Voice on their Chromebooks to give teachers feedback in a private setting.

Students also have more time and the right tools to collaborate in the classroom. For example, after primary school students draw pictures write stories, they share their "books" with peers, who give them feedback.

Since students start using Chromebooks and Google Apps for Education in primary school, they're already familiar with the technology.

Louise continued: "The Highland Council introduced technology to improve the educational experience for students and teachers, but we soon realized that these tools aren't just about digital learning and teaching - they're about creating a digital culture across the region. We're overcoming the barriers of distance learning, independent learning skills are developed



“ Students are motivated to do the work and will have the resources to truly put self-guided learning into action. ”

Louise Jones

because of access to technology and tools for learning."

The council plans to roll out Chromebooks for all students in the last two years of primary school and all secondary school students, starting in August 2017.



...On the RIB, for a fast, adrenaline fuelled trip along the Moray coast... or on the Cruiser, for a calmer, family friendly experience.



Find us at:
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How did we do?

Measuring our performance

An annual report of Corporate Performance is prepared each autumn for the previous financial year. This is an assessment of Council performance against the commitments set out in the Council's Programme, Highland First, and its performance framework.

You can find the report at:

www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/16717/corporate_performance_report_2015-2016

The period 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016 shows that good progress is being made with 89% of the commitments (64 out of the total 72) being either completed, on target or where performance is being maintained.

Growth in Early Years Workforce

After piloting in 2015/16, we have extended flexibility across Highland, with 44 centres now offering a flexible service with various options of hours available. This will continue to grow as we plan for the delivery of 1140 hours required by 2020. Parents also have the option to purchase additional hours, on top of the allocated 600 hours of early learning and childcare, at the centres and some are choosing this. We will continue to promote this.

We continue to offer 600 hours to eligible 2 year olds, although the uptake of this by parents nationally is much less than anticipated. We will continue to promote and advise parents of the service available whilst acknowledging the importance of parental choice.

School and nursery placements are included across the Highlands on our work experience database for secondary school pupils to attend as short and long term placements. These can be stand alone or linked to a Skills for Work course. Nursery and Primary school placements are particularly popular, with 183 placements organised in session 15/16 across Highland.

We encourage young people to consider employment in child care settings with college programmes on offer to school pupils to complete childcare courses while staying on at school. These courses are offered across all 3 college areas in Highland, providing Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) progression from level 4 Early Education and Childcare through to Childcare and Development at level 7. There is increasing demand for level 4 & 5 courses in Early Education and Childcare with 101 places taken up last year. Information and taster events are centrally organised through the NHS programme and are offered each year in particular on Health, Education, Child & Social careers.

Affordable Housing

The £2.9 million affordable housing development of Tweeddale in the Town Centre of Fort William began in February 2016 providing 22 housing flats for council rent. Work began in the summer of 2016 on the site of the former Belhaven Ward, to create a mixture of 5 wheel-chair fully accessible bungalows and 8 flats for rent, in a partnership between Lochaber Housing Association and The Highland Council. These projects takes the total spend to some £40 million invested in Fort William over the past five years.

Community Works

Community works budgets, valued at £28m, including drainage, verges, grass cutting and road improvements were transferred to 8 local Area Committees to achieve local decision making and meet local priorities, for April 2016.

The Council decided in November 2016 to take grass cutting in-house. Amenity Services including grass cutting for The Highland Council will be provided by an in-house service from the beginning of the financial year 2017/18.

The current cost of providing grass cutting services throughout the Highlands is £2.393 million, included in an overall Grounds Maintenance budget of £4.2 million.

An options analysis identified that grass cutting can be delivered in-house at a similar cost and level of service as outsourcing - with improvements in productivity, and working practices, using improved and efficient plant and technology.

Connectivity

Free Ness Wifi was introduced in Inverness City Centre in December 2016.

Roads, Maintenance and Future Investment

The Highland Council is responsible for the maintenance of an incredible 6,752km of roads. The extensive road networks and periods of severe weather conditions make it very challenging to keep up with pothole repairs across the region. Following trials with neighbouring Local Authorities, a Jetpatcher was purchased with £150,000 from the capital programme in February 2016. Over a 10 year period the cost of purchase and in-house delivery will provide a saving against the contracted cost of jetpatching. The number of potholes reported and instructed has since dropped. The Council approved an additional £24.520 million in December 2015 for roads, bridges and piers to be included in the Capital Plan, together with an additional provision of £1.6 million for minor flood works over 10 years.



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Developing infrastructure

Following project development and planning consent, work began on building Stage 1 of the West Link in May 2016. This will provide the link between the southern distributor and the A82, including the Canal Parks Enhancement works, all due for completion in late 2017. The initial works is the A82 Glenurquhart Road at its junction with Bught Drive. The new River Ness Bridge construction involving works in the river will take place on two occasions during the periods July 2016 to October 2016 and July 2017 to October 2017, with completion of Stage 1 of the project in late 2017. The West Link will reduce traffic congestion in the city centre, improve journey times and support active travel through new cycling and walking routes. The scheme will also provide construction jobs and will enable housing development, with Developer contributions of some £3.75 million. See page 30.



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Flood Alleviation

During 2015/16 preparation of the flood protection scheme documents for Caol and Smithton & Culloden continued and we are on target for formal consultation and approval in 2016/17. Development of a flood protection scheme for the River Enrick (protecting Drumnadrochit) will be awarded to consultants in summer 2016.

In order to promote and assist Community Resilience (Flood Action Groups) in 'at risk' communities we have developed a community resilience template and internal discussions on its use with Ward Managers and Emergency Planners is ongoing.

During 2015/16 the detailed design of small flood alleviation projects in Kirkhill and Feabuie were progressed with construction expected in 2016/17.

Lobby work has been completed with the Scottish Government confirming an 80% funding commitment to Caol, Smithton & Culloden and River Enrick Flood Protection Schemes over the coming 6 years.

Development of our first local flood risk management plan continued during 2015/16, in line with the national programme. The publication of the Local Flood Risk Management Plan in June 2016 will help to raise awareness of flood risk in communities and the responsibilities towards watercourse maintenance. Community Councils will be informed of further initiatives to raise awareness and increase resilience in communities which will be developed over coming years.

Region for Young People

The Youth Employment strategy has now become the Developing Young Workforce strategy. A revised strategic plan has been put in place to deliver the recommendations set out by the Scottish Government. Highland Works is regularly updated on the implementation of this plan.

During 2015/16 there were 103 young people supported into employment. 60 young people were supported as a result of transitional funding support to third sector organisations and 43 through the Council's own delivered programmes (3 Graduate Placements, 32 Scottish Employment Recruitment Incentives and 8 through Employment Grants).

A project director has been appointed and is leading the development of the Science Skills Academy. The project is part of the City-region Deal with an allocation of £3m from Scottish Government. A Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) hub has opened at the Inverness Campus hosted by UHI and 5 Newton Rooms are planned for across the Highlands, including Caithness and Lochaber.

To implement the ICT in Learning policy, a pilot Associated School Group was set up to trail the use of 1-1 devices in schools. Training was provided to staff and pupils. A number of other smaller projects were set to explore the use of 1-1 devices in the delivery of learning and teaching. The outcomes of the pilot and smaller projects have been shared with staff across Highland in an online blog.

Positive Mental Health and Stigma

During 2015/16 academic year the percentage of children who reported they feel safe and cared for in school was 85.4% compared to 83% the previous year.

Our aim is for more young people to say they know where to get help with bullying and in 2015 there were 88.2% of young people who said they did, slightly lower than the 91% reported in 2013.

Our aim is for more young people to say that they would tell someone if they were being bullied. 76.7% said they would tell someone when surveyed in 2015, compared to 61.1% went last reported in 2013.

During academic year 2015/16, the number of children entering P1 who demonstrated an ability to develop positive relationships increased to 94% compared to 91% in the previous year.

The Highland Community Planning Partnership Board members have given their full support to a campaign running across the Highlands to reduce loneliness and social isolation. Community factors that influence loneliness and social isolation can include access to transport, neighbourhood safety and outdoor facilities.

Community Empowerment

Local people have cast their votes for community projects as part of The Highland Council participatory budgeting events, held across the Highlands. The Community Empowerment Act 2015 requires councils and other public bodies to support communities, giving them more influence over what matters to them. It requires the public sector to work in partnership to support the development of local action, helping communities take part in decision-making. Thousands of pounds have been made available locally for people to decide how they want to see the money spent in their community.

Developing a successful and thriving City and growing a sustainable Highland economy



The City-Region Deal Heads of Terms was signed in March 2016 paving the way for securing the long term productivity and economic growth of the region and positioning 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 £800million of investment in a deal which was signed in January 2017. This 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.

What did our survey tell us?

The Highland Council's annual Performance and Attitudes survey is used to gauge levels of satisfaction with Council services.

Every year the Council surveys members of its Citizens Panel, which is designed to be representative of the adult population. This year, 1084 responses were received from a possible 2,340 panel members. Overall, while the survey provides a mixed picture of performance, it also demonstrates that we continue to deliver quality services which are valued by the public. A number of factors may influence satisfaction levels

which annual reductions in the Council's revenue budget on key factor. Going forward there are further significant challenges facing the Council with continuing reductions in revenue budgets anticipated, it will therefore continue to be particularly challenging to improve or maintain positive public perceptions on the quality of our Services.

Overall satisfaction with Council services has dropped below the target of maintaining above 80% and during 2015/16. 73% of the panel say they were satisfied overall with Council services in 2015/16 compared to 83% in 2014/15.



Council qualities

We asked the panel their views on Council qualities and overall 57% of the panel believe the Council meets or exceeds their general expectations, (69% the previous year). In being asked to rank qualities in order of importance, 'maintains good quality services' is ranked 1st with a notable

increase from 68% to 75% in 2015/16. This table shows the top 5 in order of importance with performance trends.

Our values are: *listening; being open; valuing; improving; supporting; partnering and delivering*. Many of the qualities scored by respondents are reflective of our values.

Qualities as ranked in order of importance by respondents in 2016 Survey	Respondents mentioning Quality in their top 5		
	(2015/16) %	(2014/15) %	(2013/14) %
1. Maintains good quality local services	75	68	69
2. Listens to local people	61	62	58
3. Provides value for money	60	54	51
4. Is efficient	46	38	38
5. Treats all residents fairly	42	36	38

Community Life

The panel were asked to rate a range of issues with key results including:

Considering community safety the top 3 areas of concern for the panel remain the same and are road safety (80%), alcohol abuse (70%) and drug misuse (65%).

96.7% of the panel consider the area within 15 minutes' walk of their home to be 'very' or 'fairly' safe compared to 96.8% the previous year.

When asked about awareness of the impact that hate incidents or crimes have on people in Highland 70.9% said they were aware (73.4% in 2014/15) with 29.1% saying they were not aware (26.6% in 2014/15).

76% believe the Council has strengthened the profile of the Gaelic language to a great or some extent (76% in 2014/15).

81.6% agree that Highland should do everything it can to get rid of all types of prejudice compared to 75% in 2014/15. An improving trend can be demonstrated from 66.9% agreeing when the question was first asked in 2010/11.

Council Services

There are 7 services that 90% or more of respondents say they use:

- Refuse/bin collection (98%)
- Recycling facilities (97%)
- Road repairs/potholes (97%)
- Winter road maintenance (96%)
- Street cleaning (92%)
- Street lighting (91%)
- Pavement maintenance (91%)

The top four most important services for the public are also amongst the most used; road repairs and potholes, winter road maintenance, refuse/bin collection and parks & open

spaces. High satisfaction also continues to be found with refuse (79%) and parks & open spaces (77%). The table below highlights the most important services to respondents where at least 10% of the panel placed them in their top 10 most important:

Importance of services to respondents - appearance in respondents' top five					
Services	2016 %	2015 %	2014 %	2013 %	2012 %
Road repairs and pot holes	66	63	57	57	61
Winter road maintenance	43	50	43	48	50
Refuse/bin collection	26	45	47	41	48
Public Parks and other open spaces	24	20	21	19	18
Primary education	23	21	19	19	22
Secondary education	21	17	18	18	18
Recycling facilities	18	28	30	32	32
Swimming pools	18	15	16	15	14
Other sports facilities	16	15	13	13	11
Pavement maintenance	14	15	16	12	14
Libraries	14	17	20	19	16
Care at home services	13	9	8	9	10
Council Service Points	11	10	11	6	7
Residential homes for disabled/elderly people	11	7	6	8	7
Street cleaning	10	14	15	16	17

Our online services

Online services are becoming increasingly important to both the public and the Council as an effective way to make contact, request a service or pay a bill. This year we asked new questions to gauge the panel's views on overall satisfaction with their online experience at:

www.highland.gov.uk

Overall 75.1% said they were very or fairly satisfied with online services.

In relation to questions on the qualities of online services:

- 85% said they would use online services again;
- 75% agreed that online services were easy to use;
- 71% said they were able to find the online services they needed;
- 70% agreed that online services were quick to complete;
- 68% agreed that online services were easy to find.

Areas for Improvement

Services with higher levels of respondents and low satisfaction score, and where improvement actions are in place are road and winter maintenance. An update on both these services was provided in the annual performance report to Council on 8th September 2016. The report highlighted that a review of winter maintenance is held annually in order to provide the most effective service possible, and investment of an additional £24.3 million is planned over the next 9 years in roads, bridges and piers. This will help reduce the deterioration; however it will take a few years before the investment is reflected in the road condition survey results and improves public opinion.

How did we do: Local and National Statutory Performance Indicators 2015/16

The latest year's report on Statutory Performance Indicators for 2015/16 is a positive report of improving performance overall. Demonstrated by 75% of SPIs showing a 5% or more improvement or where performance was maintained compared to 74% the year before.

There is a risk of data being misinterpreted; for example, Highland spend on roads maintenance has increased in response to political and public priorities to improve road conditions, but the national benchmark assumes that the lowest cost per kilometre of road maintained demonstrates better performance.

Indicators that have shown a change of:

Areas which show improvement by 10% or more between 2014/15 and 2015/16 are:



Care & Learning

Looked After Children

The time taken between a child being accommodated and permanency decreased from **15 months** to **9.7 months**.

Development and Infrastructure

Business

The cost per Business Supported has reduced from **£817.77** to **£655.51**.

Community Services

Environmental Health

The average number of hours on site for domestic noise complaints requiring attendance on site reduced from **146 hours** to **53.5 hours**.

Housing

The average time taken to complete emergency repairs improved from **9.1 hours** to **7.9 hours**.

Finance and Corporate

Rates

The cost of Non Domestic Rates collection per chargeable property reduced from **£20.68** to **£17.75**.

Indicators that have shown a change of:

Areas where performance has declined by 10% or more between 2014/15 and 2015/16 are:



Care & Learning

Education

The cost per pre-school registration has increased from **£2,864.66** to **£3,679.87**.

Development and Infrastructure

Planning

The cost per planning application increased from **£3,425.50** to **£4,286.70**.

Finance and Corporate

Creditors

The unit cost of creditors invoices increased from **£1.14** to **£1.30** between 2014/15 and 2015/16.

Community Services

Roads

The % of unclassified needs requiring treatment has increased from **38.8%** to **46.4%**.

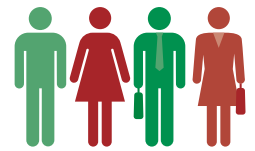
Housing

The % of rent lost through housing voids increased from **0.9%** to **1.0%**.

Procurement

The proportion of total direct spend with small to medium enterprises (SME) has reduced from **28%** to **23.1%**.

How do we compare: Benchmarking



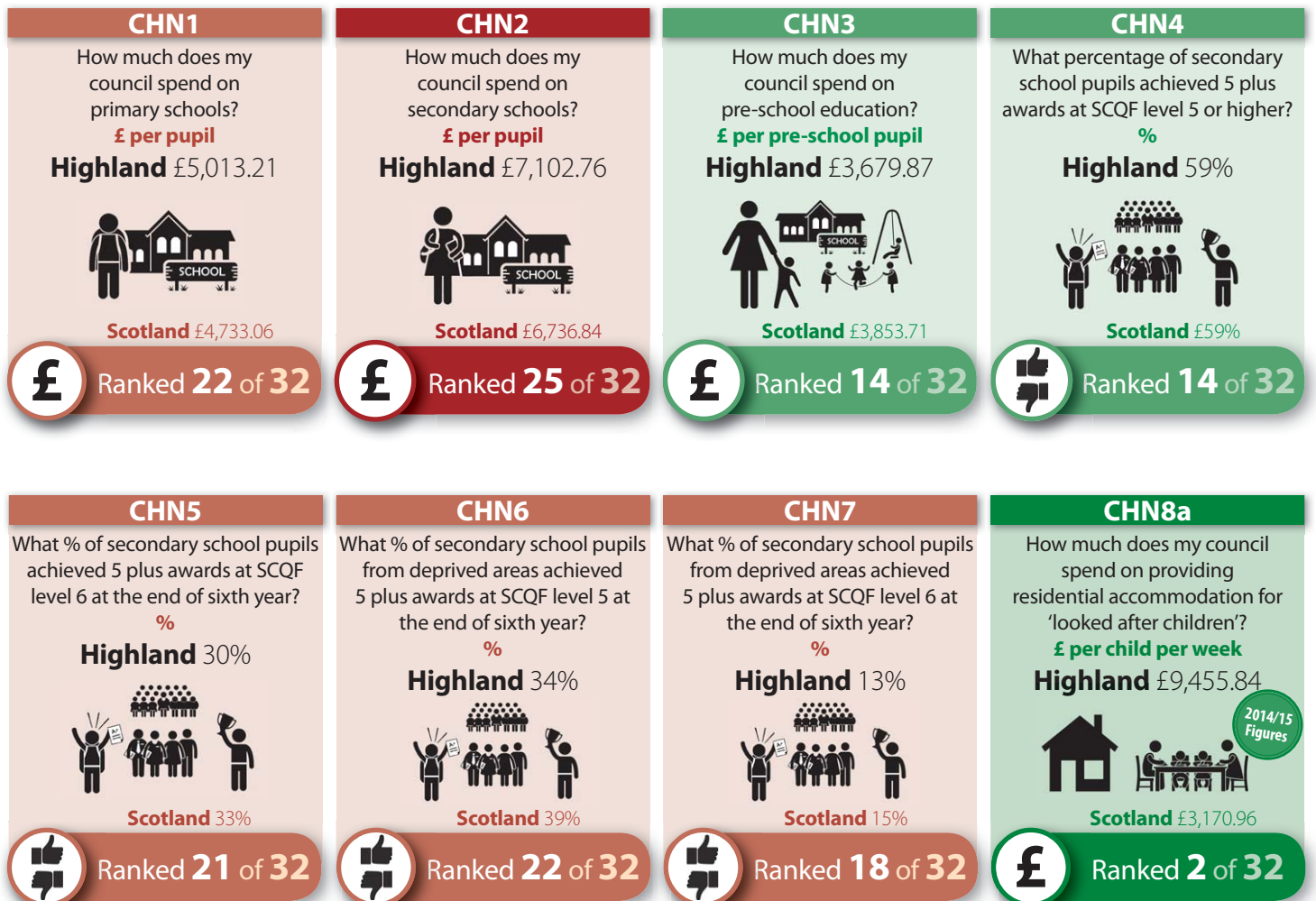
What is the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF)?

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.

Children's Services



CHN8b
 How much does my council spend on providing fostering/family placements for 'looked after children'?
£ per child per week
Highland £403.31
 Scotland £278.30
 2014/15 Figures
 Ranked **2** of 32

CHN9
 How many 'looked after children' are being cared for in foster/family placements rather than residential accommodation?
 %
Highland 87.1%
 Scotland 90.1%
 2014/15 Figures
 Ranked **13** of 32

CHN10
 How satisfied are residents with local schools?
 %
Highland 79.3%
 Scotland 78.0%
 Ranked **21** of 32

CHN11
 What % of pupils enter a positive destination after leaving school?
 %
Highland 93.7%
 Scotland 92.9%
 2014/15 Figures
 Ranked **14** of 32

CHN12a
 Average total points awarded for levels of attainment achieved - Overall average tariff
Average tariff score
Highland 877.02
 Scotland 875.23
 Ranked **15** of 32

CHN12b
 Average total points awarded for levels of attainment achieved - SIMD Quintile 1
Average tariff score
Highland 543
 Scotland 600
 Ranked **20** of 32

CHN12c
 Average total points awarded for levels of attainment achieved - SIMD Quintile 2
Average tariff score
Highland 640
 Scotland 739
 Ranked **30** of 32

CHN12d
 Average total points awarded for levels of attainment achieved - SIMD Quintile 3
Average tariff score
Highland 876
 Scotland 862
 Ranked **17** of 32

CHN12e
 Average total points awarded for levels of attainment achieved - SIMD Quintile 4
Average tariff score
Highland 968
 Scotland 997
 Ranked **20** of 32

CHN12f
 Average total points awarded for levels of attainment achieved - SIMD Quintile 5
Average tariff score
Highland 1,177
 Scotland 1,195
 Ranked **11** of 32

SIMD Quintiles

Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)

Quintile 1 = 20% most disadvantaged

Quintile 5 = 20% least disadvantaged



Corporate Services

CORP1
How much of my council's total running costs is spent on administrative support services?
%
Highland 7.7%
Scotland 5.5%




Ranked 29 of 32

CORP2
How much does my council spend on supporting elected members?
£ per 1,000 people
Highland £35,338.09
Scotland £29,980.64



Ranked 23 of 32

CORP3b
How many women are in top 5% earners?
%
Highland 47%
Scotland 52%



Ranked 26 of 32

CORP3c
What is the gender pay gap?
%
Highland 7.20%
Scotland 4.99%



Ranked 23 of 32

CORP4
How much does my council spend on collecting council tax?
£ per home
Highland £10.68
Scotland £10.34



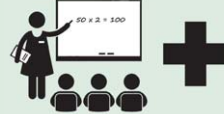
Ranked 20 of 32

CORP5b2
How long does it take my council to attend a domestic noise complaint on average?
Hours
Highland 53.50 hours
Scotland 70.30 hours




Ranked 23 of 32

CORP6a
What is the level of sickness absence for teachers in my council?
Average number of days per teacher
Highland 6.08 days
Scotland 6.12 days




Ranked 16 of 32

CORP6b
What is the level of sickness absence in my council?
Average number of days per employee (non-teachers)
Highland 9.61 days
Scotland 10.63 days




Ranked 6 of 32

CORP7
How efficient is my council at collecting council tax?
%
Highland 95.6%
Scotland 96.2%




Ranked 20 of 32

CORP8
How efficient is my council at paying invoices on time?
%
Highland 91.3%
Scotland 92.8%




Ranked 19 of 32

C-AST1
How many council buildings are suitable for their current use?
%
Highland 64.2%
Scotland 79.6%



Ranked 31 of 32

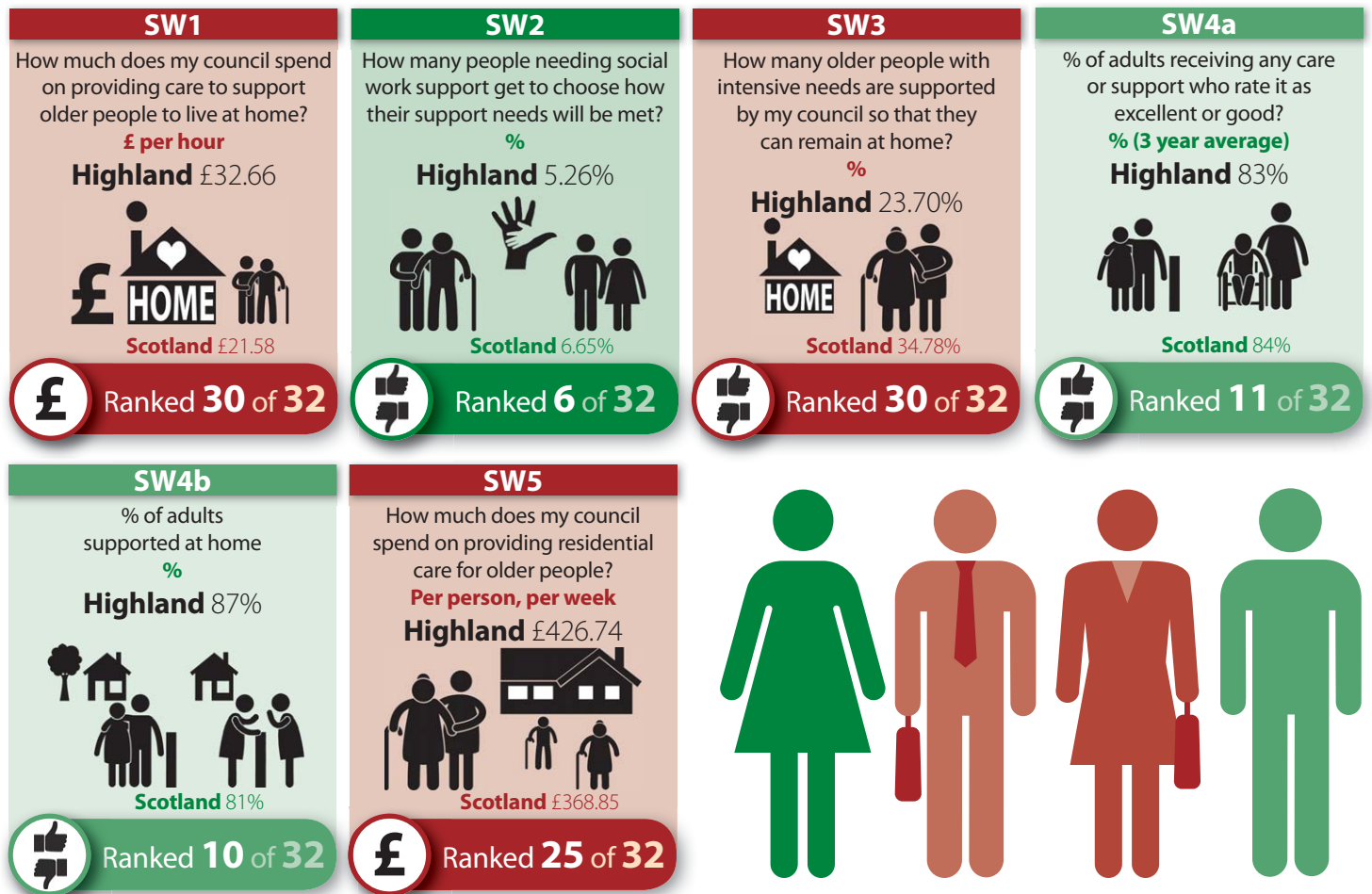
C-AST2
How many council buildings are in a satisfactory condition?
%
Highland 80.3%
Scotland 81.5%



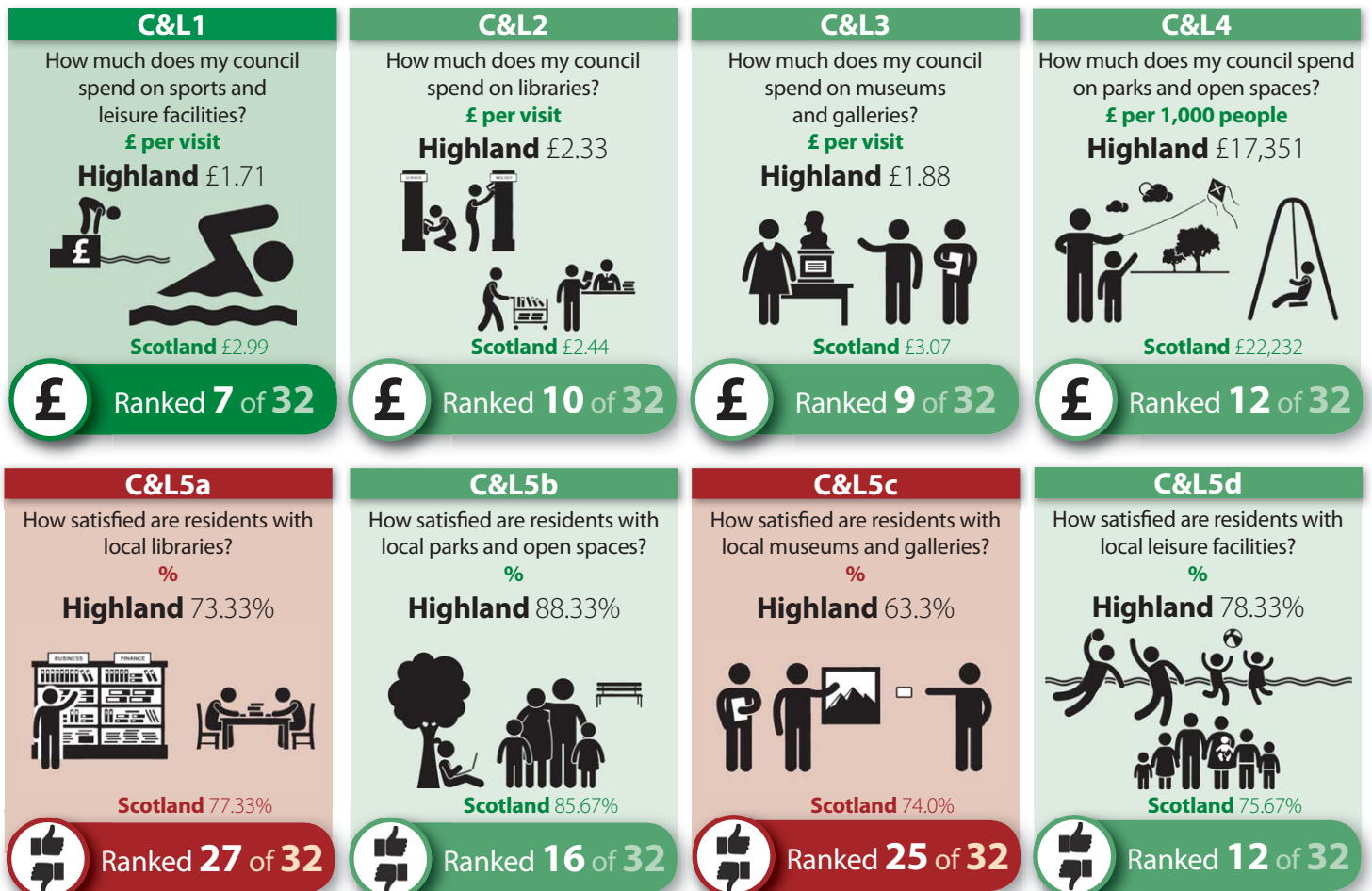
Ranked 22 of 32



Adult Social Care Services



Culture and Leisure Services



Environmental Services

ENV1a

How much does my council spend on refuse collection (net)?
£ per premise
Highland £94.44



Scotland £63.44

£ Ranked **32** of **32**

ENV2a

How much does my council spend on waste disposal (e.g. recycling and landfill) (net)?
£ per premise
Highland £107.57



Scotland £97.02

£ Ranked **23** of **32**

ENV3a

How much does my council spend on street cleaning?
£ per 1,000 people
Highland £11,418



Scotland £15,480

£ Ranked **11** of **32**

ENV3c

How clean are my local streets?
%
Highland 93%




Scotland 93%

👍 Ranked **21** of **32**

ENV4a

How much does my council spend maintaining the condition of my roads?
£ per kilometre
Highland £6,411




Scotland £10,791

£ Ranked **7** of **32**

ENV4b

How many of my local A class roads are in need of repair?
%
Highland 27%




Scotland 29%

👍 Ranked **19** of **32**

ENV4c

How many of my local B class roads are in need of repair?
%
Highland 34.7%




Scotland 34.8%

👍 Ranked **24** of **32**

ENV4d

How many of my local C class roads are in need of repair?
%
Highland 39.0%



Scotland 34.7%

👍 Ranked **22** of **32**

ENV4e

How many of my local unclassified class roads are in need of repair?
%
Highland 46.4%



Scotland 40.1%

👍 Ranked **26** of **32**

ENV5a

How much does my council spend on providing trading standards?
£ per 1,000 people
Highland £4,169.00



Scotland £5,873.30

£ Ranked **8** of **32**

ENV5b

How much does my council spend on providing environmental health
£ per 1,000 people
Highland £18,914



Scotland £16,849

£ Ranked **24** of **32**

ENV6

How much household waste is recycled by my council?
%
Highland 45.5%




Scotland 44.3%

👍 Ranked **20** of **32**

ENV7a

How satisfied are residents with local refuse collection?
%
Highland 87.7%




Scotland 83.0%

👍 Ranked **13** of **32**

ENV7b

How satisfied are residents with local street cleanliness?
%
Highland 73.00%



Scotland 73.67%

👍 Ranked **21** of **32**

Housing Services

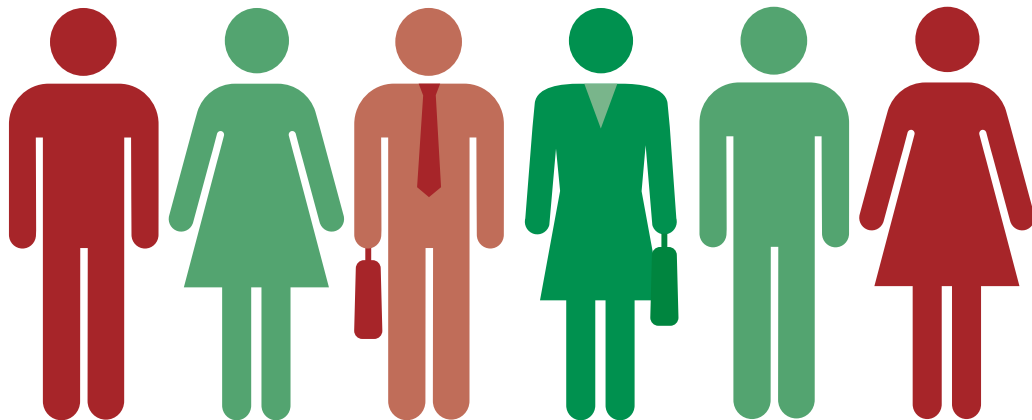
HSN1
How much rent is owed to the council due to arrears (gross)?
%
Highland 4.76%
Scotland 6.25%
Ranked **5** of **32**

HSN2
How much rent was lost due to empty properties?
%
Highland 1.00%
Scotland 1.05%
Ranked **16** of **32**

HSN3
What is the quality and standard of housing provided by my council measured by the Scottish Housing Quality Standard?
%
Highland 90.83%
Scotland 92.50%
Ranked **22** of **32**

HSN4
How long does it take my council to complete non emergency repairs?
average number of days
Highland 7.53 days
Scotland 9.38 days
Ranked **7** of **32**

HSN5
How energy efficient is the housing provided by my council as measured by the Scottish Housing Quality Standard?
%
Highland 92.36%
Scotland 96.16%
Ranked **23** of **32**



Economic Development

ECON1
How many unemployed people have been assisted into work by my council?
%
Highland 5.8%
Scotland 13.9%
Ranked **25** of **32**

ECON2
Cost per planning application?
£
Highland £4,286.70
Scotland £4,832.00
Ranked **15** of **32**

ECON3
Average time (weeks) per Planning Application
weeks
Highland 10.7
Scotland 11.2
Ranked **21** of **32**

ECON4
Total direct spend with Highland Small/Medium Enterprises to increase by 5% by 2017
%
Highland 23.1%
Scotland 19.7%
Ranked **11** of **32**

ECON5
Number of Business Gateway start-ups per 10,000 population
Highland 10.8
Scotland 16.9
Ranked **29** of **32**



Scottish council elections: they're on your doorstep

The Scottish council elections take place on Thursday 4th May. 16 and 17 year olds can vote in the Scottish local government elections for the first time. Make sure you can take part, registering to vote is easy.

**Monday 17th April
is the deadline to
register to vote.
Don't miss out!**

You can register online at:
www.gov.uk/register-to-vote.

You'll need to provide your National Insurance number, your date of birth and your address. If you're not yet 16 you won't need your National Insurance number to register.

If you can't vote in person you can

**DON'T WASTE YOUR CHANCE
TO ELECT YOUR
LOCAL COUNCILLORS**

Register by 17 April

gov.uk/register-to-vote



still have your say with a postal or proxy vote (where a person you trust votes on your behalf).

Go to yourvotematters.co.uk to find out how to apply.



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West Link bridge takes shape

The West Link and Canal Parks Enhancement are progressing well and remain on programme and on budget.

The road is now well developed with surfacing works progressing, benefitting from the continued good weather. Roadworks and surfacing is ongoing from both the north and south side converging on the bridge crossing site.

Fabrication of the bridge beams, welding and painting is nearly complete and one of the largest cranes in Europe was transported to Inverness to lift the bridge beams into position. These beams weigh 94 Tonnes each.

The beams were lifted in pairs, by the 70m crane, with a total weight of 188 Tonnes per lift, starting on the south side. Approximately a third of the span was lifted into place in late February. The crane then relocated to the north side of the river and, standing at over 100m high, lifted the north third in, followed by the central sections, which were temporarily bolted together prior to the in-situ welding of the central sections.

Work will now commence on the bridge deck which is constructed of reinforced concrete finished with blacktop surfacing.

In July works will then re-commence in the river to install the scour protection for the bridge piers – to protect from very significant flood flows.

The glazing for the new Canal Parks Clubhouse is now in and

external blockwork is progressing well. During the rugby closed season, the existing clubhouse will be demolished and the new synthetic pitch will be created and two other grass pitches prepared to allow handover in August 2017.

The West Link Stage 1 is programmed to be completed and open to traffic in December.

Work on the golf course is also progressing well with greens, tees and fairways all being constructed together with the associated drainage works. It is anticipated that the new course will become playable in Spring 2019, allowing the golf club to relocate and thus permitting the construction of Stage 2 and the second canal crossing to start. The West Link is due for completion in 2020.





Highland is making Earth Hour matter

Recently designated as a "Super Local Authority" by WWF, The Highland Council will be supporting Earth Hour for the 10th consecutive year in 2017.

You can help support Earth Hour this year by switching your lights off on **Saturday 25th March at 8.30pm**. In addition to floodlights being switched off at local landmarks there are a number of events and activities happening that you could attend:

- Eden Court Cinema in Inverness will be screening 'How To Let Go Of The World

And Love All The Things Climate Can't Change'. Prior to the film, a selection of videos and posters from local schools will be screened. There will also be a Q&A session with the Council's climate change team after the film.

- The Highlands Astronomical Society will be hosting a stargazing event at Culloden Observatory from 8.15pm - 10.30pm.

- Highlife Highland libraries across the region will have climate change displays and some will be hosting events such as talks and story time.
- Keep tabs on the Highland Council website and @Carbon_CLEVER Twitter feed throughout March for posters and videos to be shared from a school competition on ways to tackle climate change.

Details of these and any additional events will be posted on:

www.wwf.org.uk/earthhour

and on: www.whatsonhighlands.com

or visit: www.earthhour.org/scotland

**MAKE YOUR
EARTH HOUR
MATTER**

60+
EARTH HOUR

25 MARCH 2017 8.30PM
**JOIN IN TO SUPPORT
ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE**

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wwf.org.uk/earthhour

Council commends FilmG Highland successes



The success of Highland film makers in the ninth annual Gaelic FilmG Awards was highly commended today (1st March 2017) at The Highland Council's Education, Children and Adult Services Committee.

Committee Chairman, Cllr Drew Millar said:

"Congratulations to all the Highland entries, shortlists and winners of FilmG. I am particularly pleased to see so many of our schools, both pupils and staff taking part in this prestigious competition, which I am delighted that Highland Council was able to support as sponsor of the open Best Comedy award."

Director of Care and Learning, Bill Alexander said:

"We have some extremely talented people here in the Highlands, young and 'older', whose talents and creativity shine in the spotlight of opportunity created by FilmG. A huge well done to all those who took part and to the Highland winners.

"2017 has been a hugely successful year for Highland film makers. Seventeen FilmG workshops took place in Highland region, while 9 youth groups or individual teens were encouraged to make their own films, independently, with just a little support from the FilmG team. Nine Highland Sports Commentary entries were submitted to the competition, following workshops with Seumas Dòmhnallach of the BBC and Hugh Dan MacLennan."



Kirsty Scott and her BSGI class alongside actor Gary Lewis

This year's FilmG shortlist featured:

School	Film Title	Shortlists
Gairloch High	Briste	Best Film, Best Script (Amy Gudgeon & Cameron MacLennan), Best Performance (Sandi MacLean, S4 pupil)
Eòin Cumming – S2 pupil from Gairloch	Strì ris a' chiad chloich	Best Young Filmmaker, Best Mobile Short, FilmG Gaelic Prize
Ruaraidh Alexander – S1 pupil from Gairloch	Falach-fead	Best Young Filmmaker, Best Animation
Claire Frances MacNeil – S5 pupil from Lochaber	Bodach na Beinne	Best Young Filmmaker, FilmG Gaelic Prize
Dingwall Academy	Geamannan na Gàidhlig	FilmG Gaelic Prize
Millburn Academy	Eachdraidh Goirid na Gàidhlig	FilmG Gaelic Prize for Learners
Plockton High	Strì Ceitidh	FilmG Gaelic Prize for Learners
Christina MacDonald	Badenoch VS Skye	Best Sports Commentary
Kate Bradley	Lochaber VS Skye	Best Sports Commentary
Eòin Cumming	Gairloch VS Sleat & Strath	Best Sports Commentary

It was a clean sweep for Gairloch, with Eòin and Ruairidh winning a prize each Best Mobile Short and Best Animation, respectively. Cameron MacLennan and Amy Gudgeon won Best Script with Briste.

Also scooping a top award was Kate Bradley of Ardnamuchan High School, whose commentary on the women's shinty Valerie Fraser Cup Final won her the new Best Sports Commentary award title.

In the open category, adult talent from Highland also shone, with Portree's Alannah Beaton making 4 shortlists and Skye Camanachd player Kerr Gibb making the cut twice for his documentary.

Iain Wilson and Ally Macleod of Staffin and Duntulm made the shortlist twice, for their comedy,



Eòghan Stewart with Anthony Browne, of BBC The Social

"Girls, Strì is Macaroni" while Alness Academy Gaelic teacher Eòghan Stewart's satirical "FilmG no Die Trying" made the cut too.

Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Inbhir Nis Primary 7 teacher, Kirsty Scot took home the Best Community Film and Best Drama took home the

Keira O'Brien made the shortlist for Best Performance!

The award for Best Comedy went to Alannah Pheutan from the Isle of Skye for her entry Gaidheal Gu Luath which sets out to create a perfect treatment to generate the perfect Gael. The much-anticipated People's Choice award also went to Alannah.

Kerr Gibb took home Best Documentary, Eòghan Stewart won Best Mobile Short, and Kirsty Scott & P7 at BSGI continued last year's success, winning Best Community Film and Best Drama. Iain Cumming, Gairloch won the Best Script with 'Às dèidh a' Bhàthaidh'.



Writers of Gairloch High - Briste, Amy and Cameron, with stars of BBC Alba's Na Saboteurs and Màiri MacLennan of Bannan

Best Drama and Best Community awards for their film Latha Spòrs which covers the most competitive day of the year - P7 Sports Day. Double-act Lewis Boag and

2017 Lochaber Mòd Promotional Leaflet launched



More details available from @LochAbar2017
www.ancomunn.co.uk

The Lochaber Royal National Mòd Local Organising Committee have launched the Loch Abar Mòd promotional leaflet.

The Local Committee, who are supported by the Highland Council Gaelic Team, are currently fund raising to host the Mòd in Fort William which officially opens on Friday 13th October.

The Mòd is set to bring £2.5 million to the local economy as visitors and competitors meet up for the annual Gaelic festival which is in its 125th year.



© Iain Ferguson

All-abilities access improvements in Glen Nevis

A new all-abilities bridge crossing the River Nevis by the Glen Nevis Visitor Centre in Fort William has been installed.

The 31 tonne structure has a span of 42 meters and was lifted in to place with the aid of a 750 tonne mobile crane. It has been designed to accommodate the high visitor numbers experienced at this popular site and replaces an older structure nearby, which will be removed.

Other improvements included in the project are upgraded access to the existing bridge at the youth hostel and upgraded paths to provide an all-abilities

riverside walk between the visitor centre and youth hostel.

The project is being delivered by Highland Council and Nevis Landscape Partnership, and is funded by The Highland Council, Heritage Lottery Fund, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Scottish Rural Development Programme and Sport Scotland.

The Highland Council owns Glen Nevis Visitor Centre, which receives around 65,000 visitors per annum, with numbers climbing Ben Nevis itself at



around 120,000 per annum.

In addition to investment in the bridge, the Council is also contributing £35,000 to refurbishment of the visitor centre which will provide new and informative displays including vital mountain safety information for those venturing to the summit of Ben Nevis.

New family feeling in Fort William

A new "Family Centre" will bring all the relevant health professionals together on one site in a project within the old school hostel, adjacent to Lochaber High School at Camaghael in Fort William.

The first phase of this project will be used to provide office accommodation for Health and Social Care staff, well ahead of the termination of the lease of their existing accommodation at Fulton House, Gordon Square, Fort William in December 2017.

In phase two of the project, the building will be further modernised to future proof the delivery of 21st century services. It will bring Children's Services including; Children and Families Social Work, Children's Disability

Services, the Youth Action Team, Health Visiting, School Nursing, Primary Mental Health workers, and range of other Health professionals, together under a single roof.

The primary purpose of this phase, and of the project as whole, is to reap the benefits of closer integration, build relationships between professionals and to allow children and families an optimum service with the minimum of bureaucracy. There will be child and family friendly space within this phase where direct services can be delivered in a relaxed and professional manner.



Photo below from left to right: Simon Jeffrey - Practice lead School Years; Fiona Livingstone - Business Support; Elizabeth Stevenson - Health Visitor/ School Nurse; Matthew Musset - Area Principle Educational Psychologist; Lynne Donoghue - School Nurse Assistant; Phil Kyle - Systems Support Officer; Frances Smith, and Eilidh MacDonald - Business Support.



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Jarlshof is an extraordinary ancient settlement offering a glimpse into Shetland's unique past. Discover a range of archaeological gems in one place such as Neolithic houses, an Iron Age broch and Norse longhouse.



Located in the Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site, **the Ness of Brodgar** is one of the finest stone complexes in western Europe. The site is open for a limited time from 5th July until 23rd August 2017.

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