

## Highland Council Asset Transfer Request Approach

### Asset Transfer Request Form

**This is an asset transfer request made under Part 5 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.**

#### **Section 1: Information about the community transfer body (CTB) making the request**

1.1 Name of the CTB making the asset transfer request

Highlands & Islands Skills CIC

1.2 CTB address. This should be the registered address, if you have one.

Postal address:

Kintail House, Beechwood Business Park, Inverness

Postcode: IV2 3BW

1.3 Contact details. Please provide the name and contact address to which correspondence in relation to this asset transfer request should be sent.

Contact name: Callum Mackintosh

Postal address: Kintail House, Beechwood Business Park, Inverness

Postcode: IV2 3BW

Email:

Telephone:

☒ We agree that correspondence in relation to this asset transfer request may be sent by email to the email address given above. *(Please tick to indicate agreement)*

*You can ask the relevant authority to stop sending correspondence by email, or change the email address, by telling them at any time, as long as 5 working days' notice is given.*

1.4 Please mark an “X” in the relevant box to confirm the type of CTB and its official number, if it has one.

	Company, and its company number is .....	SC853712
	Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO), and its charity number is .....	
	Community Benefit Society (BenCom), and its registered number is .....	
	Unincorporated organisation (no number)	

**Please attach a copy of the CTB’s constitution, articles of association or registered rules.**

1.5 Has the organisation been individually designated as a community transfer body by the Scottish Ministers?

No ☒

Yes ☐

Please give the title and date of the designation order:

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1.6 Does the organisation fall within a class of bodies which has been designated as community transfer bodies by the Scottish Ministers?

No ☐

Yes ☒

If yes what class of bodies does it fall within?

Community Transfer Body

We are a Community Interest Company satisfying ALL the requirements set out in Part 5 of the Community Empowerment Act

## Section 2: Information about the asset requested

2.1 Please identify the asset - land or building(s) - which this asset transfer request relates.

*You should provide a street address or grid reference and any name by which the land or building is known. If you have identified the land on the relevant authority's register of land, please enter the details listed there.*

*It may be helpful to provide one or more maps or drawings to show the boundaries of the land requested. If you are requesting part of a piece of land, you must attach a map and full description of the boundaries of the area to which your request relates. If you are requesting part of a building, please make clear what area you require. a drawing may be helpful*

Torvean Quarry, Inverness, IV3 8JN

ARCGIS coordinates – N 843,214 - E 264,613

Drawing attached

Confirmed and identified as **non operational**

2.2 Please provide the UPRN (Unique Property Reference Number), if known.

*This should be given in the relevant authority's register of land*

UPRN: 130112520

### Section 3: Type of request, payment and conditions

3.1 Please tick what type of request is being made:

☒

for ownership (under section 79(2)(a)) - go to section 3A

☐

for lease (under section 79(2)(b)(i)) – go to section 3B

☐

for other rights (section 79(2)(b)(ii)) - go to section 3C

#### 3A – Request for ownership

What price are you prepared to pay for the asset requested? :

Proposed price: £1.00

Based purely on the socio-economic benefit our ownership will bring, its annual economic value added surpasses the value of the site alone. And given the potential cleanup cost of the site and prevention measures to be put in place to stop further fly-tipping and the above socio-economic value we bring to the region we believe this is a very fair price.

Please attach a note setting out any other terms and conditions you wish to apply to the request.

#### 3B – Request for lease

What is the length of lease you are requesting?

How much rent are you prepared to pay? Please make clear whether this is per year or per month.

Proposed rent: £                      per

Please attach a note setting out any other terms and conditions you wish to be included in the lease, or to apply to the request in any other way.

### 3C – Request for other rights

What are the rights you are requesting?

- Right of first refusal on any adjoining land owned by The Highland Council
- Right of access across all routes to the site including for construction, utilities connections, operations and management of the site
- Right to relocate or negotiate public rights of way
- Right to develop the site (subject to planning)
- Right to make any environmental improvements

Do you propose to make any payment for these rights?

Yes ☐

No ☒

If yes, how much are you prepared to pay? Please make clear what period this would cover, for example per week, per month, per day?

Proposed payment: £                      per

Please attach a note setting out any other terms and conditions you wish to apply to the request.

## Section 4: Community Proposal

- 4.1 Please set out the reasons for making the request and how the land or building will be used.

*This should explain the objectives of your project, why there is a need for it, any development or changes you plan to make to the land or building, and any activities that will take place there.*

The request to acquire Torvean Quarry by asset transfer is essential to establishing Centre of Excellence for Infrastructure Skills, Safety and Innovation which aims to address urgent and growing skills gaps across construction, civil engineering, and the green energy transition in Scotland, with a focus on ensuring people from the Highlands and Islands can access, train for, and thrive in these opportunities without having to relocate or face prohibitive costs.

Our core objective is to create a fit-for-purpose regional training facility that delivers exemplar, industry-relevant training, supports economic regeneration, and positions the our region as a national leader in infrastructure delivery and skills development. The centre will provide accredited courses, immersive safety training, apprenticeship courses, upskilling courses, school visits and regional skills programmes aligned with the pipeline of over 250 infrastructure and energy projects across the Highlands and Islands for the next 15 years but also into the future.

Torvean Quarry has been dormant and non-operational since 1991 and ever has become a magnet for antisocial behaviour, fly tipping, and dangerous vehicle activity. Despite repeated proposals over the years, it has remained undeveloped. This site now offers an exceptional opportunity to regenerate a problematic asset into a nationally significant hub for skills, sustainability and innovation, aligned with both local priorities and national strategic outcomes of both the local authority and Scottish government.

Our development of the Torvean Quarry site will establish a fully equipped, modern training and innovation facility designed to meet the urgent and long-term skills needs of the people working and living in the Highlands and Islands. The site will incorporate permanent high quality infrastructure including dedicated workshops, innovation space, immersive health and safety training theatre, indoor and outdoor training areas, office accommodation, learner accommodation and engagement space. These facilities will support a wide range of activity including apprenticeships, short courses, upskilling programmes and industry CPD, across multiple disciplines such as plant, crane, tunnelling, wind, renewables, OHL, scaffolding and utilities and other such specialist construction trades.

The site will feature external mock site spaces for practical/vocational training, accommodation for travelling learners and provision for low-carbon transport access.

Moreover, we will be able to deliver STEM and construction careers outreach through school visits and education days. Our overall site design is currently being developed by an award winning Scottish architectural firm.

Our plans are a vital piece of the puzzle required to service and complete the planned works across the Highlands & Islands in energy transmission & distribution, pumped storage hydro, offshore/on-shore wind and the ever-present house building and civils works taking place.

At present, apprentices in these specialist fields from the Highlands and Islands are forced to travel extreme distances, in some cases as far as Norfolk, just to complete training and college modules. This is unsustainable. It deters young people from entering the sector, and employers consistently cite the distance as the single biggest barrier to recruiting new talent.

Establishing a Centre in Inverness will change that. It will anchor training in the Highlands, enabling us to develop not only apprentices but also to upskill and retrain our local workforce, while providing essential support for transient workers drawn to the region's major projects. Without a significant training facility in the Highlands, many of these projects simply cannot proceed as the skills pipeline will not exist.

The Centre will create a clear route for local communities to benefit, ensuring that investment stays within the region, building a stronger economy, and delivering a highly skilled workforce trained in the Highlands for the Highlands & Islands and Scotland as a whole.

By planning for early delivery but with long-term growth and adaptability built in, the Centre will become a nationally significant hub for Skills, Safety, and Innovation. It will deliver tangible impact from day one and continue to expand in line with regional and national demand.

The Centre will be owned and operated by Highlands and Islands Skills CIC, a not-for-profit governed by a board of industry professionals from our defined community and operated in partnership with strategic stakeholders and other regional and national partners. It is expected to create 15 jobs in year one, rising to 60 by year three, and train 5000+ learners each year.

This asset transfer will allow us to accelerate delivery, reduce costs to the public purse, and ensure local people are the ones to benefit from the unprecedented infrastructure investment happening across the Highlands and Islands. Without this transfer, the region risks missing out on both the workforce and economic legacy these projects can offer.

Ultimately this project will regenerate a non-operational site and bring sustainable economic development whilst also supporting the people of our region who are at a socio-economic disadvantage.



## Benefits of the proposal

- 4.2 Please set out the benefits to the community that you consider will arise if the request is agreed to. This should include:- economic, regeneration, health, social wellbeing, environmental benefits; or how this will tackle inequalities.

*This section should explain how the project will benefit your community, and others. Please refer to the guidance on how the relevant authority will consider the benefits of a request.*

*The benefits of agreeing to this request will be massive for our community in many ways:*

The proposed use of the Torvean Quarry site will deliver a wide range of community benefits spanning economic development, regeneration, social wellbeing, environmental impact and reducing inequalities. All at the time when the region needs it most - <https://www.hie.co.uk/research-and-reports/our-reports/2025/may/08/rtoresearch/>

This project will create a nationally significant Centre of Excellence for infrastructure training, directly addressing a key barrier faced by people in the Highlands and Islands: access to specialist training. At present, learners must travel between 100 and 500 miles for accredited training in key disciplines such as plant operations, crane, scaffolding, tunnelling and utilities. This geographic challenge results in high costs, social disruption and, ultimately, unequal access to employment opportunities in high-value infrastructure and green energy careers. By locating the Centre in Inverness, at the heart of the region's growing infrastructure pipeline, we are placing opportunity closer to home for thousands of people across the Highlands and Islands.

Sitting behind this ambition is a comprehensive employability and workforce plan, designed to support individuals into meaningful, full-time work while also meeting the long-term skills needs of the region. For those not currently in employment, the Centre will provide tailored support, employer partnerships, and clear pathways into sustainable careers.

At the same time, it will create accessible training routes aligned with major investment programmes in construction, renewables, and civil engineering, ensuring that a homegrown and/or home trained workforce is upskilled to deliver this work. In doing so, the Centre will retain talent in the Highlands & Islands, reduce dependency on imported labour and in turn reduce dependency on temporary accommodation and ensure that the economic benefits of national infrastructure projects are shared directly with local communities.

Regenerating this long-derelict site will provide a safer, more accessible and more meaningful use of a location that has been plagued by antisocial behaviour, fly tipping and vehicle dumping. The development will bring the site back into productive use, improve safety, reduce environmental degradation and act as a visible catalyst

for wider regeneration. We aim to emulate the success of Inverness Campus by creating a welcoming environment with wider community benefit so that everyone can see the value we deliver.

The Centre's work will also address key inequalities, especially for rural residents, NEETs, career transitioners, women and young people who have previously faced barriers to entering the infrastructure workforce. By delivering local training for local people, the Centre will contribute to social mobility, community resilience and regional pride.

### **Restrictions on use of the land**

4.3 If there are any restrictions on the use or development of the land, please explain how your project will comply with these.

*Restrictions might include, amongst others, environmental designations such as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSI), heritage designations such as listed building status, controls on contaminated land or planning restrictions.*

So far as we know, the site sits within Torvean Landforms Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), however we do not expect our proposal to cause any issue to the SSSI as we expect only to be developing the already worked surface areas of the old Quarry.

We expect that since geology is so critical to much of our education and training activity there may be opportunities to enhance visibility of the features around the site for education and research and open up viewpoints. Our presence will also eliminate further dumping on the site and removal of existing dumped material.

The only other constraints to our knowledge are adjacent to the site, a historic hill fort. In any case, our presence will potentially halt any further degradation of its location by unauthorised motorbike use.

A recent environmental study carried out on the site by Highland Council also presents opportunities to improve the site rather than negatively impact them.

In all cases, we are prepared to be diligent custodians of this site for the benefit of our people and place.

### **Negative consequences**

4.4 What negative consequences (if any) may occur if your request is agreed to? How would you propose to minimise these?

*You should consider any potential negative consequences for the local economy, environment, or any group of people, and explain how you could reduce these.*

This question is subjective. In our opinion, there are absolutely no negative consequences to this request being agreed to.

The question should be, what negative consequences may occur if this is refused?

A. Our region will remain to be under skilled and our people most driven to train themselves and others will be driven to train elsewhere, typically central Scotland but mainly England for specialisms and run risk of us losing them to larger construction projects in the UK such as Sizewell C, Hinkley C, Lower Thames Crossing, HS2 etc where areas and authorities are investing in people on scale and helping them better themselves long term, forging careers not just jobs.

## **Capacity to deliver**

4.5 Please show how your organisation will be able to manage the project and achieve your objectives.

*This could include the skills and experience of members of the organisation, any track record of previous projects, whether you intend to use professional advisers, etc.*

Highlands and Islands Skills CIC (HI-Skills) is led by a growing team with extensive experience in industry, education, infrastructure, and project delivery. Our founding directors bring a proven track record in workforce development, commercial operations, and stakeholder engagement across the construction, civil engineering and renewables sectors. Collectively, the leadership team has been involved in the successful planning and delivery of training initiatives, infrastructure projects, and industry collaborations.

To ensure robust governance and professional execution, we have secured some well respected advisers. Saffery, one of Scotland's leading accountancy firms, is managing our financial modelling, business planning and grant compliance.

Thorntons LLP are acting as our legal advisors, guiding us through partnership agreements, and governance requirements. We are also working with an award-winning Inverness-based architectural practice, on the site master planning and design of our facilities.

HI-Skills has already built strong working relationships with key national stakeholders including CITB, UHI, and the National Construction College. Our collaborative model is designed to align delivery with national training standards and industry needs while enabling co-investment, cost efficiency and regional reach.

As the project progresses, we will continue to draw on specialist consultants and delivery partners, and we will grow our in-house capacity in line with demand. Risk management, procurement, and phased delivery strategies are already in place to ensure the project is delivered on time, on budget, and with measurable impact.

## Section 5: Level and nature of support

5.1 Please provide details of the level and nature of support for the request, from your community and, if relevant, from others.

*This could include information on the proportion of your community who are involved with the request, how you have engaged with your community beyond the members of your organisation and what their response has been. You should also show how you have engaged with any other communities that may be affected by your proposals.*

Highlands & Islands Skills has undertaken extensive engagement with employers and employees of the regional infrastructure and construction community, reflecting both the urgency of the skills challenge and the scale of opportunity emerging across the Highlands and Islands. While the formal development of the Centre has gathered pace over the past 12 months, our directors have been championing the need for local training capacity since as far back as 2019.

Our project has received widespread and growing support from across the region. We hold formal letters of support from a diverse cross-section of industry, including micro businesses, SMEs, and Tier 1 contractors operating in key projects from Campbeltown to Shetland. These endorsements reflect the real-world demand for local training provision and the strong appetite for collaboration among employers to grow and retain a skilled workforce in the region.

We have also secured support from sectoral bodies including the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB), the Scottish Construction Skills and Qualifications Council, and various trade associations that represent the benefiting sectors who between them represent the bulk of the sectors businesses and around Scottish 200,000 employees. These organisations recognise the Centre's potential to address long-standing training gaps and create a pipeline of qualified talent aligned with Scotland's infrastructure ambitions.

We are pleased to confirm that TunnelSkills, the UK's recognised industry body for skills and competence in the tunnelling sector, has offered its support in principle for the development of the Highlands and Islands Centre of Excellence. At present, there is no dedicated tunnelling training provision north of Birmingham. This support therefore presents an essential opportunity to establish specialist training capacity in the Highlands, directly aligned to the skills required for the region's forthcoming Pumped Storage Hydro projects and the long-term operation and maintenance of

existing hydro assets. TunnelSkills' endorsement highlights both the strategic importance of this project and its alignment with national training frameworks. With their backing, the Centre will be able to draw on established expertise, ensuring that our training provision meets the highest industry standards and delivers recognised pathways into employment.

Locally, we have engaged with The Highland Council, including its Education leadership team, who have expressed clear enthusiasm for the project and its potential to transform outcomes for school leavers, adult learners, and those in career transition. The authorities employability team has expressed support for our strategy to place every candidate into a pathway to employment. Conversations with the Chief Executive of The Highland Council have affirmed the strategic fit of the proposal, despite some ambiguity around the council's intentions for the preferred site. We are confident that our objectives align with wider regional development goals and will bring long-term benefits to the local authority and its residents.

Inverness West Community Council are in support of our project and its ambitions citing unwavering preference to a centre of excellence benefitting our own people instead of a BESS scheme. *"HI-Skills proposal would see the site returned to productive use, delivering tangible benefits to the local community and the wider Highland and Islands region. IWCC is therefore pleased to support HI-Skills Community Asset Transfer application"*

In the coming months, Highlands & Islands Skills will host formal public forums in Argyll, Highland, and the Islands to ensure transparency and give all parts of our extended community including those working in or employing people in construction, infrastructure and renewables a platform to learn more, shape the plans, and lend their support. We aim to have a particular focus in hosting in Inverness West, the ward where this centre will be located (arguably Ballifeary but with no CC it's logically Inverness West).

We plan to do these working in collaboration with regional MP's, MSP's, ward councillors, Inverness West Community Council and our project partners to host worthwhile community engagement.

Finally, the attached report highlights a range of outcomes that our project is already designed to achieve. In fact, many of these actions directly reflect the contributions of our directors at the Highlands & Islands Workforce Summit on 4 April 2025 (see: <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/x1inshgw/workforce-north-a-shared-mission-to-grow-and-expand-our-workforce.pdf> )

Our Centre of Excellence is well-positioned to deliver on these objectives efficiently and effectively, in collaboration with all required, without the need for additional bureaucracy or further reporting.

## Section 6: Funding

6.1 Please outline how you propose to fund the price or rent you are prepared to pay for the asset, and your proposed use of the asset.

*You should show your calculations of the costs associated with the transfer of the land or building and your future use of it, including any redevelopment, ongoing maintenance and the costs of your activities. All proposed income and investment should be identified, including volunteering and donations. If you intend to apply for grants or loans you should demonstrate that your proposals are eligible for the relevant scheme, according to the guidance available for applicants.*

As a Community Interest Company, HI-Skills is structured to operate commercially with all surpluses reinvested to support our community which includes local people and businesses.

We have undertaken robust and independently reviewed financial planning and modelling to support the acquisition, development and operation of the site. These details are included within our full business plan, which can be supplied upon request. However, we also operate commercially and are required to compete for contracts, funding, and private investment. Releasing detailed financial information into the public domain would place the community company at a commercial disadvantage, as it could reveal cost structures, pricing models, and forward planning to competitors. As such, preserving the integrity and confidentiality of our financial model is critical to safeguarding our future success and delivering maximum benefit to the region.

We would need to understand how such data will be handled, whether it will be made publicly available, and whether appropriate redactions can be applied to protect proprietary and strategic elements.

Information is however included in our summary business plan attached and we are willing to make detailed financials available on a confidential basis.

The £1 transfer value requested is symbolic and should actually represent the Highland Councils investment and commitment to this essential project, recognising the substantial investment that Highlands & Islands Skills and its partners will make into regenerating the site and delivering a long-term skills legacy. To date, we have secured financial backing from a number of private and industry stakeholders to enable early-stage activity, including preparing the site and mobilising initial training delivery.

The full development of the Centre represents a multi-million pound investment, expected to reach eight figures. This will be funded through a blended model combining commercial income, private sector investment, public sector grants (since the public sector consistently asks for collaboration with it), developer contributions,

industry sponsorship, philanthropic giving, and in-kind support. These income streams are summarised in the summary business plan and aligned with the phased development and operation of the Centre.

We are confident in the strength of our model and the commitments already secured to ensure viability from day one, with further income diversification and growth planned across the life of the project.

Our socio-economic and strategic impact brings annually £6.24m in direct employment value, £6.384m in added value through upskilled worker pay uplift, £545,150 in salary based value from our own staff. In addition £4,099,485 of GVA in the first 4 years (based on production method) which will increase as the facility matures.

As the Centre matures, the gross value added will increase year on year and will be key to the economic growth and legacy of our region.

## Signature

Two office-bearers (board members, charity trustees or committee members) of the community transfer body must sign the form. They must provide their full names and home addresses for the purposes of prevention and detection of fraud.

This form and supporting documents will be made available online for any interested person to read and comment on. Personal information will be redacted before the form is made available.

**We, the undersigned on behalf of the community transfer body as noted at section 1, make an asset transfer request as specified in this form.**

**We declare that the information provided in this form and any accompanying documents is accurate to the best of our knowledge.**

Name Dylan Spink

Address

Date: 08/09/2025

Position: Board Director

Signature

Name Jack Howell

Address

Date: 08/09/2025

Position: Board Director

Signature



## Checklist of accompanying documents

To check that nothing is missed, please list any documents which you are submitting to accompany this form.

### **Section 1 – you must attach your organisation’s constitution, articles of association or registered rules**

Title of document attached:

HI Skills Articles of Association

### **Section 2 – any maps, drawings or description of the land requested**

Documents attached:

HI-Skills Torvean Quarry Map.jpg

### **Section 3 – note of any terms and conditions that are to apply to the request**

Documents attached:

### **Section 4 – about your proposals, their benefits, any restrictions on the asset or potential negative consequences, and your organisation’s capacity to deliver.**

Documents attached:

HI Skills Summary Business Plan Digital.pdf

HI Skills Evidence of Torvean Quarry use

### **Section 5 – evidence of community support**

Documents attached: Image attached showing scope of our community support

### **Section 6 – funding**

Documents attached:

Unsure what exactly is expected here, needless to say, securing further funding is conditional to having a site to actually fund activities on.

*Search "Privacy Notices" on the Highland Council website to read our Privacy Statement in regards to Asset Transfer Request forms.*