

12 September 2025



To whom it may concern

Re: Callum Mackintosh, Founder and Director Highland & Island Skills (Hi Skills) CIC.

I am writing as the constituency MSP for Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch in support of the application made by Highlands and Islands Skills (Hi Skills) for a Community Asset Transfer of Torvean Quarry. Hi Skills intend to use this to provide a training facility that redefines how infrastructure, construction, engineering, and renewable energy skills are developed in Scotland.

The ownership of Torvean Quarry will allow Hi Skills to establish a nationally significant, industry-led Centre of Excellence for Skills, Safety and Innovation.

Hi Skills is keen to secure this site to develop their vision to build a better, more equitable future for learners, workers, and employers in the region. This vision is rooted in a deep understanding of the current gaps in training provision across the Highlands and Islands. The Centre will provide the Highlands with the opportunity to lead nationally on skills, safety, and innovation as training of this nature is currently only offered outside of the Highlands, with most learners being sent to a site in Norfolk. I am keen to encourage learning and development opportunities in the Highlands and Islands.

I'm very supportive of Hi Skills' plans to develop a Centre of Excellence that will not only provide training but become a catalyst for regional transformation. The Centre will offer real-world, accredited, year-round training in site-stimulated environments. This will enable learners to develop the confidence and competence needed to succeed in specialised infrastructure roles. It will serve a diverse population and be the first of its kind in the Highlands.

The first step in delivering the Centre is to secure the appropriate site at Torvean Quarry. Once the site is secured, the Centre will be delivered in two distinct phases. Phase one will involve the creation of a fit-for-purpose modular building, which will allow training to commence within 2 months of the site entry. Phase two will be the construction of the flagship building to deliver the full skills and safety training the Centre intends to offer and support regional sector innovation.

Tovean Quarry is the ideal location for the Centre as this location presents an exceptional opportunity for development, leveraging a currently vacant ex-quarry site and transforming it into a low-carbon, future-facing facility. Torvean Quarry's expansive footprint offers ample space for these large-scale training operations, while the presence of high boundary sides ensures natural privacy and containment, critical for safety and safeguarding. In addition, the availability of ideal on-site

materials reduces logistical costs and supports sustainable construction practices. This unique combination of features makes the site not only practical but strategically advantageous for establishing a purpose-built centre of excellence. It is my understanding that Torvean Quarry is the only suitable site across the Highlands to deliver Hi Skills' innovative plan.

The Hi Skills Centre for Excellence will provide opportunity for 300 additional new apprentice starts annually, injecting £6.24 million in direct employment value into the regional economy and encouraging local employers to expand capacity and take on new contracts. This will in turn create a ripple effect of economic attraction. The Centre will also become an open and valued asset with spaces being made available for community events outside working hours.

Hi Skills aim to actively partner with schools, veterans' groups, and other local organisations to widen access and create early pathways into training and employment. Phase one of the development of this centre alone will provide the immense capacity to upskill 1,824 candidates annually, enabling learners to climb the career ladder and increase their earning potential.

A successful Community Asset Transfer of Torvean Quarry would be a huge step forward in Hi Skills' plans and make an immense difference for learning and development in the Highland in this field.

I have no hesitation in endorsing and supporting the application by Hi Skills for a CAT of the Torvean Quarry and would be delighted to provide further information if required.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kate Forbes', with a stylized, cursive script.

Kate Forbes MSP

Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch