

28/08/2028

Dear Sirs,

Aventus Energy is proud to deliver engineering, fabrication, and installation solutions across offshore wind, oil & gas, and wider energy projects throughout Scotland and the UK. Our work ranges from large-scale offshore developments to complex onshore fabrication projects, often in some of the most remote and challenging environments. In each case, our people and expertise are central to delivering safe, efficient, and innovative outcomes for our clients.

As an industry, we are facing a significant and growing challenge: a shortage of skilled personnel. With the scale of infrastructure projects planned in the Highlands and Islands and across Scotland through to 2040, this shortage risks becoming a critical barrier to delivery.

At Aventus Energy, we have always invested in our workforce, from apprenticeships to specialist training and upskilling. However, for many young people, the opportunity to train and develop is limited by the need to travel or relocate far from home.

That is why we are fully supportive of your plans for a Centre of Excellence in the Highlands. Establishing sector-leading training locally will enable businesses like ours to recruit and train apprentices closer to home, embed safety and technical excellence into the workforce, and ensure talent is retained within the region. With safety at the core of our operations, we strongly welcome your commitment to making it central to all training delivered.

This initiative is vital – not only for Aventus Energy, but for the resilience and future growth of Scotland's wider energy industry. We encourage policymakers, funders, and elected representatives to recognise its value and provide their full support

Yours Sincerely



Ross Thomson  
Managing Director

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Aventus Energy  
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Highlands & Islands Skills (CIC)  
Kintail House  
Beechwood Business Park  
Inverness  
IV2 3BW

6<sup>th</sup> July 2025

Dear sirs,

The future of Scotland relies on the people who will build its infrastructure, and Blackwood Plant Hire is committed to making sure that future is local. Over the past 30 years, we've grown serving key sectors like construction, energy, and civil engineering. Now, with our new depot in Nairn, we are doubling down on our investment in the area to meet the demands in the region over the next fifteen years and beyond.

We are facing a pivotal moment with over 250 major infrastructure projects set to unfold in the region, totalling over £100bn. While this represents enormous opportunity, it also highlights a critical issue, the lack of skilled workers ready to take on these roles. To keep up with this demand, we need to ensure that we're developing the right talent, right here in Scotland and right where the demand is in the Highlands.

Currently, Blackwood Plant Hire uses the apprenticeship programme that sees our apprentices train at the National Construction College in Norfolk. While the programme itself is invaluable, the distance involved is a real obstacle for many young people. We need a solution that brings world-class training closer to home, a solution that makes access to these careers easier, not harder and we're excited your project is set to do that.

We strongly believe that a locally-based Centre of Excellence for Skills, Safety and Innovation will be a game-changer. It will provide the much-needed training infrastructure that will help us and other local businesses to develop the next generation of plant operators, groundworkers and specialist trades people. Equally important is the Centre's focus on safety. In an industry where safety is paramount, we need to ensure that workers are fully equipped to meet the highest safety standards, which will be critical for the successful delivery of major infrastructure projects.

At Blackwood Plant Hire, we are fully invested in this project's success. We want to see it happen, see it thrive, and we will support it however we can as we believe that it's crucial, not only for our business but for the entire region and sector.

We encourage the local authority, Highlands & Islands Enterprise, and all key decision-makers to get behind this initiative. The Centre has the potential to transform the workforce of tomorrow, helping to build a competent, skilled, and future-ready workforce, while bringing lasting benefits to our community.

We're excited about the opportunity to work alongside others in the industry to make this vision a reality.

Yours faithfully,

  
Paul McCormack  
Managing Director



Link-up  
empowered by Achilles



CP  
CS



BUILDER'S  
PROFILE



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Main Office Blackwood Plant Hire, Dunlop Road, Stewarton KA3 3DX • North East Office, Inveramsay Farm, Pitcaple, Inverurie AB51 5DQ  
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VAT Registration No : 262 8830 43 Company Name registered in Scotland No : SC246234



Highland & Islands Skills (CIC)  
Kintail House  
Beechwood Business Park  
Inverness  
IV2 3BW

27<sup>th</sup> August 2025

Dear sirs,

We write to express our support for your plans to establish a Centre of Excellence for skills and safety in the Highlands.

Capstone Construction are local housebuilder, delivering new homes across the region, we see daily the challenges caused by a shortage of tradespeople. From bricklayers and joiners to site supervisors, particularly to support the ambitious plans to deliver homes throughout the region at pace.

Your Centre of Excellence offers a solution. By providing quality training here in the Highlands, it will enable us to grow the local workforce, ensure safety is prioritised on every site, and build homes and communities more effectively.

We are keen to see this project realised and will support it however we can.

Yours faithfully,

Rhona Donnelly  
Managing Director





TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Greenhill

Deskford

Buckie

AB56 5UT

[www.curriecontractors.com](http://www.curriecontractors.com)

17 September 2025

Re: Callum Mackintosh, Director Highland and Island Skills (Hi-Skills) CIC

Dear Sir/Madam,

On behalf of Currie Contractors Ltd, I am writing to express our full support for the Hi-Skills initiative and its mission to address the critical skills shortage across Scotland's construction and infrastructure sectors.

Currie Contractors has long been a cornerstone of the Scottish construction industry, operating across a diverse range of sectors including civil engineering, residential and commercial development, renewable energy, and public infrastructure. With operations spanning the Highlands and Islands and beyond, our work plays a vital role in shaping communities, enabling economic growth, and delivering sustainable development across the region.

We are acutely aware of the growing skills gap within our sector. The demand for qualified professionals, particularly in remote and rural areas, is outpacing supply, and the need to invest in training and development has never been more urgent. It is essential that we cultivate talent locally, especially through apprenticeships and vocational pathways that empower young people in Scotland to build meaningful careers close to home, rather than seeking opportunities further afield. I believe Hi-Skills plans to develop a Centre of Excellence at Torvean Quarry is well timed to focus on providing world-class training and development opportunities for individuals in key sectors such as civil engineering, construction, wind, hydro, and electricity transmission, helping to ensure a pipeline of skilled talent to support Scotland's ambitions and build a resilient and skilled workforce for the future.

Hi-Skills' goals resonate deeply with our own values. We are especially aligned with our focus on regional workforce development and our commitment to collaborative solutions. At Currie Contractors, we have a proud history of investing in apprenticeships and mentoring programmes. Many of our most skilled tradespeople and site managers began their careers as apprentices with us, and their growth is a testament to the power of hands-on, locally rooted training.

The urgency of this initiative is underscored by the scale of upcoming infrastructure investment, over 250 projects valued at more than £100 billion are planned across the Highlands and Islands by 2040. Additionally, the Highland Council's ambition to deliver 24,000 new homes over the next decade presents both a challenge and an opportunity. Without a skilled local workforce, these transformative goals risk delay or derailment.

We therefore fully support Hi-Skills in creating a national Centre of Excellence for Skills, Safety and Innovation in Inverness. This is not just an investment in training, it is an investment in Scotland's future.

Kind regards,

James Currie

Director

Currie Contractors Cullen Ltd

# FORSYTH

## OF DENNY

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**19<sup>th</sup> September 2025.**

Dear Callum,

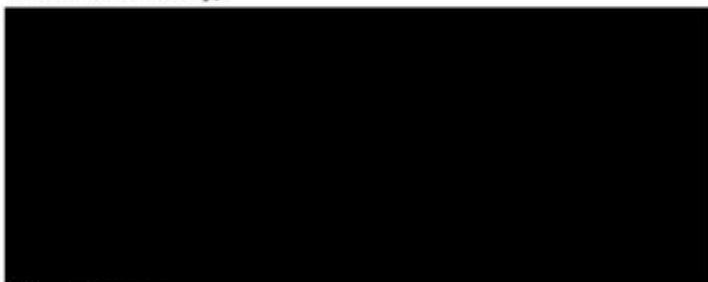
I am delighted to hear the news that you are championing the delivery of a centre of excellence for sector skills, safety and innovation in conjunction with CITB, National Construction College and the University of the Highlands & Islands.

Here at Forsyth of Denny we acknowledge the need for such a facility in Scotland as there is nothing currently suitable for the needs of our industry in terms of formal training and the need for "off the job" experience before young people enter the workplace.

Forsyth of Denny are based in Central Scotland and provide mobile crane, transport and specialist labour services for the wind, renewables and general construction industries throughout the UK & Ireland. We acknowledge that the skills shortage within the industry combined with, generally, an aging workforce can only mean a lack of suitably trained and experienced people for the future. This situation needs to be addressed sooner rather than later.

The current training option in Norfolk is prohibitive in terms of logistics, flexibility for students and travel costs, therefore a suitable facility based in Scotland makes real sense.

Yours Sincerely,



Mark Syme,  
Director.

September 2025

## **Letter of Support for Highland & Islands Skills Centre of Excellence**

To whom it may concern,

Glen Earrach Energy Limited is pleased to provide this letter of support for the proposed Highland & Islands Skills Centre of Excellence; a potentially transformative initiative being developed by Highland & Islands Skills Community Interest Company under the leadership of Callum Mackintosh.

### **About Glen Earrach Energy**

Glen Earrach Energy (GEE) is developing a £3 billion pumped storage hydro project on the Balmacaan Forest above Loch Ness, which will be one of the largest and most water-efficient energy storage facilities in the UK. This 2GW, 34GWh project is estimated to deliver around £3bn in system cost savings in its first 20 years as well as reducing the carbon footprint of the electricity grid by around 10%, providing critical grid stability services and supporting the UK and Scotland's transition to net zero.

Alongside this, GEE has committed 5% of gross margin revenue – estimated at £20 million annually – to a long-term Community Wealth Fund for the surrounding Highland communities. This would be the largest fund of its kind in the UK energy sector.

### **The Critical Skills Challenge**

Our experience in developing this major project so far has highlighted the acute skills shortage in the Highlands. It is well established that many young people depart the region in pursuit of training opportunities elsewhere, and without intervention, the Highlands risks a continuation of this trend. Meanwhile, more than 250 infrastructure projects, valued at over £100 billion, are planned across the Highlands and Islands up to 2040. Without enhanced local training capacity, the opportunities for local benefit and increased community resilience from these projects will be limited.

### **Why We Support the Centre of Excellence**

The Centre of Excellence will:

- Develop local skills capacity by relocating Scottish apprenticeships from outside Scotland directly to the Highlands.
- Embed industry partnerships with CITB, the National Construction College, and UHI Inverness.
- Raise safety standards through immersive leadership training for high-risk sectors.
- Provide innovation facilities for testing and developing new technologies in the region.



### **Our Commitment**

Glen Earrach Energy is committed to encouraging our contractors and supply chain in:

- Supporting apprenticeships and skills programmes aligned with our project.
- Engaging with the Centre of Excellence to develop training relevant to pumped storage hydro.
- Facilitating supply chain opportunities and "meet the buyer" events.
- Contributing to the creation of career pathways that encourage young people to remain in or return to the Highlands.

### **Regional Economic Impact**

The Centre aligns with our own community wealth building approach and ambitions. By creating a skilled regional workforce, we believe this initiative will diversify the economy beyond seasonal tourism, retain working-age families, and underpin long-term economic sustainability.

It will also directly support population retention in the Highlands, tackling well-documented demographic challenges by creating high-quality, year-round career opportunities that encourage young people to stay and families to build their future in the region.

### **Call for Support**

We encourage funders, policymakers, and decision-makers to support this strategic initiative. The Centre of Excellence represents an investment in the future of the Highlands, ensuring that unprecedented levels of infrastructure development translate into lasting benefits for local communities.

### **Conclusion**

Glen Earrach Energy is proud to support the Highlands & Islands Skills CIC in establishing this Centre of Excellence. We look forward to working with Callum and his partners to ensure Scotland's net zero transition creates the skilled jobs and opportunities that Highland communities deserve.

Yours sincerely,

**Roderick MacLeod**

**Director, Glen Earrach Energy Ltd**

Highland & Islands Skills (CIC)  
Kintail House  
Beechwood Business Park  
Inverness  
IV2 3BW

27<sup>th</sup> August 2025

Dear Sirs,

Global Crane Services provide lifting solutions to clients across construction, energy, and civil engineering projects throughout Scotland and the wider UK and Ireland. Our work takes us from major infrastructure projects in central Scotland to some of the most remote and challenging environments in the Highlands and Islands, where our expertise and equipment are often critical to safe project delivery.

Across our industry, there is a clear and pressing challenge: a shortage of trained crane operators and lifting specialists. With the volume of infrastructure projects planned in the Highlands and Islands by 2040, this shortage is set to become critical.

We have always invested in our people, including apprenticeships and ongoing upskilling. For many young people in Scotland, relocating or travelling hundreds of miles to train is simply not an option.

That is why we are fully supportive of your plans for a Centre of Excellence in the Highlands. By providing sector-leading training locally, it will allow businesses like ours to recruit and train apprentices closer to home, embed safety and innovation into the workforce, and retain talent within the region. Safety is at the heart of our business, and we strongly welcome your focus on ensuring it is central to all training delivered.

This is a critical initiative, not just for our business but for the future of the wider industry in Scotland. We urge funders, policymakers, and elected representatives to recognise its importance and to give it their full backing.

Yours sincerely

Cameron Coutts

Global Crane Services



To whom it may concern

On behalf of Global Highland, I am delighted to offer our strong support for the Highlands and Islands Skills (CIC) in the development of a Centre of Excellence for Infrastructure Skills, Safety and Innovation in Inverness, working in partnership with CITB, the National Construction College, ECITB, and the University of the Highlands and Islands.

As a leading recruitment and talent partner based in the Highlands, Global Highland is deeply committed to supporting skills development and workforce growth across the region. We recognise the significant opportunities and challenges facing the construction and infrastructure sectors, particularly around the need for a sustainable pipeline of skilled people to deliver both current and future projects.

The proposed Centre of Excellence will provide a vital resource for employers, learners, and communities. It will not only raise standards in training, health, safety, and innovation but also enhance employability and open new career pathways for people across the Highlands and Islands. By embedding collaboration between industry, education, and training bodies, this initiative will play a crucial role in addressing skills shortages and driving inclusive economic growth.

Global Highland is committed to working alongside Highlands and Islands Skills (CIC) and its partners to ensure that this project delivers maximum impact.

We believe this Centre of Excellence will strengthen the region's ability to attract investment, deliver large-scale infrastructure projects, and equip our workforce with the skills and confidence to succeed in a fast-changing environment.

We commend this initiative and look forward to supporting its successful delivery.

Kind Regards



Lyndsey Wilkinson  
Business Director

28<sup>th</sup> August 2025

Highland & Islands Skills (CIC)  
Kintail House  
Beechwood Business Park  
Inverness  
IV2 3BW

Dear sirs,

We welcome the proposal for a Centre of Excellence in the Highlands and see it as essential to the future of our industry.

Our company delivers civil engineering and infrastructure services to the energy sector, often working in remote and demanding locations. These projects require a workforce that is not only technically skilled but also fully committed to safe working practices. At present, the shortage of qualified people is one of the greatest risks to the region's ambitious project pipeline.

We have always prioritised training and apprenticeships, many of our recruits face long journeys away from home for training, which can cause challenges in attracting people to the industry. A local Centre of Excellence would be a game-changer—building capacity, developing local talent, and embedding safety and innovation at the heart of every project. This is precisely the kind of investment the region needs to meet the scale of opportunity ahead.

We encourage decision-makers to give this project their full backing and would be glad to play our part in supporting its success.

Kind regards,  
Iain Henderson

CEO  
Global Infrastructure (Scotland) Ltd

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Highland & Islands Skills (CIC)

Kintail House

Beechwood Business Park

Inverness

IV2 3BW

27th August 2025

Dear Sirs,

Global Wind Projects delivers specialist lifting and engineering solutions to the renewable energy sector, with a particular focus on offshore wind developments across Scotland, the UK, and Ireland. Our operations span from large-scale offshore installations to complex and remote marine environments, where safety, precision, and technical expertise are critical to successful project delivery.

As the offshore wind sector accelerates to meet the UK and Ireland's Net-Zero targets, the demand for a highly skilled workforce is growing rapidly. A key challenge is the shortage of trained personnel with the necessary Global Wind Organisation (GWO) certifications and ECITB-recognised qualifications, particularly in lifting operations and engineering construction disciplines.

We have consistently invested in workforce development, including apprenticeships and upskilling initiatives. However, for many individuals—especially those in coastal and island communities—accessing accredited training often requires significant travel and relocation, which can be a barrier to entry.

We therefore fully support your plans for a Centre of Excellence in the Highlands. By offering GWO-compliant and ECITB-accredited training locally, this initiative will enable businesses like ours to recruit and train talent closer to home. It will directly strengthen our offshore wind operations by embedding safety, innovation, and technical excellence into our workforce, while also helping to retain skilled professionals within the region.

Safety is a cornerstone of our business, and we commend your commitment to making it central to all training delivered. This initiative is not only vital for the success of Global Wind Projects, but also for achieving national Net-Zero goals and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the offshore renewable energy sector.

We strongly encourage funders, policymakers, and elected representatives to support this essential development.

Best Regards,


Kevin McAlonan  
Global Wind Projects



18th September 2025

Mr Callum Mackintosh  
Highlands & Islands Skills CIC  
Kintail House  
Beechwood Business Park  
Inverness  
IV2 3BW

**Centre of Excellence for Skills, Safety and Innovation**

Dear Callum,

I am writing to express our strong support for your proposal to develop Torvean Quarry into a Centre of Excellence for Skills, Safety and Innovation. This initiative represents a significant step towards addressing the pressing skills challenges faced across Scotland.

JST employs some 65-personnel based out of our Ayr facility. The majority of our personnel are skilled machine operators who travel throughout the UK and Ireland loading and unloading cargo ships operating large, 65-tonne, mobile cranes. We are particularly active in providing bespoke logistics solutions to the Scottish forestry sector with much of our activities occurring in the West Coast Highlands.

We are a growing business with an ageing workforce, so will be seeking to hire additional workers over the coming years. Competition for skilled Scottish workers is already high and will only get worse as the economy expands with major infrastructure projects coming online. The ability to provide bespoke training on our doorstep will facilitate the employment of locals into well-paid long-term jobs, and provide new employees for companies such as ours.

We are wholly supportive of your collaborative approach to working with industry stakeholders, funders and education providers and welcome future opportunities to collaborate with the Centre. We would urge funders, policy makers, local authorities and decision makers to back this project and for the Highland Council to back the community asset transfer of Torvean Quarry. It is an essential investment in Scotland's future workforce and in the prosperity of the Highlands and Islands.

Yours sincerely



Richard Jennings  
CEO

[www.jstservicesgroup.com](http://www.jstservicesgroup.com)



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**Highlands & Islands Skills CIC  
Kintail House  
Beechwood Business Park  
Inverness  
IV2 3BW**

**FAO: Callum Mackintosh**

**Re: Support for Centre of Excellence**

Dear Callum

We are pleased to confirm that LAS Plant Ltd fully supports the vision and ambition of Highlands & Islands Skills CIC (Hi-Skills) in their proposal to establish a Centre of Excellence for Skills, Safety and Innovation at Torvean Quarry, Inverness. It would be great to see Torvean Quarry back in use serving the regions construction industry again. We see this as a golden opportunity to drive long-term skills development across the Highlands & Islands, and we are proud to offer our support.

LAS Plant Ltd is a locally based business with strong roots in the Highlands. For many years, we have supplied reliable plant, equipment, and services to the construction, civil engineering, infrastructure, and energy sectors. We are committed to investing locally, supporting local contractors, and growing the skilled and competent workforce needed to deliver Scotland's ambitious pipeline of infrastructure and renewable energy projects.

We could support Highlands & Islands Skills CIC in the following ways:

- Training - Our own staff require ongoing training and CPD, and we would utilise the Centre's offering to complement the training we currently do with other regional providers.
- Placements - Offering work placement opportunities to trainees from the Centre, ensuring they gain practical experience and a pathway into employment.
- Equipment & Facilities - Providing access to plant and equipment where appropriate, helping to create realistic training environments and potentially reducing Hi-Skills' capital outlay on low-utilised assets.
- Collaboration on Projects - Working with Hi-Skills to align training programmes with the real skills needs of industry, ensuring trainees are job-ready for the projects we and our partners are delivering.

The timing of this initiative could not be more important. Major projects such as the A9 dualling, pumped storage hydro, and large-scale housing programmes are driving unprecedented demand for skilled workers in the Highlands. Without local training capacity,



employers will remain reliant on labour from outside the region. Hi-Skills provides the solution, equipping people from the Highlands & Islands with the skills to take on these opportunities, while strengthening the local economy and creating opportunities for visiting workers to train and upskill as well.

We view the proposed Centre at Torvean Quarry as more than just a training facility. It is a catalyst for change that will:

- Raise the quality and consistency of vocational training in critical sectors such as plant operation, civil engineering, energy, utilities and infrastructure.
- Deliver a whole suite of courses and apprenticeship programmes not currently delivered in Scotland but rather in England.
- Create local opportunities for young people and career changers, reducing the need to leave the region to gain skills or employment.
- Promote a culture of safety, innovation, and sustainability within the workforce.
- Foster collaboration amongst regional businesses to prosper from the opportunities ahead.
- Generate long-term benefits for individuals, employers, and communities through stronger local supply chains and economic resilience.

As a Highland-based company, LAS Plant Ltd recognises the value of this initiative and is determined to play our part.

We wholeheartedly endorse the Highlands & Islands Skills CIC project and commend its ambition, relevance, and potential for lasting positive impact. LAS Plant Ltd is proud to stand behind this initiative and looks forward to contributing to its success.

We also urge the Highland Council to support the proposed community asset transfer of Torvean Quarry and call on stakeholders and policymakers at every level to do all they can to enable the establishment of this Centre of Excellence. This project represents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the region, and it deserves the full backing of those in a position to make it a reality.

Yours Sincerely



Ian Bone  
Las Plant Ltd







020 8900 0000



l-lynch.com  
info@l-lynch.com



L-Lynch Plant Hire & Haulage LTD,  
Boundary Way,  
Hemel Hempstead,  
HP2 7UD



Dear Sir / Madam,

**Re: Letter of Support from Lynch Plant Hire for Highlands & Islands Skills CIC (Hi-Skills)**

We are pleased to confirm that Lynch Plant Hire fully supports the vision and ambition of Highlands & Islands Skills CIC (Hi-Skills) in their proposal to establish a Centre of Excellence for Skills, Safety and Innovation at Torvean Quarry, Inverness. We believe this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for long-term skills development in the Highlands & Islands region, and we are excited to be a supporting partner.

**About Lynch Plant Hire & Our Expansion**

Lynch Plant Hire has been operating across the UK for many years, supplying reliable, high-quality plant and equipment to the infrastructure, civil engineering, construction, and maintenance sectors. In recent times, recognising the scale of infrastructure growth and demand for skilled operatives in Scotland (particularly in the Highlands), we have committed to a programme of geographical expansion. This includes increasing our presence, operations, and investment in the Highlands & Islands, with the aim of growing our workforce locally, collaborating more closely with regional contractors, and ensuring that the supply chain and skills base in this region are strengthened.

**Our Commitment to Highlands & Islands Skills CIC**

We commit to supporting Highlands & Islands Skills CIC in a number of capacities, including but not limited to:

- **Training & Mentoring:** Offering access to Lynch's experienced staff to act as mentors, guest trainers, or adjunct trainers in areas such as plant operation, safety, environmental compliance, and maintenance.



020 8900 0000



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- **Placement / Apprenticeship Opportunities:** Providing work placements, apprenticeships and on-the-job learning for trainees emerging from the Centre, ensuring they gain hands-on, real-world experience.
- **Equipment & Resources:** Supplying access to plant, machinery, and tools for training purposes, where safe and appropriate, to help simulate realistic working environments and deliver impactful training.
- **Project Collaboration:** Working together with Hi-Skills on projects in the region to align training curricula with the actual skills our major customers require.

### **Employment Opportunities & Industry Demand**

The timing for this initiative is critical. Major infrastructure and construction projects are coming to the Highlands or are already underway with customers such as **BAM, Murphy's, Balfour Beatty**, among others. The dualling of the A9, planned housing developments (including the Highland Council's commitment to deliver 24,000 new homes), and increasing renewables / energy infrastructure all demand a skilled workforce. Hi-Skills will enable the region to supply that workforce locally, reducing reliance on imported labour, and boosting long-term economic growth.

### **Why This Is a Once in a Lifetime Opportunity**

We view the proposed Centre at Torvean Quarry as more than a training facility. It is a catalyst for transformation in the region. It has the potential to:

- Raise the standard of vocational training in trades that are critical for infrastructure, renewables, civil engineering, plant operation, and safety.
- Stabilise and grow local employment, helping retain talent in the Highlands & Islands, giving young people and mid-career professionals opportunities they might otherwise have to leave the region to acquire.



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- Foster innovation, safety culture, and environmental awareness in the workforce.
- Deliver lasting economic benefits: not only through the projects themselves but via multiplier effects in local supply chains, services and communities.

### **Our Enthusiasm as a Supporting Partner**

Lynch Plant Hire is excited to be a supporting partner in this initiative. We believe in Hi-Skills' vision, and we anticipate that our collaboration will be mutually beneficial: the region gains a stronger, more resilient skills ecosystem, and Lynch gains access to skilled, locally trained personnel who understand the particular challenges and opportunities of working in the Highlands & Islands.

In closing, we wholeheartedly endorse the Highlands & Islands Skills CIC project, and commend its ambition, its clear response to regional need, and its potential to deliver long-term, sustainable benefits for both individuals and employers. Lynch Plant Hire is ready to play our part.

Yours faithfully,

*Rob Lynch*

Joint Managing Director  
Lynch Plant Hire



**Normet UK Ltd**

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[www.normet.com](http://www.normet.com)

26 September 2025

Dear Mr. Mackintosh,

Normet is eager to support Hi- Skills on your project to establish a centre of excellence, providing specialist training for future underground operatives working on high-profile construction projects in Scotland.

Normet is a leading global technology company that defines the future of underground mining, tunnelling, and civil engineering. We partner with our clients to enhance safety, sustainability, and productivity throughout their project lifecycles. Based in our Coventry, West Midlands office, we have been successful in supporting mining, tunnelling, and large civil projects across the UK and Ireland.

We believe in integrating ourselves within project and construction teams to utilize our knowledge and add value. We actively participate in industry groups such as the British Tunnelling Society, The International Tunnelling Association working groups, The Structural Alliance, and The Mineral Processing Association. We also play a leading role in EFNARC, a global organization that establishes high-quality standards and skill certification for specialist concrete and construction systems, ensuring safety, sustainability, and innovation in underground and civil engineering projects.

As a key player in EFNARC, we establish best practices for the industry in areas such as Nozzleman training for sprayed concrete applications. We have state-of-the-art virtual reality equipment where trainees can practice their skills in a safe environment, free from onsite dangers. This year, we have conducted several training programs for HS2 and Hinkley Point C main contractors. There will certainly be a need for this type of training if the proposed Hydro schemes receive full approval. Normet has already supplied and supported the Coire Glas Exploratory Tunnel works, and if the project proceeds, we would like to expand our presence in the region.

I believe your proposed centre of excellence is of utmost importance, having witnessed the success of the Tunnelling and Underground Construction Academy (TUCA) established in London for the Crossrail (Elizabeth Line) project. This training centre, which Normet supported, trained a generation of tunnelling specialists who have worked not only in the UK but also globally on underground projects. With projects totalling over £100 billion in the pipeline across Scotland, your training centre is vital for upskilling potential new tunnellers, and Normet would love to be involved and to support you with making this a reality.

If additional backing is required I would be more than happy to canvass support from our local MP, Zara Zultana asking her to get behind this project which would be a benefit to her constituency.

Best regards,



**Edward Bellanti**

Managing and Sales Director

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Email: [stephen@orkneybuilders.com](mailto:stephen@orkneybuilders.com)  
Tel: (01856) 871447  
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Callum Mackintosh  
Director  
Highlands & Islands Skills (CIC)  
Kintail House  
Beechwood Business Park  
Inverness  
IV2 3BW

Dear Callum,

**Letter of Support – Centre of Excellence for Sector Skills, Safety and Innovation**

I am writing on behalf of Orkney Builders (Contractors) Limited to express our full support for the development of a Centre of Excellence for Sector Skills, Safety and Innovation in Inverness, being led by Highlands and Islands Skills (CIC) in collaboration with CITB, the National Construction College, ECITB, and the University of the Highlands and Islands.

As a business operating in Orkney, we play an active role in delivering critical projects throughout the Islands. Our operations span across all of the Orkney Islands, and we currently employ 85 staff. With over a number of infrastructure projects planned across the Islands through to 2040, we foresee significant growth potential and the need to expand our workforce in the years ahead.

We are acutely aware of the growing skills shortage across our industry, particularly in specialist roles such as plant and crane operators, steelfixers, groundworkers, scaffolders, and utility workers. The difficulty in accessing local training opportunities means that, too often, our workforce is required to travel long distances to Glasgow or even Norfolk to receive essential training. A dedicated, locally based Centre of Excellence would be a transformative step forward for the sector and our region.

We strongly support your ambition to build world-class training and development facilities here in the Highlands and Islands. By delivering apprenticeship pathways, higher-level qualifications, and short-duration upskilling opportunities within our own region, this initiative will help address the current and future skills gap, foster innovation, and support sustainable employment across our communities.

At Orkney Builders, we are deeply committed to workforce development and have a proud record of investing in apprenticeships and training for our team. A large proportion of our team members started their careers through apprenticeship routes, and we continue to see first-hand the long-term benefits of structured training and development.

We are also enthusiastic about the collaborative approach being taken. Initiatives like this require industry, academia, and government to work together, and we would welcome the opportunity to participate in future collaborations, whether through offering placements, inputting into curriculum design, or providing other tangible support as appropriate.

Given the scale of opportunity and the strategic importance of this project, we urge policy makers, funding bodies, and elected representatives to back this vision and help ensure its successful delivery.



Thank you for the opportunity to lend our voice to this vital initiative. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if we can be of further assistance as the project progresses.

Yours sincerely,



Stephen Kemp  
Managing Director

To whom it may concern,

## **Support for Proposed Highlands Centre of Excellence for Infrastructure Skills, Safety, and Innovation**

On behalf of *Powering Futures*, I am writing to express our strong support for the proposal to develop a Centre of Excellence for Infrastructure Skills, Safety, and Innovation in Inverness, led by Highlands and Islands Skills (CIC) in conjunction with CITB & the National Construction College, and the University of the Highlands and Islands.

At Powering Futures, we are dedicated to preparing the next generation for the jobs of the future, particularly in sectors such as renewable energy, civil engineering, construction, and infrastructure. Our SCQF Level 6 accredited schools programme, currently running in over 125 Scottish schools, and our AI-powered *Next Steps* career exploration tool are designed to unearth young talent, build essential meta-skills, and connect students directly with industry opportunities. Our mission aligns strongly with the goals of the proposed Centre: to develop a pipeline of skilled talent across the Highlands and Islands to support Scotland's net zero and infrastructure ambitions.

The need for such an initiative is urgent. With over 250 infrastructure projects worth more than £100bn expected across the region by 2040, the demand for highly skilled workers – from crane operators to engineers – will only increase. Too often, young people in the Highlands are unaware of these opportunities, or are required to travel far afield to access training. A world-class training centre based locally would not only address skills shortages but also help retain and grow talent within our communities, creating long-term employment and prosperity.

Through our own work, we see daily the impact that direct engagement between businesses and schools can have. Young people are inspired when they see tangible opportunities in their own region. We strongly support the collaborative approach being taken to this project, and we would welcome the chance to contribute to future collaborations that connect the Centre of Excellence with schools, young people, and career pathways across the Highlands.

We encourage funders, policy makers, and decision makers to recognise the significance of this proposal and to provide the necessary support to make it a reality. This initiative represents not only a practical solution to immediate workforce challenges but also an investment in Scotland's long-term economic resilience and just transition.

16<sup>th</sup> September 2025

Powering Futures  
45 Vicar Street  
Falkirk  
FK1 1LL  
[www.poweringfutures.com](http://www.poweringfutures.com)

Powering Futures is proud to add our support, and we look forward to working alongside Highlands and Islands Skills (CIC) and partners to ensure that the next generation of talent is ready to meet the demands of Scotland's infrastructure future.

Yours sincerely,



David O. Reid  
Co-Founder  
Powering Futures





# **STODDART CRANE HIRE LTD**

**Unit 17 Tomich Industrial Estate  
Muir of Ord  
IV6 7WA  
Tel: 01463 871167**

Highlands & Islands Skills (CIC)  
Kintail House  
Beechwood Business Park  
Inverness  
IV2 3BW

Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2025

Dear sirs,

We are excited to learn of your project to develop a significant centre of excellence for sector skills, safety and innovation in the Highlands.

Stoddart Crane Hire has proudly served customers across the construction, energy, and civil engineering sectors for over 20 years, providing services throughout the Highlands and Islands, including the most remote locations such as St Kilda and Unst in Shetland, as well as across the rest of Scotland and the UK.

As a business, we are acutely aware of the growing skills shortage within our sector, especially with the unprecedented pipeline of over 250 projects on the horizon in the Highlands and Islands totalling over £100bn. This pipeline presents both a challenge and an opportunity. To ensure that we are ready for the future, we have committed to an ongoing strategy of investing in our workforce, upskilling and training our team year on year to meet the demands of the ever-evolving industry.

We recently took on an apprentice crane operator who trained at the National Construction College in Norfolk. While the apprenticeship course has been a success, we recognise that for many young people, distance for training is a significant barrier to entry for similar opportunities. This is why we fully support your vision for a Centre of Excellence, which will bring high-quality vocational training directly to the region, allowing us to scale up and develop local talent without the need for long-distance travel.

Your project's objectives align perfectly with our own, particularly in fostering excellence, innovation, collaboration, and a strong commitment to safety. Ensuring that all trainees are equipped with the highest standards of safety training and awareness is crucial for us and our clients. We believe that this initiative will not only address the regional skills gap and be instrumental in building a future-ready workforce, but also ensure that safety is deeply

embedded in the next generation of skilled workers, contributing to the successful and safe delivery of infrastructure projects across the Highlands and Islands.

Given the importance of this initiative to the future of our industry, our own workforce and our own region, we are committed to supporting the success of this project in any way we can.

We sincerely hope that decision-makers, our local authority and Highlands & Islands Enterprise will recognise the importance of this vital initiative and lend their full support, ensuring its success for the long-term benefit of the region.

We look forward to seeing this project develop.

Yours faithfully



Kerri MacDonald  
Director

To Highlands and Islands Skills (CIC)

As the owner of a business working in the renewable energy sector here in the Highlands, I am acutely aware of the skills shortage in the industry and the challenges we face in finding technicians locally. Unless we invest now in developing a strong local workforce, much of the opportunity created by this expanding industry will pass our communities by.

The Hi-Skills Development at Torvean Quarry is a step in the right direction. It offers a practical and much-needed solution by creating pathways into real jobs through relevant, hands-on training. Making good use of the quarry site to support skills development is a smart move, and exactly the kind of thinking we need more of if we want to see long-term economic benefit stay in the region.

At Storr Access, we know the potential is already here. With access to the right training and opportunities, local people are more than capable of stepping into key roles across the renewables sector and beyond. Initiatives like Hi-Skills are essential if we want to build a workforce that reflects the strength and resilience of our communities.

We fully support this development and look forward to seeing it move ahead.

Yours sincerely,  
Cailean MacLeod  
Storr Access





Callum Mackintosh  
Highlands and Islands Skills CIC  
Kintail House  
Beechwood Park  
Inverness  
IV2 3BW

Stephen Sheridan  
The University of the Highlands and Islands  
UHI House  
Old Perth Road  
Inverness  
IV2 3JH

30th June 2025

Dear Callum,

This letter affirms University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) commitment to work in collaboration to contribute to the development of a business case in support of the creation of a Centre of Excellence for Infrastructure Skills Safety and Innovation in the Highlands.

Any business case should demonstrate how the proposed centre would provide businesses operating within the Highlands and Islands with a range of new and enhanced workforce development programmes available in the region. Any new programmes will aim to enhance the training offered in the region and aim to avoid any duplication or displacement.

To achieve this, UHI will work with Highlands and Islands Skills CIC, CITB and the National Construction College, working to uphold the values and principles associated with the project: Excellence, Legacy, Collaboration and Innovation. UHI is supportive of the development of a business case to develop a project that will:

- **Provide High-Quality Training**  
Deliver training programmes tailored to the unique demands of the Centre of Excellence project, ensuring workers meet industry-recognised standards and project-specific requirements.
- **Expand Entry Points**  
Support multiple pathways into the workforce, including participation from underrepresented groups, local communities, and those re-entering employment.
- **Enable Upskilling and Mobility**  
Develop career pathways to support upskilling and reskilling across the project lifecycle and onward into wider engineering and construction roles.
- **Strengthen Regional Training Infrastructure**  
Enhance the training network across the Highlands by integrating apprenticeships, vocational training, and graduate pathways to address skills shortages.

Seansalair: A h-Àirdeachd Rìoghail A\* Bhana-phrionnsa Rìoghail  
Chancellor: HRH The Princess Royal

Prionnsapal agus Iar-Sheansalair: Vicki Nairn  
Principal and Vice-Chancellor: Vicki Nairn

Taigh UHI, Seann Rathad Pheairt, Inbhir Nis, Alba IV2 3JH | UHI House, Old Perth Road, Inverness, Scotland IV2 3JH  
+44 (0) 1463 279246 | [vice-chancellor@uhi.ac.uk](mailto:vice-chancellor@uhi.ac.uk) | [uhi.ac.uk](http://uhi.ac.uk)

Companaidh earranta clàraichte ann an Alba Àir, 148203 | Àireamh Charthannais Albannaich Chlàraichte, SC022226 | Oifis chlàraichte Taigh UHI, Seann Rathad Pheairt, Inbhir Nis, Alba IV2 3JH. A limited company registered in Scotland No. 148203 | Registered Scottish Charity No. SC022226  
Registered office: UHI House, Old Perth Road, Inverness, Scotland IV2 3JH



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- **Deliver a Skilled Workforce Legacy**  
Equip workers with transferable skills and qualifications that ensure long-term employability and contribute to a resilient regional economy.
- **Collaborate on Competency Frameworks**  
Support the development and use of competency frameworks and training standards relevant to the Centre of Excellence and the wider Scottish infrastructure, construction and energy sectors.
- **Share Labour Market Intelligence**  
Work collaboratively on workforce planning and skills data to optimise project delivery and inform future regional strategy.

Should the case developed go forward, we will work with the project partners to develop a detailed business plan under a partnership contract, subject to the necessary due diligence.

We agree to maintain confidentiality over all project-related, proprietary or sensitive information belonging to Highlands and Islands Skills CIC and its signed partners (CITB, ECITB and the National Construction College), unless explicit written consent to disclose is provided. We support open collaboration with other stakeholders, including Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Highland Council, this shall not extend to the sharing of confidential or protected information without prior agreement.

**Points of Contact**

**Highlands and Islands Skills CIC:**

Name: Callum Mackintosh

Title: Director

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

**The University of the Highlands and Islands:**

Name: Stephen Sheridan

Title: Director of Economic Development and Advancement

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Stephen Sheridan



# VIKING OFFSHORE LTD

**To Whom It May Concern,**

**Subject: Letter of Support – Highlands and Islands Skills Centre of Excellence**

Viking Offshore is pleased to provide our strong support for the Highlands and Islands Skills (CIC) initiative to establish a Centre of Excellence for Infrastructure Skills, Safety, and Innovation in Inverness, in partnership with CITB, the National Construction College, ECITB, and the University of the Highlands and Islands.

As a company operating across the offshore, marine, and wider infrastructure sectors, Viking Offshore delivers specialist services throughout Scotland and beyond, including offshore energy, marine construction, and heavy lifting operations. Our work regularly requires highly skilled professionals in disciplines such as crane operations, lifting supervision, civil and marine engineering, and vessel operations.

We recognise the growing skills shortage across the infrastructure sector in the Highlands and Islands. The demand for trained operators, technicians, and apprentices is increasing rapidly, yet too often learners must travel as far as Norfolk to access the specialist training, they require. Developing this Centre of Excellence locally will not only bridge that gap but also strengthen Scotland's position in meeting the £100bn pipeline of more than 250 infrastructure projects planned across the Highlands and Islands by 2040.

We are particularly supportive of the Centre's vision to provide state-of-the-art training facilities and real-world mock sites for apprenticeships, higher-level qualifications, and short-duration upskilling courses. This will provide a critical pipeline of talent for businesses like ours, ensuring that skills are developed within the region and aligned with local industry needs.

At Viking Offshore, we have a longstanding commitment to developing a highly skilled workforce. Apprenticeships, ongoing training, and career development are central to our operations, and we have seen first-hand the benefits that well-structured training brings to safety, performance, and innovation. We welcome the collaborative approach being taken by Highlands and Islands Skills (CIC) and are open to contributing to future partnerships that enhance workforce development in our region. We strongly encourage funders, policymakers, and decision makers to support this initiative, which we believe will deliver long-term, sustainable benefits to the Highlands and Islands economy, create high-value employment opportunities, and ensure Scotland's infrastructure ambitions are fully realised.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Damian Breckon

Managing Director/Owner

**Viking Offshore & West Coast Seafoods Ltd**





Ness Suite  
Ground Floor Offices  
Port of Inverness  
Inverness  
IV1 1SU

To whom it may concern,

At Vinje UK Ltd, we would like to declare our support for the Highlands and Islands Skills (CIC).

One of the biggest challenges we have identified is the potential for skills shortage in the region. We are the first Norwegian owned business to take residence in the Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport Zone. Together with our partners at the Norwegian Offshore wind Cluster we foresee the UK as an enormous growth market, and we will be looking to recruit skilled technicians in the Energy sectors including renewables and infrastructure.

My background is in the training sector, I was an early school leaver, then time served Plater Welder at Brown and Root McDermott. Having served my time at Ardersier yard during the 1990's, this apprenticeship provided the cornerstone and installed a solid knowledge base for the rest of my career. This includes management roles in overseas companies, and ownership of my own companies too. Throughout my career Apprenticeships have been the lifeblood of any growing business and economy. I have a strong affiliation with colleges and other skills centres, I am a former committee member at various training trade associations and standards committees including IRATA Rope access and work at Height.

At Vinje UK Ltd, we would most certainly look at developing our skilled workforce through modern apprenticeships and other skills-based courses. We will certainly need to invest in and grow a local workforce to benefit from the once in a lifetime opportunity in the Highlands which currently has over 250 planned projects in the area by 2040. I feel that the Inverness, the beating heart of the Highlands region would be the ideal choice for such a skills development project.

By having a collaborative approach and one shared vision, Vinje Uk Ltd would like to play its part in the development of such a project, such as advice and or funding towards the development.

If there is any other information required from us, please contact me using the below details.

Yours Sincerely,

Andrew Johnston  
General Manager-Vinje UK

