Chapter 11 : Infrastructure

Information required by the Act regarding the issue addressed in this section	Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended: Section 15(5)(d): - the infrastructure of the district. Section 15(5)(e): - how that infrastructure is used. Town and Country Planning (Development Planning) (Scotland) Regulations 2023: Regulation 9 - Have regard to the national waste management plan
NPF4 LDP Requirements	NPF4 Policy 18: - LDPs and delivery programmes should be based on an integrated infrastructure first approach. Plans should: - set out the infrastructure requirements to deliver the spatial strategy, informed by the evidence base, identifying the infrastructure priorities, and where, how, when and by whom they will be delivered; and - indicate the type, level (or method of calculation) and location of the financial or in-kind contributions, and the types of development from which they will be required. - Plans should align with relevant national, regional, and local infrastructure plans and policies and take account of the Scottish Government infrastructure investment hierarchy and sustainable travel and investment hierarchies in developing the spatial strategy. - Consistent early engagement and collaboration between relevant stakeholders will better inform decisions on land use and investment. NPF4 Policy 12: - LDPs should identify appropriate locations for new waste management infrastructure to support the circular economy and meet identified needs in a way that moves waste as high up the waste hierarchy as possible. NPF4 Policy 24

	• LDPs should support the delivery of digital infrastructure, including fixed line and mobile connectivity, particularly in areas with gaps in connectivity and barriers to digital access
Links to Evidence	**(THC159)** Developer Contributions Supplementary Guidance **(THC160)** Highland Council School Role Forecasts **(THC161)** Highland Investment Plan **(THC282)** Communities & Place Committee Report: Long-Term Waste Management, November 2024 **(THC300)** Highland Housing Land Audit **(THC370)** A National Mission with Local Impact: Infrastructure Investment Plan for Scotland 2021-22 to 2025-26 **(THC371)** A Changing Nation: How Scotland will Thrive in a Digital World **(THC372)** Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation **(THC373)** Connected Nations Scotland Report 2024 **(THC374)** Broadband infrastructure in Scotland: public review **(THC375)** Openreach Broadband Full Fibre Build Plan 2024 **(THC376)** Gigabit in Scotland Public Review Report Revision 3 **(THC267)** Highland GP Practice List Sizes **(THC268)** Highland Health Facilities **(THC275)** Accessible Amendments to Houses Analysis **(THC276)** Residential Annex for Elderly Family Analysis **(THC215)** Highland Burial Ground Capacity {table below}

Online Resources	Date Accessed
Highland Council Programme: Our Future Highland	
Highland Delivery Plan	
Delivery Programme	
Highland Investment Plan	
Revised HOIP June 2024	
2024–2027 HOIP	
Gaelic Language Plan 2024–2029	
GME catchment areas	
School Core Facts Summary	17 Nov 2025
Local Broadband Information	30 Sept 2025
Waste Management (Scotland) Regulations 2012	30 Sept 2025
Strategic Aim - Decarbonise Disposal	30 Sept 2025

	Gigabit Infrastructure Subsidy Scheme	07 Apr 2025
	Openreach Full Fibre Build Programme	07 Apr 2025
	UK Broadband Coverage & Speedtest Result Maps	07 Apr 2025
	Digital Connectivity Data Insights	07 Apr 2025
	Local Broadband Information	07 Apr 2025
	COHI Meeting in May 2025	30 Sept 2025
	Gigabit in Scotland Premises Subsidy Control - Highland	07 Apr 2025
	Connected Nations update: Spring 2025	30 Sept 2025
	Health and Social Care Service Renewal Framework	31 Oct 2025
	Improvement Service Spatial Hub NHS Hospitals GP Practices Pharmacies	31 Oct 2025
	GP Workforce and Practice List Sizes	31 Oct 2025
	General practice list size and demographics information	31 Oct 2025
	Culloden Medical Practice and Culloden Surgery	31 Oct 2025
	General Practice (in-hours) Workforce Survey 2024	31 Oct 2025
	NHS Scotland Workforce statistics to 30 June 2025	31 Oct 2025
	NHS Highland List of Dental Practitioners	31 Oct 2025
	NHS Highland consultant workforce data	31 Oct 2025
	Care homes and day care - NHS Highland	31 Oct 2025
	Care homes across the Highland HSCP area	31 Oct 2025
	Care Homes for the Elderly	31 Oct 2025
	Independent Care Sector Home Overview and Collaborative Support Update	31 Oct 2025
	Social Care Insights Dashboard	31 Oct 2025
	Call for Development Sites	31 Oct 2025
	Highland Council Burial Grounds Map	17 Mar 2025
	Public Health Scotland Death Rates by Council Area	31 Oct 2025

In order to avoid repetition of content contained elsewhere within the Evidence Report, this chapter should be read in conjunction with other chapters. We recognise that there are relevant crossovers between Infrastructure and other topics including:

- **Chapter 4: Climate Change and Energy**

- **Chapter 5 Nature and Environment**
- **Chapter 6: Coastal Development and Aquaculture**
- **Chapter 7: Flood Risk Management**
- **Chapter 8: Economy, Business, Tourism and Productive Places**
- **Chapter 9: Housing**
- **Chapter 10: Transport**
- **Chapter 12: Historic Assets, Brownfield Land and Empty Buildings**
- **Chapter 13: Design, Wellbeing, Local Living and Placemaking**

Where apparent, the Council has referenced relevant linkages between policies areas throughout the chapter.

Summary of Evidence

11.1 This chapter presents the Council's evidence in relation to infrastructure capacity, other than transport which has been detailed separately in **Chapter 10: Transport.** The Council considers it has undertaken thorough engagement with stakeholders for this chapter and collected sufficient evidence on the topic for the Proposed Plan development. This Summary of Evidence focuses on information relating to:

- **Context and Approach**
- **Education**
- **Community Facilities**
-
- **Waste Management**
- **Digital Infrastructure**
- **Health and Social Care Needs**

Context and Approach

11.2 NPF4 Policy 18 Infrastructure First seeks to ensure that infrastructure considerations are integral to development planning and decision making, and potential impacts on infrastructure and infrastructure needs are understood early in the development planning processes as part of an evidence-based approach.

11.3 Policy 18 of NPF4 stemmed from work commissioned by the Scottish Government and completed by the Infrastructure Commission for Scotland in July 2020. The Commission's Key Findings Report set out a new, logical, coordinated

and comprehensive approach to future infrastructure planning and investment across Scotland. Unfortunately, the Report's laudable recommendations have only been partially implemented and the principle of the approach has slowly been eroded by decisions taken by all infrastructure providers since. This section explains why the erosion of the principle of a coordinated approach to infrastructure investment makes it very challenging for any local planning authority and particularly Highland to implement Policy 18 through its LDP. Moreover, this NPF4 Policy 18 approach has not, to date, been translated into development management decision making, court decisions or most importantly the capital programmes of infrastructure providers. This is perhaps unsurprising because the wording of NPF4 Policy 18, despite its title, doesn't justify the refusal of a planning application in a case where there is insufficient capacity in all relevant infrastructure and local facility networks to support that proposal. Sufficient capacity does not need to be created first for an application to be supported. At best, the policy requires proposals to "contribute to" and "address the impacts on" infrastructure capacity issues. "Contributing to" and mitigation to "address" are limited by the 5 planning obligation tests listed in part b) of Policy 18. It is sufficient for a developer to mitigate an infrastructure capacity issue as far as it is proportionate to do so relative to the impact of that developer's proposal. Policy 18 does not require a comprehensive and effective solution to every infrastructure capacity issue prior to a permission being issued or development commencing. Put simply, all necessary infrastructure capacity does not have to come first.

11.4   This national planning policy context suggests that a new-style local development plan that promoted a different, "embargo on development unless all infrastructure capacity is provided first" approach would be deemed incompatible with NPF4 and therefore be amended/rejected by a DPEA Reporter at Examination and/or by Scottish Ministers. Instead, this NPF4 context implies that at Gate Check stage, an LPA should gather evidence on infrastructure capacity, how that may change over time, and how future development can best be matched to where spare capacity exists or can most effectively be added by new investment whether that is by the public or private sector. This chapter explains how the Council has done this. It does not pretend that all future development in Highland will be supported by sufficient infrastructure capacity from day one of its completion. Such an approach would also be impracticable because of how infrastructure providers now operate in Scotland (and the wider UK).

11.5   Decisions on infrastructure capacity investment in Highland are made by a myriad of public and private organisations. There is very little spatial and temporal coordination of these decisions and investment. Like different statutory undertakers digging up the same street for different purposes over a short time period without coordinating those works then so too the UK Government, Scottish Government, Highland Council, Scottish Water, other public agencies and the private sector, for the most part, don't coordinate their capital investment. This is understandable to a degree because each organisation has a separate capital programme, different political priorities, different investment drivers, different legacy problems, a different need and demand profile, and different legislative imperatives. For example, 95% of Scottish Water's capital programme is about maintenance of ageing pipe networks and maintaining water quality standards rather than supporting new development proposals. The electricity local distribution network providers and Scottish Water provide local network improvements on a "first-developer-in-pays-first" principle rather than via a comprehensive assessment of need and demand for their networks from new development sites. Similarly, Transport Scotland, NHS Highland and the Highland Council's Education Team concentrate on addressing the legacy of existing physical assets in less than optimum physical condition rather than strategically, adding new, future-proofed assets to support a coordinated spatial growth strategy. In many cases, because of expenditure constraints, adding infrastructure capacity to support new development is made on a "just-in-time" principle or in a reactive way as existing assets become unacceptably overloaded. Given this context, very few if any settlements in Highland have spare existing or programmed future capacity in all existing infrastructure and facility networks. There may be capacity for new development in the sewage works but not in the primary school. There may be capacity in the local road network but not in the local electricity distribution network.

11.6   Moreover, where spare capacity does exist it is not always in places where people want to live, work, be educated or enjoy recreation. Any comprehensive infrastructure and/or facility planning model should look at both supply and demand for that provision. In Highland, there are marked geographic differences in development pressure. Therefore, it is no surprise that there is a geographic mismatch between the supply and demand for most networks. For example, most Inverness City schools are close to or over capacity whereas most remoter area schools are threatened with closure. A "social engineering" spatial strategy to disperse economic opportunity and population to the remoter parts of Highland has been tried for the last 60 years but has been mostly unsuccessful. Put simply,

moving people to where existing spare network capacity exists isn't a practicable spatial strategy.

11.7   Given the context explained above, the Council believes that the only logical way to approach the issue of infrastructure is to gather and assess all available and relevant evidence on the supply and demand for each infrastructure and facility network and then evolve a practicable spatial strategy that best matches new development locations to where spare capacity exists, is committed in short-term capital programmes or can be added at least cost to the public and private sector. This Chapter follows such an approach.

11.8   Infrastructure investment in Highland is allocated and delivered through various mechanisms, from Scottish Government, UK Government, local authorities and private sector.

National Infrastructure Investment

11.9   NPF4 defines a set of National Developments which will support the delivery of the spatial strategy. LDPs are required to identify and support National Developments relevant to their areas. National Developments within Highland include:

- Energy Innovation Development on the Islands
- Pumped Hydro Storage
- Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure
- Circular Economy Materials Management Facilities
- National Walking, Cycling and Wheeling Network
- A Digital Fibre Network

11.10   However, many of these are not focused on providing additional infrastructure capacity directly to support housing and economic growth in Highland. For example, improvements to strategic renewable electricity generation and transmission infrastructure including pumped storage hydro are driven by Scottish and UK national aims of energy security, carbon emissions reductions and moving generated energy to areas of higher demand not about creating energy network capacity for new Highland homes and businesses. More positively, NPF4 referenced investment in the national walking, cycling, wheeling and digital fibre networks has had a direct benefit to Highland in enhancing local development potential.

11.11   Scottish Government's *Infrastructure Investment Plan (IIP) 2021-22 to 2025-26* **(THC370)** set out the national infrastructure pipeline for capital investment and

delivery within the timeframe (now extended to 2026-27). Scottish Government has announced that it will publish a draft national infrastructure strategy for consultation in January 2026. Specific major projects included in the 2021 IIP for Highland include A-road transport improvements (see **Chapter 10: Transport**), Highland Elective Care Centre, HMP Highland (replacement facility), Inverness and Highland City Region Deal (IHCRD) and capital grant funding available to local authorities for infrastructure across numerous workstreams and programmes.

11.12   The Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal sets out a 10 year joint investment agreement between the Highland Council, UK Government and Scottish Government. It was signed in January 2017 and projects were intended for completion by end of January 2027. Many projects have been implemented but key ones remain to be taken forward, notably improvements to strategic road infrastructure at Inverness crucial to the expansion of the City of Inverness.

Highland Infrastructure Investment – LDP Delivery Programme

11.13   Like other local planning authorities, Highland's list of infrastructure deemed necessary to underpin the implementation of its existing LDPs is set out in its Delivery Programme. The Council's previous three Delivery Programmes for each of its three area LDPs have now been consolidated into a single Delivery Programme for the whole of Highland. It is structured into three sections corresponding to the existing area LDPs. The Programme signposts for developers and communities the infrastructure commitments and requirements for each main settlement and those relevant to the wider spatial strategy. Where known, timescales, financial amounts, locations and funding partners are specified.

11.14   The Delivery Programme is also aligned with the latest Highland Housing Land Audit (HLA) **(THC300)** which predicts the phasing of new housing and therefore the likely level of future developer contributions for each main settlement. The Programme also takes account of the latest Highland School Roll Forecasts **(THC160)**, which outline the anticipated changes to pupil rolls in primary and secondary schools in Highland which in turn affect where education developer contributions are triggered.

11.15   One of the most critical aspects of infrastructure investment to stress is that in Highland, a much wider package of investment mechanisms is required to provide adequate investment into our diverse communities. With substantial

areas having no presence from major volume-housebuilders, the Council has long recognised that alternate plans are therefore required, beyond the Delivery Programme alone. The following sections therefore set out the range of measures underway.

Highland Investment Plan

11.16   The Highland Council's own capital programme has recently been rebranded as the Highland Investment Plan (HIP) (THC161). It forms part of the Highland Delivery Programme referenced previously. The HIP is subject to regular review with any significant amendments in turn being reflected within the Highland Delivery Programme and is also intended to align and support the three strategic priorities of the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan (HOIP 2024–2027). The HIP does reference partner funding such as Scottish Government grant for new schools and there is a stated desire for asset reconfiguration and co-location with other public sector partners in the new buildings created by the Plan's investment. The Plan commits £2.1 billion of capital funding over a twenty-year period, based on the ring fencing of 2% council tax per annum, or an equivalent revenue stream. These funds will be capitalised to create an investment fund that will be used to tackle the major capital challenges that Highland Council faces: transport and roads; schools and community facilities; depots and offices – as part of work towards a single public estate and integrated community operating model. One of the key objectives is to initiate a programme of improvements to the school estate recognising that 92 of the 196 Highland operational schools currently rated as "C – Poor" for condition and/or suitability, which is discussed in **Education** below.

Developer Contributions

11.17   The Highland Council *Developer Contributions Supplementary Guidance* (DCSG) **(THC159)** sets out Highland Council's approach to mitigating the impacts of development on services and infrastructure by seeking fair and realistic developer contributions to the delivery of such facilities. This guidance forms part of the Council's approved development plan in terms of sections 24 and 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended.

11.18   The DCSG is applicable across the HwLDP area and still has some relevance within the Highland Council part of the Cairngorms National Park Authority area

because the Council provides education, waste and transport services within that area.

11.19   The Council recognises that the DCSG will fall on the adoption of the new HLDP and therefore wishes to embody the principles if not all of the detail of its future approach to infrastructure developer contributions within the new HLDP.

11.20   Table 11:1 summarises existing developer contribution requirements by development type, scale and type of infrastructure.

Table 11:1 Development Types that require Developer Contributions in Highland

Development Type	Schools	Community Facilities	Affordable Housing	Transport	Green Infrastructure	Water and Waste *1	Public Art
Residential *2	Yes	Yes (4 or more homes) *3	Yes (4 or more homes) *4	Yes	Yes (4 or more homes)	Yes	Yes
Business	No			Yes			
Industrial (inc. energy)	No			Yes			
Retail	No			Yes			

*1 - For all scales of projects, water/waste connections are required and these utility costs are not usually covered by developer contributions. These should be budgeted for separately, forming part of the developer's project costs. Scottish Water recommends that the developer submits a Pre Development Enquiry Form so that these network costs can be budget for.
*2 - Including affordable housing and any tourist accommodation suitable for permanent residential occupancy.
*3 - Developments of less than 4 homes which form part if a wider site are required to contribute towards community facilities.
*4 - Developments of less than 4 homes which form part of a wider site, and all homes in the Cairngorms National Park, are required to contribute.

Education

11.21   Table 11:2 illustrates the number of schooling facilities across Highland regions and divides the education estate into a number of categories; High Schools, Primary Schools, Nurseries, Additional Support Needs (ASN) and Gaelic Medium Education (GME) which will be explored in detail.

Table 11:2 School distribution across Highland

Highland Region	High Schools	Primary Schools	Nurseries	ASN	GME
Badenoch & Strathspey	2	8	7		
Caithness	2	16	12	1	
Inverness	6	36	34	1	1

Lochaber	4	23	15		1
Nairn	1	4	4		
Ross & Cromarty	7	45	35	1	
Skye & Lochalsh	2	20	16		1
Sutherland	4	14	10		
Total	**30**	**166**	**133**	**3**	**3**

Highland's Current Learning Estate Strategy (LES)

11.22 In common with many other authorities, the Council is directing its education facility capacity investment into new, integrated (often ages 3-18 campus) provision and/or where it is most needed to improve the physical condition and/or suitability of older school buildings. As described in **Context and Approach**, future-proofing for education needs triggered by future housing development is a less important factor. Indeed, Scottish Government grant levels for new high schools in Highland have been limited to like-for-like replacements in capacity terms not for future-proofing. Any additional "headroom" is to be funded from additional Council capital allocations or more commonly Council borrowing the loan charges for which are met by "income" from future developer contributions. One exception to this approach is the new primary school envisaged for the Tornagrain New Town but this has been necessitated by a significant breach of the capacity of the existing primary school at nearby Croy not provided in advance on an "infrastructure first" basis. More prudently, many Highland primary schools are now constructed in a phased, modular way so additional wings can be added off a general/common purpose rooms core. From the outset, a large enough site is purchased and serviced to allow for such phased expansion. This is a principle that the Council encourages other infrastructure providers to adopt and the HLDP will include sufficiently sized allocations to support this approach.

11.23 The Highland LES sets out the principles and priorities to drive the development of the learning estate across Highland consistent with the national agenda and wider Highland strategic priorities. One of the key objectives of the LES is a programme of improvements to the Council's school estate that seeks to bring all schools to, or sustain them at, B/B ratings or better for condition/suitability, as 92 of the Council's 197 operational schools currently rated as "C – Poor" for condition and/or suitability.

11.24 LDP Guidance for NPF4 Policy 18, requires LDPs and Delivery Programmes to be integrated infrastructure first. This includes capacity, condition, needs and

deliverability. The condition of Highland's education estate is an important evidence consideration which will be required alongside capacity. Despite whether these schools will be eligible for developer contributions or not.

11.25   **Error! Reference source not found.** highlights the condition and suitability of both primary and secondary schools across Highland. With the most common condition and suitability score for primary schools being categorised as B. For secondary schools there is a much broader mix of categories.

Table 11:3 Education condition, suitability by category (School Core Facts Summary)

	Condition				Suitability			
	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D
Primary Schools	24	83	52	0	23	81	55	0
% of total	15%	52%	33%	0%	14%	51%	35%	0%
Secondary Schools	10	7	8	2	11	5	11	0
% of total	37%	26%	30%	7%	41%	18%	41%	0%

11.26   The LES also aligns with the local priorities set out within the HIP vision for developing its learning estate. This means that HIP school investments are generally in locations where improved school estates are needed that would have been unlikely to have been provided by developer contributions owing to the occupancy of the schools remaining below the qualifying threshold of 90%.

11.27   The methodology and rationale for selecting the schools for investment under HIP are:

- those with the poorest condition and suitability ratings as shown in the School Core Facts Summary.
- instances where multiple schools with poorest condition and suitability ratings in one town can be improved in tandem under a joint programme.
- Instances where joint use of assets and community facilities can be provided with other agencies through Points of Delivery (PODs).

11.28   The HIP schools committed for investment are therefore:

- Dingwall: 1 Primary (over 400 pupils) and 1 Special School (over 50 pupils); cost range £40M to £50M
- Thurso: 1 Secondary School (around 750 pupil) and 3 Primary Schools (over 600 pupils); cost range £80M to £100M

11.29   A new generation of community facilities is envisioned for the Highlands, with Points of Delivery (PODs) seeing a range of public services brought together in a single location. Works will range from relatively minor improvements to fabric and retrofitting, to major renovations and new build schools, linked to our Community Points of Service Delivery (POD) approach to future delivery of Council and partner services across all of our Highland Communities.

School Roll Forecast (SRF)

11.30   Quantifying the supply and demand for Highland's existing and future education infrastructure is done through School Roll Forecasts (SRF). These are re-run on an annual basis using the latest school intake figures the latest Housing Land Audit site programming assumptions and taking account of population, household, GP registrations, house completions, school capacity and pupil product data. The 15-year forecasts for each school are published on the Council's website. Each forecast contains a Red-Amber-Green analysis of how close the forecasted roll is to the 90% physical capacity of the school's building(s). 90% is chosen to allow sufficient lead time for a new capital programme project to be worked up. Also, many schools find it difficult to function without at least 10% spare physical capacity. Additional space is required for unforeseen or regular operational issues such as the need to divide classes or groups of pupils for short periods of time.

11.31   The SRF methodology **(THC190)** provides a simplified approach to determining the effect of residential development on the school estate. A baseline forecast is updated and published annually, which also acts as a template that can now be used for modelling future school rolls based on testing various potential development and school estate management scenarios.

11.32   The annual Housing Land Audit (HLA), further detailed in **Chapter 9: Housing,** provides the base information for annual SRF's. Since 2016, the HLA has been prepared in parallel with the creation of the annual SRF's. In addition to programmed build out rates for LDP site allocations, allowance for smaller scale windfall development sites is also applied to the forecasts. Using the residential development information, estimated build out rates are aggregated by primary catchment and an updated windfall contribution is added to give a year-by-year additional housing count for each. These values are combined with the Pupil Product Ratios to predict the number of additional pupils expected per school for each year forecast. Total school rolls forecasted are reported against school capacities to highlight current and future school's capacity constraints or where schools have excess capacity.

11.33 The latest 2024/2025 SRF for each Highland school is supplied **(THC###)** and owing to the number of over 300 schools and nurseries, these are not included in the body of the evidence report, although 53 are forecast to breach 90% physical capacity for at least one year of the 15 year forecasting period and 30 are currently operating at above 90% capacity, with some in fact operating well above 100% of their intended capacity as highlighted in Table 11:4. By contrast, 279 schools/nurseries are not anticipated to breach 90% within the next 15 years, and 176 are forecast to see their school roll decline which are spread throughout much of the remote rural and fragile areas discussed in **Chapter 8: Economy, Business, Tourism and Productive Places**. Unsurprisingly, physical capacity issues are most prevalent in the Inner Moray Firth area where development pressure is higher than elsewhere in Highland.

*Table 11:4 Highland Schools already operating above 90% of capacity **(THC###)***

School Name	Type	Current Capacity
Charleston Academy	Secondary	94%
Beauly Primary	Primary	95%
Kinmylies Primary	Primary	110%
Kirkhill Primary	Primary	90%
Tomnacross Primary	Primary	95%
Kirkhill Primary (Nursery)	Nursery	110%
Croy Primary	Primary	119%
Croy Primary (Nursery)	Nursery	90%
Dingwall Primary	Primary	94%
Avoch Primary	Primary	96%
Avoch Primary (Nursery)	Nursery	166%
Glenurquhart Primary	Primary	99%
Carrbridge Primary	Primary	100%
South Lodge Primary (Nursery)	Nursery	91%
Inverness Royal Academy	Secondary	90%
Lochardil Primary	Primary	103%
Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Inbhir Nis (Nursery)	Nursery	148%
Hilton Primary (Nursery)	Nursery	94%
Holm Primary (Nursery)	Nursery	105%
Lochardil Primary (Nursery)	Nursery	106%
Millburn Academy	Secondary	105%
Raigmore Primary (Nursery)	Nursery	220%

Auldearn Primary (Nursery)	Nursery	100%
Cawdor Primary (Nursery)	Nursery	90%
Millbank Primary (Nursery)	Nursery	95%
Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Phort Rìgh	Primary	91%
Craighill Primary	Primary	132%
Knockbreck Primary (Tain)	Primary	104%
Miller Academy Primary (Nursery)	Nursery	115%
Wick High School	Secondary	96%

Gaelic Medium Education (GME)

11.34 The Council has a clear focus on increasing Gaelic usage and the number of Gaelic speakers as outlined in its Gaelic Language Plan 2024–2029. The Council continues to be committed to providing and enhancing GME, recognising this as one of the key drivers in sustaining and developing Gaelic. Education is one of the four themes of the Gaelic Language Plan 2024–2029 where the Council seeks to:

- Deliver continued promotion and growth in GME and GLE at all levels including delivery of Gaelic as a modern language, with 70% of primary schools providing Gaelic as an L2 and L3 to increase the provision of Gaelic across the authority.
- Expand the delivery of GME with increased secondary subject delivery, creation of new standalone schools and new early years, primary and secondary provision.

11.35 The growth of GME has been rapid and successful nationally, and the Council is currently the largest provider of GME, using both units within mainstream schools and standalone GME schools. Despite this however, GME schools/units have not until now been included within the formal developer contributions process, as GME schools/units previously had no formally defined catchment areas that could be used in operational terms, and it was previously considered challenging to predict how increased development could be modelled to forecast the impact on GME schools/units specifically. The current SRF assumption is that 100% of projected pupils from new housing go to the mainstream school for that catchment. A new process would be needed to more accurately reflect pupil behaviour and that may open up the possibility of taking contributions for GME.

11.36 There is anecdotal evidence of parents wishing to place their child(ren) within a GME school/unit not only for the benefits of a bilingual early education but also

because, often, class sizes and therefore pupil/teacher ratios are lower relative to the adjoining mainstream school. Such parent placement requests are very difficult to predict because these comparative pupil/teacher ratios are very fluid. In some instances, parents simply wish to use GME because the primary school is newer or closer than the mainstream alternative.

11.37 In 2023, the Council completed statutory consultations to create GME catchment areas for 15 of the 20 primary schools in the Highland area that offer GME. Table 11:5 illustrates that GME enrolment is growing in numerous schools and represents a significant share of total school occupancy, in both the three standalone schools and in the GME units.

Table 11:5 Gaelic Education Data Summary and Capacity 2024

School Name	Total P1–7	GME P1–7	% GME	% Δ 23–24	Planning Capacity	% Occupancy
Acharacle Primary	51	39	76%	-1%	75	68%
Broadford Primary	62	34	55%	+3%	125	49%
Bun-Sgoil Shlèite	53	41	77%	-4%	100	51%
Bun-Sgoil Stafainn	33	22	67%	-11%	50	70%
Craighill Primary	202	49	24%	—	150	131%
Dingwall Primary	420	70	17%	+2%	442	94%
Dunvegan Primary	50	23	46%	+4%	100	50%
Gairloch Primary	48	14	29%	+7%	124	40%
Glenurquhart Primary	151	16	11%	—	150	98%
Kilmuir Primary	16	13	81%	+12%	74	22%
Lochcarron Primary	44	14	32%	—	100	44%
Mallaig Primary	61	25	41%	—	99	66%
Millbank Primary	254	33	13%	—	332	76%
Mount Pleasant Primary	166	8	5%	—	243	69%
Newtomore Primary	107	37	35%	—	50	88%
Plockton Primary	52	37	71%	—	75	69%
Ullapool Primary	118	70	59%	—	172	68%
Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar*	151	151	100%	—	150	101%
Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Phort Rìgh*	172	172	100%	—	188	91%
Bun-sgoil Ghaidhlig Inbhir Nis*	220	220	100%	—	281	78%

* Standalone GME school

11.38 In reviewing HLDP policy on developer contributions, it is considered that with formal catchment areas in place and with evidence of GME occupancy and growth, it would be possible to develop a framework for including GME schools within developer contributions. However, the overall level of contributions per pupil should not be increased. The catchment pupil population both existing and projected should be compared to the education facility capacity (both mainstream and GME) available to serve it. Contributions would be sought for any necessary additional capacity directly attributable to new development whether that additional capacity was required via "mainstream" or GME accommodation. This may be linked to the formal designation of Gaelic Areas of Significance as discussed in **Chapter 8: Business, Economy, Tourism and Productive Places**.

11.39 The capacity, condition and suitability of standalone GME schools is illustrated in Table 11:6.

Table 11:6 GME school condition suitability and capacity (School Core Facts Summary)

School	Condition	Suitability	Pupil roll	Planning capacity	% Occupancy
Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar	A	A	151	150	101
Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Phort Rìgh	A	A	172	188	91
Bun-sgoil Ghaidhlig Inbhir Nis	A	A	220	281	78
Bun-Sgoil Shleite	B	B	51	100	51

ASN

11.40 The capacity, condition and suitability of standalone ASN schools across Highland are illustrated in Table 11:7.

Table 11:7 ASN school condition suitability and capacity (School Core Facts Summary)

School	Condition	Suitability	Pupil roll	Planning capacity	% Occupancy

Drummond	A	A	109	N/A	N/A
St Clement's	C	C	50	N/A	N/A
St Duthus	A	B	27	N/A	N/A
The Bridge	B	B	0	N/A	N/A

Nurseries

11.41 There is increasing pressure on Highland's nursery estate. This results not just from increasing numbers of children but additionally when there are increased Care Inspectorate requirements for space and capacity which results in some nurseries emerging as overcapacity. The Council does not currently take developer contributions directly for nursery school accommodation even though new development impacts upon its capacity. However, there is a trend and Scottish Government grant assistance to provide for the expansion and physical separation of nursery accommodation from provision that in Highland was and still is often within primary schools. Several Highland primary schools have capacity issues because of the lack of a separate building within which to accommodate nursery pupils.

11.42 The Council intends to continue to provide separate nursery accommodation as grant assistance and developer contributions allow. Such provision usually frees up spare capacity within the associated primary school which can support new development. Predicting the number and location of nursery accommodation demand is another reason not to formalise developer contributions towards its provision. Currently there is conflicting data on this issue. Highland birth numbers are on a downward trend but the age profile of net (in-)migration has seen an increase in the 0-5 age cohort in the single years to mid-2023 and mid-2024

Home Schooling

11.43 Highland records of home schooling are not stored centrally in SEEMiS however, each area retain their own list of home-schooled students. Important to recognise are that families that move into Highland do not have to inform the authority that their children are home-schooled. Therefore, this may result in a less accurate figure of home schooling known and understood by the Council, and for that reason no adjustments are made to the Council's SRF modelling to account for trends in home schooling.

11.44 Once all the catchments are finalised, it would then require a significant piece of work with Planning colleagues to agree how to implement and communicate any

Developer Contributions changes. I presume we would try to calculate a PPR value for each Gaelic catchment, but this would have other implications - c.

Developer contributions towards education

11.45   Overview of how dev contributions have currently been used for the education estate (ringfenced to individual schools, nursery/ASN/GME/RC not included) – incl schools that will likely require contributions into the lifespan of the new plan 2028/9-2038/9

11.46   A separate income stream for gaining contributions to Highland's education estate is through the HIP and Delivery Programme (DP).

11.47   There are a number of committed HIP/DP school projects, listed in TABLE – (likely timescales?)

Committed Project	Funding stream	Timescale

Highland Investment Plan (HIP)

11.48   The HIP is a long-term investment programme, which incorporates the commitments contained in the existing, approved, core five-year capital programme and adds to new investment commitments in roads and transport, as well as a longer-term strategy for the school, depot and office estate. The rationale for this is to find creative ways to ensure that an effective strategy is in place, is achievable and affordable. The HIP is part of the wider drive towards THC asset reconfiguration, and one of the key drivers of the delivery plan. This is in recognition of the number of assets that are in poor condition or no longer retain their prior functionality. The HIP requires that we relinquish assets as required, refurbish those we are committed to, and create new builds as part of a place making plan.

11.49   The recommended approaches will deliver substantial benefits to the school estate and to the learning and working environments within it on a pan Highland basis. It will have the benefit of being a fully data informed, evidence-based approach, incorporating the Council's prioritisation matrix and accounting for the whole life cycle costings of these buildings.

11.50   In identifying options for the future configuration of services the Council is taking account of the views of local people and evidence of local issues and priorities. The option generation process is being aligned with Area Place Plans that are being prepared across Highland, and evidence that is being gathered for the future Local Development Plan, both of which are the subject of ongoing engagement.

11.51   One of the key objectives of HIP is to initiate a programme of improvements to Highland's school estate, with 92 of Highlands 196 operational schools currently rated as "C – Poor" for condition and/or suitability.

Housing impacts on education

11.52   Impact of Local Housing Land Requirement (LHLR) on Education Estate (can only be written after HNDA projections- Dec2025)

11.53   Implications for the new plan – incl some high-level lessons learned for new DC policy (potential wider ring fencing/ inclusion of nursery/ASN/GME/RC)

Tertiary education

11.54   Consideration of the availability of tertiary education and its associated infrastructure is required through HLDP.

Table 11:8 Tertiary Education Settings in Highland

Tertiary Education Facilities	Location	Capacity
Alness Campus (UHI)	Alness	
Auchtertyre Campus (UHI)	Auchtertyre	
Scottish School of Forestry	Balloch	
Broadford Campus (UHI)	Broadford	
Dornoch Campus (UHI)	Dornoch	
Fort William Campus (UHI)	Fort William	
Gairloch Campus (UHI)	Gairloch	
Halkirk Campus (UHI)	Halkirk	
Inverness Campus (UHI)	Inverness	
Highland Theoretical Collage (UHI)	Dingwall	
Kilchoan Campus (UHI)	Kilchoan, Lochaber	
Kinlochleven Campus (UHI)	Kinlochleven	

Mallaig Campus (UHI)	Mallaig	
Portree Campus (UHI)	Portree	
Sabhal Mòr Ostaig (UHI)	Sleat, Isle of Skye	
Strontian Campus (UHI)	Strontian, Lochaber	
Thurso Campus (UHI)	Thurso	
Ullapool Campus (UHI)	Ullapool	

11.55   The Highland HNDA includes assessment of student accommodation needs from UHI and other facilities across Highland. Once complete, the HNDA will inform capacity numbers of student accommodation across Highland. Further details of which can be found in **Chapter 9 – Housing**.

Connection to fragile areas and areas of repop

Community Facilities

Infrastructure

11.56   NPF4 defines community facilities as buildings or services used by the community, including community halls, recreation centres and libraries. Highland has a vast number of community facilities throughout its area; these are listed in **THC###**. These range from libraries and leisure centres operated by High Life Highland, to town, village and church halls and other privately operated clubs and sports facilities. A number of community facilities also serve a dual purpose as cultural and creative facilities, for example museums and galleries. Culture and Creativity is described further in **Chapter 8: Economy, Business, Tourism and Productive Places**.

Condition

11.57   Due to the number of facilities throughout Highland that are owned and operated numerous different organisations comprehensive data was not available on the condition of community facilities.   It is known however that the condition of community facilities varies throughout Highland. Some data was available for facilities that are operated by Highlife Highland, this is presented in **THC###.**

11.58   A number of community facilities in Highland have benefitted from funding from a range of sources, including Community Regeneration Funding, developer contributions and Ward Discretionary Funding, a summary is provided within

THC###. Funding has been used for various purposes, for example towards increased capacity, condition, energy efficiency and accessibility improvements.

Current Approach to Developer Contributions

11.59   The Highland policy framework currently requires developments of four or more homes to contribute towards the enhancement or creation of new community facilities in areas where a deficiency has been identified.

11.60   The DCSG **(THC159)** explains that contributions for indoor community facilities may be required for leisure/community centres, community halls or libraries. The catchment area for these contributions is usually based on secondary school catchment areas, however in some instances it is based on development brief boundaries. The rate per home for indoor community facilities is specified in the DCSG at £1,019 per home. This rate is based upon the costs for delivery of a typical community hall. This rate was increased in line with the Building Construction Information Service (BCIS) Index to £1,568 per home, following a report on Developer Contributions that was presented to the Council's Economy and Infrastructure Committee on 4 May 2023 **(THC###)**.

11.61   The DCSG **(THC159)** explains that contributions towards outdoor facilities may be required for a district park or any specially designed playing surface, including: pitches for football; cricket; rugby; shinty; hockey; bowling greens; tennis courts; multi-sports courts; skate parks; cycle / athletics tracks; and associated land acquisition, ground enabling works, changing facilities, lighting, fencing, spectator areas and parking. Contributions are calculated on a case by case basis and the indoor facility contribution rate should be used as a guide.

11.62   The DCSG **(THC159)** outlines that community facility contributions will either be required for indoor or outdoor facilities, but not typically for both. Where the need for both occurs, the higher of the two contribution rates applies. A number of development briefs for strategic expansion areas in Highland specify other contribution levels for new community facilities, both indoor and outdoor, for example the Inverness East Development Brief **(THC###)**.

11.63   The use of developer contributions funds is limited to helping address known deficiencies in community facility provision, in terms of capacity, rather than condition improvements.

Needs

11.64   Those community facilities that have identified deficiencies are contained within the Highland Delivery Programme **(THC132).** These have been summarised in

THC378, alongside other community facility projects that contributions from developments have already been taken towards.

11.65   Where information is available the Highland Delivery Programme **(THC132)** specifies the nature of expansion required and the catchment area liable for contributions. Community facilities that are identified are currently largely limited to High Life Highland operated facilities. This is due to High Life Highland being a key operator of community facilities throughout Highland and delivering services on behalf of the Council. There is currently some scope for contributions to be distributed to other community facilities, as contained in the Highland Delivery Programme **(THC132)** and/or in line with the Council's Developer Contributions Protocol **(THC###)**.

11.66   Local Development Planning Guidance for Proposed Plans (page 127) explains that provision for community facilities should be considered according to local need as evidenced through community engagement and assessed against existing provision in areas where there is no, limited or inaccessible provision.

11.67   The Highland Council intends to undertake community engagement in the form of a public 'Call for Ideas' during 2026. A key element of the Call for Ideas will focus on seeking views on the adequacy of existing community facilities within settlements. This will help to inform the approach taken in the Proposed Plan.

11.68   Data on existing provision and needs is currently available for many areas of Highland from validated Local Place Plans (LPPs) and Area Place Plans (APPs). A summary of community facility needs from each Highland LPP is provided below within the Summary of Local Place Plan Priorities section of this chapter. It is clear from this review of LPPs that improved community facilities are a key priority for many Highland communities.

11.69   The Council's Local Living Mapping also provides data that helps to inform an assessment of existing community facilities provision. Figure 11:1 shows, in blue, areas that can be reached within a 10 minute (800m) walking distance from community facilities in Dingwall. This mapping can be amended and analysed for the HLDP area to help understand where those areas are that have no, limited or inaccessible provision. For Highland, it may be appropriate for varying accessibility thresholds to be applied based upon the nature of different geographical areas. Local Living Mapping is explained fully in **Chapter 13 Design, Wellbeing, Local Living and Placemaking**.
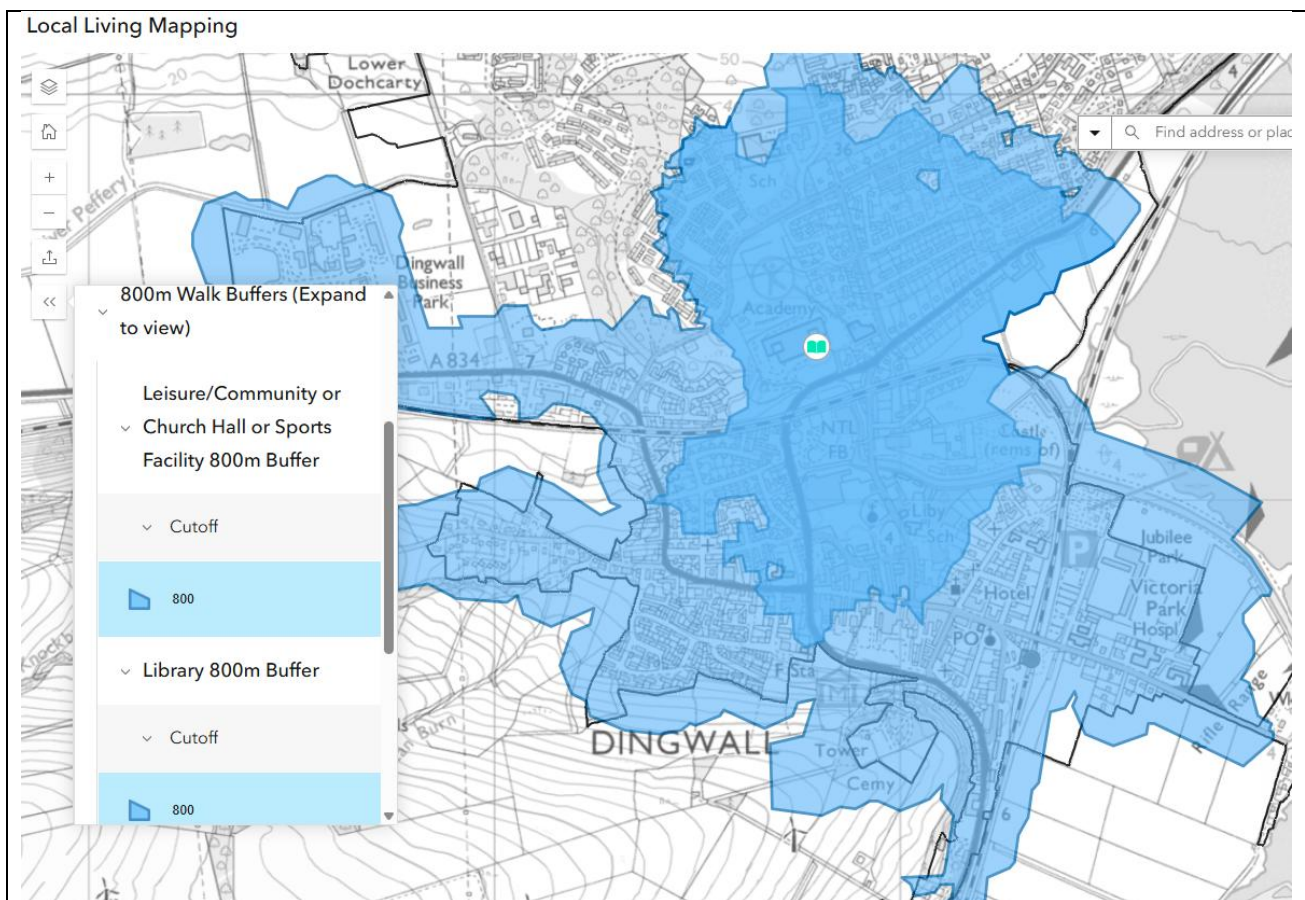
Figure 11:1 Highland Local Living Mapping - Walkable Community Facilities Extract

Water and Waste Water

11.70   NPF4 Policy 22

11.71   Abc...

Waste Management

11.72   Presently the Council's Developer Contributions Supplementary Guidance does not seek contributions towards waste transfer stations or recycling centres but instead seeks that sufficient space is preserved within developments for refuse bins. The preparation of HLDP offers an opportunity to revise this and consider the impact of development on waste facilities, and consider whether a suitable framework for developer contributions towards waste infrastructure is warranted.

11.73   The Council's Waste Management Service operates in a highly regulated environment. This regulatory regime covers the type of collection services that

must be provided to households and businesses, the operation of landfill sites and other facilities, and how material can be processed. There is an evolving, ever-changing operating environment for waste management, the pace of change accelerating in recent years, reflecting the climate changing requirements of Scottish and UK Governments. Prominent changes in waste management operations are fully detailed in **THC282** – Communities & Place Committee report - but are primarily underpinned by the impending ban on landfilling biodegradable municipal waste from 31 December 2025 as introduced through the Waste Management (Scotland) Regulations 2012. The ban on landfilling waste seeks to reduce emissions of managing such residual waste. The Council is in the process of diverting landfilled waste to other outcomes.

11.74   The Council has a medium-term solution in place through its contract with Viridor, which began in January 2023 and runs until 2027, with the potential to extend to the end of December 2030 if both parties agree to apply the extension provision built into the contract. This ensures that the biodegradable municipal waste – residual waste – collected by the Council will not go to landfill, but instead will be processed at a licensed energy-from-waste (EfW) facility in Dunbar and will comply with the Waste (Scotland) Regulations prohibiting landfilling of such waste. Progressively, over the 2023-25 period, the Council is directing its residual waste tonnage to this facility.

11.75   The Council Communities & Place Committee considered long term solutions for waste management in November 2024 (see **THC282**) which were either to:

11.76   Send the residual waste, that which won't be recycled, to an EfW facility outwith the Highland area (akin to current practice through the Council's contract with Viridor),

11.77   Or process waste collected by The Highland Council at an EfW facility located locally, potentially at the closed Longman landfill site, Inverness.

11.78   The Council considered that the most appropriate long-term strategic direction for residual waste management was to tender for a merchant provider solution to succeed the current medium-term contract.

11.79   The option of seeking to develop an energy-from-waste facility at the closed Longman landfill site would require major development planning permission. NPF4 Policy 12 provides that Development proposals for EfW facilities will not be supported except under limited circumstances where a national or local need has been sufficiently demonstrated (e.g. in terms of capacity need or carbon benefits)

as part of a strategic approach to residual waste management and where the proposal:

- is consistent with climate change mitigation targets and in line with circular economy principles;
- can demonstrate that a functional heat network can be created and provided within the site for appropriate infrastructure to allow a heat network to be developed and potential local consumers have been identified;
- is supported by a heat and power plan, which demonstrates how energy recovered from the development would be used to provide electricity and heat and where consideration is given to methods to reduce carbon emissions of the facility (for example through carbon capture and storage);
- complies with relevant guidelines published by Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA); and
- has supplied an acceptable decarbonisation strategy aligned with Scottish Government decarbonisation goals.

11.80   It is considered that if an EfW were to be developed locally then a realistic operational date could be 2032, with an estimated 65,000 residual waste tonnage collected by the Council by then. Should an EfW facility be developed locally it will require to operate as a combined heat and power facility, that is, active use must be made of its electrical power and heat outputs in order to secure planning permission (as discussed in **Chapter 4: Climate Change and Energy**). Proof that a functional heat network can be created is needed to support an EfW proposal under NPF4.

11.81   The scale of the energy-from-waste facility required to process the anticipated 65,000 tonnes of residual waste which would be collected by Highland Council is considered small in market terms. Nonetheless, the facility would offer long-term employment opportunities directly, and construction phase business over a 3–4-year period. The site under review at Longman, Inverness, is considered suitable within the current IMFLDP2 (**THC003**), for waste management facilities including an energy from waste operation. The Council's Climate Change and Energy Team is assisting the Waste Service to identify possible demand centres for the uptake of heat and power from a potential Longman-located EfW facility. An energy-from-waste facility must achieve certain efficiency thresholds, which necessitate the use of both electricity and heat outputs.

11.82   Taking the residual waste collected by The Highland Council to an EfW processor in the Central Belt of Scotland requires numerous articulated lorry movements

primarily using the A9 out of the Highlands. For a projected annual tonnage of 65,000 tonnes, it is likely that there would be circa 2,700 articulated lorry return journeys required per year.

11.83 The Scottish Government has undertaken to develop and deliver a Residual Waste Plan to ensure the best environmental outcome for unavoidable and unrecyclable waste and set strategic direction for management of residual waste to 2045 (Strategic Aim - Decarbonise Disposal). Furthermore, the Scottish Government has undertaken to facilitate the development of a Sector-Led Plan to minimise the carbon impacts of the Energy from Waste Sector.

11.84 These plans are expected in 2027. It is intended that the Residual Waste Plan will set the long-term vision for future disposal practices in Scotland to minimise the environmental and climate impacts of waste whilst ensuring that Scotland has appropriate capacity in place to manage the expected, declining volumes of waste in the future. The Sector-Led Plan will form a specific strand of the Residual Waste Plan. It will set out how the sector will minimise climate impacts of energy from waste specifically and ensure that actions across the energy from waste sector are aligned with net zero ambitions.

11.85 The Highland Council remains focused on reducing the tonnage of residual waste transported over time, through the impacts of waste management collection service changes already being implemented across the Highlands. The aim of the new collection services is to reduce the annual residual waste tonnage within Highland by nearly 9,000 tonnes, which would save 368 return transport journeys per year – as agreed on 27th November 2024 Committee.

Zero Waste Policy

11.86 Scotland's circular economy and waste route map to 2030 **(THC###)** sets out a plan to deliver 11 priority actions that will help progress towards a circular economy, accelerate more sustainable use of our resources across the waste hierarchy: waste prevention, reuse, recycling and recovery. informed by improved understanding of the environmental consequences of how we use and dispose of resources, and by the requirements of European legislation. The Zero Waste Plan is underpinned by a determination to achieve the best overall outcomes for Scotland's environment, by making best practical use of the approach in the waste management hierarchy. It aims at increasing levels of recycling, recovery and is seeking to avoid waste generation and to use waste as a resource

11.87 .

11.88   Zero Waste Scotland **(THC###)** has regulations which require all business and organisations to separate key materials including food waste. They also have carrier bag charge regulations and single use plastic products regulations.

11.89   Zero Waste data by SEPA **(THC###)** aims to conserve and protect world's natural resource by reducing waste production, circulate materials, prevent waste management harms and tackle waste crime.

11.90   NPF4 Policy 12 requires Local Development Plans to identify appropriate locations for new waste management infrastructure to support the circular economy and meet identified needs in a way that moves waste as high up the waste hierarchy as possible. It sets out policies to seek reduction, reusing and recycling materials in line with the waste hierarchy. Circular Economy Materials Management Facilities are also listed as a National Development in NPF4.

11.91   Circular economic activity and climate adaptation outcomes are linked. Highland Adapts commissioned economic assessments of climate change impacts in the Highland Region, in partnership with Zero Waste Scotland, for the region and key sectors (energy, food and drink, and forest and timber). The assessments highlight how circular economy practices can strengthen climate adaptation by improving local resource security and reducing supply chain risks, building resilience in climate-sensitive industries. Climate adaptation evidence is further considered in **Chapter 4: Climate Change and Energy**.

Motorhome waste facilities

11.92   There is an increasing number of people visiting the Highlands and Islands in campervans and motor homes. Waste disposal facilities for motorhomes are provided on commercial sites throughout Highland, as part of the tourism infrastructure. Waste disposal for motorhomes includes chemical waste disposal (black water) and grey water waste disposal. The *STIDP* (2022) **(THC344)** identified 44 motorhome waste disposal facilities in Highland. Tourism infrastructure is considered in **Chapter 8: Economy, Business and Productive Places** as part of the Tourism evidence.

11.93   SEPA, Scottish Water and Highland Council developed Campervan and motorhome waste disposal guidance for independent developments. It sets out the considerations for providing appropriate motorhome waste disposal facilities. The guidance recognises that when there are inadequate motorhome waste facilities provided the result is inappropriate use of public toilets, with potential for blockages or spills, risk of serious environmental pollution, and health and

safety risks. The guidance highlights the demand for the provision of more facilities which can be delivered and maintained by local communities, charities, businesses or other interested parties.

Relevant source of information

11.94   Scottish Waste Environmental Footprint tool (SWEFT) **(THC###)** – has been developed to provide a holistic understanding of the life cycle impacts of our household waste and the environmental damage it can cause. It is an evolution of the Carbon Metric, a pioneering development in the monitoring of waste impacts. More recent and detailed report can be found here – 2022 Household Waste Results Summary**(THC###)**.

11.95   Scotland's circular economy and waste route map to 2030 **(THC###)** sets out 11 priority actions for households, business, the public and third sectors need to make changes, support and invest in a circular economy. This allows priority measures to take a targeted, coordinated approach to specific materials across the waste hierarchy, recognising the variation in emissions or environmental impact of production, consumption or waste management of different materials and products.

11.96   Making Things Last: a circular economy strategy for Scotland **(THC###)** stresses the importance of reducing waste and using resources more efficiently in Scotland, delivering economic and environmental benefits.

11.97   Environment Strategy: initial monitoring framework **(THC###)** focuses on transitioning to a circular economy, where resources are used sustainably and kept in high value use for as long as possible, minimising waste.

Local Data

11.98   The Council has a Strategy for Waste Management which focuses on reducing waste, increasing recycling and treating residual waste biologically or thermally. On 27th November 2024, The Council agreed for a long term strategic direction for residual waste management by reducing residual waste by 9000 tonnes which would save 368 transport journeys per year.

Highland's Waste Statistics

11.99 Highland recycles less and sends more waste to landfill than the national average as shown in Table 11:9, and Other diversion is also lower in Highland, suggesting fewer alternative treatments are used compared to the rest of Scotland.

Table 11:9 Household waste Overview (SEPA's Household management 2023)

Waste	Scotland	Highland
Generated	2,304,850	111,532
Recycled	43.5%	36%
Landfilled	17.7%	38.4%
Other Diversion	38.8%	25.6%

11.100 As recorded in SEPA's 2023 Data set, The Highland Council has 4 Operational Landfill sites, 21 non-operational Landfill sites and 4 non-authorised SEPA sites.

11.101 The table below shows summary of Landfill sites used and their capacity from 2015-2023,

Table 11:10 Landfill data_Highland

Year	Total waste landfilled	Remaining capacity
2015	56,400	873,418
2016	92,754	855,342
2017	90,534	788,497
2018	75,575	700,395
2019	66,798	653,929
2020	59,201	607,436
2021	69,017	550,043
2022	60,689	478,823
2023	54,945	491,938

Text

Highland's Waste Handling Infrastructure

11.102 Highland Council manages household waste across a vast and predominantly rural geography, which presents distinct challenges for waste handling infrastructure and service delivery. The Highland Council currently collects and disposes of around 125,000 tonnes of waste produced by households and business waste customers each year. At present, 35% of this material is recycled.

11.103 The relatively high proportion of waste going to landfill more than twice the national average of 17.7% suggests constraints within the region's waste management system. These include limited no. of local recycling and treatment facilities, higher transportation costs, and logistical challenges associated with serving remote communities. Additionally, the recycling rate in Highland remains below the national average (43.5%), indicating room for performance improvement in the capture and processing of recyclable materials.

11.104 The lower percentage of waste managed through other diversion methods may reflect insufficient infrastructure for food and garden waste collection or limited capacity for thermal treatment or composting within the region.

11.105 To improve outcomes and support national circular economy targets, investment in Highland's waste infrastructure could focus on:

- Expanding material recovery and sorting capacity
- Enhancing kerbside collection coverage, particularly in remote areas
- Developing decentralised composting or anaerobic digestion facilities
- Supporting community recycling hubs or reuse schemes
- Strategic infrastructure development, coupled with behaviour change initiatives and service optimisation, could significantly reduce the region's reliance on landfill and enable Highland to align more closely with Scotland's waste reduction ambitions.

11.106 The latest figures from the Council's Waste Services Team, show a reduction of approximately 7,500 tonnes of waste collected at the kerbside and sent for disposal in the last 12 months compared to the previous period. Currently THC has 22 recycling centres. According to SEPA's informatics – THC has 29 Landfill sites and over the years, there has been a reduction in land fill tonnages and as of 2023 there is a total of 5,999,821 tonnes of capacity left at those sites.

11.107 TEXT

Digital Infrastructure

11.108 NPF4 seeks to encourage, promote and facilitate an infrastructure first approach to land use planning, which puts infrastructure considerations at the heart of placemaking. For the purpose of applying the Infrastructure First policy the meaning of infrastructure applies to communications – including digital and telecommunications networks and connections. The Scottish Government's 2021 Digital Strategy **(THC371)** sets out ambition for high quality connectivity across all of Scotland. This includes closing the gaps in mobile provision and facilitating the grown investment in and deployment of 5G networks, as set out in the Scottish Government's 2019 5G Strategy **(THC###)**.

11.109 Modern telecommunications and digital connectivity is a fundamentally important utility which allows people to be connected for business and social purposes at work, home or remotely, and enables people to have immediate access to emergency services, healthcare, education, shopping, leisure etc. It supports living locally and helps to sustain and grow rural and island communities. *Digital telecommunications: planning guidance* **(THC377)** notes the planning system can assist in addressing the gaps in connectivity and barriers to digital access by supporting the delivery of new digital services and technological improvements, particularly in areas with no or low connectivity capacity. These factors are critical to NPF4 aspirations which seek to:

- tackle climate change and protect local environments from its damaging impacts by reducing the need to travel and to contribute to a net zero society.
- unlock opportunities for businesses, employment and remote working.
- support investment and population growth in rural areas.
- create better places by influencing the pattern and location of development and ensure connectivity is where it is needed.
- build 'smart' communities to facilitate more sustainable ways of living.

11.110 A 'Digital Fibre Network' is designated as a national development by NPF4. This NPF4 designation supports the continued roll-out of world class broadband across Scotland. This means works to deliver it could occur in any planning authority area and where the classes of national developments are met, planning applications should be processed as national developments rather than as a major application. NPF4 spatial strategy refers to this national development as a: fundamentally important utility, required to support development, community wellbeing, equal access to goods and services, and emissions reduction from reduced demand for travel.

11.111 There are a number of national digital infrastructure and related initiatives which are being rolled out which have significant consequences for the Highland area. Most recent figures suggest that 16% of people in the Highlands do not have access to digital broadband. This is estimated to be over 40,000 Highland residents, mainly in rural areas furthest from urban connectivity. The issue for Highland communities is that they are harder for the national programmes to reach. Think Broadband's Local Broadband Information as presented in Table 11:11 illustrates the availability of superfast and fibre broadband coverage in Highland relative to Scotland.

Table 11:11 Availability: Broadband – Superfast and Fibre Coverage (April 2025)

	Highland	Scotland
Premises	131,664	2,901,631
Superfast (30 Mbps and faster)	87%	97%
Gigabit	54%	81%
Full Fibre (Fibre to the Premises FTTP)	54%	69.%
Alt Net FTTP (FTTP excl Openreach KCOM)	41%	33%
Openreach FTTP	24%	51%
Fibre partial/full at any speed	95%	99%
Below 2 Mbps down	4%	0.7%
Below 10 Mbps down	9%	2%
Below 10 Mbps down, 1.2 Mbps up	10%	2%
Below 15 Mbps (High Speed Broadband)	11%	2%
Ultrafast (>100 Mbps)	54%	82%
Virgin Media Cable	0%	51%
Openreach (>30 Mbps)	85%	94%
Openreach G.fast	0%	5%

11.112 Given the expanse of Highland, aggregated averages obscure significant variations between the more connected urban area of Inverness and the remote rural regions. This data is visualised within Think Broadbands Broadband Coverage & Speedtest Result Maps, which demonstrates the distribution of

properties by their Project Gigabit Status, Full Fibre to Property Status, and postcodes Without Superfast Broadband speeds (<30 Mbps).

11.113 Mobile Connectivity data extracted from the Connected Nations update: Spring 2025 indicates similar trends as summarised in Table 11:12, with greater geographic areas covered by no 4G and 5G providers in Highland, and with lower shares of premises served by 4G and 5G providers for both indoor and outdoor coverage compared to Scotland nationally.

Table 11:12 Mobile 4G and 5G Coverage (THC###)

	Highland		Scotland	
Geographic Coverage	**4G**	**5G**	**4G**	**5G**
No Providers	18.1%	80.1%	4.1%	40.3%
1 Provider	8.0%	16.5%	3.0%	19.2%
2 Providers	7.3%	2.5%	4.4%	17.5%
3 Providers	13.0%	0.8%	7.5%	13.1%
4 Providers	53.6%	0.2%	81.7%	17.2%
Premises (%) Coverage	**4G**	**5G**	**4G**	**5G**
No Coverage Outside	0.3%	29.6%	0.1%	14.4%
1 Provider Outside	0.6%	19.4%	0.2%	16.5%
2 Providers Outside	0.8%	15.3%	0.6%	26.5%
3 Providers Outside	4.4%	16.6%	2.4%	24.6%
4 Providers Outside	93.9%	19.1%	97.1%	29.3%
No Providers Inside	1.5%	*	15.4%	*
1 Providers Inside	2.9%	*	1.4%	*
2 Providers Inside	5.2%	*	3.5%	*
3 Providers Inside	12.7%	*	10.3%	*
4 Providers Inside	77.7%	*	84.4%	*

For 5G services, only outdoor coverage information is provided

Scottish Government Led Connectivity Programmes

11.114 The Scottish Government is running several projects aimed at improving digital connectivity, specifically faster broadband access for homes and businesses, and improved mobile services. Projects include:

11.115 **Reaching 100% Programme – R100** – aiming to provide every home and business in Scotland with access to broadband speeds of at least 30Mbps.

11.116 **Scottish Broadband Voucher Scheme – SBVS** – providing subsidies up to £5,000 to help eligible properties install faster broadband, covering installation costs from registered suppliers. SBVS provides subsidies of up to £5,000 per property for direct install costs with registered broadband suppliers. Eligible properties will have a current broadband speed less than 30Mbps and will not be included in R100 plans. Householders and business owners have to apply for a voucher. When the voucher is approved, they then have to identify a suitable supplier, of which there are 19 covering Highland out of a total of 40 in Scotland and arrange for an install.

11.117 **Scottish 4G Infill Programme – S4GI** – improving access to mobile services, particularly in areas with poor coverage. S4GI is a £28m project delivering 4G mobile coverage to 55 mobile "notspots" in rural and island parts of Scotland. Activity in the Highlands and Islands was part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund. All the 55 planned mobile masts have now been delivered and are live, and 17 of these are in Highland.

11.118 **Connecting Scotland** – providing internet-enabled devices, connectivity and digital skills support to those who are digitally excluded, delivered in partnership with the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO). It aims to provide devices, connectivity and support for people who are digitally excluded. Over 61,000 devices have been issued since May 2020. Although not directly providing any new connectivity infrastructure, the programme is supporting those people who have access to broadband but need assistance to make use of it.

11.119 R100 is a £600+ million programme that has been bringing faster broadband to thousands of homes and businesses across Scotland with the aim of providing "superfast" broadband to every home and business in Scotland by the end of 2021. "Superfast" was defined in 2016 as speeds higher than 30Mbps, noting that this is probably no longer seen as a particularly fast speed, particularly for larger households and businesses. It was estimated that 113,000 properties would be connected through R100, split across 3 geographical areas – North, Central and South, defined by postcode areas, with Highland falling entirely within North.

- R100 is being delivered via 3 routes:
- Scottish Government contracts with Openreach.
- Planned commercial investment by a variety of broadband providers.

11.120 Scottish Broadband Voucher Scheme (SBVS) providing funding for properties not covered by the above, up to £5,000 to help eligible properties install faster broadband, covering installation costs from registered suppliers.

11.121 By March 2025, 78,000 premises had been connected (69% of the total). Approximately 23,000 of these are in the North area. Table 11:13 shows a detailed progress update dating from January 2025, which shows that progress in the North has been significantly less than the other areas.

Table 11:13 R100 Rollout Progress – Jan 2025 **(THC###)**

Contract Area	Total Premises for Delivery in R100 Contracts	R100 Contract Premises Delivered	R100 SBVS Premises Delivered
Central	30,287	25,292	1,243
North	60,764	21,509	3,065
South	21,889	22,750	601
Total	**112,940**	**69,551**	**4,909**

UK Government Led Connectivity Programmes

11.122 The two key UK Government initiatives are:

- **Project Gigabit** – is a £5bn investment across UK managed by Broadband UK (BDUK). In Scotland this runs in conjunction with R100, providing additional funding on top of Scottish Government funding. Whereas R100 aims to provide broadband coverage of at least 30Mbps to properties where it is not yet available, Project Gigabit aims to provide increased speeds (1,000Mbps+) in areas where such developments are not commercially viable. There are areas of overlap where the combined funding will bring additional benefit to the Highlands.
- **Shared Rural Network - SRN** was announced in 2020 with the aim to provide 4G mobile coverage to 95% of the UK landmass by the end of 2025, with a £1b investment. The biggest improvements were expected to be in rural parts of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In September 2024, it was announced that 94.9% pf the UK landmass the had mobile coverage from at least 1 operator. Areas with coverage from all 4 operators had increased from 66% to 84%.

11.123 In March 2021, the UK Government announced an ambition to deliver nationwide gigabit-capable broadband as soon as possible, recognising that there is a need for government intervention in the parts of the country that are not commercially viable. This will be spent through a package of coordinated and mutually supportive interventions, collectively known as Project Gigabit **(THC###)**, with an

initial intervention of £1.2bn targeting at least 85% gigabit coverage of the UK by 2025.

11.124 Under the UK Government's Gigabit Infrastructure Subsidy Scheme guidelines, public sector intervention in broadband infrastructure investment is limited to those areas where there is no current or planned (within the next 3 years) commercial deployments, to avoid distorting what might otherwise be/become a competitive market.

11.125 The Scottish Government's issued a *Broadband Infrastructure in Scotland: Public Review* **(THC374)** to determine the eligible intervention area for investment of public funds into gigabit-capable broadband infrastructure. In line with the Gigabit Infrastructure Subsidy Scheme guidelines, the Scottish Government has classified premises as White, Grey, Under Review or Black. Project Gigabit will only subsidise build to premises which have been designated as White.

11.126 **White:** Indicates premises with no gigabit network infrastructure and none is likely to be developed within 3 years,

11.127 **Black:** indicates premises with two or more qualifying gigabit infrastructures from different suppliers being available, or will be deployed within the coming 3 years,

11.128 **Grey:** indicates premises with a single qualifying gigabit infrastructure from a single supplier is available, or is to be deployed within the coming 3 years,

11.129 **Under Review:** indicates premises where suppliers have reported current or planned commercial broadband coverage, but where claimed current gigabit coverage has not been verified, or, in respect of planned build, where evaluators are confident that gigabit infrastructure will be delivered, but some risks to delivery remain, or there are some gaps in evidence.

11.130 The current Gigabit coverage map for Scotland can be found in **THC###**. The Scottish Government has used this information to define the eligible Intervention Area for potential future procurements under the Gigabit Infrastructure Subsidy Scheme and is in the process of finalising the design of procurement areas as a subset of the intervention area. One of these procurement areas – Lot 5 Dundee, Aberdeenshire, Angus and Moray, encompasses a small area of Highland in Nairnshire (**THC###**) and is a regional procurement with an initial 48,914 in-scope premises of which 2,960 are within Highland. The estimated contract award date is envisaged as May 2025. The majority of Highland's area and premises fall outwith any of the identified procurement areas, and are classed as Rest of

Scotland, where the UK Government plans further interventions beyond those described above as part of Project Gigabit.

11.131 Data released by the Scottish Government through the Gigabit in Scotland Premises Subsidy Control - Highland provides the status of properties in Highland which is shown in Table 11:14, alongside comparable figures for Scotland nationally, as derived from **THC###**. Highland evidently has a greater proportion of properties classed as white, and therefore within the scope of Project Gigabit upgrades, owing to the unlikelihood of market provision.

Table 11:14 Properties by Project Gigabit Status

	Highland		Scotland	
	#	%	#	%
White	53,018	37%	380,073	13%
Black	9,855	7%	1,009,899	34%
Grey	53,924	38%	1,176,460	39%
Under Review	25,907	18%	413,436	14%

11.132 Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) were carrying out a Project Gigabit procurement on behalf of the Inverness and Highland City Region Deal (IHCRD). HIE has since confirmed that it will not proceed with the procurement.

Resilience and Digital Connectivity

11.133 There is an interdependency between projects relating to the rollout of digital infrastructure and the parallel switch-off of legacy analogue infrastructure which has cumulative effects upon Highland communities detailed in **THC###**, namely through:

11.134 The Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) which is being retired within the UK in January 2027 and will be replaced by phone services relying on the Internet, which will result in concerns about resilient communications for residents and businesses in areas more prone to power cuts;

11.135 Radio Teleswitch Service (RTS) switch-off, affecting certain older electricity supply meters, on June 30 2025. Smart meters to replace RTS require a mobile signal to operate. This transition is expected to disproportionately affect around 30,000 households across the Highlands and Islands, where reliance on electric heating is more prevalent due to limited access to the gas grid.

11.136 Scottish and UK Government initiatives are helping to address connectivity challenges but are running slower in the Highlands than other parts of Scotland. There are also likely to be a higher proportion of properties that will be reliant on satellite broadband as the only possible option.

11.137 Both individually and in combination, these projects are likely to be having a proportionally greater negative impact on those people who are more vulnerable, less well off, living in more rural areas and less digitally aware. These people could be in a situation where they will struggle to maintain telephone access, face difficulties with heating, incur additional costs for heating and be disproportionately affected by a reliance on more expensive and less resilient broadband options. NPF4 sets out that LDPs should support the roll out of digital infrastructure and in Highland it is recognised that some of the more difficult remaining areas as of yet unconnected by any of the initiatives are in remote rural areas of the Highlands, potential resilience issues if the programmes do not complete timeously.

11.138 Engagement with the UK and Scottish Government alongside Ofgem, BT, HIE and other stakeholders as part of COHI Meeting in May 2025, where progress on the digital connectivity initiatives was discussed, alongside the disproportionate impact on communities that remain unconnected, and the costs of connecting the remaining 1% that are currently out with the scope of Project Gigabit.

11.139 Initiatives seeking to achieve geographic coverage targets such as SRN have been challenging to support through the planning process, in locations that are subject to natural heritage designations as discussed in **Chapter 5: Nature and Environment**. While NPF4 contains strong policy support for digital infrastructure, NPF4 Policy 24 states that development proposals will only be supported:

11.140 where the visual and amenity impacts have been minimised through careful siting, design, height, materials and landscaping, taking into account cumulative impacts and relevant technical constraints.

11.141 where it has been demonstrated that before erecting a new ground based mast the possibility of erecting antennas on an existing building, mast or other structure, replacing an existing mast and/or site sharing has been explored.

11.142 where there is no physical obstruction to aerodrome operations, technical sites or existing transmitter/receiver facilities

11.143 Demonstrating the visual and amenity impacts have been minimised has formed a crucial component of several mast applications taking considerable time in the

planning process. Submission of planning applications for telecommunications masts from various operators has also hampered the ability to gauge the cumulative impacts. In such instances following engagement with the applicant operators, applications are generally withdrawn, resubmitted in alternate locations and then supported, rather than refused outright, as indicated in Table 11:15.

Table 11:15 Highland Planning Records for Telecommunications Masts* – as of 05/09/2025

		No. of Applications	% of Valid Applications Received
Valid Applications Received		485	
Withdrawn		78	16.1%
In Planning		3	0.6%
Approved	Delegated	327	67.4%
	Committee	56	11.5%
	CNPA	5	1.0%
Refused	Delegated	4	0.8%
	Committee	12	2.5%
	CNPA	0	0.0%
Enquiries/Pre-Apps		429	

* Includes erection of new/replacement Mobile Network Masts, Emergency Services Network Masts, Radio Masts and Smart Meter Masts, and additional equipment to existing masts. Does not include anemometer/meteorological masts and amateur radio masts.

Health and Social Care Needs

Overview

11.144 LDPs should identify the health and social care services and infrastructure needed in the area, including potential for co-location of complementary services, in partnership with Health Boards and Health and Social Care Partnerships.

11.145 Scotland's Health and Social Care Service Renewal Framework provides a high-level guide for change, to ensure the sustainability, efficiency, quality, and accessibility of health and social care services in Scotland. The framework's 'Community Principle: More care in the community rather than a hospital focused model' seeks to support people to live well locally, in line with the 'Local Living' principle of NPF4. Future planning and delivery of community hubs seek to

ensure that opportunities for infrastructure co-location are considered to further develop person-led approaches for access to seamless and coordinated care.

11.146 NHS Highland (NHSH) services cover the entirety of Highland and Argyll and Bute Councils, spanning an area that equates to 42% of Scotland's landmass. The Highland Health and Social Care Partnership (HHSCP) covers the Highland Council area. NHS Highland is the Lead Agency for Integrated Health and Social Care for Adults, while The Highland Council is the lead agency for Integrated Health and Social Care for Children (NHS Highland Strategy 2022-227: Together we care with you, for you).

11.147 As Highland's population is broadly equally divided across urban areas, small towns, rural areas and very rural areas, delivery of health and social care services to large populations living out with settlements places significant challenges on NHS Highland's operational delivery relative to other Health Boards with more compact population distributions.

11.148 Outside Inverness and the Inner Moray Firth, a number of key settlements including Wick and Thurso, Fort William, Aviemore, and Nairn act as local service centres for the extensive rural areas which make up the majority of the region

Primary & Secondary Care Facilities

11.149 Information on known health facilities within Highland was accessed from the Improvement Service Spatial Hub, which provides records of NHS Hospitals, GP Practices, and Pharmacies. Summarised in Table 11:16, there are currently 11 Community Hospitals across Highland, two Rural General Hospitals in Wick and Fort William, one mental Health Unit in Inverness and one District General (Acute) Hospital (Raigmore) in Inverness.

11.150 Information on General Practice provision was accessed via Public Health Scotland. Specifically, the number of practices and the average practice list size was accessed via the PHS GP Workforce and Practice List Sizes datasets and is shown in Table 11:17.

Table 11:16 Hospital Provision in Highland

Site Name	Location	Type of Facility	Tenure
Raigmore Hospital	Inverness	District General Hospital	Owned
Belford Hospital	Fort William	Rural General Hospital	Owned
Caithness General Hospital	Wick	Rural General Hospital	Owned

New Craigs	Inverness	Mental Health Hospital	PFI/NPD
Badenoch & Strathspey Community Hospital	Aviemore	Community Hospital	Owned
Broadford Hospital	Broadford	Community Hospital	Owned
Town & County Hospital	Wick	Community Hospital	Owned
Dunbar Hospital Thurso	Thurso	Community Hospital	Owned
Ian Charles Hospital	Grantown on Spey	-	*Closed*
Invergordon County Community Hospital	Invergordon	Community Hospital	PFI/NPD
Lawson Memorial Hospital	Golspie	Community Hospital	Owned
Migdale Hospital 2011	Bonar Bridge	Community Hospital	Owned
Portree Hospital	Portree	Community Hospital	Owned
Ross Memorial Hospital	Dingwall	Community Hospital	Owned
Royal Northern Infirmary	Inverness	Community Hospital	Owned
Town & County Hospital Nairn	Nairn	Community Hospital	PFI/NPD
Abban Street Chiropody Clinic	Inverness	Clinic*	Owned
Bruce Gardens Day Centre	Inverness	Clinic*	Leased
Culloden Health Centre	Inverness	Clinic*	Owned
Dunbeath Health Clinic	Dunbeath	Clinic*	Owned
Dundonnell Clinic	Badcaul	Clinic*	Owned
Harm Reduction	Inverness	Clinic*	Leased
Kilchoan Nurses Base	Acharacle	Clinic*	Leased
Raasay Clinic	Isle of Raasay	Clinic*	Owned
Staffin Nurse's Base	Staffin	Clinic*	Owned
Unit 67 Eastgate Centre	Inverness	Clinic*	Leased

* Clinics include Day Hospitals and Resource Centres

11.151 While Highland has lower average practice list sizes than Scotland has a whole, 23% of Highland's registered patients are aged 65+ in contrast with Scotland's 19%. Detailed indications of demand at individual practices was accessed via PHS General practice list size and demographics information which are correct as of April 2025.

11.152 In general, GP Practices in the Inverness Area have a greater share of registered young patients aged 0-14, often equating to between 13-18% of total patients

registered. By contrast, GP Practices in Wester Ross, Skye and Sutherland have a greater share of registered patients aged 65+ which often exceed 30% of total patients registered. A full dataset **(THC267)** of registered patients at individual practices is provided detailing this information further.

11.153 Practices that have experienced the greatest increase in registered patients from October 2023 to April 2025 include Kinmylies Medical Practice (9.4%), Dunedin Medical Practice (6.7%), and Burnfield Medical Practice (5.4%), which are all located within Inverness. Several other practices with significant increases in registered patients include The Pearson Practice in Wick, Dornoch Medical Practice in Sutherland, Drumnadrochit Medical Practice South of Inverness, and Cromarty Medical Practice in the Black Isle.

Table 11:17 GP Patients registered in Highland and Scotland by Age Group (April 2025)

		Highland	Scotland
No. of Practices		62	**897**
No. of GPs		307	**5,209**
Patients Age Group	0-4	9,466	**237,880**
	5-14	24,669	**607,758**
	15-24	23,804	**685,493**
	25-44	59,947	**1,744,497**
	45-64	71,347	**1,589,398**
	65-74	31,664	**633,541**
	75-84	20,863	**400,840**
	85+	6,928	**135,160**

11.154 List Closure Notices were received from Culloden Medical Practice and Culloden Surgery in July 2024 and for a one year period since August 2024, both practices did not registered new patients, although this has since lapsed and the practices are again registering patients. The Practices have highlighted concerns about their increasing list size for a number of years, and this has been accelerated by the high volume of new homes being built in the area.

11.155 The Practices have been in discussions with NHSH about expanding the size of their premises. However, as there is a pause of capital spending across NHS Scotland, no premises work can progress at this time. The Council seeks to

continue engagement with NHSH on the issue of rising list sizes as detailed in **Chapter 11: Infrastructure**.

11.156 NHSH, as with other health boards, are increasing the placement of primary care staff in general practices and in the community, where they can work alongside GPs and practice teams to deliver an increased range of services. Provision of GP Practices and Pharmacies are summarised at area level within Table 11:18, using 2022 Census population estimates to illustrate the provision per 10,000 population. A full dataset **(THC268)** of this information at settlement level is available, evidencing that most settlements tend to have one of each facility.

11.157 NHS Highland Workforce statistics to 30 June 2025 reported 426 total GPs, an increase in 11.2% over the last 10 years and a 3.9% annual change. NHS Highland reports 14.3% of GP practices had vacancies (total 16) and around 80 vacant sessions per week (3.2%), which are both lower than the Scottish average of 22.1% of practices with vacancies and 7.6% vacant sessions per week. Over 80% of general practices in NHS Highland use locums (temporary or short-term staff), with 29.2 WTE locums required (26.5 WTE are filled locums). Highland had 87% percent regular locum sessions which is comparable to the Scotland-wide figure of 88%.

Table 11:18 Provision of Primary Care Facilities (GP and Pharmacy) in Highland Administrative Areas

Admin Area	GP Practice		Pharmacy	
	No.	Per 10,000 Population	No.	Per 10,000 Population
Badenoch and Strathspey	4	2.8	3	2.1
Black Isle	3	2.9	1	1.0
Caithness	7	2.8	6	2.4
Dingwall and Seaforth	1	0.8	4	3.1
Easter Ross	3	1.3	7	3.1
Inverness and Area	14	1.7	16	1.9
Lochaber	7	3.5	3	1.5
Nairnshire	1	0.7	2	1.5
Skye	5	5.0	1	1.0
Sutherland	8	6.1	4	3.0
Wester Ross Strathpeffer and Lochalsh	9	7.4	4	3.3
Total	**62**	**2.6**	**51**	**2.2**

11.158 There were a total of 208 dentists (including primary care) employed in NHS Highland as of 31 March 2025 (NHS Scotland Workforce statistics to 30 June 2025). There are 60.8 primary care dentists per 100,000 population (compared to 59.2 per 100,000 in Scotland). NHS Highland maintains a list of dental practices and their practitioners in Highland (NHS Highland List of Dental Practitioners) which is summarised in Table 11:19. It is noted that dentists are listed as providing services at multiple practices and evidence on dental clinic hours, or dentist FTE hours was not available. Also, any dental practices not contracted to NHS are not included in this list.

Table 11:19 HHSCP North and West Highland Operational Unit Dental Practices and Practitioners contracted to provide NHS Dentistry, September 2025 (Source: NHS Highland List of Dental Practitioners)

Admin District	Dental	
	Dentists	**Practices**
Caithness	16	7
Sutherland	9	6
Skye, Lochalsh and West Ross	7	5
Lochaber	22	4
East Ross	21	5
Mid Ross	14	6
Inverness East	56	14
Inverness West	26	8
Nairn, Ardersier, Badenoch & Strathspey	23	9
Total	*****	**64**

*A figure of total number of dentists is not reported as some dentists in each district serve multiple practices or districts.

11.159 NHS Scotland Workforce statistics to 30 June 2025 report 9,459.6 WTE employees of NHS Highland, total of 11,420 headcount staff. The medical workforce is 723 WTE, and the non-medical workforce is 8,736.5 WTE (including 3, 578.8 nurses and midwifes WTE). The headcount workforce is 81.9% female (compared to 77.1% females across for NHS Scotland), with a median age of 47 (older than for NHS Scotland at 44 median age), and 30.6% over 55 years (23.2% NHS Scotland).

11.160 In nursing and midwifery there are 328.5 total vacancies, predominantly within adult nursing (200+). Medical and dental consultants have 12 WTE vacancies which is well below previous vacancy rates ranging from 20-40 WTE post-Covid. Allied health professions had 38.4 WTE vacancies (including physiotherapy, occupational therapy, podiatry, speech and language therapy and diagnostic radiography).

11.161 NHS Highland consultant workforce data reports 167.7FTE consultants, across a range of specialties which includes:

- Emergency medicine – 11.1 FTE
- Anaesthetics – 38.6 FTE
- Intensive care – *nil reported*
- Clinical laboratory -17.7 FTE
- Medical – 11.4 FTE
- Psychiatric – 20.2 FTE
- Surgical – 45.6 FTE
- Paediatrics – 8.5 FTE (plus 6.4 FTE community paediatric consultants)
- All dental – *nil reported*

Social Care Facilities

11.162 Information on Social Care facilities and capacity are provided by NHS Highland **(THC274)**, outlined in Table 11:20. Capacity figures are up to date as of September 2025. There are 66 Care Home and Day Care service facilities in Highland. Any facility with 90% or more capacity filled is highlighted in blue in Table 11:20.

Table 11:20 Capacity of Care Homes and Day Care services in Highland, by sector (Source: ***THC274****)*

Care Home, by location	Total capacity (Number of beds)	Capacity filled (%) Sept 2025	Sector
Easter Ross			
Catalina House Nursing Home	28	54%	Private
Innis Mhor Care Home	40	**95%**	Private
Kintyre House	41	85%	Private
Mull Hall Care Home	42	**100%**	Private
Redwoods Nursing Home	42	**93%**	Private
Mid Ross			

Eilean Dubh Care Home	40	**93%**	Private
Fairburn House Nursing Home	40	78%	Private
Fodderty House Care Home	16	**94%**	Private
Nansen - Tigh Na Cloich	4	75%	Third Sector
Seaforth House Respite and Care Centre	22	86%	Private
Strathallan House	32	**94%**	Private
Urray House Care Home	40	85%	Private
Wyvis House Care Home	50	88%	Private
Caithness			
Bayview House	23	83%	NHS
Pentland View Care Home	50	80%	Private
Pulteney House Resource Centre	18	**100%**	NHS
Riverside House Nursing Home	44	84%	Private
Seaview House Nursing Home	42	**90%**	Private
Sutherland			
Meadows Nursing Home	40	**90%**	Private
Melvich Centre	6	67%	NHS
Oversteps Eventide Home	24	**92%**	Third Sector
Seaforth House Resource Centre	15	**93%**	NHS
Inverness			
Ach-An-Eas	24	67%	NHS
Aden House	24	**92%**	Private
Ballifeary House	24	**92%**	Third Sector
Birchwood Highland Recovery Centre	23	9%	Third Sector
Cameron House Eventide Home	-	-	-
Castlehill Care Home	88	57%	Private
Centred Recovery Centre - Block	23	26%	Third Sector
Centred Recovery Centre - Spot	23	70%	Third Sector
Cheshire House For The Highlands	16	25%	Third Sector
Culduthel Care Home	65	83%	Private
Daviot Care Home	74	76%	Private
Highview House Nursing Home	83	87%	Private
Isobel Fraser Residential Home	30	73%	Third Sector
Kingsmills Nursing Home	60	87%	Private
Kinmylies Lodge Nursing Home	18	**94%**	Private
Maple Ridge	13	69%	Private
Maple Ridge - High Dependency Unit	5	80%	Private
Mayfield Lodge Residential Home	12	**100%**	Private
Meallmore Lodge - Drumboe Unit	74	22%	Private
Nansen - Fram House (Residential)	5	80%	Third Sector
Pittyvaich Care Home	58	59%	Private

Southside Nursing Home	33	70%	Private
Nairn			
Bruach House	22	86%	Private
Carolton Care Ltd	20	**95%**	Private
Hebron House Nursing Home	22	**91%**	Private
Hillcrest House Nursing Home	23	65%	Private
St Olaf Nursing Home	-	-	-
The Manor Care Centre	43	58%	Private
Whinnieknowe Residential Home	24	79%	Third Sector
Badenoch & Strathspey			
Grant House Resource Centre	20	50%	NHS
Lynemore Care Home	40	83%	Private
Mains House Care Home	31	77%	NHS
Wade Centre Community Care Unit	22	36%	NHS
Lochaber			
Abbeyfield House	30	**110%**	Third Sector
Invernevis House Resource Centre	32	**100%**	NHS
Mackintosh Centre	8	88%	NHS
Moss Park Nursing Home	40	55%	Private
Telford Centre Community Care Unit	10	**90%**	NHS
Skye and Lochalsh			
An Acarsaid	10	**90%**	NHS
Home Farm Care Centre	35	71%	NHS
Wester Ross			
Howard Doris Centre	n/a		Third Sector
Isle View Nursing Home	25	88%	Private
Lochbroom House Community Care Unit	11	**91%**	NHS
Strathburn House Resource Centre	14	43%	NHS

11.163 Care homes across the Highland HSCP area are mapped by NHS Highland, demonstrating the spatial distribution of care homes provided by the public sector, private sector and third sector. This data is also available on the Improvement Service Spatial Hub Care Homes for the Elderly.

11.164 As of May 2025, there are 62 total care homes across north Highland, 45 which are operated by independent sector care home providers and 17 of which are in-house care homes operated by NHSH (Independent Care Sector Home Overview and Collaborative Support Update 7 May 2025). As reported in Table 11:17, as of September 2025 there were 1675 care home beds available in Highland, with around 1463 provided by private or third sector care homes. In terms of size of

care homes, within Highland, there are 9 private sector care homes have 50 beds or over, with 2 of these being over 80 beds. The majority of care homes are under 50 beds, with 28 care homes operating with 20 beds or less.

11.165 For Highland, figures from the Public Health Scotland Social Care Insights Dashboard 2022/23 show that 36 per 1,000 people are supported by Social Care Services, which include: care at home, care home, meals, community alarm/telecare, housing support, social worker and day care. This rate is lower than the Scottish equivalent of 42.8 per 1,000 people but represents a slight increase relative to figures for 2017/2018, and the rates of increase are slightly higher in Highland than Scotland as a whole. From recent data it is estimated that there are 26,179 unpaid adult carers in the North Highland area, this information is obtained from the Carers Census 23/24 which is currently the most up to date published figure. However, it is recognised and estimated that in reality this figure is likely to be 30% higher as it is known that unpaid carers do not self-identify as an unpaid carer especially in the older adult population.

11.166 Care at Home provision in Highland, by provider type is presented in Figure 11:2. External care home provision is most prevalent, especially in Inverness, Nairn, Easter Ross and Mid-Ross. However, in Sutherland, Skye and Lochalsh, Lochaber, Caithness and Badenoch and Strathspey in-house care at home provision is more prevalent. Reablement, short term provision of care at home up to 6 weeks, to support recovery from illness or injury, has limited provision in Highland.
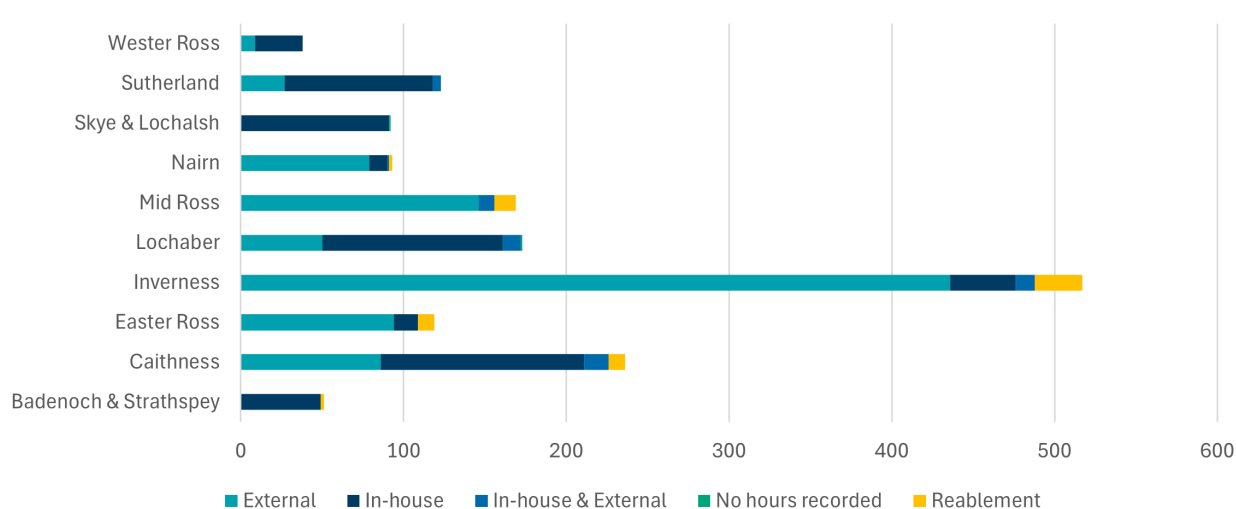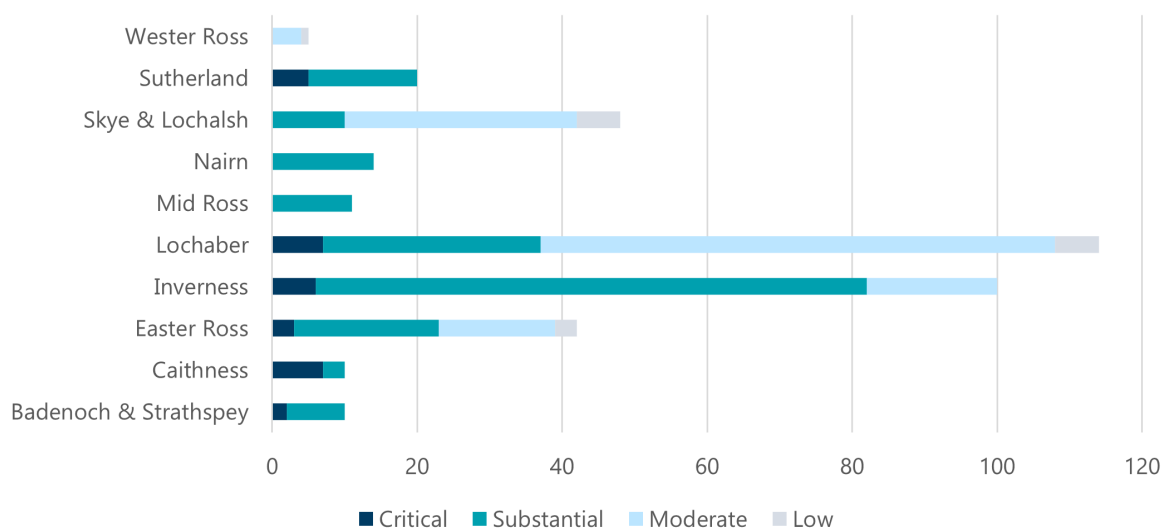

Figure 11:2 Provision of Care at Home services in Highland by area, at 26 October 2025. (Source: NHS Highland)

11.167 The Care at Home waiting list by level of need varies by area in Highland, as shown in Figure 11:3. Lochaber and Inverness have both the largest waiting lists and highest level of Critical and Substantial need, and Caithness also has a comparably similar waitlist for Critical need.

Figure 11:3 Care at Home waiting list by level of need, by area of Highland, at 26 October 2025 (Source: NHS Highland)

11.168 The Independent Care Sector Home Overview and Collaborative Support Update details that over the course of 2024/2025 there have been continued sustainability concerns and arising quality issues within the independent sector care home market within Highland. There is a higher proportion of smaller size of operator and smaller scale of provision within north Highland. Whilst this smaller scale provision reflects Highland geography and population, it presents increased financial sustainability and vulnerability risks, particularly given that the National Care Home Contract (NCHC) rate is calculated on the basis of a 50 bed care home, operating at 100% occupancy.

11.169 Independent providers and NHSH care homes continue to experience difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff and this represents a very high risk across the sector. The most significant difficulties are with recruiting nurses to work in care homes. Staffing difficulties are further exacerbated in homes in rural locations away from the larger population centres but are not limited to these locations.
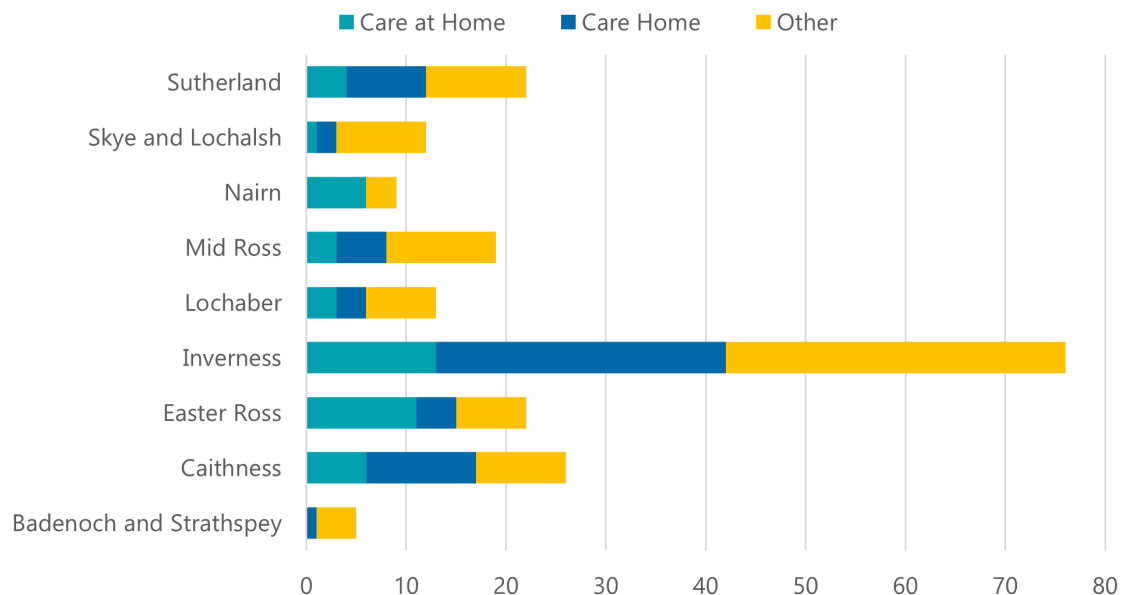
Further, smaller care homes in rural communities are very vulnerable to availability of workforce and housing availability is a key factor in being able to recruit and retain workforce. These rural care homes are also generally in older buildings and the Care Inspectorate environmental requirements on the buildings are becoming increasingly difficult to comply with - making those services increasingly vulnerable to closure.

11.170 Since March 2022, there have been 6 independent sector care home closures and 4 NHSH in-house care home closures with a total loss of 204 registered beds (Independent Care Sector Home Overview and Collaborative Support Update 7 May 2025). Strathburn, Gairloch has since re-opened in spring 2025. There have also been three care home acquisitions by NHS Highland / The Highland Council since November 2020 (Home Farm, Main's House and Moss Park). A common theme across many of these closure situations relates to staff recruitment and retention, the cost of securing agency cover and financial viability. This has coincided with increasing rates of delayed discharges from hospitals which remain a concern both nationally and within NHS Highland and more care-at-home capacity needs to be generated to alleviate this issue (Independent Care Sector Home Overview and Collaborative Support Update 7 May 2025).

11.171 Additional capacity has been added with the opening of Pittyvaigh, a 56 bed care home in Milton of Leys in Inverness, in June 2025. Planning applications for two further care homes, which if granted would provide a further 22 beds. The Call for Development Sites for the HLDP, which received suggestions from landowners, developers and others from 31 January to 2 May 2025, included one suggested site for a care home in the Black Isle.

11.172 NHSH are developing a locality model as a preferred and intended direction of travel for the provision of health and social care services, the key objectives of which are safe, sustainable and affordable locality provision. This is the direction as set out in the Joint Strategic Plan. However, there has been and continues to be, immediate and operational challenges from arising and anticipated care home closures, which require to be addressed. Given the evolving nature of the developing situation, the available courses of action to prevent a significant scale of lost provision may not entirely align with the intended strategic direction but these actions are being taken or considered out of necessity (Independent Care Sector Home Overview and Collaborative Support Update 7 May 2025). Work to progress a care home strategy, commissioning plan and market facilitation plan has been delayed due to operational pressures. Capacity has now been created within the Partnership's joint Transformational Programme, which will now see

some much needed progress in these areas. This transformational activity will consider sustainable forward care models.

11.173 However, there has been and continues to be immediate operational challenges arising from care home closures which require to be addressed in the short term, diverting resources away from fully progressing the locality model. There is insufficient capacity within the health and social care system to cope with the ongoing scale of lost provision. Mitigating actions are therefore required to avoid whole system destabilisation, whilst ideally at the same time, moving toward the locality model in development. Given the evolving nature of the developing situation, and the unpredictability of the future of independent sector care homes, more precise forecasting of care home needs in Highland are being developed through the forthcoming draft Commissioning Plan (expected late November 2025), for approval end of December 2025. The Highland Health and Social Care Partnership Commissioning Plan for Adult Care will evaluate future demand and capacity for Adult Care services across all of Highland, including considerations for a changing model of care for Adult Social Care.

11.174 In Highland, many care homes are at capacity (Figure 11:3) and have waitlists. Care homes are increasingly being used only for people with the highest level of need (e.g. severe dementia) due to the limited number of spaces. This also means that delayed discharges from hospital are a common practice for managing this demand for care homes. For example, as shown in Figure 11:4, in October 2025 over 20 people were waiting in hospitals in Sutherland, Easter Ross, Caithness and Inverness to enter care homes. NHS Highland have noted there is a recognised deficit of up to 3,000 care-at-home hours per week.

Figure 11:4 Delayed discharges from hospital, by destination care type at 27 October 2025 (Source: NHS Highland)

11.175 NHS Highland recognise the limitations of the current locality model for social care. The Commissioning Plan being developed is charting a path toward a changing model of care with more of a localised care service, working in partnership with local organisations and agencies to deliver care-at-home services and to support people to live in their homes for longer. The Commissioning Plan is expected to provide a forward estimate of Gross Floor Area (GFA) of planned care homes. This, in conjunction with projected population and household estimates, may enable the Council and HSCP to identify how Adult Social Care services could be impacted by future development and could therefore inform future Developer Contributions. At this stage however this analysis has not been undertaken and continued engagement would be required to ascertain details of these requirements.

11.176 The prevalence of residential annexes or accessible amendments to homes offers a proxy indication of unmet demand for adult care, whereby some families are taking it on themselves to prepare for or provide accommodation (with unpaid care or in-home care services) for elderly or disabled family members. Analysis of Council development management data from 2012-2025 identified 195 planning applications for residential annexes, of which 45 were specified for Elderly Parents, 15 for Other Family members and the remainder unspecified **(THC276)**.

Of the 195 annexes, 38 were licensed and converted to short term lets. There were 121 planning applications approved for accessible amendments to homes from 2012-2025 (excluding Highland Council HRA funded portfolio) **(THC275)**. Addition of access ramps were the most common amendment (96 applications), and more than 10 applications were received in the following areas: Badenoch and Strathspey, Culloden and Ardersier, Inverness Ness-side and Nairn. Between 2013-2017, 96 accessible amendment planning applications were approved. Further consideration of the impact of this as relates to housing availability is discussed in **Chapter 9: Housing**.

Burial Grounds

11.177 Section 3 of the Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016 requires each local authority to provide at least one burial ground within its area. The Highland Council has 245 burial grounds as shown on the Highland Council Burial Grounds Map. The Highland Council also operates Inverness Crematorium, located at Kilvean, Inverness. The service undertakes around 1300 cremations and 1700 burials per year **(THC214)** as detailed in Table 11:21. Annual rates of burials and cremations in Highland evidence a 43% rate of cremation in contrast with the Scottish average of 70%.

11.178 Capacity within Highland Burial Grounds is detailed separately **(THC215)**, owing to the large number of burial grounds and settlements, which shows an approximate average 57-year supply of burial ground, based on previous burial rates and annual rates of lairs sold. This is summarised in Table 11:21.

Table 11:21 Burials and Cremations in Highland

Year	Cremations	Burials	Total	% Cremation
2016	1100	1647	2747	45.55
2017	1127	1690	2817	44.21
2018	1240	1771	3011	45.00
2019	1237	1594	2831	43.70
2020	1239	1445	2684	46.16
2021	1264	1713	2977	42.46
2022	1403	1677	3080	45.55
2023	1360	1716	3076	44.21
2024	1270	1552	2822	45.00
Total	**11240**	**14805**	**26045**	**43.16**

11.179 While the 57-year burial ground supply represents an average number of years supply across all burial grounds, it is recognised that capacity at individual burial grounds varies and there are 19 identified burial grounds with a supply of less than 6 projected years until all lairs are sold **(THC215)**. The Highland death rate as specified within <u>Public Health Scotland Death Rates by Council Area</u> statistics is currently 1% of the population per annum. The matter of need for burial space in Highland will be considered in the proposed HLDP.

Table 11:22 Burial Ground Capacity in Highland's Administrative Areas

Admin Area	Av. Burials per Annum	Av. # Lairs Sold per Annum	Unsold # Lairs	Projected # Years until all Lairs Sold
Alness	82	40	658	27.5
Badenoch & Strathspey	88	44	1583	51.4
Dingwall & Black Isle	195	69	3870	80.6
Drummuie	97	64	3490	103.7
Gairloch	22	12	349	53.8
Inverness	394	172	2283	67.9
Kyle	15	12	239	17.2
Lochaber	147	79	658	46.0
Nairn	106	31	434	30.4
Skye & Lochalsh	130	103	2306	43.3
Tain	48	29	561	25.9
Thurso & Wick	268	145	2270	40.2
Ullapool	15	5	581	88.2
Total	**1609**	**804**	**19282**	**57.4**

Summary of Stakeholder Engagement

11.180 A full breakdown of all stakeholder engagement undertaken to support the Evidence Report is provided within the Log of Engagement **(THC001)**. A summary of the key stakeholder engagement activities undertaken for this chapter include:

-

Summary of Local Place Plan Priorities

11.181 Ardgour Local Place Plan **(THC010)** has identified the following priorities relating to Infrastructure:

- Childcare across the area supplementing Clovullin nursery.
- Enhanced community facilities around the school and hall in Clovullin such as new community centre, community garden / greenspace, all-weather pitch & better play facilities.
- Provide infrastructure, simplify consents; commuted sums paid by developers in relation to affordable housing developer contributions should be invested in the Community Council area;
- Our community needs people. Younger people, workers and families in particular need to be able to stay here or to move here. If not addressed, the school roll will continue to fall, population will continue to age, job vacancies will continue to remain unfilled, and providing vital services and activities will get even harder.
- Treslaig Village Hall improvements, including potential extension and terrace area, car park enlargement and outdoor space.
- Ardgour (Clovullin) Village Hall improvements, for example roof & other repairs, heating, insulation, solar panels, kitchen, parking.
- Clovullin Community Hub:
  - New Ardgour Hall (Clovullin) - opportunities for a youth space, cafe, heritage centre, cafe, shop/vending, public toilets, workspace, heritage centre etc.
  - Creation of central village green.
  - Upgrade existing community field - All-weather pitch and better play facilities - Install all-weather pitch, Multi Use Games Area, better play facilities, pumptrack, sports equipment, lighting etc.
- Community garden(s) - with polytunnels, orchard, events, rhododendron removal etc.
- Achaphubuil - add play, paths and seating to existing greenspace.
- Enhanced community facilities around the school and hall in Clovullin such as new community centre, community garden / greenspace, all-weather pitch & better play facilities
- improvements and extensions to existing community paths at Camusnagaul/Achaphubuil and Clovullin/North Corran in particular
- Support for community-led renewable power generation & micro-grid options in principle.
- Improve broadband

- Care for older people – home-based care and respite/residential care at Dail Mhor in Strontian.
- Flexible GP catchments and transport

11.182 Black Isle Local Place Plan **(THC011)** has identified the following priorities relating to Infrastructure:

- Fit-for-purpose school buildings, facilities & education.
- Review and upgrade school facilities and education in Fortrose, Avoch, Munlochy and Conon Bridge.
- Consider need for 3-18 Campus in Fortrose/Rosemarkie.
- Access to all-weather sports pitches and swimming opportunities.
- Network of local play facilities for children and teens across the Black Isle (play parks, pump track etc.)
- Better facilities & services for disabled people.
- Develop new / strengthen existing community hubs in Culbokie, Fortrose, Munlochy and Tore.
- Make more of hubs for social activities (in partnership with Black Isle Leisure Centre and Leanaig Centre), public services (e.g. health and police) and other opportunities like home working, training and lifelong learning.
- Support use of halls and schools for additional activities such as youth clubs, training and adult education.
- Build up community assets to generate income and run services, for example re-use of former churches in Cromarty / Munlochy and community energy generation.
- Visitor facilities including motorhome waste disposal.
- Sewerage upgrades and public toilets.
- Good quality broadband across the Black Isle.
- Care for older people (in their own homes & residential care)

11.183 Broadford and Strath Local Place Plan **(THC012)** has identified the following priorities relating to Infrastructure:

- Welcome prospect of new primary school and community facilities at Broadford new and existing infrastructure should tie into this development.
- Elgol School – community aspiration for this mothballed primary school to be reopened. Encourage options for 'meantime use' include community learning hub, visitor or heritage centre, workspaces etc. to maintain building
- New Broadford Primary School – to include nursery and community facilities.

- Childcare and education facilities to be available across Broadford and Strath to encourage families to stay and work in the area. Explore the potential for mobile outdoor learning and play facility.
- Broadford West:
    - South Skye Community Campus – phased development of leisure and recreation facilities, could include swimming pool, climbing wall and soft-play area.
    - Old toilet block – mixed-use facility including business and community space.
    - Land opposite Broadford Village Hall - potential for community purchase for amenity use.
    - Protect and enhance community green and amenity spaces - including the Community Garden, the 'arboretum' strip at Old Corrie Industrial Estate, the garden at the current (2024) primary school and the 'Clay Pools' natural swimming spot.
- Elgol:
    - Elgol School - options for 'meantime use' of mothballed primary school, including community learning hub, visitor or heritage centre, workspaces etc.
    - Elgol Village Hall - support future development of sport and leisure facilities in and beside hall site, including play park and community garden.
- Broadford West industrial estates - consider provision of waste/recycling facilities.
- Widespread concern over litter, anti-social behaviour and general neglect and untidiness. This needs to be managed through better communication, education and improved waste/recycling facilities, potentially in Broadford industrial estate.
- Support key services and drivers of economic activity. Continued support for business to be encouraged as appropriate, in particular for start-up businesses. Priority to be given to waste and recycling facilities.
- Upgrade broadband and electricity supply in outlying areas including Elgol/Torrin.
- Old hospital site and helipad – should be used to further health and social care provision for the wider area.
- Consider last-time housing options of various types in the right locations – generally close to services and facilities, especially health care.

11.184 Caol Local Place Plan **(THC024)** has identified the following priorities relating to Infrastructure:

- Promote adult learning
- More local tuition
- Introduce community garden, produce to be shared in community cupboard.
- A general feeling that facilities at the community centre and school/pitches are not being utilised to the best of their ability. Janitorial type keyholder, Access to school/ YC also to ensure spaces can be booked for clubs etc, options for events, such as mother & baby group, School campus accessible by all, improved coordination
- Option to have a community gym facility in the centre, corner shop on Castle Drive/Riverside
- Request for post office in village again
- Concerns for mental health, need opportunities to improve support.
- Importance of ensuring long -term needs of our elderly residents are respected and considered including nursing care, residential medical care and care at home needs.
- Manage campervan infrastructure including the need for waste disposal facilities in the village.
- Identify opportunities for kerb side food waste collection, circular waste and reduce food waste through community cupboard.

11.185 Dores and Essich Local Place Plan **(THC013)** has identified the following priorities relating to Infrastructure:

- Community concerns over Primary School roll decline.
- Dores - current site of public toilet under the Comfort Scheme is inadequate, preference for standalone provision elsewhere.
- Dores – upgrade Parish Hall including additional toilet block and extension.
- Dores – new hall or community hub, however preference for developing and upgrading existing Parish Hall.
- Dores – allocate land to north of Dores Inn for community use as per IMFLDP1 (**THC###**)
- Lack of waste disposal and parking area for campervans.
- Dores – lack of waste water provision for black water disposal, potential site south west of Dores Hall
- Dores - expand existing cemetery site (proposal already developed)

- Dores – use site C1/H4 (east of Torr Gardens) to develop a care home, sheltered housing or assisted living facility.

11.186 Duror and Kentallen Local Place Plan **(THC014)** has identified the following priorities relating to Infrastructure:

- Suggestion for education facilities and education centre for local heritage/ecology/outdoor pursuits at Cuil Bay.
- The potential loss of the village school is causing stress to many in the area, who see it as a valuable local resource.
- Opportunity for adult evening classes.
- Requirement for nursery services and wrap around child care.
- Cuil Bay struggles with the influx of camper vans during the summer, and there were suggestions for the installation of public toilets there,
- Explore extension of community centre including full time café, public toilets, office space and small community shop.
- Need people to establish and run services – such as a permanent café, activities for school-age children.
- Need reliable broadband and mobile phone service across the region.
- Opportunity for drop in surgery in community centre at Ballachulish.
- Wastewater and fresh water provision needed for campervans.

11.187 Fort Augustus and Glenmoriston Local Place Plan **(THC022)** has identified the following priorities relating to Infrastructure:

- Suggestion for education facilities and education centre for local heritage/ecology/outdoor pursuits at Cuil Bay.
- The potential loss of the village school is causing stress to many in the area, who see it as a valuable local resource.
- Opportunity for adult evening classes.
- Requirement for nursery services and wrap around child care.
- Upgrade Fort Augustus play areas and tennis court, create outdoor shelter for young people.
- Acquire Fort Augustus Memorial Hall for community space.
- Community resilience facilities in halls.
- Open up campus outdoor recreation facilities outwith school hours.
- More activities for school-age children after school time inc. local swimming lessons.
- Upgrade public toilets in Fort Augustus & Invermoriston.

- Upgrading and/or increased use of access to healthcare (especially dentistry).

11.188 Gairloch Local Place Plan **(THC015)** has identified the following priorities relating to Infrastructure:

- Improve and maintain roads and pathways
- Improve sports facilities and access to changing rooms and toilet facilities.
- Improve infrastructure to support tourism
- Develop sports and recreation facilities on the Glebe.
- Create a better outdoor play facility for children.
- Create a shared working space/ business hub.
- Develop improved facilities for tourists.
- Improvement of health care support and provision, including dental and eye care
- Develop infrastructure for internet and phone connection.

11.189 Garve and District Local Place Plan **(THC016)** has identified the following priorities relating to Infrastructure:

- Retain education provision at Strathgarve Primary School, and improve facilities
- Fear of Strathgarve Primary School under threat of closure due to the state of the building and potential reducing school roll. Want children to continue to attend school in Garve with improved learning environment including more indoor space.
- Improved rail and bus services and road maintenance.
- Improve infrastructure to support tourism such as public toilets, parking, and waste disposal for campervans.
- Concerns over Kinlochluichart Church – Currently we are seeing a general trend towards the closure. Important to its current congregation but is also an important historical feature within the community which we would hope to preserve.
- Garve Hotel building is in disrepair and causing concerns for local residents. Attempting to engage with owners has proved unsuccessful, desire to see this building and land developed quickly.
- Better infrastructure to support tourism is essential - public toilets, parking, and waste disposal for campervans.
- Parking is an issue, especially at playpark.
- An improved Fire Service is essential for our remote community

- Improvement of health care support and provision, including easy access to NHS services dental and eye care and sheltered housing that is local.
- Develop infrastructure for internet and phone connection.
- Reliance on private water supplies and a desire to upgrade them

11.190 Golspie Local Place Plan **(THC021)** has identified the following priorities relating to Infrastructure:

- Consider options to build a new 3-18 yo school campus.
- Long term plans for the Village Hub depend on the potential relocation of key facilities (High School, Primary School and Care Home).
- Improve local green networks, walking and cycle routes.
- Add self-service petrol station with parking and electric charging points.
- Use Drummuie site as an outdoor training centre (similar to Glenmore lodge).
- Add supermarket/food shop at business park and add more affordable food shop units on the Main St.
- Retain playing field and add/improve changing facilities. Access to playing fields should also be made free if possible.
- Retain allotments and add collective composting areas. Other potential small community garden sites.
- Golspie Town Cycle Centre/Facility. Add new facility Provide Village Centre changing and bike servicing facilities to encourage the Wildcat Trail users to stay in the town. Bike washing and maintenance facilities will also be provided at the Caravan site.
- Health centre to be retained
- Need affordable and reliable digital infrastructure

11.191 Kinlochleven Local Place Plan **(THC017)** has identified the following priorities relating to Infrastructure:

- Reboot the school campus and Leven Centre.
- Improve public services - including education, health, transport, employability and planning (and to complement the forthcoming Kinlochleven Locality Plan that will address inequalities).
- Improve/create playparks.
- Reinvigorate the village centre including renovation of derelict buildings such as the Aluminium Story Visitor Centre, Ice Factory and business park.
- Grow the community garden, re-open post office and open community cafe.
- Upgrade path network, and improve public/community transport.
- Restore Mamore Lodge as hotel.

- Create village maintenance squad.
- Manage visitor parking, camping and motorhomes including waste disposal.
- Retain GP surgery & pharmacy.
- Fix community composting site.

11.192 Lochalsh Local Place Plan **(THC018)** has identified the following priorities relating to Infrastructure:

- Affordable/easier community access to school facilities, indoor and outdoor.
- Improve safer routes to school
- More training, apprenticeships & work premises.
- Community acquisition of old Post Office for community use in Plockton
- Retain airstrip and extend car park to provide more spaces and include seating, ev charging, upgraded toilets/showers, jetty, workshop in Plockton.
- Desire for more community facilities in Stromeferry, and redevelop former hotel and Macaroni Yard.
- Visitor facilities to increase benefit & reduce harm from tourism.
- More cultural, sporting & social facilities & activities for all ages, especially <30s.
- Land for growing & promotion of local produce.
- Mental health support services for all ages, particularly
- Recycling options locally

11.193 Nairnshire Local Place Plan **(THC023)** has identified the following priorities relating to Infrastructure:

- Supports the development of education/ training/ further education facilities alongside commercial development and business start-up opportunities, including a physical centre (innovation hub) designed and operated around commercial and industrial innovation.
- Suggestion for development of common good land at Sandown for A Wetlands Education Centre Community Greenspace, Sustainable energy generation, and some community-led development and Sports facilities.
- Option for vacated Nairn Academy to e used as adult further learning centre.
- Suggested options for the future use of the St Ninian's church include a recycling and re-use centre, a climbing centre or relocation of Nairn library.
- Request that all new development and regeneration should improve the utility infrastructure position and not burden or create a deficit.
- Support the audit and consolidation of the public use of community buildings to support the viability of key community assets.

- Support for applications for community district heating schemes and community-led energy generation schemes should be supported.
- Scope to modernise the swimming pool using renewables with surplus used for district heating.
- Support the previously included commercial land to the Nairn East (NA05) North site as a sustainable location for expansion for business to locate.
- Town centre growth and any community hub developments should encourage small businesses and sole traders, including co-working spaces.
- Support business use of office space/ co-work uses including developing the harbour as a place for business associated with harbour/water uses including tourism.
- A Nairnshire focussed tourism strategy is needed.
- Nairnshire LPP adopts the proposed expansion space for the Gordon & Son Sawmill.
- Safeguarding and promoting key tourist and resident Links and beach front, including the re-development of the old paddling pool into the Team Hamish Splash Pad and proposal for the existing mini and crazy-golf courses, outdoor board games.
- The Former 'Morganti Land' site is promoted by the NRCC for a Community Right to Buy application.
- Development of a pump track to replace the BMX track at Riverside.
- Concerns of Green Free Port putting pressure on healthcare services.
- Retain greenspaces to boost health and wellbeing.
- Ensure high-speed broadband and mobile data connectivity available to all residents.

11.194 Sleat Local Place Plan **(THC025)** has identified the following priorities relating to Infrastructure:

- Local water supply approaching capacity limits.
- Recognise Sleat's unique economic and cultural position as a Gaelic education hub and its strong tourism potential.
- Digital skills development programme.
- Creation of traditional and digital skills training programmes, in partnership with educational providers such as SMO and the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI).
- Development of environmental education centre (Tormore) and agricultural education centre.
- Limited sport and leisure facilities.

- Desire for creation of flexible workspace hub and trades-focused business units, ideally at existing sites, such as Ardvasar old sheds, around Armadale or within the Kilbeg development.
- Recognise and support key businesses in Sleat including retail, food, hospitality and services including enhanced support to encourage seasonal businesses to open for longer.
- Development of sustainable tourism infrastructure including establishing a ranger service.
- Enhanced path network management.
- Develop purpose-built business centre, year-round tourism economy, integrated traditional and modern business hub, and comprehensive local food system.
- Enhance parking facilities and ev charging points.
- Gaps in healthcare services, particularly dentistry, concerns over social isolation, suggestion for integrated health care facilities, expanded local health care especially for elderly residents
- Suggestion for mental health and community wellbeing support programmes and community care coordination.
- Systematic mapping of connectivity gaps, support programmes for digital inclusion and enhanced mobile coverage in black spots with medium/long-term goal of universal full fibre broadband coverage.
- Acknowledge waste management infrastructure gaps, request for enhanced public waste facilities, seasonal waste management solutions, local recycling facilities and community composting scheme.
- Negative impact on water quality in the Sound of Sleat from dredge sand dumping, cruise ships and poor-quality wastewater discharges, suggestion for Marine litter reduction programme.

11.195 Stratherrick and Foyers Local Place Plan **(THC019)** has identified the following priorities relating to Infrastructure:

- Explore the future of local schools.
- Create sports and recreational facilities in Foyers: Riverside Field and Foyers Bay.
- Retain Foyers Post Office and shop.
- Create, maintain and upgrade local community hubs including The Hub in Foyers, Foyers Medical Centre, Foyers Shop, Camerons Tearoom, Boleskine House, Stratherrick Village Hall (Gorthleck), Whitebridge Hotel, Wildside Centre (Whitebridge), Errogie Kirk, Torness field sports club and Inverfarigaig forest school.

11.196 Torridon and Kinlochewe Local Place Plan **(THC020)** has identified the following priorities relating to Infrastructure:

- Re-purposing Torridon and Kinlochewe schools.
- Expand and enhance play facilities.
- Improved infrastructure to connect all properties to the grid.
- A requirement that fish farm development and management should require strong community engagement and partnership working.
- An aspiration that Loch Diabaig could be community owned or managed.
- Development of new National Trust visitor centre in Torridon with options for grey waste disposal.
- Retention of post office and shop in Kinlochewe.
- New mountain bike tracks developed as part of hydro scheme tracks in Kinlochewe.

Summary of Implications for the Proposed Plan

Education

11.197 HLDP will continue to seek developer contributions towards schools and the delivery programme shall require to be maintained to identify schools where capacity will be needed to accommodate future development.

11.198 GME schools have not been included in developer contributions towards education, but GME is growing with many schools reporting increasing GME enrolment, which in some schools outnumbers English Median enrolment. In reviewing HLDP policy on developer contributions, it is considered that with formal catchment areas in place and with evidence of GME occupancy and growth, it would be possible to develop a framework for including GME schools within developer contributions.

Community Facilities

11.199 The HLDP will recognise the important role of the vast range of community facilities throughout Highland. Based on various sources of evidence previously described it will outline the need for any new or improved community facilities.

11.200 The HLDP will continue to seek developer contributions towards community facilities. It will seek to update the policy framework in a number of ways. This includes the potential to be more reflective of smaller scale and/or rural development by requiring developments for 1-3 houses also make proportionate

contributions. It will also review catchment areas for seeking contributions, potentially applying more 'local' catchment areas than secondary school catchment areas where appropriate.

Water and Waste Water

11.201 HLDP will

11.202 HLDP will

Waste Management

11.203 Implication 1

11.204 Implication 2

Digital Connectivity

11.205 HLDP should take account of the overall policy approach, as set out in Policy 24 of NPF4, to support the delivery of digital infrastructure, particularly in areas with gaps in connectivity and barriers to digital access as outlined in the *Digital Telecommunications Planning Guidance* (**THC###**). Digital connectivity improvements are fundamental to facilitating rural business and remote working across the Highlands. HLDP should identify and support national developments which are located in the Highlands.

11.206 The impact of digital infrastructure developments on the built and natural environment, historic assets and designated sites must be considered and demonstrated to be minimised, taking cumulative impacts into account.

11.207 The spatial strategy for HLDP should have cognisance of the current availability of ultrafast and gigabit connectivity for new properties. HLDP must have regard to Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) once statutory guidance on RSS has been prepared and adopted, at which stage the duty to prepare RSS will come into force. RSS will provide a long-term spatial strategy which specify the area/s to which they relate, and identify:

- the need for strategic development.
- the outcomes to which strategic development will contribute.
- priorities for the delivery of strategic development.
- proposed locations, shown in the form of a map or diagram

11.208 Implication 4

11.209 Implication 5

Health

11.210 HLDP will require to consider how bespoke housing solutions can support NHSH's developing locality model to increase future adult health and social care provision at home, owing to the fragility of the care home sector in Highland. Ongoing engagement with Council officers liaising with NHSH on this work will be required as part of this. The impacts of factors related to Highland's housing challenge and their implications for the staffing and subsequent operations of care homes are noted. As discussed in **Chapter 9: Housing**, HLDP will require to consider developing a policy framework that responds to the needs of Highland's key workers.

11.211 The Council has an established mechanism in place for securing developer contributions, but this has not previously included contributions towards primary care settings or health and social care settings. As part of preparing HLDP, the Council will require to work with NHSH to consider whether a policy framework for these would support and respond to the pressures faced by NHSH, and seeks to collaborate in doing so, learning from other authorities which have established developer contributions policies towards healthcare facilities. The Council notes that building capacity has been directly attributed to GP Practice list closures in two locations in the East of Inverness and that rising numbers of registered patients has been observed in other locations which witnessed housing developments, such as Dornoch and Drumnadrochit. The Council considers that continued engagement with NHSH will be required to consider the role of developer contributions further.

11.212 Most evidence reviewed relating to pressures within NHSH signals that pressures for Care Homes are primarily caused by financial viability of small care homes alongside staffing and recruitment challenges, rather than capacity limits within existing buildings. These staffing challenges are exacerbated by a lower pool to recruit from in Highland and context-specific challenges of a highly seasonal economy in some areas. As developer contributions are principally concerned with funding required expansions of services, there is uncertainty as to whether this model would respond to the needs and priorities of NHSH in the short to medium term.

11.213 Future need for care homes in Highland is not yet fully understood. The Proposed Plan will have consideration for the future HHSCP Commissioning Plan – Adult Care which will provide Evidence on future needs.

11.214 The matter of need for burial space in Highland will be considered in the proposed HLDP and shall be informed by evidence where burial capacity is known to be constrained.

Statements of Agreement / Dispute

Agreement on Evidence

11.215 Agencies who responded and agreed with the evidence and content presented included X.

Disputes with Stakeholders

11.216 While

11.217 While not explicitly raised as disputes, concerns raised by

Information Gaps

11.218 It is considered that Highland Council's Area Place Plans would be informative evidence sources of relevance to this section of the evidence report, yet it is acknowledged that these remain in production at the time of writing. Place Plans once approved will be considered in the production of the LDP if timeously available.

11.219 It is considered that community-led Local Place Plans would be informative evidence sources of relevance to this section of the Evidence Report, and several are understood to remain in production at the time of writing. To date, INSERT NUMBER communities in Highland have formally registered Local Place Plans, but the progress is supported and communicated by the Council's Community Planning Lead. Any Local Place Plans registered will be considered in the production of the LDP if timeously available.

Community Facilities

11.220 The condition and capacity of a number of community facilities in Highland remains unknown. This is due to the vast range and nature of facilities throughout Highland that are owned and operated numerous different organisations. Where this information is not available, qualitative information

sources will used to help inform the approach in the HLDP, including from validated Local Place Plans.