

Working together for the Highlands

Ag obair còmhla airson na Gàidhealtachd



The Highland Council's Annual Performance Supplement, December 2013

Help us make the Highlands Carbon CLEVER

The public are being urged to get behind a new Council-led initiative, Carbon CLEVER, to place the Highlands at the forefront of the move to a low carbon economy. The ambitious target is to create a carbon neutral Inverness in a low carbon Highlands by 2025.

The Council has a major role to play in coordinating Carbon CLEVER Highlands and making it real. We need public bodies, private business, community enterprises, and the residents of the Highlands to support Carbon CLEVER Highlands and commit to it.

The benefits of Carbon CLEVER are that it will improve transport infrastructure, save money, reduce air pollution, make us healthier and make services more accessible. Growth will be stimulated and the Highlands will make a significant contribution to mitigate against climate change. ▶

An early goal is to make Inverness a cycle city, with a network of high quality and safe cycle routes, starting with Millburn Road. An electric bike hire service in Inverness is another early project for delivery. We are also working with UHI to develop the scope of the proposed Zero Carbon Institute.

A number of other projects are currently under development which will focus on civic engagement, behaviour change, transport, energy and heat, land use, and green tourism and business. These projects are being developed in partnership with community planning partners, through the Scottish Cities Alliance, and through collaboration with European partners. ■

Why not keep updated by following us on Twitter: **@Carbon_CLEVER** or for specific enquiries please email: **carbonclever@highland.gov.uk**

Apprentice bonus from Council energy contract

Our commitment to biomass as a heat source has enabled a Lochaber-based green energy company to employ two new apprentices to help service a four-year £1.2 million per year contract with the Council.

Biomass heat specialists, HWEnergy, who are based at Torlundy, Fort William, now have an in-house team of more than 50 who install, maintain and service biomass boilers as well as supply wood chips and pellets. ▼



Photo by Ewen Weatherspoon

An increasing number of council house tenants are benefitting from bio-mass boilers to provide cheaper heat and hot water. This photo shows two of our apprentices working on one of the many systems being installed across the Highlands.

By making the switch to a renewable heat source at 61 sites across the Highlands, the Council has demonstrated its commitment to providing a cleaner, greener energy source.

It is estimated the contract will bring savings of 40% on heating fuels and leading to costs avoided in the region of £900,000. In addition the initiative will see a combined carbon saving of 7,500 tonnes per annum, which is the equivalent to 30 million car miles off the road per annum. ■

When you have finished with this paper, please recycle it.



Photo by Stuart Downie, The Highland Council

Recycling/Refuse collections over the festive period

Normal collection day: Wednesday 25 Dec → **Will be collected on Saturday 21 Dec**

Normal collection day: Wednesday 1 Jan → **Will be collected on: Saturday 28 Dec**

Normal collection day: Thursday 2 Jan → **Will be collected on: Saturday 4 Jan**

Recycling Centres will be closed on 25 Dec 2013 and 1-2 Jan 2014.

Boxing Day collections as normal

For collection calendars and further information please visit:

www.highland.gov.uk/recycle or call: 01349 886603

Use your local Recycling Centre over the festive period:

-to recycle all those glass bottles and jars; -for extra recycling e.g. wrapping paper and cardboard;

-to recycle REAL Christmas trees.

www.highland.gov.uk [@highlandcouncil](https://twitter.com/highlandcouncil)

Thanks for recycling

The good news from our Waste Team is the household recycling rate for 2012/13 was 44% - so a big thanks to all householders for your time and effort in helping achieve this.

A staggering 20,000 tonnes of recyclable material including rubble, timber and waste electrical and electronic equipment was collected at our 21 Recycling Centres. Glass bottles and jar recycling has hit an all-time high with over 5,000 tonnes being recycled ▼



by householders in the same year. Residents in the Inverness area have also embraced the new weekly food waste collections introduced in September, with over 300 tonnes of food waste being collected and recycled into agricultural soil improver. Keep up the great work. ■

New service structure

Savings of £350,000 per year are to be achieved through a change to the Council's Service structure to align teams into five Services rather than the current seven.

The current seven Services are: Education, Culture and Sport; Health and Social Care; Finance; Chief Executives Service; Housing and Property; Planning and Development; TECS.

The new Services are Children, Education and Adult Services; Finance; Corporate Development; Capital and Development; Community Services.

The changes will be implemented in two phases. The first phase will see the creation of three new Services – Capital & Development, Corporate Development and Community Services by 31 March 2014. A target of 30 September 2014 has been set for the formation of an integrated Children, Education and Adult Service.

A further report will be presented to the next Council meeting on Thursday 19 December setting out in detail the new Service management teams. ■

Budget Report

In February 2013 Council set a balanced budget for 2013/14 and an indicative budget for 2014/15 which required further savings of £3.6m to be determined.

In order to achieve a balanced budget for 2013/14 and 2014/15, The Highland Council agreed in February 2013 a package of challenging savings totalling £30m covering both these years. Delivering all these savings is challenging, but we believe that the right approach remains to concentrate on delivering these rather than to seek new and additional savings measures.

Looking ahead, the period from 2015-19 looks to be particularly challenging, with a potential real reduction in resources of £80m (15%) over this period. We are currently considering a longer term approach to the Budget which will look at transformation and prevention, as well as revisiting all previous assumptions. ■

Employee of the Year

Each year the Council marks the achievements of staff by organising a Quality Awards event. This is climaxed by the award of Employee of the Year. The winner is Scott Taylor, Civic Officer at Inverness Town House. He was commended for his qualities of composure, resourcefulness, problem solving, respect for colleagues, and leadership. He shone during the recent Inverness office rationalisation project when an additional 100 members of staff moved into the Town House from premises on Church Street. ▼



Also short-listed for Employee of the Year were Evelyn Miller, Cleaning and Facilities Management Manager, Education Culture and Sport, and Drew McNeil, Employment Support Adviser, Employability Team, Planning and Development. ■

Positive feedback on our services

Survey results from our Citizens' Panel show high levels of satisfaction with Council Services and captures peoples' positive perceptions of community life in the Highlands.

A total of 1,151 responses were received from the Panel, which is made up of 2,300 adults randomly selected from across the Highlands, giving a response rate of 49%.

Key findings include:

- 88% said they were satisfied with Council Services in 2012/13.
- 90% say they found it easy to contact the Council.
- 73% felt their request was dealt with by the first person contacted.

Only roads repairs and potholes have more dissatisfaction than satisfaction.



The top four most important services for the public are also the top four used by most people; road repairs and potholes, winter road maintenance, refuse/bin collection and recycling facilities. High satisfaction is found with refuse and recycling services.

However generally people with disabilities tend to have less positive feedback, although still positive and largely not negative.

All indicators on community life are positive with some of the highest scores ever recorded from our surveys.

Actions that should affect future scores are:

- New investment to repair roads and pot holes;
- Addressing the top three community safety concerns ie road safety, alcohol misuse and anti-social behaviour. This includes working to reduce the level of worry about being a victim of crime among people with disabilities and improving community safety perceptions in areas of multiple deprivation;
- Working to continuously improve employability services and to provide more affordable housing;
- The redevelopment of the Council website by spring, 2014, including the ability for more self-service and payments; and
- Automating the phone payment line and making it available 24/7. ■

A Fairer Highland: Advancing Equality

In March 2013 the Council agreed its first full set of equality outcomes to better help us eliminate discrimination, advance equality and foster good relations. The outcomes are based on evidence from a range of local and national data as well as testimonies from local equality groups.

We published 20 equality outcomes linked to three key overarching objectives, including examples such as:

People are, and feel, free to live their lives without harassment and discrimination, and can take part in community life -

- People feel involved and are able to participate in public life.
- Violence Against Women and its impact are reduced.
- Improve pupil and school staff understanding of prejudice based bullying. ▶

Top uptake in Highland of Small Business Bonus Scheme

For the sixth year running, we have achieved the highest uptake of Small Business Bonus Relief in Scotland, with 8,715 local businesses benefitting from a reduction of between 25% and 100% in their rates during 2013/14.

The Scottish Government introduced the Small Business Bonus Scheme in April 2008 to replace the existing Small Business Rates Relief Scheme. Initially the new scheme provided relief to ratepayers with properties in Scotland with a combined rateable value of £18,000 or less. Since the launch it has been expanded and now where the cumulative rateable value of a ratepayer's properties, within Scotland, falls between £18,000 and £25,000, the scheme will offer 25% relief to individual properties with a rateable value of up to £18,000. ■

Let's hear from you

To see all of the Council's reports on performance please visit:

www.highland.gov.uk/howyourcouncilperforms

If you wish to provide feedback on this newspaper supplement, or make suggestions for future content please:

Email: policy@highland.gov.uk

or write FREEPOST to:

**Newspaper Supplement,
Performance Team,
Chief Executive's Service,
FREEPOST SCO5567,
Inverness, IV3 5BR**

Corporate member of
Plain English Campaign
Committed to clearer
communication

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People benefit from public services in a fairer way, and are able to have their say about them -

- Improve customer satisfaction rates, in particular from disabled people.
- Young people can enter the labour market with aspiration, skills and experience.
- Schools can support equality through delivery of curriculum for excellence.

Staff feel there is an organisational culture where everyone is treated with dignity and respect -

- Increase the proportion of staff who feel they are treated fairly.
- Eliminate employment barriers that contribute to pay inequalities.

The outcomes are supported by agreed actions and measures.

For further details visit the Council's Equal Opportunities pages at:

www.highland.gov.uk/equalopportunities ■



Review of office accommodation

As part of a Highland-wide review of office accommodation, the Council is busy reducing costs and delivering services from better performing properties.

In Wick, we are building an £8 million new office at Market Square. Staff have relocated to the former DSS Office on Girnigoe Street during construction and should move back to the town centre next summer.

In Dingwall, plans are advanced to make fuller use of the main Council Office and reduce the number of locations in the town where staff work.



The former Fort William School site, photo by The Highland Council

In Fort William, the Council has earmarked the former and disused Fort William Primary School site for its new office in the town. The disused historic building will be rebuilt to house staff currently based at Lochaber House, Fulton House and Tweed-dale.

The former Courthouse at Kingussie is in line for refurbishment to house Council staff, replacing Ruthven House and other Council offices.

Work is continuing in Inverness to achieve savings by reducing the number of offices we use. In the meantime, more than 150 staff at 21-23 Church Street have been re-located in the Town House and Council HQ in Inverness – at a saving of £300,000 per year. ■

National Mod heads to the Highlands

The Council and An Comunn Gàidhealach are looking forward to hosting the Royal National Mod in Inverness in 2014 and Lochaber in 2017. The Inverness Mod will be the climax to the 2014 Highland Homecoming festivities.

Inverness Hogmanay Party

Northern Meeting Park Arena will host the Red Hot Highland Fling Party from 8.30pm on Tuesday 31 December.



Compere is comedian Craig Hill and music is provided by the Red Hot Chilli Pipers supported by Skerryvore and Dorec-a-belle. **The event is free.**

Freedom of John O'Groats

The Freedom of the most northerly community in Great Britain – John O'Groats – has been bestowed by the Council on Mr John Green, who served as a Highland Councillor for 12 years for North East Caithness from 1995–2007.

Polling review

The Council is reviewing the venues where you vote at elections and we want to hear your views by 7 February next year. A second phase of consultation, which runs between 4 April – 27 June, next year, will invite comments on the draft proposals that emerge from the review.

Nairn Academy mock election

Pupils from Nairn Academy have led the way in the Highlands in getting involved more in the democratic process. They recently ran a mock referendum on Scottish Independence and attracted a turn out of 64%. Other secondary schools are planning to run a similar event.

Working together for the economy

Ag obair còmhla airson an eaconamaidh

1,000 not out for Business Gateway

Business Gateway, the business and information advice service for Highland and Moray Councils, last year celebrated assisting its 1,000th business start-up since its launch in 2009.

Delivered by Highland Opportunity, the business support arm of The Highland Council, Business Gateway provides advice, training and practical support to local businesses looking to start and/or grow. Last year the team of seven Regional Development Officers responded to 1,669 enquiries; assisted 548 existing businesses to develop; and organised events on themes such as social media for business, self-assessment with HMRC and marketing.

Two new employment initiatives – the Graduate Placement Programme and Employment Grant – and a new Business Gateway recruitment advisory service were launched by the Council to meet the need for greater employment support. ▶



With the help of a Highland Opportunity loan, Kilcoy Kindergarten acquired and developed new larger premises at Tore Gallery.

These initiatives, funded by the Council and the European Social Fund, have so far provided 232 businesses with recruitment advice, supported 157 local people out-of-work into employment, and created 34 new positions for graduates.

Enterprise Europe Network, also delivered by Highland Opportunity, continued to support businesses looking to internationalise by providing information on European legislation and markets, business partnering opportunities, assistance with accessing European markets, and public procurement support. Over 330 enquiries were answered last year, ranging from providing market research on German golf magazines, to partnering fish producers and wholesalers.

Prince's Trust Youth Business Scotland awarded £38,040 of grants and loans to 34 local businesses run by young entrepreneurs aged between 18 and 30 last year. Loans were granted at the new reduced interest rate of 3% and match-funded by Highland Opportunity, the Trust's agency partner in the Highlands.

As the area's Enterprise Trust, Highland Opportunity continued to provide affordable business loans. It awarded £379,400 of loans to Highland-based commercial and social enterprise businesses through its Opportunity and Community Enterprise funds. The 20 businesses assisted ranged from a café on the Isle of Skye, to a Ross-Shire dental laboratory. The financial assistance provided by Highland Opportunity created and retained 153 local jobs across the Highlands. ■

Tel: 01463 713889

www.bgateway.com

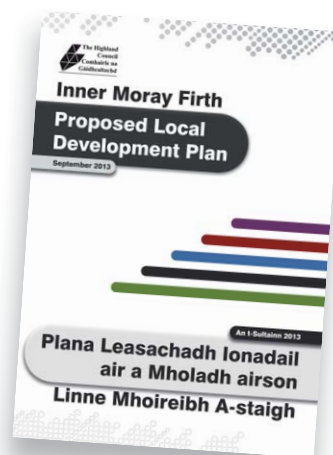


How do we perform?

- We introduced a living wage of £7.45 per hour for all council staff on 1 April 2013, helping the lowest paid, this benefited around 800 staff.
- In 2012/13 we exceeded targets to pay 60% of invoices within 10 calendar days of receipt (67.6%) and 90% within 30 calendar days (90.7%).
- We have a target to increase our spending with Highland businesses by 5% by 2017. The total spend with Highland businesses fell by 2.5% in 2012/13 but we did increase direct spending with Highland Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) by 10%.
- During 2012/13 through our Business Gateway we supported 351 business start-ups (244 in 2011/12) and provided 548 businesses with advice, information or training (474 in 2011/12).
- The number of businesses supported by the Small Business Bonus Scheme during 2012/13 was 8,532 compared to 7,969 the previous year. This is the highest uptake in Scotland and has increased annually in the last 5 years.
- The value of tourism increased marginally from £738.36m in 2011/12 to £738.43m in 2012/13 but did not achieve the 4% annual target (£767.97m).
- The Scottish Traditional Music Awards were hosted in Fort William in December 2012 meeting the target we set in our Gaelic Language Plan.
- A free download "app" which focuses on opportunities for the Film industry in Skye and Lochalsh has been developed by the Highlands of Scotland Film Commission with support from our Gaelic Development Team.
- Visitor numbers to the Cairngorm National Park fell slightly by 4.6% in 2012 to 1.518m compared to 1.543m in 2011. The target is to increase by 15% by 2017.
- The value of tourism in the Cairngorms National Park was also slightly lower in 2012 at £209.59m compared to £210.56m in 2011.
- The proportion of non-householder planning applications that were dealt with within two months increased in 2012/13 to 60.8% compared to 54.8% the previous year, achieving the target set by the Planning Team.

Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan

Many local residents and businesses have been contacted recently about the Inner Moray Firth proposed Local Development Plan. It sets out the Council's ambition for delivering sustainable economic growth and improvements to communities in the Inner Moray Firth area over the next 20 years and beyond. As well as identifying land that could see the delivery of 17,000 homes and the creation of 11,000 jobs, once adopted, it will provide policies and sites to guide development over an area which ▶



stretches from Tain in the north, through Easter Ross, the Black Isle and Dingwall to Garve in the West, down Loch Ness to Fort Augustus, and through Inverness to Nairn and Auldearn.

All the comments received will be gathered together so that they can be considered both by the Council and a Scottish Government Reporter who will hold an Examination of the Plan with the result known by the end of 2014. ■

Pioneering charrettes put local communities first

The Council has pioneered a new way of placing local communities at the forefront of deciding their future. ▼



Photo by The Highland Council

Earlier this year, we hosted charrettes (interactive facilitated workshops) at Thurso and Wick to give local people a hands-on role in preparing and shaping a new Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan.

Following this success, we have made a bid for funding from the Scottish Government to run mini-Charrettes to focus on projects that will best deliver town centre regeneration in Fort William, Nairn and Tain. The bid is for £20,000 and if successful the Council will contribute £15,000 of its own funding towards the events, which would be held over a two week period in the new year. ■

Additional funding boost to Highland fishing communities

Four coastal communities in the Highlands are the latest to attract funding from the European Fisheries Fund Axis 4 Programme, via the Highland Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG).

- Kyle of Lochalsh Community Trust received £233,004 towards the upgrade and extension of pontoons at Kyle Harbour and visitor amenities;
- Mallaig Harbour Authority received £82,471 for the development of a new shore side promenade;
- Applecross Historical Society received £25,571 for a project to capture the culture and heritage of fisheries communities of the peninsula; and
- Staffin Community Trust received £11,400 to carry out feasibility studies to consider the social and economic development potential of Staffin Slipway and its surrounding area. ■



Staffin Slipway, photo from Highland European Fisheries Fund

EU Projects

The Highlands has benefited from more than £145 million of European funding over the past six years. The Highland LEADER Programme, alone, has funded 358 local projects to the tune of £14.7 million.

Examples of Council projects funded by money from Europe include:

- £500,000 for the Sconser Ferry Enhancement from the European Regional Development Fund;
- £262,000 from the European Social Fund to run a Youth Trainee scheme at The Highland Council; and
- £658,000 to run Activity Agreements to support young people leaving school and moving on to further education, training or employment. ■



Activity Agreements, photo by Pultneytown Peoples Project

Glen Nevis Visitor Centre

The centre celebrated its 20th anniversary in June this year – shortly after a major refurbishment of the adjacent toilets to provide 21st century facilities for the 100,000+ visitors that use the site each year.

The centre continues to offer an advice service to the many visitors arriving to climb Ben Nevis including many charity event groups for which the centre also assists with event planning. ■



Glen Nevis Visitor Centre, photo by Jacquie Barbour, The Highland Council

How do we perform?

- The number of large renewable energy developments in Highland increased during 2012/13 and can now supply 1471MW of energy compared to 1330MW the previous year. Our target is 2908KW by 2017. Current figures do not include "old" hydro schemes, small scale renewables and bio-mass.
- We completed planning guidance for Scrabster, Nigg & UHI Campus enterprise areas. This guidance supports Highland-wide, large-scale development opportunities for employment and growth.
- The number of cruise liner visits to Highland ports increased by 41% in 2012/13 with 113 visiting in 2012/13 compared to 80 in 2011/12. We have a target of 130 by 2015.
- Good progress is being made to increase the percentage of young people leaving school moving into education, training or employment, 90.7% of young people moved into education, employment or training in 2011/12, up from 89.7% in 2010/11. We will report on 2012/13 figures in January 2014.
- The annual European report for 2013 showed that for 2007-13 we attracted £6.38m of EU funding for regional development. Highland projects submitted by other applicants attracted £138.6m. In addition, European Social Fund (ESF) and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) projects covering the Highland and Islands attracted a further £41m.
- We are continuing to address fuel poverty in the Highlands. In 2012/13 2,498 insulation measures were installed in private sector houses through the Universal Home Insulation Scheme. We have successfully spent all funds allocated to us from the scheme.
- The proportion of the council's housing stock meeting the energy efficiency standard (Scottish Housing Quality Standards) in 2012/13 was 80%, a significant improvement from 47.9% in 2011/12.

Countryside Rangers

Come and join the Countryside Rangers for something to remember in the Homecoming Year 2014.

Our long distance routes offer great day and family adventures, choosing from walking, biking, or paddling. Get much more out of your countryside visit this year and join one of our Ranger events that will inspire you to come back again and again. Contact us for more information on ranger@highland.gov.uk

Check out the new website:

www.outdoorhighlands.co.uk for the events calendar, information about the Rangers and our awesome long distance routes in Highland. ■

Working together for our children and young people

Ag obair còmhla airson ar cloinn agus ar n-òigridh

Highland schools for the future

The Council continues to invest heavily in our schools and exciting projects are planned throughout the Highlands in the near future.

New primaries at Aviemore, Ben Wyvis (Conon Bridge) and Lochaline are now established, while Plockton High School is benefiting from a major extension.

At Wick, the Council is replacing the High School and building two new Primary Schools, to serve the North and South of the town.

Planning permission for a new High School, Primary School, Pre-school, community swimming pool/fitness suite and community library south of the River Wick was granted in August 2013. The Wick Schools £39 million Community Campus building will be handed over to The Highland Council in February 2016, with the campus opening from Easter 2016. ►

A new £14 million Primary School north of the river remains on course to be handed over to the Council in June 2015. The new north school will open in August 2015.

Plans for the £34 million new Inverness Royal Academy project went on public display in September. The new school will have a larger capacity to include the increasing roll from the nearby Gaelic school, and additional supports needs accommodation will more than double.

Works are also underway on the £11 million third phase of Lochaber High School upgrade, bringing the total investment at the school to £26 million.

Planning permission has also been granted for a new Gaelic Primary School in Fort William and new Primary Schools at Caol and Upper Achintore.

The school communities in Alness and Invergordon are being consulted over long term proposals for future education provision. ■



Lochaline Primary School photo by Iain Ferguson



Aviemore Primary School photo by Chris Humphreys



Artist Impression of Inverness Royal Academy by JM Architects

Carbon CLEVER pupils from Farr

Pupils at Farr Primary, near Inverness enthralled over 100 delegates at the Council's recent Carbon CLEVER conference by telling how they are reducing the carbon footprint at their rural school with a series of eco-friendly projects.

Their head teacher Sheila Lamont is retiring at Christmas after 40 years of outstanding service to her local community.

Sheila was recently commended at the Council's Quality Awards for her outstanding service to the school and Strathnairn, which has her recognised by the local Community Council. ■



Photo by The Highland Council

How do we perform?

- Low levels of child protection re-registrations have been sustained (12 months or less between registrations) - at 4% during 2012/13, comparing with 7% in 2011/12.
- We have agreed additional funding for early years services and earlier assessment and intervention, which will be implemented as part of enhanced integrated front line teams.
- The uptake rate for MMR1 immunisation (% of 5 year olds) declined slightly in 2012/13 to 94.6% compared to 97.5% in 2011/12. The target is to increase.
- Currently 31.9% of new-born babies are exclusively breastfed at 6-8 weeks. This compares to 29.4% at year-end 2011/12. The aim is to increase this to 36%.
- We aim to provide every pre-school child with 600 hours each year of flexible childcare and early learning. In 2012/13 we worked with communities and 3rd sector partners on options and this work is continuing. From 2014 with our partners we will provide the additional 125 hours needed to achieve this.
- The Council maintains high educational standards, our overall approach is changing and pupils are taking alternative and more personally appropriate qualifications. Highland data for 2011/12 within the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework shows high levels of achievement. The scores cover the average total points awarded for all exam results per pupil. With the exception of S4 this is above the national averages:
 - S4 at 186 (national comparator 187), baseline 181 in 2006/7.
 - S5 at 321 (national comparator 311), baseline 294 in 2006/7.
 - S6 at 400 (national comparator 383), baseline 354 in 2006/7.
- Currently 80% of children with Additional Support Needs have a Child's Plan. We aim to achieve 95% by June 2014.
- We allocated an additional £1m to early year's services and families during 2012/13. This has provided increased support and earlier assessment and intervention for very young children.

Council campaign calls for supply teachers to come forward

The Council has mounted a campaign to engage more supply teachers to cover teacher absences in our 29 secondaries and 181 primary schools. The shortage is causing increasing difficulties for schools and staff in every part of the Highlands.

The Council is interested in hearing from teachers across all geographic areas who may be willing to consider joining the Highland Council supply teacher lists. Primary and secondary teachers, including those able to teach through the medium of Gaelic, are urgently needed.

Anyone interested in finding out more should contact the Education, Culture and Sport Service on telephone: **01463 702 734 / 735** or email: **ECStaffing.Teaching@highland.gov.uk** or apply at **www.myjobscotland.gov.uk** ■



Lochaline Primary School photo by Iain Ferguson

Out of authority residential school placements

A programme has been devised to look at ways to keep more young people closer to home for their care and schooling as an alternative to out of authority placements in residential schools.

A significant sum of the total annual budget for out of authority placements (18%) goes towards funding specialist autism placements. As a result, the development of a residential unit for children with autism at the new Inverness Royal Academy was recently endorsed by members of The Highland Council's Adult and Children's Services Committee subject to further consideration of revenue and capital implications. A suitable site footprint has been determined at the edge of the school site and should it progress it will be a separate build to the school. The residential unit is likely to be for 4 to 5 young people in their teens. ■

Commitment to Gaelic

We currently have 50% of all the pupil learners of Gaelic in Scotland. We have:-

- 18 Gaelic medium nurseries and 4 partner centres providing GME for 292 three and four year olds.
- 21 primary schools providing Gaelic medium education for 784 pupils.
- 12 secondary schools offering Gàidhlig (Gaelic fluent speaker) classes, or subject teaching through the medium of Gaelic, to 364 pupils.

In addition 12 secondary schools provide classes for Gaelic Learners for 1,487 pupils, and pupils in 52 primary schools receive a basic grounding in Gaelic as part of a programme which trains class teachers to teach Gaelic. ■

Fostering and adoption service

There's a constant need for foster carers and adoptive parents right across the Highlands. The people who come forward play a vital role in securing better futures for the children of the Highlands who desperately need support and the opportunity to experience a stable family environment.

The ultimate aim for foster care is for children to return to their natural families, and foster carers are crucial in making this possible.

We also need long term foster carers, respite carers for children affected by disability, as well as carers who can provide emergency placements for all ages of children and young people.



We will consider couples, married or not, civil partnerships and single people. Employed or unemployed, home owners or those who rent. The assessment process is thorough and the applicant's skills are assessed, particularly with regard to their understanding and ability to care for children who have experienced trauma, neglect and abuse and those affected by disability.

If you have ever thought about fostering or adoption and would like to find out more, please don't hesitate to contact us for more information. The first step is to phone our friendly team on **01463 703 431** or email **fostering@highland.gov.uk** ■

How do we perform?

- In 2012/13 the percentage of young people reporting that they had a positive learning environment was 78.4% compared to 82.6% the previous year. These figures are from Education Scotland surveys and are based on a smaller number of inspections in 2012/13 as inspection staff engaged more in Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) development work.
- The Wick and Fort William new schools programme is progressing well with five new campuses approved. Planning for future education provision in Easter Ross, Inverness and Skye & Lochalsh is well underway with extensive public consultation planned to take place during financial year 2013/14.
- In 2012/13 we opened new primary schools to serve the local communities in Conon Bridge/ Maryburgh and Lochaline. We also invested significantly in improved and extended accommodation at Plockton High School and Kingussie High School.
- 70% of children now receive a health assessment within 4 weeks of becoming looked after. This compares with 23.3% in 2011/12, the target is for 100% to be assessed within this time period.
- Of all children under authority supervision or care, 27.3% of children were looked after at home; a reduction from 32.1% in 2011/12. This indicates that there is more confidence in planning for children and young people which means that statutory measures are less necessary.
- Of those children who need to live away from the family home, 19.3% are supported in kinship care with other family members in 2012/13, this compares to 16.5% the previous year.
- We aim to have fewer looked after children in out of authority placements. For 2012/13 the number remained the same as the previous year at 44.
- We completed a 5-15 years Physical Activity Plan and this means from August 2014 every week there will be two secondary school periods and two hours in primary schools of physical activity. This is slightly later than the target of March 2014.
- We are pressing ahead with plans to build a standalone Gaelic Primary School in Fort William. We are in discussion with the Scottish Government to try and secure funding for a Gaelic Primary School in Portree
- We invested an additional £250k to improve social care services for children with disabilities in 2012/13.

Working together for better infrastructure

Ag obair còmhla airson bun-structair nas fheàrr

Milestones reached for Inverness West Link project

The first phase of the Inverness West Link road project is on track with construction due to start in 2015.

The Council has made good progress over the past few months, approving the final lay out drawings, submitting a planning application for the new road and publishing notice of the compulsory purchase order for the land.

The West Link will be a new transport link from the Southern Distributor Road at Dores Road to the A82 trunk road at Torvean via a fixed link across the River Ness and the Caledonian Canal.

The road will be built in two phases. Phase one will be from Dores Road Roundabout to Glenurquhart Road, including the new crossing of the River Ness. ►

Phase two will see the crossing of the Caledonian Canal, including the tandem bridge arrangements at Torvean.

The works will require to be carefully phased to ensure that all businesses and sporting activities can continue to operate throughout the period of road construction. Additional features for cyclists and walkers have been included in the plans as a result of consultation with the public.

The cost of the project is estimated at £34.4 million. At the same time, the Council is making progress with plans to get a state of the art sports hub at Torvean, which has the potential to be used by a wide range of sporting clubs, attracting significant external funding, and become one of the top sporting venues in Scotland. ■



Artist impression by Capita Symons/The Highland Council

Sconser Ferry Terminal

A new £2 million ferry terminal has opened at Sconser, which is the Skye base for ferry sailings to the island of Raasay on the new hybrid ferry, MV Hallaig. ►



Photo by Willie Urquhart

The existing slipway was remodelled to accommodate the new ferry vessel. As well as lengthening and widening the slipway, a new car park, marshalling area and new waiting-room with toilets have been constructed.

The opening of the terminal at Sconser completes the work on the Sconser to Raasay route and complements the £12 million terminal constructed at Churchton Bay, Isle of Raasay, completed in 2010.

The project was part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund.

Another project which attracted ERDF funding is the 1km section of the A838 Lairg to Tongue road, north of Laxford Bridge. The £850k scheme realigned and widened the existing single track road to a modern two-lane standard. ■

How do we perform?

- We contributed £100k towards the re-opening of the Conon Bridge railway station which was officially opened by Keith Brown MSP on 8 February 2013. We also completed works (£100k) to improve parking and cycling facilities at Conon Bridge railway station to help encourage a shift from car to rail travel.
- We reviewed the road maintenance allocation system and funding will be allocated according to need, based on the outputs of the Scottish Road Maintenance Condition Survey. An additional £3m was allocated to road maintenance to improve the condition of our roads.
- We allocated £500k for a feasibility study to find a long-term solution for a secure transport link between Lochcarron and Lochalsh. The first stage of this has been completed. Maintenance of the rock face, including responding to any further rock falls continues. The road was closed between 25 and 27 December due to a rock fall at the western end of the Stromeferry bypass, repairs were completed by a specialist contractor and the road re-opened on 27 December 2012. We allocated an extra £150k to stabilise a number of locations between Attadale and Adrnarff.
- Working with partners, the Council will support the delivery of the Inverness West-Link road and the associated amenity and leisure improvements. We have made good progress and following public consultation the detailed design work is complete. Work on the associated amenity and leisure improvements is progressing in parallel with the road design.
- We agreed grant funding for community transport groups for 2013/14 at committee on 17 January 2013. Five additional groups were funded from the same overall funding package as provided in 2012/13.
- We are working with the Highland Road Safety Group to improve road safety. Cycling access from East Inverness to the City Centre will be improved as part of the UHI development. We are working with Sustainable Transport (SUSTRANS) to expand cycling routes.

River Ness Flood Scheme

Work is well underway on the River Ness Flood Alleviation Scheme, which will protect 800 homes and 200 businesses in the city centre.

Having diverted the gas, water, electricity and telecommunications services in the first phase of work, the focus is now on the £8.5 million first phase of construction of flood walls between the River Ness Bridge and Friars Street.

The scheme, which attracted 80% funding from the Scottish Government, is due for completion in April 2015. ▶

Restrictions to vehicle movements on Huntly Street – between Young Street and Greig Street - and Bank Street, Inverness, have been lifted to ensure local businesses gain the maximum benefit from pre-Christmas trade. Work at both locations will resume on Monday 6 January, next year.

The works will also include streetscape and public arts features. Moray artist Mary Bourne has been appointed to undertake the £60,000 first project, River Connections. ■



Photo by Kirsty Foster, The Highland Council

How do you bin yours?

In October we launched a high profile campaign in partnership with the Chewing Gum Action Group to tackle gum littering in the Highlands.

This was part of a national campaign which last year saw a fall in gum litter levels of over 50% in participating areas.

Brightly coloured posters and street banners featuring professionally choreographed dance moves were used to encourage gum chewers to dispose responsibly of gum litter in a fun and engaging way or face a fine of up to £80.

Our staff will be carrying out monitoring over the next few months to see what kind of impact the campaign has had.

We also have had a great response from young people for the SCOPE (Schools and Community Ownership for Pride in our Environment) Litter Campaign with 10 Highland secondary schools signing up to take part in the first project of its kind that brought together pupils and representatives from their local community to tackle littering.

Thanks to pupils from Alness Academy, Dingwall Academy, Inverness High School, Inverness Royal Academy, Kingussie High School, Nairn Academy, Glenurquhart High School, Millburn Academy, Portree High School and Wick High School for their enthusiasm and hard work to get everyone at their school to reduce waste and recycle more. ■



Photo by Ewen Weatherspoon

Work gets underway on West Ross road upgrade

Work is underway on a £1.75 million project to upgrade the A890 Strathcarron-Balnacra Road.

The Council has attracted funding of £250,000 from the European Regional Development Fund to assist with funding of the widening of the road to a two-lane carriageway for some 2km immediately to the east of the Strathcarron Junction where the road is narrow, with an undulating profile due to underlying peat and is of a very poor standard. Work is expected to be completed by June of next year. ■

Innovative transport scheme to be piloted in Glenelg

A £3,000 pilot scheme is being introduced to provide residents in the remote Lochalsh communities of Glenelg and Arnisdale with a transport link to Shiel Bridge on the A87 Inverness and Kyle road, where they can connect with the long distance City Link coaches.

The scheme is to be managed by a local voluntary community group. The pilot scheme, using local taxis or private cars, will run for 12 months. The outcome will be fed back to HITRANS and other local authorities in the Highlands and Islands area. If it proves successful, the service may be replicated in other remote rural communities which have little or no transport facilities. ■

How do we perform?

- Our carbon management plan for 2013-20 was approved in April 2013. It includes a target to reduce emissions by 21% by 2020. Our 2012/13 target was to reduce emissions by 3% but they went up by 3%. While some areas showed a reduction, including business travel, the prolonged cold winter resulted in high energy consumption for heating and road gritting. However since 2007/8, carbon emissions from Council operations have reduced by 10% and avoided costs of £2.3m in energy and fuel bills.
- We supported the campaign to retain Inverness to Gatwick flights following the Flybe decision to sell landing slots at Gatwick to Easyjet. We contributed £15,000 towards the Flybe service to Schiphol for 2012/13 to support new international routes.
- We made successful applications to the Scottish Government for financial support to introduce statutory food waste collections in Inverness; provide additional glass collections; additional recycling centre skips and "recycling on the go" facilities have all been successful. Statutory food waste collections started in Inverness in September 2013. Our overall household recycling rate is 44%.
- The Cleanliness Index (sample of streets and land that meets the standards) remains high at 79% in 2012/13 compared to 78% in 2011/12.
- A review of our winter maintenance policy and service was reported to committee on 16 May 2013. The revised policy reflects the changes agreed in May including reducing (and simplifying) the number of route priorities from 4 to 3 and provides 3 spare vehicles.

Transition Black Isle

A local community group in the Black Isle has completed its first year of providing an innovative car sharing scheme in the Highlands.

Transition Black Isle's highland.liftshare.com was launched at the start of December 2012 ahead of the first phase of works on the Kessock Bridge and membership has grown to 541 people during its first year. ■

Working together for caring communities

Ag obair còmhla airson coimhearsnachdan cùramach

Helping ease impacts of Welfare Reform

The Council is heavily involved in making representations to the UK Government about a whole series of Welfare Reform measures that will impact increasingly severely upon some Highland residents.

Working within the legislation, the Council's main focus has been to achieve mitigation for certain categories of claimant, and provide help to vulnerable individuals; also tenants of Council houses and Housing Association properties.

The implementation of measures, such as Under Occupancy, is beginning to bite, but it is hoped that through increased resources negotiated for Discretionary Housing Payments and grants from the Scottish Welfare Fund, the Council will be able to help many local families.

We have written to the UK Government to support the call for communities of 3,000 or less being excluded from the Under Occupancy legislation. This is because there are not enough one or two bedroomed homes for people to downsize to.

A recent report by Audit Scotland has concluded that working in close collaboration with other stakeholders, the Council should be well placed to meet the even greater challenges of Universal Credit which is being introduced to Scotland via the Inverness Job Centre. ■

New care homes for Muir of Ord and Tain

Work is well underway on new care homes at Muir of Ord and Tain to replace the existing homes that serve the two communities.

Parklands Highland Ltd is the provider of the new homes for older people in the two communities, along with their build partner, Robertson.

Parklands Highland Ltd is now responsible for the operation of the existing homes at Urray House and Duthac House which were formerly run by The Highland Council. The homes will remain in operation until the new homes are completed in April 2014.

Meanwhile, work is progressing to upgrade facilities at Ach an Eas, Inverness and Invernevis House, Fort Willam. ■



Concern over payday lenders

The Highland Council has written to the UK Government, the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to highlight its total opposition to the high-cost short-term credit offered by pay day lending companies and the misery that spiralling debt brings to the poorest in society.

A priority, they say, is to cap the level of interest owing on loans, which can be as high as 4,000 per cent, at 60 per cent.

At the same time, a council delegation is to seek an early meeting with officials of the Hi Scot Credit Union, which is based in Stornoway, to discuss what additional support the Council can provide to increase awareness and membership of the union. The Council sees the Credit Union as a viable alternative form of affordable credit to consumers across the Highlands. ■

How do we perform?

- The integration of adult social care services is enabling a far-reaching programme of service redesign, to achieve fully integrated front line health and social care services for adults. The first single point of access has been established in a local district, and this will be rolled out across all nine districts.
- The percentage of older adults who had a community care assessment completed within 15 days was 34.4% in 2012/13. We will measure against this in future years.
- We aim to reduce the rate of emergency inpatient bed days for people aged 75 and over per 1,000 population. The rate was 4,854 per 1,000 in 2012/13 slightly higher than 4,711 in 2011/12 but within target.
- We had no people waiting for hospital discharge beyond the four weeks target at the end of year census point. There was an average of 13 people delayed by four weeks at the end of each month over the full year. There was a monthly average of 2,074 bed days lost against a target of 1,650 during 2012/13.
- We increased customer contact levels with Citizen's Advice Bureaux (CAB) with 44,961 customer contacts in 2012/13 compared to 43,606 the previous year.
- We increased the financial benefit to customers from the advice given by the Council during 2012/13 to £2,303,574 this compares to £1,734,080 the previous year. We also assisted 1,839 customers with our money advice and welfare rights service.
- The uptake of free school meals for all schools increased to 73.4% in 2012/13, compared to the baseline of 72.4% for the previous year.
- We allocated £250,000 of additional funding to help deal with the impact of welfare reform.
- £3m was allocated to preventative spend with outcomes agreed by March 2013 and progress is reported to committee.
- While there has been some slippage in the commissioning for new care homes in Tain and Muir of Ord, work is now progressing for them to open by the end of 2014. Refurbishment of the former local authority care homes will be complete by March 2017.
- Visitor numbers at archive centres for on-line and public callers continue to rise and were 32,954 in 2012/12 compared to 20,562 the previous year.

Working together for better housing

Ag obair còmhla airson taigheadas nas fheàrr

House building

Highland's beleaguered construction industry, cautious lenders and the shortage of affordable homes are challenges being met by the Council and private/public sector partners to develop 5,000 new homes by 2017. The building programme will enhance confidence in the building industry, meet demand, safeguard jobs and kickstart development.

The Council is playing its part in the revival and is on target to deliver 688 mainstream affordable houses by 2017. ▶

In a new approach to tackling homelessness, 200-300 amenity houses are in the pipeline for temporary accommodation, phasing out the use of Houses of Multiple Occupation. 40 empty homes are in line to be brought back into use. New council houses have been built at Assynt road and St Valery Avenue, Inverness, as well as Conon Bridge, Invergordon, Ardgour, Caol, Portree, Nairn and Kingussie. In some cases the Council is working with house association partners and local developers. Sites have been earmarked for a continuous programme of council house building over the next five years – so hopes are high of the target being met. ■



Photo by Ewen Weatherspoon

Home Swapping Scheme

Tenants of approximately 19,000 homes managed by the six main Highland based social landlords can benefit from joining up to the popular home swapping service – House Exchange. The service is free for tenants to join and matches up households who want to move to find other homes that meet their requirements. The mutual exchange scheme gives tenants more choice of homes and helps them to search for a new home that is just right for them.

Any tenants wanting to exchange must get written permission from their current landlord before they move. Advice and application forms are available from any of The Highland Council Housing Services or Housing Association offices across the Highlands.

The main social landlords across the Highlands are The Highland Council, Albyn Housing Society, Cairn Housing Association, Lochaber Housing Association, Lochalsh and Skye Housing Association, and Pentland Housing Association. These six landlords work together to operate a common housing register and allocations policy under The Highland Housing Register. ■

Free energy savings for home owners

Home owners in four Council Wards are the first to be offered free energy saving measures in a £6.4 million project with energy company E.ON.

People who own homes in the Landward Caithness; Aird and Loch Ness; Inverness Central and Upper Achintore (Fort William) Wards have been invited to have their properties assessed for free energy efficiency measures as part of the Home Energy Efficiency Programme for Scotland – Area Based Scheme.

The scheme is mainly aimed at insulating hard-to-treat properties with primary measures being cavity wall insulation or external wall insulation. ■



How do we perform?

- We built 127 council houses in 2012/13 exceeding our target of 120. We aim to build 600 houses by March 2017.
- Through planning policy we facilitated the building of 833 houses in 2012/13 below our target of 1,000. We aim to allow 5,000 houses through planning policy by March 2017.
- We are making good progress towards achieving the Scottish Housing Quality Standard. For 2012/13 the proportion of our housing which met the standard was 70.2%. This is well above target for 2012/13 and an increase from 41.6% the previous year.
- We approved a pilot empty homes initiative scheme, and funding for it in April 2013. We will continue to try and reduce the time it takes to re-let council houses (average number of days). For 2012/13 this remained at 38 days per tenancy change.
- We aim to reduce the number of people/families approaching the council as homeless. During 2012/13 there were 1,001 homeless applications, a reduction of 22% on the previous year. This is excellent progress against the target to reduce presentations to below 1,000 by 2016/17.
- The number of households in temporary accommodation fell to 477 in 2012/13 compared to 939 the previous year.
- The work of the homeless prevention team continues to have a significant effect on reducing homelessness. During 2012/13 they dealt with 2,024 referrals against a target of 1,000. The team had positive results in 1,249 cases against a target of 500 each year.

Ormlie Junior Community Wardens Project

Young people in Ormlie, Thurso are pioneering a Junior Community Warden Scheme, which is promoting positive behaviour among young people and good citizenship and delivering better outcomes for residents. As a measure of its success, the Junior Warden Project will be rolled out to other areas of Highland in partnership with existing local resident groups. ■

Working together to empower our communities

Ag obair còmhla gus comas a thoirt do ar coimhearsnachdan

First Highland Community Challenge Fund scheme gets off the ground

The first scheme arranged through The Highland Council's Community Challenge Fund is now up and running. Fort Augustus and Glenmoriston Community Company have taken over responsibility for street cleaning and grounds maintenance in their villages, including the grass cutting in the cemeteries of Auchterawe, Kilchuimen and Strathoich. As well as Highland Council funding, the Community Company is receiving financial support from SSE and Falck Renewables. The agreement runs until March 2016 and is renewable after this date. The Council has introduced the Fund of £1 million of recurring spending to support community projects which explore new ways of delivering services at a local level.

The Council's network of Ward Managers will be the first point of contact to groups considering bidding into the fund to promote a local project.

More information can be found by following the link on the front page of the Council's website:

www.highland.gov.uk ■

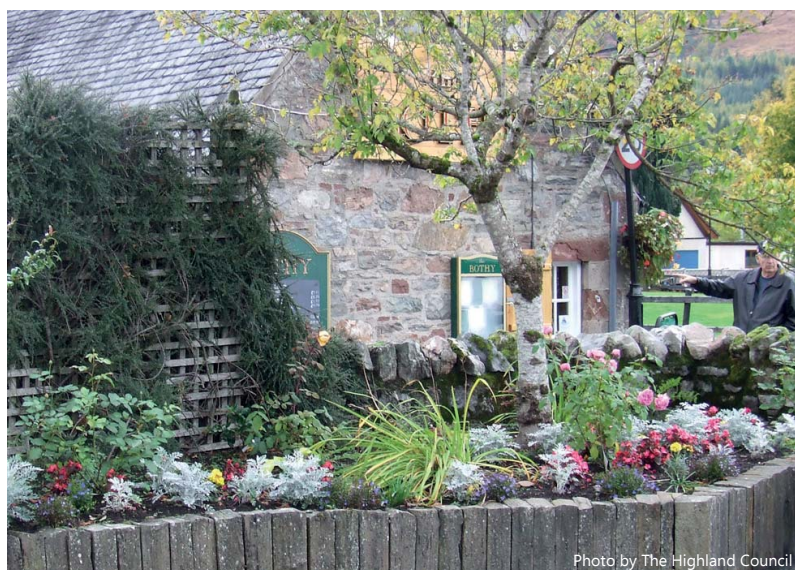


Photo by The Highland Council

Empowering Highland's Communities

The Community Challenge Fund is just one way that the Council is empowering communities in Highland. We recognise how important it is for communities to have their say on service delivery within their communities. This comes at a time that the Scottish Government is consulting on the Community Empowerment Bill, which amongst other things proposes to give communities the right to request the transfer of public sector assets and have a greater involvement in reviewing service delivery.

A good way for people to become more engaged in their community is to get involved with their Community Council. Community Councils are elected to represent their local area and are responsible directly to their communities. In addition to the statutory roles they have in planning and licensing applications, Community Councils have a much broader remit in representing their community and getting involved in areas of local importance. ■

ScotlandsPeople Hub opens at Inverness

The eagerly-awaited access to ScotlandsPeople Hub for the public to search the birth, death and marriage records unassisted has come on-stream in Inverness. The recent addition to the services provided at the Highland Archive and Registration Centre, Bught Road, Inverness also provides access on-line to valuation rolls with the facility to search by street, wills and testaments and Catholic records for all of Scotland.

Opening hours are Monday to Friday between 10am and 4.30pm. Places can be booked in advance by contacting Inverness Registration Office on **01463 256400** or by emailing: inverness.registrars@highland.gov.uk
The fee is £15 per day or part of a day. ■

Passport service

Customers in North East Scotland applying for their first passport no longer face a journey of around 200 miles to Inverness to be interviewed, thanks to a new service which has opened in Wick. ■

How do we perform?

- The public's overall satisfaction with our services in 2012/13 was 88% the highest figure ever reported. This compares to 85% in 2011/12.
- We completed a review of two pilot Area Committees (Inverness and Caithness & Sutherland). We will pilot three further Area Committees over the next year. Each will meet four times per year.
- We are committed to giving more young people a voice, 98% of our schools had pupil councils in 2012/13, this compares to 100% the previous year. The Council continues to engage with and support the work of the Highland Youth Convener, Highland Youth Voice (HYV) and local members of the Scottish Youth Parliament.
- In November 2012 we agreed an approach to allow communities to put forward petitions to us on issues of local interest. The procedure to allow petitions was approved in June 2013.
- We aim to increase the number of people who are in urgent need who are able to access 24 hour a day help through NHS Highland's out-of-hours service. In 2012/13, our first year of reporting, 13,064 people used this service.
- We aim to deliver more of our services through our customer services team. During 2012/13 our team had responsibility for 55% of the services identified. We aim to increase this to 80% by March 2017.
- Our annual survey of performance and attitudes shows that 30% of those making contact with the Council did so online. The trend has increased steadily from 12% in 2009.
- Volunteering levels remain high with 38% of our Citizen's Panel saying they volunteer in some capacity (up from 29% in 2009) and 60% of them say they do this at least every week.
- During 2012/13 we added 71.2% of the recommended national target for adding to our adult library lending stock per 1000 population, this compares to 64.7% the previous year. We also added 93.9% of the children's and teenage target compared to 84.7% the previous year.
- During 2012/13 we met the Government's annual efficiency targets achieving £11.404m against a target of £10.2m.
- More people are showing positive attitudes to diversity and tackling prejudice in Highland. In 2013, 73.6% of survey respondents felt that Highland should do everything it can to get rid of all types of prejudice, compared to 70.4% in 2012 and 66.9% in 2011.

Working together for strong and safe communities

Ag obair còmhla airson coimhearsnachdan làidir agus sàbhailte

Control centre hub mooted for Inverness

The Council has proposed a plan to allow the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service to retain a control room presence in Inverness.

The suggestion is that the Fire and Rescue Service works with the Council and others to share a building that provides control room services.

The Council believes the hub would provide the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service with their third strategic



Photo by Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

control room for Scotland and also further demonstrate the good practice in the Highlands and Islands of public agencies sharing accommodation and delivering services efficiently and collaboratively. ■



Photo by Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

Survey draws positive responses on community life

A series of 20 Council Ward forums have been held across the Highlands to seek the views of the public on local police and fire services.

Both Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service were keen to consult with the communities across Highland to identify the local policing and fire & rescue priorities for the next round of local police and fire plans.

Our recent Citizen's Panel Survey drew some of the highest scores ever recorded from our surveys. For example, 95.5% say you rate the neighbourhood or community you live in as very or fairly good. ■



Photo by Scottish Fire and Rescue Service



Photo by Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

Operation Respect

As the festive period rapidly approaches, multi-agency partners have once again joined forces to support Operation Respect with the aim of making the streets of Inverness safer for shoppers and party-goers, both day and night during the busy festive season.

Co-ordinated by Inverness Community Safety Partnership, it will see increased police patrols as well as the use of taxi marshals, security task team members, the British Red Cross and Street Pastors during December. There will also be a focus on the security and safety of shoppers and businesses. ■

How do we perform?

- We support the maintenance of police numbers in the Highlands and currently the Local Area Police Commander manages 541 officers in Highland. At the same time last year the Divisional Commander had 458 officers under his command. The increase has occurred as a result of restructuring from a Constabulary to Divisional structure within Police Scotland. We will continue to monitor numbers.
- Interim local fire and police plans were agreed by the Council for 2012/13. Community safety priorities were agreed by all community planning partners as part of the Single Outcome Agreement. They relate to alcohol misuse, improving road safety, reducing anti-social behaviour, making disadvantaged areas safer and helping people with disabilities feel safer. These priorities came from feedback from the public, from statistics on crimes and from staff working in community safety in fire, police, health and our services.
- Scottish Police, Fire and the Scottish Ambulance Services report their performance to our Community Safety, Public Engagement and Equalities Committee and members actively query performance reports.
- We have been recognised as national good practice by the Scottish Government in both our approach to local scrutiny of police and fire and providing training and developing councillors in their new scrutiny role of national services.
- Criminal Payback Orders and processes to support them are now in place and well established. There are a range of schemes in place, reflecting local offending patterns and local needs. There were 587 Payback Orders in 2012/13.
- We submitted our annual report to Scottish Government showing the Council's good progress in meeting Scotland's Climate Change Declaration in April 2013.



Photo by Northern Constabulary

Customer Service Centre

Ionad Seirbheis Luchd-ceannaich

General Enquiries: **01349 886606**

Email: **customer.service@highland.gov.uk**

For information about your local Service Point please visit our website:
www.highland.gov.uk/servicepoints

Out of Hours (emergency only)

Roads and Street Lighting **01349 886601**

Health and Social Care **0845 601 4813**

Housing **0845 700 2005**

Service Centre Festive Opening Hours 2013/14

DECEMBER 2013	Lines Open	Lines Close
Tuesday 24	8am	4pm
Wednesday 25	Closed	Closed
Thursday 26	Closed	Closed
Friday 27	9am	4pm
Saturday 28	Closed	Closed
Sunday 29	Closed	Closed
Monday 30	9am	4pm
Tuesday 31	9am	4pm
JANUARY 2014		
Wednesday 1	Closed	Closed
Thursday 2	Closed	Closed

**Back to normal hours Friday 3 January,
8am - 6pm Monday to Friday,
9am - noon on a Saturday. ■**

Citizens Advice Bureaux

Caithness: 01847 894243
or 01955 605989

**Inverness, Badenoch &
Strathspey:** 08444 994111

Lochaber: 01397 705311

Nairn: 01667 456677

Ross & Cromarty: 01349 883333

Skye & Lochalsh: 01478 612032

East Sutherland: 01408 633000

North West Sutherland: 01971 521730

These agencies offer a range of advice including welfare benefits, money advice, housing and employment.

Business Gateway

Telephone: **0845 6096611** or **01463 897843**

Website: **www.bgateway.com**

Address: **81 Castle Street Inverness IV2 3EA**

Our network of Service Points and our Customer Services Centre are your first points of contact with The Highland Council.

Our Customer Services Centre at Alness deals with all general enquiries from the public. The telephone number is 01349 886606.

**The Centre operates:
8am - 6pm Monday to Friday,
9am - noon on a Saturday**

At our Service Points our friendly, experienced staff are there to help you with any council enquiry and provide access to a wide range of services. If we cannot help, we will arrange for a specialist to deal with your enquiry.

The team was recently recognised with the Customer Service Excellence award. ■



Photo by Ewen Weatherspoon

HI-Scot Credit Union

Website: **www.hi-scot.com**

Telephone: **01851 701865**

Email: **info@hi-scot.com**

SAVE, BORROW, PLAN FOR TOMORROW

**HI-Scot
CREDIT
UNION**



**AONADH
CREIDEAS
HI-Scot**

The Highland Council Money Advice

Telephone: **0800 090 1004**

Email: **money.advice@highland.gov.uk**

The Highland Council Income Maximisation (Benefits)

Telephone: **0800 090 1004**

Email: **income.maximisation@highland.gov.uk**

Find out about your entitlement by following this link: **www.highland.gov.uk/benefits**

Housing Advice

Shelter: **0808 8004444**

www.scotland.shelter.org.uk

Energy Advice

www.changeworks.org.uk

Freephone: **0808 808 2282**

Email: **ask@changeworks.org.uk**

National Debtline

0808 808 4000

Citizens Advice Consumer Service

www.citizensadvise.org.uk

Telephone: **08454 040506**

Emotional Support

Breathing Space: **0800 838587**

www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk

Samaritans: **08457 909090**

www.samaritans.org

Financial Report 2012/13

Aithisg an Ionmhais 2012/13

The Highland Council prepares a "Statement of Accounts" in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards. The figures presented in this summary have been extracted from the 2012/13 Statement of Accounts. The Council is pleased to confirm that an unqualified audit opinion has been received for the Statement of Accounts for 2012/13 which is deemed by the Accounts Commission to provide a true and fair view of the financial position of the Council.

Council Tax collected exceeded budget by £0.9m and after transfers to reserves and ▶

other adjustments £5.5m was added to General Fund Balances.

The reserves position is shown below the Income and Expenditure Account. Of the £37.9m available in the General Fund, the Council has earmarked £19.7m for specific purposes leaving £18.2m to deal with unexpected events. In addition, Capital, Renewal and Repair and Insurance Fund balances stand at £35.2m.

General Fund capital expenditure for the year was under budget by £4.1m due mainly to slippage in some projects. Where projects ▶

have been affected by slippage, they will be progressed in future years in accordance with council priorities. Housing Revenue Account capital expenditure was over budget by £5.4m due to accelerated spend.

The Council's 2012/13 Statement of Accounts is available at:

[www.highland.gov.uk/
accountingandbudgeting](http://www.highland.gov.uk/accountingandbudgeting) or by request from:
The Director of Finance,
Glenurquhart Road,
Inverness, IV3 5NX
Telephone: **01463 702302** ■

Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended 31 March 2013

Expenditure on Council Services

	2012/13 £m	2011/12 £m
Council Houses	46.7	46.6
Other Housing and Property Services	11.6	9.0
Education, Culture and Sport	235.7	235.1
Planning, Development and Tourism	7.8	8.8
Transport, Environmental and Community	64.8	64.6
Health and Social Care	134.9	135.3
Chief Executive's Office	24.3	27.1
Finance Services	12.0	6.9
Police Requisitions	15.6	18.9
Fire Requisitions	15.6	15.8
Valuation Services	2.4	2.3
HITRANS	0.1	0.1
Provision for commitments	0.1	0.6
Transfers to reserves	0.1	3.3
Financing costs	51.9	50.3
Net Cost of Services	623.6	624.7

Income

	2012/13 £m	2011/12 £m
Government Grants	364.9	375.3
Business Rates	108.1	94.8
Council Tax	110.7	110.1
House Rents	45.4	45.4
Total Income	629.1	625.6
Net surplus for the year	5.5	0.9
Revenue reserves at 1 April 2012	39.2	38.3
Revenue reserves at 31 March 2013	44.7	39.2
General Fund	37.9	32.4
Housing Revenue Account	6.8	6.8
Total Revenue Reserves	44.7	39.2

Capital Expenditure

	2012/13 £m	2011/12 £m
Council Houses	32.9	23.6
Other Housing Services	8.2	2.6
Education, Culture and Sport	24.8	26.7
Planning, Development and Tourism	0.1	0.8
Transport, Environment and Community	26.2	24.0
Social Work	2.6	1.7
Strategic Property Management	7.0	5.8
Corporate Projects	7.1	10.8
Total Gross Expenditure	108.9	96.0

Statistics

	2012/13	2011/12
Population (mid-year estimate)	232,910	222,370
Council employees (full time equivalents)	7,924	8,674
Council Tax level at Band D	£1,163	£1,163
Council Tax Band D equivalents	91,744	90,882
Council Tax collection rate (in year)	95.6%	95.5%
Business Properties	17,179	16,835
Business Rate collection rate (in year)	97.5%	97.5%
Council Houses	13,534	13,511
Average Council house weekly rent	£63.60	£62.25

Paying Your Council Tax

Help Us to Help You - Why not join the 76,089 people (67%) who already pay their Council Tax by Direct Debit. You can choose from a number of payment options, whichever suits you best. If you choose to pay by Direct Debit you will be helping us to reduce our administration costs.

If you choose a payment method other than Direct Debit, your instalments will always be due on or before the 1st of the month.

For more information please contact our:

Operations TEAM, The Highland Council,
PO Box 5650, Inverness IV3 5YX

or call FREEPHONE 0800 393 811

Council Tax Services Telephone Numbers

- For all **Council Tax, Council Tax Benefit** and **Housing Benefit** enquiries FREEPHONE 0800 393811.
- For all **Council Tax Debit/Credit Card Payments** Local 0845 6024232
- **Fraud Hotline** FREEPHONE 0800 854183
- For all **Council Tax Valuations, Rating Valuation** and **Electoral Registration** enquiries FREEPHONE 0800 393783

Council Tax Collection

Despite the economic situation, The Highland Council achieved an in-year Council Tax collection rate of 95.6% in 2012/13. The Council has achieved an overall collection rate of 97.8% since Council Tax began in 1993/94. Public satisfaction with the arrangements for the payment of Council Tax is ranked highly.

Get Ready For Winter

Bi Deiseil airson a' Gheamhraidh



Photo by Ewen Weatherspoon

One of the key messages is for motorists to change their driving behaviour to take account of winter conditions. You should be aware of the dangers of sudden changes in weather and the hidden dangers of black ice.

You should ensure your tyres have sufficient tread, that your screen wash is topped up and that your battery is in full working order.

Pedestrians are urged to wear appropriate footwear and consider the purchase of snow/ice grips which are attached to your footwear to reduce the risk of falling.

You should also listen to radio, watch TV broadcasts and keep up with the latest information running on Police Scotland's Twitter and Facebook pages:

Trunk Road Maintenance

For information on: A82 - A828 - A830 - A835 - A86 - A87 - A828 - A830 - A835 - A887 - A889 - A9 - A95 - A96 - A99

Call Bear Scotland: 0800 028 1414

The Highland Council

Roads, Flooding & Street Lighting
(Mon - Fri: 8am - 5pm & Sat: 9am - noon)
01349 886601

Roads, Flooding & Street Lighting
(Out of hours emergency only)
01349 886690

Health and Social Care
(Out of hours emergency only)
0845 601 4813

Housing
(Out of hours emergency only)
0845 700 2005

Other Handy Numbers

NHS 24 (Out of hours medical advice/GP service) 08454 242424

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (24 hours)
01463 240999

Police Scotland (24 hours)
101 for all services

Scottish Water (24 hours)
0845 601 8855

Scottish & Southern Electric Freephone
0800 300 999

Gas Freephone
0800 111 999

Floodline
0845 988 1188

www.twitter.com/northernPolice

www.facebook.com/PoliceScotland

www.trafficscotland.org is full of up to date roads information.

You can also follow Traffic Scotland on twitter at www.twitter.com/trafficscotland ■

Winter Salt Supplies

We allocate £5.6 million each year to winter maintenance. £1.4 million is spent on winter salt supplies to treat our road network. We used 64,000 tonnes of salt last winter and at the start of this winter our stock stood at 62,000 tonnes.

Our biggest facility is at Inverness Harbour, where up to 18,000 tonnes are stored under cover.

We have a fleet of 115 gritters and 51 pavement gritters. ■

Clearing Paths and Driveways

Being a good neighbour and clearing paths of ice and snow is the kind of practical step that most of us can take during cold weather. In fact, a helping hand with this can make all the difference for people who may be unable to clear their own paths, or who need to use local paths to access services. Salt supplies are provided in bins in many local communities for your use. ■

Council Gritting Policy

Responsibility for snow clearing on trunk roads - such as the A9, A82 and the A96 - lies with BEAR Scotland (0800 028 1414). The Council is responsible for maintaining 4,200 miles of the regional road network.

Roads

Primary Routes

These are strategic roads including main routes in urban areas and will be serviced between:

6am to 9pm, Monday to Saturday

Secondary Routes

Roads connecting communities to the primary network including services and school bus routes will be serviced between:

6am to 6pm, Monday to Saturday

Other Routes

Minor rural roads and local access roads including residential roads in urban areas will be serviced after primary and secondary routes are completed and as resources permit.

Sunday, Christmas Day & New Year's Day

For primary routes, service bus routes and main urban streets only. Service will be provided between **7am to 9pm**.

Bus Routes

Gritting will not necessarily be completed before buses start their journey.

Footways

Like roads, footways have been prioritised and service will be provided:

Monday - Saturday between 6am - 6pm.

On **Sundays and Public Holidays**, the service period will be between:

7am - noon on primary routes only.

Primary Footways

Main urban shopping centres.

Secondary Footways

Main urban footways serving schools, hospitals and minor shopping areas.

Other Footways

Other urban footways as resources permit.

There will be no footway treatment on Christmas Day or New Year's Day.

www.highland.gov.uk/gritting ■



Photo by The Highland Council