

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Planning, Development and Infrastructure Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday, 2 November 2016 at 10.30 am.

### **Present:**

Mrs H Carmichael	Mrs I McCallum
Dr I Cockburn	Mrs M Paterson (Substitute)
Mr G Farlow	Mr T Prag
Mr C Fraser (Substitute)	Mr M Reiss
Mr J Gordon	Mr I Renwick
Mr J Gray	Mr G Rimell
Mr M Green	Mr R Saxon
Mr R Greene	Dr A Sinclair
Mr B Lobban	Mr J Stone (Substitute)
Mr D Mackay (Substitute)	Mr H Wood
Mr T MacLennan	

### **Non-Members also present:**

Mr R Balfour	Mr R Laird
Mr A Baxter	Mr D Millar
Mrs I Campbell	

### **Officials in attendance:**

Mr S Black, Director of Development and Infrastructure  
Mr M MacLeod, Head of Planning and Building Standards  
Mr C Howell, Head of Infrastructure  
Mr A McCann, Economy and Regeneration Manager  
Mr A Maguire, Head of Development and Regeneration  
Mr R Gerring, Transport Planning Manager  
Mr M Mitchell, Service Finance Manager  
Ms N Wallace, Environment Manager  
Mr J Robertson, Programme Manager City Region Deal  
Mr C Simpson, Principal Tourism and Film Officer  
Ms A Hackett, Principal Projects Officer  
Mr K MacInnes, Principal Economy Officer  
Mr K Masson, Climate Change Officer  
Ms H De Haas, Climate Change Coordinator  
Ms L MacKellaich, Road Safety Officer  
Mr A Fraser, Engineer  
Mrs L Dunn, Principal Administrator  
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant  
Mr S Taylor, Administrative Assistant

### **Also in attendance:**

Mr E Sinclair, Programme Manager, Caithness and North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership (Item 3)

An asterisk in the margin denotes a recommendation to the Council. All decisions with no marking in the margin are delegated to the Committee.

## Dr A Sinclair in the Chair

### Business

#### 1. Apologies for Absence Liesgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mrs C Caddick, Mr B Clark, Mr J Crawford, Mr M Finlayson and Mr M Rattray

#### 2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

The Committee **NOTED** the following declarations of interest:-

- Item 3 – Mr G Farlow and Mr R Saxon (both non-financial)
- Item 6 – Mr A Baxter (non-financial)
- Item 8 – Mr G Farlow (financial) and Dr A Sinclair (non-financial)
- Item 10 – Mr T Prag and Dr A Sinclair (both non-financial)
- Item 11 – Mr R Saxon (non-financial)
- Item 14 – Dr A Sinclair (non-financial)
- Item 17 – Mr R Greene (non-financial)

At this point in the meeting, the Committee **AGREED** to take the additional item, agreed at the meeting of the Highland Council on 27 October 2016, after item 3 on the agenda.

#### 3. Presentation – Caithness and North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership Taisbeanadh – Com-pàirteachas Ath-nuadhachaidh Ghallaibh agus Chataibh a Tuath

##### Declarations of Interest

**Mr G Farlow and Mr R Saxon declared non-financial interests in this item as the North, West and Central Sutherland Ward representative and as a Member, respectively, of the Caithness and North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership Advisory Board, but having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that their interest did not preclude them from taking part in the discussion.**

A presentation was given by Mr Eann Sinclair, Programme Manager, Caithness and North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership (CNSRP) which provided an update on progress with the programme of activities to support the diversification of the Caithness & North Sutherland economy. He advised that the CNSRP programme had focused on a number of areas of job potential, including energy, financial and business services and tourism, food and drink and highlighted that over 1200 full-time equivalent jobs had been created or retained since 2008. He drew attention to the 2014-17 programme target of creating or retaining between 359 and 479 full-time equivalent jobs in the area and advised that the programme was on course to meet this target by the end of the current financial year. Mr Sinclair outlined the key findings of a recent study into the socio-economic impacts of decommissioning of Dounreay and the work CNSRP had taken to address this.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- The CNSRP had set a good example of partnership working between agencies and organisations;
- Officials from the oil and nuclear decommissioning industries regularly used Wick Airport, and it was noted that there had been recent investment by the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority;
- The numerous jobs created in North Sutherland through onshore windfarms and transmissions schemes was highlighted;
- An increase in specialist technology being produced in Caithness had resulted in a growing confidence and appetite for business start-ups in the area;
- Following comment that renewable energy was providing many jobs in the area, a request was made for a breakdown in the number of local based jobs compared to the number of incoming jobs;
- A reduction in dependency on Dounreay as a major employer in the Caithness area from 15% to 10% was welcomed;
- The awarding of a contract to JGC Welding in relation to the Pentland Firth renewable energy project was highlighted;
- In highlighting the increased development of offshore renewable energy in Caithness and North Sutherland, emphasis was made on the importance of creating jobs through this sector of industry to help protect the economic wellbeing of the area; and
- A request was made for information on the number of employees resulting from the MeyGen project in the Pentland Firth and the location of the turbine maintenance base. It was explained that whilst a maintenance base had not yet been identified, it was the aspiration of the CNSRP to attract the operation and maintenance base to the north and that currently it was unknown how many jobs would be associated with this project.

The Chair having thanked Mr Sinclair for his attendance at the meeting and his presentation, the Committee then **NOTED** the presentation.

#### **Good News:**

At this point in the meeting, the Chair, on behalf of the Committee, congratulated the Director of Development and Infrastructure on his recent award at the SCDI Highlands and Islands Business Excellence Awards for Outstanding Business Ambassador.

The Chair also highlighted that three teams within the Development and Infrastructure Service had been nominated at the annual Highland Council Quality Awards:-

- Carbon CLEVER Community Grant Fund
- Chanonry Point Environmental Improvements
- Supporting Highland's Destination Organisations

#### **Additional Item:**

##### **Scottish Government Enterprise and Skills Review**

There had been circulated Report No PDI/77/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which advised Members of outcomes of Phase 1 of the Scottish Government's Enterprise and Skills Review and highlighted the proposals for implementation in phase 2.

Prior to discussion, the Chair suggested that an additional recommendation be included to reflect the Council's views regarding the importance of Highland and Islands Enterprise (HIE) to the Highlands and ensuring the retention of the strong link with HIE locally.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- It was an advantage to have the Board of HIE based locally and concern was expressed that the proposed changes would result in both a substantial change in the governance of HIE and a reduction of the Highland's voice nationally;
- The Council's decision at its meeting on 27 October 2016 was to express its concern to Ministers at the potential removal of a local board and that this should be included as a recommendation;
- Whilst some of the Scottish Government's proposals were welcomed, it was emphasised that partnership working, particularly in local communities, would be difficult to attain without having a local autonomous body to deal with directly;
- Having one strategic board would not necessarily ensure greater strength in governance and concern was expressed that this could dilute the effectiveness of HIE;
- The Highlands and Islands required a board which could reflect the distinctiveness of the area and respond to the particular set of circumstances prevalent locally;
- Joint working between HIE project officers for Strengthening communities and fragile areas and Ward Managers was welcomed;
- Emphasis was made on the potential to attract large international companies into the Highlands both through HIE and the Scottish Government;
- The importance of continued lobbying nationally to ensure the retention of local connection was emphasised; and
- The Council's initial response to the consultation had emphasised the importance of partnership working between the Council and HIE and that this would be difficult to achieve without a local board.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the outcomes of Phase 1 of the Scottish Government's Enterprise and Skills Review, the proposals for implementation in phase 2 and considered the implications for the Highlands;
- ii. **AGREED** the view of the Full Council as agreed at its meeting on 27 October 2016 that the potential loss of an autonomous decision making local board was a serious concern be endorsed; and
- iii. **AGREED** that the Leader of the Council and the Chair of the Planning, Development and Infrastructure Committee write to Fergus Ewing, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity expressing that concern and take any other steps as necessary over the coming months to ensure Highlands and Islands Enterprise remained accountable to a local Board.

#### **4. Revenue Budget Monitoring to 30 September 2016 Sgrùdadh Buidseat Teachd-a-steach gu 30 Sultain 2016**

There had been circulated Report No PDI/57/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which provided information on the revenue monitoring position for the Planning and Development Service for the period to 30 September 2016.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- Concern was expressed that some previously agreed budget savings might not be achieved in the way they were originally intended and that this could have implications when identifying future savings within the Service budget;
- Public Local Inquiries (PLIs) should not be included as part of the revenue budget and an alternative source of budgeting for this should be investigated;
- In acknowledging the challenges faced by the Service in delivering a balanced budget, it was highlighted that The Council had previously offered to find savings from elsewhere within its budget in the event of an overspend in PLIs; and
- Concern was expressed that the inclusion of PLIs within the Development and Infrastructure Service's budget could interfere with the planning process as a decision taken by Members at Planning Committee meetings could result in a PLI being requested, thereby creating an expenditure to the Service.

The Committee **APPROVED** the report and the attached monitoring statements which showed the revenue position for the period 1 April 2016 to 30 September 2016, and the actions which had been put in place to manage the budget over the remainder of the financial year.

#### **5. Capital Expenditure Monitoring to 30 September 2016 Sgrùdadh Caiteachais Calpa gu 30 Sultain 2016**

There had been circulated Report No PDI/58/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which sought approval of the capital expenditure monitoring position for the period from 1 April 2016 to 30 September 2016, including the redevelopment of the Fort William Primary School and approval of a new route by-passing the existing White Bridge.

In speaking to the report, the Head of Infrastructure presented a flyover video of drone footage of construction work on the Inverness West Link and provided an update on individual projects within the capital expenditure budget. The Director of Development and Infrastructure then provided a short presentation of images from the Kingussie Office Rationalisation which was commended by Members.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- The importance of White Bridge to Cawdor, Nairnshire and the wider A96 infrastructure was emphasised and whilst acknowledging that Option 2 was not the cheapest for the new route alignment, support was expressed for the recommendation. The work undertaken by the Head of Infrastructure and his team was commended by Members;
- Following comment that it was unclear why Option 2A had not been recommended for approval, it was explained that the Council's benchmark for developing a road was the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges

(DMRB) and that due to engineering issues, departures from standard within the DMRB were required when assessing the construction of the proposed route;

- The completion of construction works on the Kingussie Office was commended;
- The inclusion of drone footage of the Inverness West Link construction work on the Council's website was welcomed and the importance of keeping the public informed of the work being undertaken on the project was emphasised;
- With regard to the suggestion in the report of a shared road and rail space as an option for the A890 Stromeferry Bypass, there was potential to increase passenger numbers and attract tourists on this section of the railway due to the specialist train/tram rolling stock which would be required to operate it;
- Disappointment was expressed at the length of time that had been taken with the STAG appraisal process in relation to the A890 Stromeferry Bypass;
- With regard to the Portree Link Road, information requested on the timescale expected for commencement and completion of the project would be provided to the Local Member following the meeting;
- In welcoming progress with the Kinnairdie Link Road, reassurance was sought, and received that consultation with the residents in Burns Crescent would take place to address concerns regarding flooding in the area;
- The progression of works with the Muir of Ord Railway Bridge was welcomed, particularly as the expected completion date was currently on time;
- Concern was expressed regarding debris which had been left behind following recent work on the Cromarty Bridge and a number of other issues including the closure of a layby;
- With regard to the Laxford Bridge North Extension, concern was expressed that the alignment of the dual track roads at both ends of the single track bridge was confusing to approaching drivers and a request was made that this concern be investigated. In addition, it was highlighted that the solar panel speed limit sign was not working and a request was made for it to be repaired;
- Concern was expressed regarding the current condition of the B876 Killimster Moss Road; and
- With regard to the Inverness West Link flyover video, there was an opportunity to undertake a similar exercise with the Inverness "East Link" project to enable a better understanding of the key issues and challenges faced.

The Committee **APPROVED**:-

- i. the capital expenditure monitoring position for the period 1 April 2016 to 30 September 2016;
- ii. the inclusion of the redevelopment of the Fort William Primary School, to be funded from the Property Rationalisation line of the capital programme, and to be included in the Council's capital programme review currently underway; and
- iii. Option 2 for a new route by-passing the existing White Bridge.

## 6. Town and Countryside Capital Programme Prògram Calpa Baile agus Dùthcha

### Declaration of Interest

**Mr A Baxter declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Board Member of Nevis Partnership but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude him from taking part in the discussion.**

There had been circulated Report No PDI/59/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which provided an update on capital allocations within the Town and Countryside Capital Programme to 2024/25. These projects were recommended in support of the Council's 'Highland First' priorities including, in particular, projects with the potential for new ways of working with communities.

Prior to discussion, the Principal Projects Officer gave a short presentation which provided visualisations of completed and future projects within the Town and Countryside Capital Programme. The Committee welcomed the visualisations provided in relation to each project.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- The retention and enhancement of the Programme was emphasised, and represented an opportunity for the Council to work in partnership with communities to deliver modest projects of local importance;
- The Scottish Scenic Routes Project was highlighted as a potential source of funding;
- It was anticipated that a number of projects would be considered for funding from the Nairn £100,000 budget allocation in 2017 and the opportunity for the chair of the Nairn BID Steering Group to discuss with officers how to progress these was suggested;
- Progress with the upgrade of Coghill Bridge, Wick was welcomed and a request was made for a presentation to be made to the Caithness Committee on this project;
- In welcoming the proposed enhancements to the Pictish Trail, the view was expressed that signage on this route was slightly cryptic and that this could be improved by linking it into the North Coast 500;
- Improvements to the John o' Groats Trail had been made through the effort of volunteers and it was suggested that this walking route be considered for funding under the Long Distance Routes allocation;
- The breadth of projects across the Highlands which had been funded through the Programme was acknowledged and welcomed;
- In welcoming projects within Lochaber, it was suggested that more should be done to promote the Programme and the opportunity available for communities to seek funding for projects;
- The provision of tourist facilities through the development of a number of high quality projects had made a difference within small communities and it was suggested that any underspend in capital funding should be diverted in the Programme;
- In highlighting the involvement of the community in the Ballachulish Inclined Plane project, an ongoing issue with the finish of the slate arch on this project was raised. In response, Members were advised that discussion had taken place with conservation architects and engineers and that

feedback had been provided to the community; however, further discussions could take place to alleviate any ongoing concerns; and

- The scope of some of these projects went beyond local communities, such as the Wester Ross Visitor Hubs which had received expressions of interest from Europe.

The Committee **NOTED** the contents of the report and **AGREED** the proposed project allocations, subject to ongoing affordability within the Corporate Capital programme.

## **7. Quarter 2 Performance Review Ath-bhreithneachadh Dèanadais Cairteil 2**

There had been circulated Report No PDI/60/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which advised of the delivery of the Development Management, Building Standards, and Development Plan services for the second Quarter of 2016/2017.

The Committee **NOTED** the performance updates across the Development Management, Building Standards and Development Plans teams.

## **8. Housing Development Investment Iomairtean Leasachaidh Taigheadais**

### **Declarations of Interest**

**Dr A Sinclair declared a non-financial interest in this item as a member of both the Lochalsh and Skye Housing Association and the Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that her interest did not preclude her from taking part in the discussion.**

**Mr G Farlow declared a financial interest in this item as a Council house tenant but, in terms of the dispensation granted by the Standards Commission, remained to participate in the discussion.**

There had been circulated Report No PDI/61/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure seeking approval of the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) which set out proposals for affordable housing investment during 2017–2022. The report also sought approval of grant assistance in support of affordable housing projects and for the purchase of land in support of housing development. Approval was also sought for Landbank funding to support further projects within the National Housing Trust initiative.

The proposals contained within the report would assist in the meeting of the Council's overall affordable housing target of 1,700 new affordable houses by 2017.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- With reference to the Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan (CaSPlan) under the section on strengthening and supporting communities, the importance of providing an indication to people going through education and then into employment that there would be somewhere for them to rent, particularly in remote and rural areas, was emphasised;



- In highlighting the low demand for new social housing in Caithness, a request was made for further information on what the investment planning outlined in Appendix 2 to the report entailed;
- Concern was expressed that businesses in Badenoch and Strathspey were unable to expand due to the unavailability of housing in the area;
- Additional funding which had been afforded to the Glenurquhart Care was welcomed;
- Whilst welcoming Nairn as among the highest priority locations in the Council's Local Housing Strategy (LHS), concern was expressed at a potential deficit in new housing in the event that Nairn South was not confirmed. Reassurance was provided that the figure of 120 contained within Appendix 2 to the report which had yet to be confirmed was not specifically for Nairn South and that a number of developments within the Nairn area had been identified. Local Members would be consulted on the local plan to assist in identifying potential opportunities to meet demand;
- In highlighting the potential for more housing to be built in the Highlands, a request was made for the Chair to write to the UK Government regarding the abolition of the Council's housing debt;
- The developments at Tweeddale and the former Bellhaven Ward in Fort William were welcomed; and
- Concern was expressed regarding areas with aging populations and decreasing school rolls being explored for potential housing.

The Committee:-

- APPROVED** the Strategic Housing Investment Plan as submitted to the Scottish Government in draft form, as included within Appendix 1 to the report;
- NOTED** the planned investment programme as included within Appendix 2 to the report;
- AGREED** that the Council enter into a Design and Build contract, required to secure the affordable housing in Kiltarlity, detailed within section 3 of the report, and that the land required for the 18 homes within the contract together with additional development land be purchased, on terms and conditions to be agreed by the Director of Development and Infrastructure;
- AGREED** that a grant of £120,000 be offered to the Glenurquhart Care Project, to support the development of 12 new houses for rent in Drumnadrochit, utilising funding available within the Landbank Fund and on terms and conditions to be agreed by the Director of Development and Infrastructure; and
- AGREED** that a loan of up to £725,000 be offered to the Highland Housing Alliance, to support housing projects in Munlochy and Inverness utilising funding available within the Landbank Fund, subject to Resources Committee approval for the use of prudential borrowing for the same projects, and on terms and conditions to be agreed by the Director of Development and Infrastructure.

## 9. Inverness and Highland City/Region Deal Cùmhnant Baile/Roinne Inbhir Nis agus na Gàidhealtachd

There had been circulated Report No PDI/62/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which provided an update on the Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal, set out the expected high level benefits of the Deal, gave an update on the status of the component projects and explained the next steps.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- A request was made by the Chair that Appendix 2 to the report be circulated to all Members of the Council. A further request was made for Appendix 2 to be included on the Council's dedicated web page on the City-Region Deal;
- In emphasising the importance to Members of regular updates regarding the Deal, it was highlighted that the next meeting of the Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal Scrutiny Board would take place in December 2016;
- Concern was expressed regarding the communication strategy and that there had been a misconception within the public over the Council's ability to spend money from the Deal;
- It was emphasised that funding of projects was not just an extension of the Council's capital budget and that the Deal was a three-way commitment from the Council, UK Government and the Scottish Government;
- Frustration was expressed by Members that the Deal had only focused publicly on the roads and transport infrastructure around Inverness and that more emphasis should be made on the projects that would bring benefits to the whole of the Highlands;
- It was emphasised that the Deal was earmarked funding for specific projects and was not being used to support some specific infrastructure projects which had been erroneously reported in the press;
- Concern was expressed at the lack of detail currently available regarding the Deal, in particular the potential benefits to areas out with Inverness City, and a request was made for improvements to the Council's communication regarding this;
- In welcoming the proposals for the Assisted Living Scheme, it was suggested that an alternative to building new properties in areas with existing sheltered housing would be to retrofit these with the latest IT healthcare; and
- The provision of more information on what the likely business cases to be put forward for individual projects, such as the Newton Rooms and WiFi in main towns in Highland, would help alleviate the concerns raised by Members and communities.

The Committee **NOTED** the report and **AGREED** that:-

- i. communication be improved to ensure Members were kept fully informed of progress, particularly in respect of pan Highland projects; and
- ii. a copy of Appendix 2 to be circulated to all Members and added to the Council's dedicated web page on the City-Region Deal.

At this point the meeting adjourned for lunch at 1.00 pm and the meeting resumed at 1.45 p.m.

## 10. Business Gateway Leasachadh Gnothachais

### Declarations of Interest

**As Directors of the Board of Highland Opportunity Ltd and the Board of Highland Opportunity (Investments) Ltd, Mr T Prag and Dr A Sinclair each declared a non-financial interest in this item but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, each concluded that their interest did not preclude them from taking part in the discussion.**

There had been circulated Report No PDI/63/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which gave an update on the Business Gateway contract performance for Quarter 2, 2016/17.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- It was highlighted that all 29 businesses that applied for grant support from the Employment Grant Scheme had received offers but not all of them had taken up the grant;
- A request was made for information on whether performance had been consistent across the whole of the Highlands and if there were any particularly weak or strong areas. It was highlighted that some weaker areas required a more concentrated focus and that the assistance available to small business was being promoted through marketing and by attending events such as the Cairngorm Business Partnership Conference;
- The delivery of the Business Gateway service and the safeguarding of the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) for the next two years was welcomed;
- It was suggested that the title of the report should be changed to reflect the breadth of business support provided by the Council;
- The handling of the transfer from Highland Opportunity Limited (HOL) into the Council by staff was commended by the Chair; and
- In highlighting a recent report to local committees on business development which had raised a number of queries specifically relating to employability, it was suggested that a briefing be held following a future meeting of the Committee.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the report and the Heads of Agreement reached with the Scottish Enterprise to fund the Enterprise Europe Network team until December 2018; and
- ii. **AGREED** that a briefing on Employability be held following a future meeting of the Committee

## 11. Highland Council Engagement with European Networks Conaltradh Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd le Lìonraidhean Eòrpach

### Declaration of Interest

**Mr R Saxon declared a non-financial interest in this item as a member of the Highland LEADER Local Action Group for Caithness but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude him from taking part in the discussion.**

There had been circulated Report No PDI/64/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which gave an update with the current situation regarding European policy work and European funding following on from the UK referendum decision to leave the European Union, and made recommendations on an approach to future policy development.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- Concern was expressed regarding the future of LEADER funding and the need for clarity over the level of guarantee currently afforded to projects prior to letters of offer being issued;
- The difficulty for projects claiming LEADER funding was that money had to be sourced in advance in order to proceed and clarity was sought on how the uncertainty over funding would affect projects in Highland;
- The importance of rebuilding confidence and providing reassurance to people to continue to apply for funding was emphasised;
- The recruitment of a dedicated Highlands and Islands European Partnership (HIEP) officer was welcomed;
- The breadth of knowledge and expertise offered by having a close relationship with Europe was emphasised; and
- A request was made that for greater emphasis on the importance of Europe to the Highlands to be included in Committee reporting.

The Committee **NOTED** the report and **APPROVED** the approach to influencing future policy development both individually and collectively with the Highlands and Islands European Partnership as described in section 4 of the report.

## 12. Review of Highland Council's Tourism Services Ath-sgrùdadh air Seirbheisean Turasachd Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd

There had been circulated Report No PDI/65/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which presented the findings of the review of the Council's Tourism Services and sought approval of the recommendations of the review.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- The figures contained within the report emphasised the importance of tourism to the economy of the Highlands;
- In highlighting a number of visitor attractions which had proved popular during the summer, it was suggested that tourism had continued to grow in the Highlands;
- The effect that potential budget cuts could have on tourism services such as toilets, car parking and harbour repairs were highlighted

- Whilst highlighting the success of Aviemore as a tourist destination, concern was expressed regarding the smaller areas within Badenoch and Strathspey which had struggled economically and it was suggested that utilisation of new junctions from the A9 dualling project could be beneficial in attracting visitors into small communities instead of providing restroom services on the road;
- The growing market for accessible accommodation for carers within tourism was highlighted;
- The importance of having a much more holistic approach to the tourism market was emphasised;
- Given the importance of tourism to the Council, it was suggested that tourism and the economy be included as an implication within Committee reports;
- The potential to attract “yachties” to sail around the Highlands through marketing of a marine equivalent to the North Coast 500 was suggested;
- The Nairn Business Improvement District (BID) was highlighted and Members looked forward to working closely with the Council’s tourism team;
- The issues raised in the report covered a number of departments and the opportunity to discuss this at full Council was raised, in particular, a champion of tourism;
- Whilst there were facilities for campervans to park throughout the Highlands, concern was expressed that many drivers wanted to park in a layby near an iconic location such as Loch Lochy and that in a number of circumstances had left rubbish and caused sanitation issues near lochs. It was later suggested that discussion be held with Scottish Water to address these concerns;
- A request was made for Members of the Community Services Committee to discuss the issues raised in the report, such as toilets and car parking, which fell under the remit of Community Services. During further discussion, it was highlighted that a report would be brought to Community Services Committee in February 2017 and would include information on toilet facilities;
- In highlighting a number of film projects which had taken place on Skye, concern was expressed that the infrastructure on the island was unable to cope with the increased level of tourism arising from this exposure and it was suggested that a fresh look at a strategy for tourism in Skye was required. It was highlighted that communities wanted to be part of the solution to the issues raised from the increased tourism and the Council was commended for its work with local communities to address these concerns;
- The growth of the cruise liner industry across the world was highlighted and there was increasing demand for cruise liners which could fit through intricate coast lines. Therefore consideration should be given to looking at pontoons and improvements to facilities in order to supplement that demand. It was highlighted that the Harbours Management Board was currently undertaking a review of marine tourism and that in addition to the well-established cruise liner ports, the smaller harbour ports capable of taking in smaller vessels were being considered for marine tourism; and
- The enormous financial benefit arising from the relatively low cost of creating a marketing strategy for the North Coast 500 was praised and it was suggested that there was scope for this to be replicated on the West Coast.

The Committee **NOTED** the findings of the review of the Highland Council's tourism services and **APPROVED** the recommendations made and subsequent delivery of these as outlined in section 2.2 of the report.

### 13. Climate Change Atharrachadh Aimsir

#### i. Annual Progress Report on the Carbon Management Plan 2015/16 Aithisg Adhartais Bhliadhnail mun Phlana Rianachd Càrboin

There had been circulated Report No PDI/66/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which reviewed the Council's performance in meeting the targets outlined in the Carbon Management Plan (CMP) for 2015/16.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- Reference was made to the fact that the top 10 Energy Consuming Buildings used 24% of Highland Council's total energy. Projects and strategies were to be developed to reduce energy consumption in these buildings;
- It was noted that energy use in Public Private Partnerships (PPP) properties had increased by 4% in 2015/16. The Council seemed to have little control of energy consumption in these properties and owners of PPP properties should be encouraged to introduce measures to reduce energy consumption;
- An unintended consequence of the Voluntary Severance Scheme would be a positive impact of a reduction in energy usage and carbon emissions impact through less travel by staff;
- It was noted that work was underway to refresh, re-engage and retrain the Green Ambassador Network. It was suggested that in order to provide a consistent message across the whole organisation, that measures to reduce carbon emissions and energy consumption should be communicated to schools and imbedded in the school curriculum.

The Committee **NOTED** that remedial action to improve performance was currently being refocused on areas where emissions and costs were highest and increasing, in order to meet the 15% reduction target in 2016/17. This meant that:

- a programme of measures, as detailed at para 2.9 of the report, would be rolled out to ensure progress towards meeting targets set out in the CMP being achieved in 2016/17, with targets being re-evaluated to understand whether they were achievable or require revision; and
- acceleration of progress which had already been achieved to reduce staff travel and fleet carbon emissions would continue. Further reductions in staff travel would require additional promotion of video conferencing, and the Climate Change team would work with the Travel Desk to ensure that grey fleet mileage and car hire was minimised.

**ii. Carbon CLEVER Capital Budget  
Cuibhreann Calpa Chàrboin CHIALLAICH**

There had been circulated Report No PDI/67/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which provided details of projects for Members to consider for funding from the Carbon CLEVER capital budget for 2016/17, and set out proposed project funding arrangements and governance going forward.

During discussion, clarification was sought on what the budget for the Accessibility, Signage and 20mph Zones project was intended for. It was advised that this funding would accelerate existing schemes to improve signage and accessibility on Highland cycle routes and would provide funding for schemes in other areas of the Highlands.

The Committee **APPROVED**:-

- i. funding of legacy projects as detailed at paragraph 2.1 of the report;
- ii. capital programme spend breakdown detailed at paragraph 3.3 of the report;
- iii. Carbon CLEVER capital programme application assessment criteria as detailed at Appendix 3 to the report; and
- iv. the delegation of decision making as discussed at paragraph 4.1 of the report.

**iii. Annual Report under Public Sector Climate Change Duties 2015/16  
Aithisg Bhliadhnaid fo Dhleastanasan Atharrachadh Aimsir na Roinne Poblach**

There had been circulated Report No PDI/68/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which presented the Council's first mandatory report under the Public Bodies Climate Change Duties (PBCCD), as required under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009.

During discussion, Members proposed that consideration should be given to:-

- reducing the size of Committee reports for example by using weblinks for Appendices. This would help reduce the Council's Carbon footprint;
- appointing an Energy Champion(s). The Energy Champion(s) would be a Member(s) who had a specific interest in Climate Change and reducing the Council's carbon emissions and who could scrutinise the detailed information contained in Climate Change reports.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED** that the 2015/16 report be submitted as part of the mandatory reporting process under the Public Bodies Climate Change Duties.

#### 14. **Skye Air Services Business Case 2016** **Cùis Gnothachais Sheirbheisean Adhair an Eilein Sgitheanaich 2016**

##### **Declaration of Interest**

**Dr A Sinclair declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Board member of HITRANS but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that her interest did not preclude her from taking part in the discussion.**

There had been circulated Report No PDI/69/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure, which presented a copy of the Final Skye Air Services Business Case 2016 the focus of which was on the way forward, working with partners and tackling some of the key development strategy actions identified within the Business Case Report.

There was a presentation by the Transport Planning Manager which highlighted in particular that Members of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee had supported the draft Business Case report at their meeting held on 3 October 2016 and had requested that details of the wider economic and social benefits of new air services be highlighted in the report to this Committee. If all funding and approvals were received air services from Skye could commence in 2018 and a short term action plan had been drawn up to take the project forward.

In discussion, Members welcomed the report and fully supported air services from Skye, which was great news for the Skye, Raasay, Lochalsh and Wester Ross areas. There was a strong economic case for an air service from Skye which also had wider economic and social benefits and in particular reference was made to the potential benefit from the establishment of additional fire-fighting capabilities based at the operational airport. It was of critical importance to gain support of the project from the Scottish Government and lobbying at the highest level should now proceed. In this respect, the Member of Parliament for the area was fully supportive of the proposals and the Leader of the Council had met recently with the Scottish Government Minister for Transport during which Skye Air Services had formed part of their discussions.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the report and the contents of the Skye Air Services Business Case 2016 Report and:-

- i. **AGREED** support for the re-introduction of scheduled air services to Skye Airport;
- ii. **AGREED** the Scottish Government and its agencies continued to be lobbied; and
- iii. **APPROVED** the proposed short-term development activities contained within Appendix C of the report, through continued collaboration with HITRANS and Highlands & Islands Enterprise, with a budget allocation of up to £30,000.

#### 15. **Consultation on the Future of Forestry in Scotland** **Co-chomhairle mu Àm ri Teachd Choilltearachd ann an Alba**

There had been circulated Report No PDI/70/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which introduced the Scottish Governments 'Future of Forestry in Scotland' Consultation document, highlighted key proposals and provided a copy of the Council's draft response for consideration.



During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- The Headquarters for Forest Enterprise Scotland was in Inverness and Members were keen to see this remain in any future plans for the organisation;
- The Council should look at ways of supporting and improving Forestry in Highland for example through the planning process. Also, if there was Council owned land surplus to requirements, this could be considered for Forestry as a long term investment;
- The Council's response should be strengthened to note the Council's concern of centralising Forestry Commission Scotland's functions into the Scottish Government; and
- consideration should be given to replanting trees close to roads in order to minimise the risk of landslides occurring.

The Committee **APPROVED** the draft response to the Future of Forestry in Scotland Consultation as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, subject to the inclusion of Members comments.

#### **16. Confirmation of the Smithton and Culloden Flood Protection Scheme Sgeama Dion Thuiltean Bhaile a' Ghobhainn agus Chùil Lodair**

There had been circulated Report No PDI/71/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which sought approval to confirm the Smithton/Culloden Flood Protection Scheme (FPS).

In particular it was noted that one objection to the scheme had subsequently been withdrawn following discussion and agreement with officers. The work of officers in dealing with this objection was acknowledged in what was a very worthwhile project which would be welcomed by most people. Also, there had been concern that the scheme would result in the loss of the Culloden Play Park, but in fact, the play park would not be affected by the scheme. While there would be the loss of a football pitch in Culloden Park, this pitch had been most affected by waterlogging and would form part of the Flood Protection Scheme. Two of the football pitches in Culloden Park would be upgraded resulting in an overall increase in playing time on the football pitches in Culloden Park.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** to make its 'preliminary decision' on the Smithton & Culloden Flood Protection Scheme to be to 'confirm the scheme without modification';
- ii. **AGREED** to make its 'final decision' on the Smithton & Culloden Flood Protection Scheme to be to 'confirm the scheme without modification'; and
- iii. **APPROVED** the recommended planning conditions to be applied to the Smithton & Culloden Flood Protection Scheme (set out in Appendix 1 to the report) to be recommended to Scottish Ministers.

## 17. Draft Aquaculture Planning Guidance Dreachd Stiùireadh Dealbhaidh Tuathanais Uisge

### Declaration of Interest

**Mr R Greene declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Trustee of Wester Ross Fisheries Trust but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude him from taking part in the discussion.**

There had been circulated Report No PDI/72/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which outlined the Aquaculture Planning Guidance developed to support the aquaculture and related policies in the current Highland-wide Local Development Plan.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- The quality of the marine environment was crucial to the longevity of our coastal communities and therefore the Aquaculture Planning Guidance was welcomed. The benefits to aquaculture to the Scottish economy were significant and was worth approximately £1.8billion;
- It was noted that there was to be a presumption against open sea fish farms and it was queried how the guidance would affect closed containment fish farming when more of the fish farming industry was undertaking this; and
- It was advised that in September 2016 the International Maritime Organisation's Ballast Water and Sediment Convention was ratified by Finland and it was queried what the impact of this would be for on ship and onshore ballast water treatment.

Having expressed their thanks to the organisations and groups who had taken part in the draft aquaculture supplementary guidance consultation, the Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the Aquaculture Planning Guidance at Appendix 1 to the report; and
- ii. **NOTED** the responses to comments raised on the previous consultation as set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

## 18. Road Safety Activities Monitoring Sgrùdadh Ghnìomhan Sàbhailteachd Rathaid

There had been circulated Report No PDI/73/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which provided information on the activities of the Road Safety Team within Transport Planning. One particular aspect of the activities was the preparation and implementation of the 20mph speed limit schemes across the Council area and a detailed update was provided within this report.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- Reference was made to a petition about the traffic issues in Caol, Fort William. These issues had been compounded by the new schools in Caol which had resulted in a dramatic increase in traffic going through the village. It was advised that Officers were aware of the road traffic issues in Caol, but that this was not unique to this area, and it was an issue in other areas

with schools. The Road Safety team would work with schools to develop their travel plans and address traffic management issues;

- It was queried how The City of Edinburgh Council had managed to impose 20mph speed limits on most of its streets, but this Council was having to implement it on individual streets on a case by case basis;
- A focus on cycle training was welcomed and it was confirmed that members of the Road Safety Team and volunteers were trained to provide cycle ability training;
- Reducing speed limits to 20mph should be done on streets where there was logic to introducing them and motorists were more likely to observe the speed limits; and
- Introducing 20mph limit schemes in the vicinity of schools would be looked at.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the content of the report and the ongoing work of the Road Safety Team;
- ii. **NOTED** progress to date in the 20mph Speed Limit programme;
- iii. **AGREED** the list of 20mph schemes in preparation (Appendix 3 to the report) and the use of the Collision Matrix to assist with priority for delivery of future 20mph schemes; and
- iv. **NOTED** that an annual activity report would be brought back to Committee.

**19. Beinn Tharsuinn Windfarm Community Limited  
Coimhearsnachd Tuathanas Gaoithe na Beinne Tarsainn Eta**

There had been circulated Report No PDI/74/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which detailed the activities of Beinn Tharsuinn Windfarm Community Limited during Financial Year 2015/16 and recommended that Members accept the Financial Statement as at 31 March 2016 on behalf of The Highland Council.

Following consideration, the Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the activities of Beinn Tharsuinn Windfarm Community Limited; and
- ii. **AGREED** that the Financial Statement of Beinn Tharsuinn Windfarm Community Limited for the year ending 31 March 2016 be accepted on behalf of The Highland Council.

**20. Highland Economic Forum Minutes  
Fòram Eaconamach na Gàidhealtachd**

There had been circulated Minutes of the Highland Economic Forum held on 19 April 2016, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

## 21. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There had been circulated separately in Booklet A for noting Minutes of the Planning Applications Committees (PAC) for:-

- i. South PAC – 28 June 2016
- ii. North PAC – 2 August 2016
- iii. South PAC – 16 August 2016
- iv. North PAC – 13 September 2016

The Committee **NOTED** the terms of the Minutes as presented.

## 22. Exclusion of the Public Às-dùnadh a' Phobail

The Committee **AGREED** to resolve that, under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 6 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

## 23. Property Transactions Monitoring Report Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Ghnothachasan Seilbhe

There had been circulated to Members only Report No PDI/75/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which provided details of the General Fund and Property Account transactions approved by the Head of Development & Regeneration, and Corporate Property Asset Manager under delegated authority. The report also advised Members on sales concluded and sales targeted for completion within the financial year 2016/17 and the status of sales for 2017/18 onwards.

The Committee **APPROVED** the monitoring statements for the General Fund and Property Account transactions approved by the Head of Development and Regeneration and Corporate Property Asset Manager under delegated authority, Budgeted Sales for 2016/17 and Future Years Sales.

## 24. Land and Property Report Talamh agus Cuid-seilbh

There had been circulated to Members only Report No PDI/76/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which sought approval for the purchase of areas of land in Drumnadrochit, Gairloch and Tain. Approval was also sought for transfer of property in Dingwall from the General account to the Housing Account.

The Committee **APPROVED** the recommendations as set out in the report.

The meeting concluded at 3.55 pm.