

Agenda Item	8
Report No	CCWG/4/2022

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee:	Climate Change Working Group
Date:	28th January 2022
Report Title:	Highland Adapts – A Place-based Approach to Climate Change Adaptation
Report By:	Executive Chief Officer – Performance and Governance

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report presents an update on the Highland Adapts initiative, which will deliver a Highland-wide, place-based partnership approach to climate change adaptation.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are invited to:

- i. Discuss and note the contents of the report.

3. Implications

3.1 Resource - There are no direct resource implications arising from this report.

3.2 Legal - The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 places a legal duty on the Council to adapt to the impacts of climate change. Taking a place-based, partnership approach will ensure that the key cross-cutting risks of climate change are identified and addressed, protecting service delivery.

3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) – There are no community implications arising from this report. However, taking a partnership approach to climate change adaptation is likely to have significant positive benefits for remote-rural communities, many of which are likely to be disproportionately impacted by the changing climate, and it has been recognised by the partners that Highland Adapts must be built on a strong foundation of community engagement and involvement.

3.4 Climate Change/Carbon CLEVER – There are a number of climate change implications arising out of this report. Whilst the main focus around developing a Highland Adapts partnership will be to prepare appropriately for change, there will also continue to be a requirement to mitigate our

collective carbon footprint. The establishment of this type of partnership provides a useful collective mechanism to support both adaptation and mitigation efforts.

- 3.5 Risk – Given increasing public awareness of the issues around the climate and ecological emergency, as well as the increasing frequency of extreme weather events, there is a reputational and financial risk to the Council from not taking sufficient action to prepare ourselves for changes to our climate.
- 3.6 Gaelic – There are no Gaelic implications arising from this report.

4. Background

- 4.1 Scotland's climate is already changing. There is a long-term trend of warming temperatures, shifting rainfall patterns and rising sea levels. This has been experienced as highly variable weather – hot, cold, wet and dry – that has proved hugely challenging in recent years.
- 4.2 The impacts of climate change have been felt across Highland: from damage to infrastructure, to disruption of vital services, and a shift in growing seasons. Work in Highland to reduce greenhouse gas emissions will contribute to limiting the extent of future climate change but we cannot turn back the clock. Past and present-day emissions mean that the rate of climate change is set to intensify over the coming decades, and we need to adapt now.
- 4.3 The impacts of climate change affect everyone, with consequences for our economy, society, and natural environment. No one organisation, business or community can adapt to these impacts alone, since many risks are inter-related – for example, what transport operators do, has an impact on the resilience of our healthcare system and the ability to deliver lifeline services.
- 4.4 In 2018, the Climate Change team sought outline support from the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) to apply for funding from Adaptation Scotland for assistance in the development of a Highland-wide approach to climate change adaptation, which was secured. A project proposal was submitted to Adaptation Scotland by The Highland Council on behalf of the CPP. The funding bid was ultimately unsuccessful, as Adaptation Scotland believed that a longer time frame and additional resources would be required to deliver on the vision set out in the application. This led to Adaptation Scotland supporting the Highland Council to develop the outline of what a region-based, partnership approach to adaptation might look like and engage with various potential partners.
- 4.5 From early discussions with interested stakeholders there was evidently a clear appetite for taking a region-wide approach to adaptation, particularly given the various challenges presented in a region of this size as well as its largely remote rural population. It was also recognised that there are multiple benefits (social, economic, financial and environmental) which are likely to flow from such an approach.
- 4.6 A funding commitment of £45k from the Change Fund over 3 years was agreed by the Council in December 2019 to support the recruitment of a Principal Project Manager to lead the Highland Adapts initiative. Following on from this funding commitment, and additional £135k has been committed by partners to enable this recruitment to take place.

The founding funding Highland Adapts partners are:

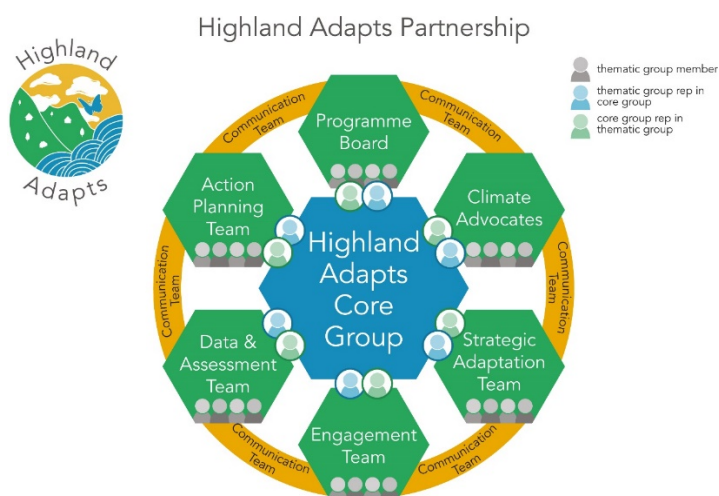
- The Highland Council
- Changeworks
- Highlands & Islands Enterprise

- NHS Highland
- NatureScot
- Zero Waste Scotland

The Highland Adapts Principal Project Manager started in post on 4th May 2021, and this report provides an update on progress to date.

5. Progress Update

- 5.1 The governance structure and model for Highland Adapts has now been agreed and is based on the principle of shared responsibility with clear channels of communication and domains of accountability to support a collective journey towards meaningful transformation. It is dynamic, without rigidity, allowing space to grow, adapt and be responsive. The diagram below sets out the current structure, with further details at appendix 1:



- 5.2 The various thematic teams have been populated with partners from a wide range of organisations across the region who wish to take a collaborative place-based, community-led approach to climate change action. The Programme Board have welcomed the positive response and willingness to participate from organisations and individuals pan-Highland.
- 5.3 The Programme Board has nine members with representatives from Highland Council, NHS Highland, NatureScot, Forestry & Land Scotland, Changeworks, Zero Waste Scotland, HIE, Highland Climate Hub, and Sniffer. This Board is the strategic decision-making body that provides general direction and support and ensures the Partnership remains true to its purpose and principles (details on purpose and principles can be found at **Appendix 1**).
- 5.4 The Climate Advocates team are working on a climate and environment charter for Highland, as well as developing a youth green leadership programme.
- 5.5 The Engagement team are working with Architecture and Design Scotland on the Climate Action Towns initiative in Alness and Invergordon. This initiative is using place-based engagement tools to identify climate action opportunities with these two towns, with the plan to work with the Highland Climate Hub to support the community to deliver priority projects. Lessons learned from this project will be applied to future community engagement initiatives.
- 5.6 The Data and Assessment Team are working with a PhD student from the Tyndall Centre for Climate Research who is working on the [OpenClim](#) project. This student will be with Highland

Adapts for 3 months and will help to develop a technical risk assessment scope. This is potentially the most difficult and complex part of the initial phases of Highland Adapts, and therefore the support on offer from the Tyndall Centre (secured through attendance at COP26) is a significant benefit for the initiative.

- 5.7 The Strategic Adaptation Team have set up a business climate sub-group, with the first meeting to be held on 3rd February. The purpose of this group is to work together to support the private sector to embed climate change adaptation in their business. Stuart Black, Chief Executive at Highlands & Islands Enterprise, has agreed to lead this group. This team are also preparing a senior leaders' climate summit for the region, where it is proposed to launch the climate and environment charter discussed at para 5.4 above.
- 5.8 Finally, the Communication Team will launch the Highland Adapts website by the end of January 2022, along with a social media campaign. This is phase one the communication strategy and forms a vital part of ongoing engagement efforts in order to further raise awareness and attract additional interest / partners to the initiative.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1 Whilst significant progress has already been made in respect of setting up the Highland Adapts initiative, the coming months are vital as efforts to increase levels of community engagement, deliver the communication strategy and finalise the risk assessment scope to support funding applications to deliver a full risk assessment over the coming year, are all ramped up. A further update will be presented to Members of the Climate Change Working Group later in 2022.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer – Performance and Governance

Date: 14th January 2022

Author: Emma Whitham, Highland Adapts Principal Project Manager



Highland Adapts

Purpose

The Highland Adapts initiative brings our communities, businesses, land managers and public sector together to facilitate transformational action towards a prosperous, climate-ready Highland.

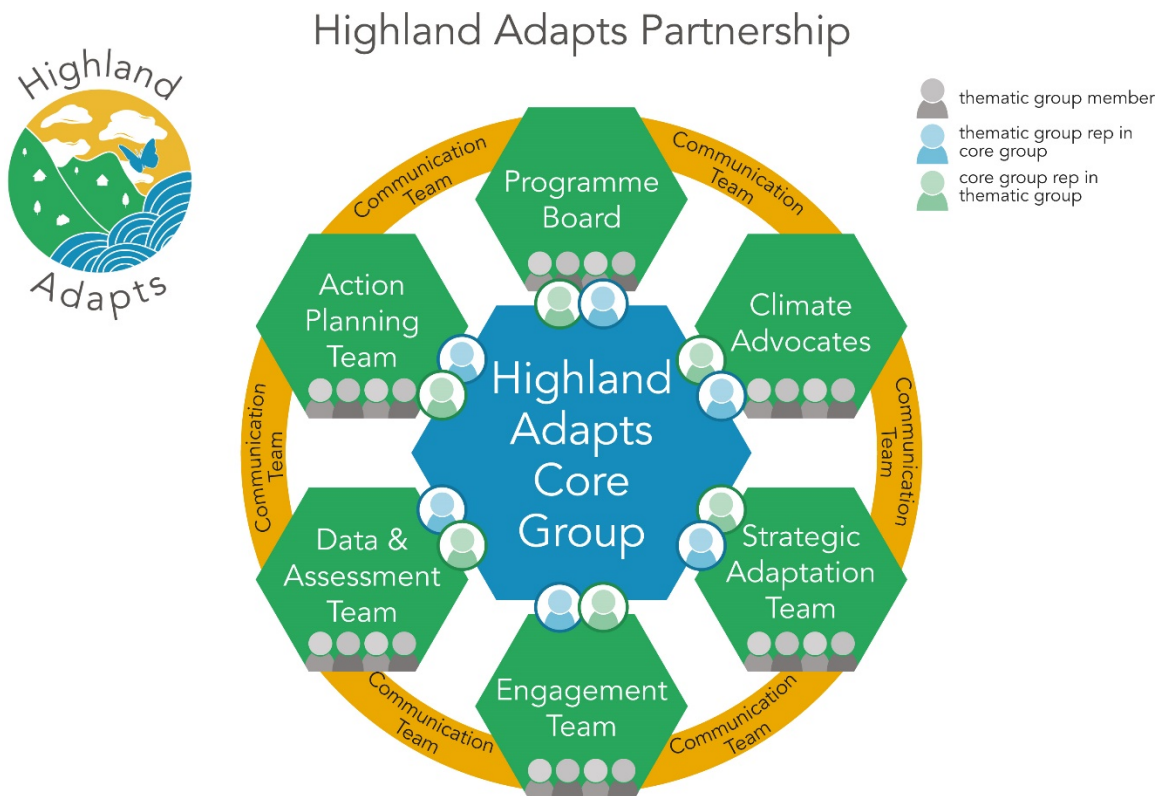
Guiding Principles

1. **Transformational Action** - through brave leadership, we embed hope and prioritise action.
2. **Collaboration** - we facilitate working together and the sharing of knowledge, expertise and resources.
3. **Place-based** - we are place-centred, with an approach that is bottom-up and fully inclusive.
4. **Evidence-based** - all our action is supported by up to date qualitative and quantitative data.
5. **Sustainable** - we only endorse robust, resilient and future-proof actions using the blueprint of the UN Sustainable Development Goals to achieve a flourishing, climate-ready future for all.
6. **Influence** - we use our presence and connections to support cultural change
7. **Climate and social justice** - our work is rooted in a deep understanding of the needs and priorities of communities.
8. **Build capacity** - through education, knowledge sharing and facilitating connections we increase confidence and the ability to adapt in others
9. **Celebrate** - we communicate and promote ongoing inspiring climate action and initiatives.
10. **Empower** - we enable communities/places to increase control over their ability to adapt to and mitigate climate change.

Objectives

- Develop a strong knowledge and evidence base, setting out the climate risks and opportunities that will affect the region
- Facilitate information sharing through a range of resources
- Identify opportunities to reduce and overcome these climate risks
- Develop a shared adaptation strategy and suite of action plans
- Support others to use plans to form the basis of projects and activities across the public sector, community, land management and business sector plans, strategies and investments

- Support the public sector to embed climate change adaptation throughout their business
- Support community climate change action.



The Highland Adapts governance approach is based on shared power with clear channels of communication and domains of accountability to support a collective journey towards meaningful transformation. It is dynamic, without rigidity, allowing space to grow, adapt and be responsive.

Core Group (CG) - the centre of the Partnership connecting all the thematic teams and is the delivery mechanism.

Programme Board - the strategic decision-making body that provides the general direction and support and ensures we remain true to our purpose and principles.

Climate Advocates - supports and empowers a network of community climate action champions across the region, ensuring climate change action is embedded in all community initiatives in Highland in a consistent and integrated way.

Strategic Adaptation Team - supports and guides public sector agencies to integrate/embed climate change adaptation.

Engagement Team - the listening and 'challenging' arm of the Partnership, rooted in the community and focussed on gathering data and building the big picture.

Data & Assessment Team - through working with a broad spectrum of partners ensures the Partnership is using the most up to date climate, health, social, and environmental data, science and projections to inform all HA project work and communications. This team also leads on the assessment work of the Partnership.

Action Planning Team - a group of experts that work with specific communities/sectors to develop action plans and projects.

Communications Team - a vibrant and creative team that leads on developing, implementing and revising the HA communication strategy; supporting, informing, inspiring and celebrating climate action across the whole community.