The Highland Council

Committee:	**Climate Change**
Date:	**23 May 2024**
Report Title:	**Climate Change Impact Assessment (CCIA)**
Report By:	**Assistant Chief Executive, People**

1.   Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1   The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the ongoing progress of the Climate Change Impact Assessment (CCIA) and its accompanying guidance, which are aimed at integrating climate change considerations into decision-making processes.

1.2   The primary objective of the CCIA and its associated guidance is to equip decision-makers with comprehensive tools and insights to effectively address the challenges posed by climate change. By integrating climate considerations into decision-making process in the early stages of development the Council can anticipate and mitigate potential risks, capitalise on emerging opportunities, and foster long-term sustainability.

1.3   Once considered by the Climate Change Committee, the CCIA will be incorporated into the Integrated Assessment tool for final approval by Council.

2.   Recommendations

2.1   Members are asked to:

   i.   **consider** the Climate Change Impact Assessment and supporting guidance.
   ii.   **note** the integration of the CCIA into the Integrated Impact Assessment tool, which will be presented to Full Council for approval.

3.   Implications

3.1   **Resource -** Potential requirement for ongoing subject matter expert involvement from the Climate Change and Energy Team (CCET), to assist authors filling out the CCIA. This should reduce as staff become more accustomed to the process and Climate Literacy Training is taken up.

3.2   **Legal -** The Council has several requirements in respect of reporting against its climate change obligations, in addition to being required to directly support Scotland's target to end its contribution to climate change no later than 2045. The CCIA ensures

that the Council's decisions align with these statutory obligations and contributes to our reporting requirements.

3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island) -** The CCIA is being developed as part of a wider integrated impact assessment that incorporates Equalities, Poverty & Human Rights; Children's Rights & Wellbeing; Data Protection; and Islands & Rural impact assessments. Just Transition and Community Resilience both feature as key assessment categories within the CCIA.

3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever -** Combatting climate change is the public sector's most complex challenge. The CCIA embeds climate change at the heart of the decision-making process.

3.5 **Risk -** Failure to proactively address the climate and ecological emergency across all service delivery carries significant reputational risk, particularly considering the political ambition at both local and national level around the climate change agenda. In addition, failure to take a proactive approach to climate change action will necessarily limit opportunities to secure external funding.

As outlined in Audit Scotland's briefing "Scotland's councils' approach to addressing climate change", action is needed now to make sure that Scotland is sufficiently resilient to deal with the impacts of the changes to the climate that are already happening. If we do not respond quickly and adequately to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase our resilience, drastic and severe widespread impacts are expected. This includes extreme disruption to the systems we depend on for food, water, and shelter.

3.6 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people) -** There are no Health and Safety implications arising from this report.

3.7 **Gaelic -** There are no Gaelic implications arising from this report.

4. Background

4.1 The Council's Net Zero Strategy stands as a cornerstone of the organisation's commitment to address climate change effectively. As part of this strategy, it is imperative to embed Net Zero and climate change considerations into decision-making processes. A pivotal step towards achieving this objective is the development and implementation of the Climate Change Impact Assessment (CCIA) within the Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) tool.

5. Scope of the Climate Change Impact Assessment

5.1 The CCIA is designed to comprehensively assess the impact of decisions on Net Zero, Biodiversity, and Resilience principles and ambitions. By evaluating these aspects, the intention is to ensure that mitigating and/or adaptive actions are taken to achieve overall positive outcomes for both the Council and Highland communities wherever possible. Where the opportunities to mitigate are limited, or do not exist, it enables evidence based and informed decisions to be made about whether or not to proceed with a proposal.

5.2   The Climate Change Impact assessment is intended to sit within the Integrated Impact Assessment tool, currently under development within the Council. Incorporation within the toolkit provides the Council with a holistic evaluation framework which includes assessments for:

- Children's Rights and Wellbeing (CRWIA)
- Data Protection (DPIA)
- Equalities, Poverty & Human Rights (EPHRIA)
- Islands and Mainland Rural (IMRIA)

5.3   The Screening is currently ready for integration into the impact assessment toolkit. The full CCIA impact assessment structure is being reviewed by the Thematic Groups. Initially where IIA screenings identify the need for a Full Impact Assessment they will be signposted to the CCET to undertake until the full set of questions are finalised by the Net Zero Strategy Group.

5.4   It is important to note that the CCIA is not a replacement for more in-depth Environment Impact Assessments (EIA) or Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA) which are statutory requirements for larger proposals and for which existing processes are in place.

6.   Introduction to the Climate Change Impact Assessment

6.1   The CCIA adopts a systematic approach wherein all new and revised projects, policies, strategies, and decisions (hereafter referred to as proposals) undergo assessment against various climate change-related factors. This method enables a comprehensive evaluation of the repercussions of any decisions. Subsequently, it facilitates the timely and informed integration of measures pertaining to mitigation, adaptation, and resilience to climate change into all proposals as deemed appropriate.

6.2   The completion of a CCIA will yield three primary outcomes:

- Providing valuable insights to inform decision-making processes.
- Identifying both positive and negative impacts of proposed changes within the Council.
- Guiding the development of necessary mitigating and adaptation actions aimed at minimizing or counteracting any adverse effects.

7.   The Process

7.1   The CCIA is structured into two distinct stages:

Stage 1: Screening
Stage 2: Full Impact Assessment

7.1.1   Upon completion of each stage, thorough review and approval by the responsible manager are mandated to ensure meticulous attention to detail. Subsequently, a comprehensive PDF summary of the CCIA will be generated and made available on the Council website, with corresponding links included in reports to Committee and Council.

7.1.2   Both the IIA and CCIA are obligatory for all individuals overseeing the development of the following proposals:

- New or Revised Policy
- New or Revised Strategy
- Action or Delivery Plan
- Area or Partnership-wide Plans
- Redesign or modification of an existing service
- Introduction of a new service
- Proposed tenders related to Council services
- All projects
- Budget Savings Proposals
- Service Plan or Programme

7.1.3   Depending on the nature of the proposal, the CCIA may be authored by a single individual or involve multiple key authors collaborating via the reassign function available in the IIA tool.

7.2   Stage 1 – Screening
The CCIA screening process is seamlessly integrated into the IIA tool. It serves as an initial, concise assessment conducted at the outset of a proposal to gauge its potential impact, both positive and negative, on three critical areas: Emissions, Biodiversity, and Resilience. This assessment is facilitated through the following questions:

1.   Does the proposal involve activities that could impact greenhouse gas emissions (CO2e)?
2.   Does the proposal have the potential to affect the environment, wildlife, or biodiversity?
3.   Does the proposal have the potential to influence resilience to extreme weather or changing climate?

7.2.1   For each question, respondents have the options of 'yes,' 'no,' or 'don't know.' In cases where any impact is identified or if uncertainty exists, a comprehensive impact assessment is warranted. Guidance accompanies each question to aid respondents in making well-informed decisions.

7.2.2   Upon completion of this stage, the author will submit the screening to the responsible manager (RM) for thorough review and approval. The RM assumes responsibility for ensuring the adequacy and detail of the CCIA content. Subsequently, the RM will determine whether to proceed with a Stage 2 Full Impact Assessment.

7.3   Stage 2 – Full Impact Assessment (FIA)
Currently, the CCIA FIA exists as a standalone Word document. The ultimate intention is to seamlessly integrate this assessment into the new IIA tool, alongside the screening process.

7.3.1   The FIA serves as a dynamic document throughout the proposal development journey, allowing authors to continually reference and update it as needed. Authors are tasked with identifying both positive and negative impacts of their proposal across various categories, including:

- Energy Efficiency
- Energy Generation
- Transport
- Procurement & Material Consumption
- Circular Economy
- Waste
- Just Transition
- Quality of Natural Environment
- Quantity of Natural Environment
- Biodiversity
- Adaptation
- Infrastructure Resilience
- Council Resilience
- Community Resilience

7.3.2   Authors must provide explanations for these impacts and list mitigating actions aimed at achieving an overall positive outcome. Once authors are satisfied with their assessments and mitigating strategies, they can submit the FIA to the responsible manager (RM) for final review and approval.

7.3.3   Final Approval and PDF Summary – Upon receipt of the FIA, the RM will utilize the Stage 3 – Review & Approve table at the bottom of the form to provide comments and approve the assessment. Once approved, the FIA will be attached to a PDF summary generated from the Integrated Impact Assessment tool. This summary will then be published on the Council website, with corresponding links provided in Committee and Council Reports.

8.   Guidance and Training

8.1   Comprehensive guidance documents have been developed to assist throughout both stages of the CCIA process. These documents are conveniently accessible through links provided within IIA toolkit. Copies of the guidance materials have been attached (Appendices 1 & 2).

8.2   To further support authors undertaking the CCIA, a dedicated subject matter expert from the Climate Change and Energy Team will be available to provide additional advice and guidance as needed. Contact details for reaching out to this expert are conveniently included within the supporting documents and webpages.

9.   Conclusion

9.1   The integration of CCIA into the Council's decision-making processes underscores our commitment to sustainability and climate resilience. By systematically evaluating the impacts of our decisions and incorporating mitigating actions, the Council can more effectively address Climate Change both internally and for the Region collectively.

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Date: 10 May 2024

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Screening questions and supporting guidance

Appendix 2 – Full Impact Assessment and supporting guidance

Appendix 3 – Samples of completed CCIA screenings

Appendix 1 – Screening Questions & supporting guidance.

Does the proposal involve activities that could impact on greenhouse gas emissions (CO2e)?

Related to transport and travel, energy use, land use, procurement or disposal of resources

○ Yes
○ No
○ Not known

Guidance - A proposal's activities can have both positive and negative impacts on greenhouse gas emissions; therefore, it is very unlikely that a proposal has no impact. Greenhouse gas emissions may come from direct sources, e.g., fleet vehicle usage or heating in buildings, or indirect sources, e.g., procurement of goods and services, disposal of resources or changes to energy use. It may also be the case that this proposal will have knock on impacts that may require further consideration, or alternatively, foster a business-as-usual approach that does not contribute towards our net zero ambitions.

Given the complexity of this topic, it may not be immediately apparent where the impact may lie therefore it is highly recommended that consultation is sought from subject matter experts.

Does the proposal have the potential to affect the environment, wildlife or biodiversity?

○ Yes
○ No
○ Not known

Guidance - Proposals have the potential to impact negatively and/or positively on the quality and quantity of the natural environment. Some considerations to make when answering this screening question are:

- Does this proposal result in the creation, destruction, or modification of habitats and/or green spaces?
- Are we joining up species rich areas or cutting that connectivity?
- Does this activity help or hinder the natural world's ability to cope with climate change?
- Will there be an increase or decrease in natural land carbon storage (tree and vegetation, peatland, or wetland coverage)?
- Will the proposal result in any pollution (air, water, land, noise or visual) that may cause disturbance to the natural environment? E.g. using pesticides.

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, then the proposal has the potential to affect the environment, wildlife, or biodiversity.

Does the proposal have the potential to influence resilience to extreme weather or changing climate?

○ Yes
○ No
○ Not known

Alongside the Council's actions to reduce emissions and transition to a sustainable net zero future, we also need to take a proactive approach to build resilience to the impacts of climate change. Some considerations to make when answering this screening question are:

- Will the proposal impact on the resilience of our operations, including service plans/delivery, policies and working practices.
- Does the proposal impact the resilience of our assets and infrastructure?
- Is there potential for the proposal to impact on our ambitions to build resilience into the communities and environment of the Highlands?
- Does the proposal incorporate business continuity plans to account for climate change?
- Does the proposal have the potential to exploit any opportunities that are presented from a changing climate?

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, then the proposal has the potential to influence resilience to extreme weather or changing climate.

Appendix 2 – FIA & supporting guidance.

<u>**Climate Change Impact Assessment**</u>

A Climate Change Impact Assessment (CCIA) is an evaluation of the impact of a new proposed change to how we work, what we buy, or what we create. It applies to all new projects, policies, strategies, proposals, and decisions ("Proposals").

The CCIA is a defined step-by-step process whereby a Proposal is assessed against different Climate Change related aspects, thereby allowing an informed evaluation of the impact of the Proposal to be produced. From this, proper and timely consideration of potential measures relating to mitigation, adaptation, and resilience to climate change can be considered and potentially incorporated into the Proposal, if deemed appropriate.

Do your CCIA as early as possible to ensure positive climate change impacts and emissions reductions are embedded into your Proposal. You may not have all the information available at the early stages, you can revisit the CCIA as the Proposal develops and a greater level of detail is understood. The ideal end point is to undertake a CCIA early enough that you can ask "what would a good net zero outcome look like?" and shape the Proposal accordingly.

To ensure improved outcomes it is advisable that the CCIA not be done in isolation and that authors should contact a Climate Change Team representative for advice and assistance with filling out the assessment and help with shaping thinking. Further online guidance can be found here.

<u>It is important to note that the CCIA is not a replacement for a more in-depth Strategic Environmental Assessment which is a statutory requirement for larger proposals.</u>

Stage 1 - Climate Change Impact Assessment: Please assess the impact of the proposal on each of the objectives listed using the impact criteria in the drop-down box in the impact column. Provide an explanation of the impact given using quantitative data where possible, as well as all actions required to enhance positive impacts or to mitigate and/or adapt to any negative impacts listed. Actions raised should then be added to the summary in the section below.

Service:	Department:
Lead person/project manager:	Contact number: Email address:
Proposal Title & summary:	

Energy, Emissions and Resources		
Objective	**Impact**	**Reasons/Mitigating Actions**
Energy Efficiency	Choose an item.	
Energy Generation	Choose an item.	
Transport	Choose an item.	
Procurement & Material Consumption	Choose an item.	
Circular Economy	Choose an item.	
Waste	Choose an item.	
Just Transition	Choose an item.	

Natural Environment & Biodiversity		
Objective	**Impact**	**Reasons/Mitigating Actions**
Quality of Natural Environment	Choose an item.	
Quantity of Natural Environment	Choose an item.	
Biodiversity	Choose an item.	
Adaptation and Resilience		
Objective	**Impact**	**Reasons/Mitigating Actions**
Adaptation	Choose an item.	
Infrastructure Resilience	Choose an item.	
Council Resilience	Choose an item.	
Community Resilience	Choose an item.	

Stage 2 – Summary of Actions
Please provide a summary of the mitigating actions raised in the above table here along with timescales and identify a lead person for each action. This can be referred to throughout the proposal development and in the final CCIA. (Use TAB to add more rows if required)

Action	Timescale	Lead Person

Stage 3 - Review & Approve
Please provide the name of your Service Manager who will be your main approver and a co-approver in your service. Once completed please email the form to the integrated impact assessment mailbox (impactassessments@highland.gov.uk) for the team to review and then pass on to your Service Manager for final review and approval.

Service Manager	
Co-Approver	
Date form sent for review & approval.	
Reviewers' comments	
Service Manager approval & comments	

Introduction to CCIA Full Impact Assessment Guidance

The Climate Change Full Impact Assessment (CCIA) is an in-depth assessment of the areas you have already identified in your screening. This guidance has been designed to provide you with further information on the impact areas and a list of considerations to assist you with assessing how your proposal will impact each area.

It is recommended that the full impact assessment is not done in isolation and rather completed as a collaborative effort. Advice and assistance should be sought as and when required to ensure the correct impacts are identified. Please use the signposting section for further assistance if required.

It is essential that this stage is started as soon as your screening has been completed and as early in the proposal development process as possible. Taking an iterative approach to the assessment will allow you to build on actions you have already identified and therefore influence and shape your proposal to align with the Councils Net Zero, Sustainability and Biodiversity priorities and targets.

Throughout this full impact assessment, you will be required to identify where your proposal has positive, negative, or no/neutral impact on each of the listed categories. Each impact type would require different actions as follows:

- **Positive Impact -** In the event of a positive impact please detail what this is and where possible consider actions to further enhance the outcome where possible. Please list any actions on the form.
- **Neutral Impact** - In the event of a neutral impact it is recommended to consider how benefits could be achieved in this area, but otherwise proceed to the next category.
- **Negative Impact** – In the event of a negative impact please detail what this is and identify mitigating actions that would result in a positive outcome where possible.
- There may be occasions when both positive and negative impacts are identified in an individual category. If this is the case it is recommended that the severity and duration of the impacts is considered to identify whether the overarching impact is positive or negative. In this case, all impacts, both positive and negative, should be listed so that a full overview can be provided, and mitigating actions put in place where required to result in an overall positive outcome.

It is recommended that you develop a clear understanding of the objectives and intended outcomes of the proposal and have enough information to make a meaningful assessment. This way you can identify and record any explicit impacts that may be evident, both positive and negative.

The below list of considerations has been developed to assist you in identifying where your impacts may lie. It is important to note that this list is not exhaustive, and the completion of the assessment will require wider deliberation.

It is important to note that the CCIA is not a replacement for more in-depth Environment Impact Assessments (EIA) or Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA) which are statutory requirements for larger proposals.

Energy, Emissions and Resources

Energy Efficiency – In order to achieve our target of net zero by 2045, it is essential that we increase energy efficiency across the Council's domestic and non-domestic estate. It is also important to ensure that our proposals do not negatively impact on external efforts to increase energy efficiency throughout the Highland Region. Please consider whether your proposal has a positive or negative impact in this area by considering some of the following questions:

- Does the design of any new building or retrofit activity incorporate a fabric first approach that prioritises energy efficiency?
- Does this proposal involve installation or replacement of heating or lighting systems with more energy efficient alternatives, e.g., LEDs, heat pumps, automatic lighting, or passive cooling?
- Does the proposal take into consideration the energy efficiency of appliances white goods, and IT & comms equipment?
- Does this proposal positively or negatively influence the Council's energy demand?
- Does this proposal positively or negatively influence fuel poverty in the region?
- Does this proposal promote, or hinder energy efficiency works across the Highland Region?

Energy Generation – Our Net Zero Programme, Corporate Plan and Operational Delivery Plan 2024-27 all place a particular emphasis on energy generation as a key component in the shift towards a more sustainable organisation. For this to be achievable, we need to ensure that our proposals support our ambitions in this field. As such, please consider whether your proposal has a positive or negative impact in this area by considering the following questions:

- Does this proposal increase or decrease grid connectivity in the Highlands (both National and Micro Grids)?
- Does this proposal maximise the financial and investment opportunities arising from renewable energy generation?
- Does this proposal increase or decrease our energy usage?
- Does this proposal increase or decrease our reliance on fossil fuels for energy generation?
- Does the proposal use or promote the development of renewable energy systems such as wind, solar, biomass, hydrogen, and hydro energy both within the Council and wider region?
- Does the proposal support the development of a local skilled workforce in the renewable energy sector?

Transport - The transport sector is currently the greatest contributor to carbon emissions in Scotland, and the second highest emitting sector in Council operations. To mitigate this, the National Transport Strategy sets out statutory targets to phase out the need for new petrol and diesel vehicles in the light fleet and heavy fleet by 2025 and 2030 respectively, while reducing vehicle mileage by 20% in the same period. Here are some questions to consider when thinking about your impact in this area.

- Does this proposal increase or decrease the number of vehicles in the light and/or heavy fleet?

- Will this proposal increase or decrease the number of miles travelled when carrying out Council operations?
- Does this proposal impact the quantity or type of fuel used in our vehicles?
- Does this proposal increase or decrease the number of Ultra Low Emissions Vehicles (ULEVs) (e.g., electric, hydrogen and hybrid vehicles)?
- Does this proposal impact on the provision and connectivity of affordable and sustainable public transport for Highland communities?
- Will this proposal increase or decrease the availability of Electric Vehicle (EV) charging capacity across the region?
- Does this proposal promote the use of car share schemes for staff travel?
- Does this proposal promote sustainable travel practices such as active travel, digital first and public transport as opposed to traditional methods of transport e.g., car, ferry and air?

Procurement & Material Consumption – The Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 introduced the Sustainable Procurement Duty that requires public bodies to achieve socio-economic and environmental benefits during their procurement activities. In compliance with this duty the Highland Council is required to demonstrate how we will prioritise climate change and circular economy implications in our procurement.

It is estimated that the indirect (Scope 3) carbon emissions arising from our procurement and consumption of goods and services equate to approximately 80% of our carbon footprint. To achieve our target of net zero by 2045 it is essential that we ensure our proposals utilise sustainable procurement and consumption practices. Here are some questions to consider when identifying potential impacts in this area.

- Does this proposal increase or decrease the number of products or materials that are purchased and consumed?
- Does this proposal ensure that any new build domestic & non/domestic properties follow the Public Buildings Net Zero Standard and are built to BREEAM or Passivhaus standards?
- Does this proposal consider the sustainable use of construction and demolition materials during the lifecycle of a building?
- Does this proposal reduce material consumption and waste through more efficient internal practices such as Digital by Default and paperless working?
- Does this proposal incorporate and promote sustainable procurement and consumption practices such as using locally sourced products?
- Does this proposal incorporate supply chain management and sustainable practices to maximise resource efficiency, cost savings, and environmental benefits?
- Does this proposal embed community wealth building and community benefits that are in favour of net zero outcomes into contracts for goods and services?
- Does this proposal have a positive or negative impact on the emissions produced by the services and contractors that we procure?
- Will the life cycle (embodied) carbon emissions of materials and goods be considered in any procurement process related to the proposal?

Circular Economy - A circular economy is one in which materials and resources are kept in circulation as long as possible, while minimising the amount of waste produced. Circular economy practices include things like repair, re-use, sharing and upcycling. The Council is aiming to embed circular economy practices wherever possible to make our procurement and waste generation more sustainable while providing financial and social benefits. As such, please consider whether your

proposal has a positive or negative impact in this area by considering the following questions:

- Does this proposal promote circular economy practices both internally and externally?
- Does this proposal decrease the demand for raw materials to produce goods, through incorporation and promoting reuse and repair, whilst encouraging sustainable product design and production, resource efficiency and responsible consumption?
- Does this proposal incorporate and promote business models that prolong product lifespan?
- Does this proposal utilise a circular economy model as opposed to a linear economy model?
- Does this proposal extend the lifetime of assets through redistribution and/or repair?
- Does this proposal provide financial and upskilling opportunities (internally or externally) from circular economy practices?
- Does the proposal consider any socio-economic benefits arising from the reuse of materials, resources and/or equipment that are no longer required?
- Does this proposal embed circular economy into our procurement practices?
- Does this proposal encourage sharing of existing resources and equipment rather than procurement and/or disposal?

Waste – [Scotland's Zero Waste Plan](#) set a statutory target to recycle 70% of all Scotland's waste with only a maximum of 5% of remaining waste going to landfill by 2025. To achieve this, we need to make the most efficient use of resources by maximising the reuse, recycling, and recovery of resources instead of treating them as waste. As such, please consider whether your proposal has a positive or negative impact in this area by considering the following questions:

- Will this activity increase or decrease the total volume of waste going to landfill?
- Will this proposal promote efficient and sustainable waste and recycling practices internally and/or externally?
- Does this proposal increase or decrease the quantity and quality of recyclates?
- Will this proposal have the potential to increase or decrease the amount of food waste?
- Does this proposal increase or decrease the quality and/or quantity of compostable materials? Will biodegradable waste be composted?
- Does this proposal improve or reduce recycling and/or food waste infrastructure internally and/or externally?
- Will this proposal strengthen partnership working between catering and education staff in schools to reduce food waste?
- Does the proposal consider the financial opportunities presented from the generation of waste?
- Does the proposal increase or decrease the financial and environmental opportunities from energy from waste?
- Does the proposal have the potential to increase or decrease the amount of litter generated across the Highlands?

Just Transition - Common throughout all the themes of the Net Zero Strategy is the recognition that our work and activities are undertaken in such a way as to ensure the benefits of climate change action are shared widely, while the costs do not

unfairly burden those least able to pay, or whose livelihoods are directly or indirectly at risk as the economy shifts and changes. As such, please consider whether your proposal has a positive or negative impact in this area by considering the following questions:

- Does this proposal support the improvement of health and wellbeing through sustainable practices such as active travel, accessing nature, both in and out of the Council?
- Does this proposal alleviate the pressures of a cost-of-living crisis?
- Does this proposal help to reduce fuel and/or food poverty in the Highlands?
- Does this proposal create sustainable job opportunities?
- Has this proposal incorporated the inclusion of local consultation where applicable?
- Does this proposal incorporate retraining opportunities to support retention of employees who may be adversely affected by the transition to net zero?
- Does this proposal support people into sustainable training opportunities?
- Does this proposal maintain/improve people's access to Council services?
- Does this proposal address existing economic and social inequality by sharing the benefits of climate action?
- Does this proposal support places affected by the transition to net zero by empowering and invigorating communities and strengthening local economies?
- Does this proposal help alleviate depopulation in affected Highland communities?
- Does this proposal promote digital inclusion both internally and externally?

Natural Environment & Biodiversity

Highland is currently in the midst of an ecological emergency and witnessing a dramatic biodiversity decline. Since 1970, 49% of Scottish species have decreased in abundance and 11% are under threat of extinction, including many iconic Highland species. Consequently, The Highland Council declared a climate and ecological emergency in 2019, adding this to the Corporate Risk Register in 2022. In the same year the Council became a signatory to the Edinburgh Declaration further underlining its commitment to tackle the nature crisis and reverse biodiversity loss.

The Scottish Government has set ambitious statutory targets for local authorities to address nature and biodiversity loss through strategies such as the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, The Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act (2011) and National Planning Framework 4 which all require public bodies to further biodiversity conservation and expand the natural environment when carrying out their responsibilities. This has resulted in the development of our Ecological Strategy. As such, please consider whether your proposal has a positive or negative impact in this area by considering the following questions:

Quality of Natural Environment

- Will the proposal result in any pollution (air, water, land, light, noise or visual) that may cause disturbance to the natural environment, e.g., use of chemical pesticides or accidental chemical spillage etc.
- Does this proposal help to protect and enhance our natural heritage and further support it?

- Does this activity help or hinder the natural world's ability to cope with the effects of climate change?
- Does this proposal have the potential to increase the exposure of the Highland region to the occurrence of pests and diseases?
- Does this proposal result in the improvement of habitats and/or green spaces?
- Will this proposal influence the natural environment's ability to sequester carbon i.e. through peatland restoration, rewilding, restoration of coastal ecosystems etc.?
- Does this proposal favour nature-based solutions over traditional engineering methods to minimise detrimental environmental impacts wherever possible such as vegetation buffers to reduce noise pollution?
- Does this proposal build resilience and sustainability into our natural environment and land use practices?
- Does this proposal consider the environmental implications of a change in land use?
- Does this proposal influence the restoration of soil fertility through the use of organic cultivation and land management methods?
- Does this proposal influence efforts to prevent wildlife crime such as destruction of freshwater pearl mussels, fly tipping, damage to protected and/or historic sites etc.?
- Does this proposal increase or decrease the publics access to nature through methods such as developing infrastructure to support active travel; access to nature and outdoor activity; embedding nature and environment learning at all levels of education provision?
- Does this proposal create or capitalise on green finance opportunities?
- Does this proposal result in the net decrease of invasive species in our natural environment?
- Does this proposal impact on the natural environments ability to provide healthy ecosystem services such as pollution reduction, seed dispersal, climate regulation, water or soil purification, nutrient cycling, and pest control?
- Does this proposal protect and enhance the natural environment through sensitive planning decisions, positive site action, and identifying opportunities to reduce our environmental impacts?

Quantity of Natural Environment

- Does this proposal result in the creation, restoration, destruction, or modification of green and/or blue spaces?
- Does this proposal result in the increase or decrease of natural carbon storage such as woodland, peatland, wetlands, marine vegetation etc.?
- Does this proposal compensate for the removal of natural environment as a result of development?
- Does this proposal consider bringing nature into the design and layout out of our public spaces, infrastructure and built environment? e.g., green roofs, roundabouts, vacant, derelict and brownfield sites.

Biodiversity

- Does this proposal facilitate the joining up of species rich areas e.g., through expansion and connection of blue and green infrastructure, nature corridors etc.?
- Does this proposal increase or decrease the quality and/or quantity of habitats across the region?
- Does this proposal impact on the resilience of biodiversity to climate change?
- Does this proposal promote the mainstreaming of biodiversity considerations both internally and externally?
- Does this proposal improve or hinder nature conservation efforts within the region?
- Does this proposal help to improve biodiversity data gathering and sharing?
- Does this proposal disturb or conserve ecosystems?
- Does this proposal impact a protected species?

Adaptation and Resilience

The impacts of climate change are currently being felt and are likely to increase, resulting in damage and disruption to Highland Council assets & services, the natural environment, our communities, and infrastructure. Climate Change has been identified as a risk to the region and added to the Corporate Risk Register. It is imperative that we build in adaptive capacity and resilience into our practices and proposals to alleviate potential impacts. As such, adaptation and resilience are key priorities in our Net Zero Strategy. Here are some considerations to take into account when assessing the impacts your proposals may have:

Adaptation
- Does the proposal have the potential to exploit any opportunities that are presented from a changing climate?
- Does this proposal utilise non-maladaptive nature-based solutions to minimise the impacts of climate change?
- Does this proposal increase or decrease the heat island effect in built up areas?
- Does this proposal increase or decrease the risk of flooding due to changes in land use?
- Does this proposal influence the ability of our natural environment to cope with the impacts of climate change? E.g. reduced slope stability, decreased drainage, etc.,
- Does this proposal impact on the resilience of our supply chains, e.g. food, energy, skills etc.?
- Does this proposal increase or decrease the regions adaptive capacity thereby reducing our vulnerability to the long-term effects of climate change?
- Does this proposal consider the use of climate risk assessments to ensure that it is sustainable and adapted to the impacts of climate change?
- Does this proposal make the Council or Highland region more susceptible to the impacts of climate change?

Infrastructure Resilience
- Does the proposal impact the resilience of our assets and infrastructure to the effects of climate change?

- Does this proposal increase or decrease net resilience gain and improve the continuity of critical services such as energy, roads and transport, water, wastewater, waste, and digital communications?
- Does this proposal strengthen or weaken infrastructure connectivity and interdependencies across the Highland region?
- Do new construction activities incorporate adaptative considerations?

Council Resilience
- Will the proposal impact on the resilience of our operations, including service plans/delivery, policies and working practices?
- Does the proposal incorporate and/or enhance business continuity plans to account for climate change?
- Does this proposal increase the functionality of our buildings to cope with a changing climate?
- Does this proposal influence Council staff's exposure to the impacts of climate change?

Community Resilience
- Does this proposal influence the resilience of communities to the impacts of climate change?
- Does this proposal increase or decrease a community's access to public services i.e. through the use of 20-minute neighbourhoods? Especially in cases of extreme weather.
- Does this proposal increase the awareness of the impacts of climate change to enable people to adapt to future extreme weather events?
- Does this proposal support our health and emergency responders to enable them to respond effectively to the increased pressures associated with a changing climate?
- Does this proposal increase or decrease the provision of our emergency response and recovery to climate related disasters such as flooding, major storms, wildfires, the introduction of new pests and diseases etc.?
- Does this proposal impact on our efforts to promote business continuity and community resilience, recovery guidance, training and exercising?
- Does this proposal impact on the resilience of our historic and/or cultural heritage?

Appendix 3 – Samples of completed CCIA screenings. This will show the evolution of the questions through their development.

Sample 1 (earlier question set) –

7. Climate Change

Use this screening to determine whether your proposal has the potential to have positive or negative impacts on the climate, the environment, and/or biodiversity.

This screening and further full impact assessment is a reflective tool, not a framework for approving or rejecting a decisions, so will work best if the questions were given carefull and honest consideration.

For further advice and guidance on what to take into account when answering this screening please refer to the Climate Change Impact Assessment guidance here.

For further information see the Net Zero Strategy.

Does the activity/proposal have the potential to impact on any of the following (please tick all that apply):	☒Greenhouse gas emissions and/or the procurement, use or disposal of physical resources both within the Council and Highland Region ☒Efforts to enhance climate adaptation and to build a more climate resilient and sustainable Highland Council and Highland Region ☒Efforts to enhance biodiversity, carbon sequestration and climate resilience in our natural environment and land use practices

Climate Change – please tick which of the 3 options below relates to this proposal. Based on the information you have provided in this IA Screening and your judgement in relation to this; please select which option you think applies this Climate Change Screening.	☒Positive or No impact – no further action required ☐Potential negative impact - you have identified negative impact on one or more of the protected characteristics but think there may be mitigation ☐Full impact assessment required – you have identified negative impact on one or more of the protected characteristics
Provide a brief description explaining why you have selected this.	An aim of the policy is to promote allotments as part of the solution and response to climate change and biodiversity loss. Land management approaches and gardening

Please be advised that the brief description provided may be used in Committee Reports, relevant Board Meetings, etc.	techniques that increase biodiversity and reduce waste will be supported. There will be increased provision of locally grown food for plot holders and improved food resilience for communities.

Sample 2 - Active Travel Strategy Screening (final question set) –

7. Climate Change

Use this screening to determine whether your proposal has the potential to have positive or negative impacts on the climate, the environment, and/or biodiversity.

This screening and further full impact assessment is a reflective tool, not a framework for approving or rejecting a decisions, so will work best if the questions were given carefull and honest consideration.

For further advice and guidance on what to take into account when answering this screening please refer to the Climate Change Impact Assessment guidance here. For further information see the Net Zero Strategy.

Does the proposal involve activities that could impact on greenhouse gas emissions (CO2e)? *Related to transport and travel, energy use, land use, procurement, or disposal of resources...*	☒Yes ☐No ☐ Not Known
Does the proposal have the potential to affect the environment, wildlife, or biodiversity?	☒Yes ☐No ☐ Not Known
Does the proposal have the potential to influence resilience to extreme weather or changing climate?	☒Yes ☐No ☐ Not Known

Have you identified potential impact for any of the areas above of marked any as not known?	☒ Yes ☐ No
Provide a brief description explaining why you have selected this. *Please be advised that the brief description provided may be used in Committee Reports, relevant Board Meetings, etc.*	A key objective of the ATS is to contribute to a just and fair transition to a more sustainable transport network. A shift away from car over-use and car dependency to walking, wheeling and cycling helps to deliver our net zero target, to adapt to the effects of climate

| | change, and to promote cleaner, greener choices. A reduction in vehicle use also leads to a reduction in air, watercourse and noise pollution. The ATS also commits to increasing the biodiversity net gain of projects by including native species in planting schemes, tree planting to stabilise temperatures, and water management via features such as water gardens. These lead to multiple benefits for biodiversity as well as increasing our resilience to extreme weather and changing climate. |