

Agenda Item	<b>5</b>
Report No	<b>BIER-15-24</b>

**The Highland Council**

**Committee: Black Isle and Easter Ross Committee**

**Date: 5 August 2024**

**Report Title: Opportunity Black Isle, Your Place, Your Future – The Black Isle Local Place Plan**

**Report By: Assistant Chief Executive - Place**

## **1 Purpose/Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This report invites Members to adopt The Black Isle Local Place Plan - [Opportunity Black Isle](#) **Appendix 1**

Opportunity Black Isle, an Area/Local Place Plan hybrid, provides a Black Isle wide vision for a more sustainable and resilient future, bringing together actions by the local community, Community Planning Partners and others covering big issues such as getting about, housing, community facilities, and nature and the environment.

The report also provides an update on next steps for progressing the Plan and how the Plan will be monitored and overseen going forward.

## **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
- i. Adopt the Plan, using it as a tool to inform and support decision making about the Black Isle.
  - ii. Note Opportunity Black Isle is both a Local Place Plan in line with national Planning Legislation and an Area Place Plan in line with Highland's Place Based Framework.
  - iii. Note the Plan will be taken into account in preparation of the Highland Local Development Plan (HLDP) as guided by the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019
  - iv. Note the next steps for progressing the work set out in the plan

## **3 Implications**

- 3.1 **Resource** – No additional resource is requested. Highland Council support for initiatives outlined in the Plan may have resource implications in the future which would be subject to appropriate Committee or Service decision making.

Ongoing involvement in Place Planning activity requires input and commitment from services across the Council to ensure Place Plans provide the framework to support targeting resources, service delivery and provide a clear vision for attracting external investment. The Plans will help the Highland Council, partners, and communities secure funding by evidencing the impact of every pound spent and the actions associated will provide clarity and manage expectation around how and where resources are prioritised.

- 3.2 **Legal** – There are no legal implications rising from the adoption of Opportunity Black Isle, which is a commitment to support the vision.
- 3.3 **Risk** – Opportunity Black Isle will help to coordinate future activity and investment in the area but requires clear communication and coordination of resources across partners and sectors. Developing a place-based approach is encouraged through the Scottish Government’s Place Principle, the Christie Commission recommendations and is required by the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 for community planning.
- 3.4 **Gaelic** – A focus on place, and considering the priorities for a local area, has potential to support a focus on Gaelic language and culture if identified by communities and partners.

4. **Impacts**

- 4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children’s Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.
- 4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.
- 4.3 Integrated Impact Assessment - Summary

An Integrated Impact Assessment screening has been undertaken. The conclusions have been subject to the relevant Manager Review and Approval.

- 4.4 The Screening process has concluded that the plan has a positive impact on promoting equality, addressing inequality (including socio-economic) and targeting the priorities of the people of the Black Isle and therefore a full impact assessment is not required. Members are asked to consider the following summary to support the decision making process.

Impact Assessment Area	Conclusion of Screening/Full Assessment (to be deleted as appropriate)
Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children and Young People – Positive</li> <li>• Children affected by disability – No impact</li> <li>• Older adults –No impact</li> </ul>
Socio - economic	Positive

Human Rights	No impact
Children's Rights and Wellbeing	Positive
Island and Mainland Rural	No impact
Climate Change	Positive
Data Rights	No impact

## 5 Background

5.1 The Black Isle Local Place Plan is both a Local Place Plan and an Area Place Plan and was initiated and facilitated by the Black Isle Partnership through funding from the Place Based Investment Fund and Community Regeneration Funding.

The Plan sets out the aspirations and ambitions of the Black Isle community which:

- Articulate long term shared strategic outcomes for the whole area.
- Support informed local and national decision making about public services, budgeting, planning policy & other policy areas.
- Support community action and provides partners with evidence for funding bids.
- Build on the good work that is already happening across the Black Isle and makes the most of opportunities and new investment.
- Provide a framework for individual local communities to prepare their own more detailed plans should they wish.

### 5.2 Understanding the hybrid nature of Opportunity Black Isle

#### What is an Area Place Plan?

In partnership with local communities, public agencies, private and third sector, Highland Council is leading the development of a place-based approach to planning for the future of each sub-regional area. During 2024/2025, area-based plans are being produced as a clear statement of shared priorities for development and investment, service delivery and community action.

The [Place Principle](#) is a Scottish Government and CoSLA initiative to encourage better collaboration and community involvement. It is about understanding the issues, opportunities and relationships in a place, so we can work effectively together to improve the quality of life for our communities. Knowing how a community is structured and how it works helps us make good decisions on investment, service delivery and how to coordinate change.

In Highland, sub regional Area Place Plans are being developed to bring an overview of existing strategies and projects, so, collectively, we are clearer on what we are working towards. Community engagement will build a shared understanding of how Place underpins development, service delivery and how communities and organisations work together. These plans will be a future guide to get the best impact for people living in an area, based on shared understanding of local need.

At its simplest, Area Place Plans will create a shared vision for an area, outlining priority outcomes and how they will be achieved. The Plans will make publicly clear what activity is happening in each area, the outcomes being sought, when they are intended to be delivered and who is responsible for doing so.

### 5.3 What is a Local Place Plan?

Following recent changes to the national planning system, communities have been invited to consider preparation of their own [Local Place Plans](#) – a community’s proposals for development of use of land and buildings in their local area. Currently across Highland, several groups are engaging their local community to reflect how to make their place better, agree priorities for the future and how to act on them – often working with others. While local place plans have a particular role in the planning system, they may also highlight other priorities for service delivery and community action.

The Black Isle Partnership, in discussion with Highland Council, recognised the opportunity to develop and deliver a plan which met both the requirements and aspirations of both a local and an area plan.

## 6 How the Plan was prepared

6.1 The Plan was developed over 2023 and early 2024 with engagement being carried out in three key stages:

1. Aspirations - understanding community issues, aspirations and opportunities;
2. Solutions - Identifying solutions; and
3. Plan - Agreeing the plan with the community.

Community engagement was extensive and resulted in:

- 2, 800 written comments from 380 participants at nine Stage 1 events
- 120 participants at four public workshops in Stage 2 and 3 events
- 216 children and young people engaged through surveys and focus groups
- 350 online responses
- 7 focus groups involved in drafting the plan.

## 7 Opportunity Black Isle – setting out the vision for the future

7.1 The overarching outcomes set out in the plan are for the Black Isle to become a **net zero carbon, sustainable, and resilient** community with **opportunity, health and wellbeing for all**. To achieve these outcomes, the Plan further sets out the following four Calls for Action for the community, public and private sectors:

- **Community infrastructure:** facilities and services that are fit for purpose & minimise travel, including education, health & social care, infrastructure, recreation, emergency services & other community facilities;
- **Think global, act local:** climate-focussed action to achieve a net zero, biodiversity rich, ecologically coherent, resilient and sustainable community;
- **Affordable homes for all:** so young people, workers and families can afford to live in environmentally-friendly homes that are fit for purpose; and
- **Getting about:** making it safe, convenient & affordable to move around without a car.

## 7.2 How the plan will be used

The Plan has been written for the local community, community organisations, businesses and Highland Community Planning Partners. To achieve the outcomes set out in the plan, it will require all partners, community, public, third and private, working together. The Plan should be used as it is intended – as a tool to bring people together to inform decision making, to collaborate on and to achieve better outcomes for the community.

The Plan is an ambitious evidenced based statement of the community's aspirations, based on sound and robust community engagement. This therefore provides all who are responsible for delivering services, looking after assets or with a vested interest in the Black Isle, to use this Plan to inform decision making about service design, delivery and investment.

7.3 The Plan requires collaboration which is based around two key principles – **resetting the relationship** between the public sector and local communities and **thinking differently** about funding and resources. The Plan will help foster greater opportunity to:

- support and enable the community to influence and understand their future;
- empower the local community as an active partner;
- create more trust and collaboration between community and authorities; and
- enable equitable and smoother delivery of services and investment.

To support this in practice, Public Sector partners and funders are asked to utilise the Plan to inform discussion and decision making on service design, delivery and budget allocation. The Plan should help influence how budgets are allocated, how services could be delivered, provide evidence for decision making, inform policy and support communities to acquire and develop their own income-generating assets and funding sources. This can be achieved by Members, Council officers, statutory and community partners considering the Plan in various forums eg

- Area Business Meetings
- HC Area Service Meetings
- Mid Ross Community Partnership
- NHS Adult Services Mid Ross Locality Plan Group

## 8 Next Steps - Governance Arrangements

8.1 Following discussions to determine governance arrangements with the Black Isle Community Council Forum, Place Plan steering group and local Elected Members, an agreement has been reached to establish a Board. The structure will be simple and membership will be drawn from Community Councils (5 places) and Elected Members to ensure it is democratic in nature. In addition to these positions a further 5 places, including an independent Chair, will be available through a recruitment process seeking individuals with the key skills to advocate for and drive the plan.

## 8.2 Next Steps – Delivery

As the plan moves from development to delivery, it can continue to act as a tool which brings different interest groups together to collaborate on a shared vision for the future. That has been made possible by the robust approach to process and broad participation, including the guidance and participation of Elected Members, officers, community councillors and, importantly, the wider Black Isle community.

The approach taken to the development of the Black Isle Plan has been increasingly recognised as an example of best practice. This is evidenced by representatives of the group being invited in to regional and national forums to share their experiences, learning and knowledge. A sample of illustrative highlights include the following:

- Community led - the plan being prepared by, and for, the community with public, private and third sector partners supporting;
- Elected Member engagement and participation throughout;
- Considered and extensive community engagement consistent with national standards of community engagement, with particular focus being made on reaching *quieter voices*;
- Collaborative and transparent, keeping communities up to date throughout;
- Testing and confirmation of priorities to ensure those included in the plan represent the community as a whole;
- Wealth of information captured providing stakeholders with rich data for their own purposes;
- Simplifying how we work together through achieving a holistic plan which meets the requirements and aspirations of local place plan, community action plan and area place plan; and
- Support and guidance from national experts in community participation and planning working alongside locally based and well-connected Development Officer.

## 8.3 The anticipated benefits and impact of the Black Isle wide Place Plan are that it will:

- Consolidate local priorities from across a variety of plans and strategies – national, regional and local
- Develop a shared understanding of our communities' priorities and opportunities for the future
- Make clear what current projects and interventions are working towards, when they will be delivered and who is responsible
- Re-set relationships by strengthening collaborative working and trust between communities, public and third sectors
- Provide a framework for delivering a shared vision, priority outcomes and actions to deliver these in a way that is tailored to the needs of the Black Isle
- Target resources, investment and action in line with local priorities
- Improve communication providing greater certainty to communities on how partners will support changes in the Black Isle
- Track and publicise the impact of spending and project delivery against local priorities.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

Date: 22 July 2024

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Background Papers:

Appendices: Opportunity Black Isle