The Highland Council

Agenda Item	4
Report No	HC/12/25

Committee:	Highland Council
Date:	15 May 2025
Report Title:	Highland Investment Plan Update
Report By:	Assistant Chief Executive – Place Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out a consolidated Highland Investment Plan (HIP) based on investment decisions made by the Council over the past 12 months and provides a consolidated view of investment plans for the current 5-year period covering 2025/26 through to 2029/30.
- 1.2 The consolidated HIP combines the pre-existing 5-year (2024/25 to 2028/29) base investment programme, rolled forward to include 2029/30 established on the parameters of affordability as agreed by the Council, added to which are the HIP priorities and spend profiles agreed by the Council on 27 March 2025.
- 1.3 In total the consolidated HIP has a net Investment profile of £756m of investment over the forthcoming 5 years. Gross investment would be expected to be above that level when external grants, funding and other contributions are considered, some of which will only be confirmed as project development progresses.
- 1.4 This consolidated programme is part of the longer-term strategy for the HIP which creates a potential £2.1bn of capital investment over a twenty-year period with the objective of tackling the major capital challenges that Highland Council faces: creating a new generation of community based facilities in the form of Points of Delivery (PODs) as part of the drive towards a new integrated Operating Model for service delivery; included in that is a programme of improvements to our school estate, with 92 of our 197 operational schools currently rated as "C Poor" for condition and/or suitability; also, investment for transport and roads; schools and community facilities; depots and offices.
- 1.5 While this report is primarily a consolidation of Investment Plans based on decisions made by Members to date, the report also provides update on certain key projects where there is, or expected to be, some revision to cost, funding or profile and how this will be addressed.

- 1.6 This report, and the Council's HIP remains founded on the core principles of the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities which are *Affordability*, *Prudence and Sustainability*. The Council's HIP is founded on and operates within a range of prudential indicators and limits approved by Council on 27 March within the Treasury Management Strategy Statement, and within that Strategy the agreed local cap that projected borrowing costs for the General Fund will remain within 10% of total revenue funding for the Council. It should be noted that the initially agreed reports on the Highland Investment Plan was accompanied by a substantial forecasting of levels of borrowing required and the affordability to do so in relation to the revenue budget of the council.
- 1.7 The report also sets out some key next steps over the coming year with regard to the Highland Investment Plan and further reporting to Members.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
 - i. **Note** the update provided regarding the consolidated Highland Investment Plan and estimated £756m of net investment over the 5-year period; and
 - ii. **Agree** that officers progress actions to ensure the programme is managed within the overall funding envelope, as described within Section 7.

3 Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** the funding and affordability parameters for the HIP and the Council's overall borrowing and treasury management have been previously agreed by Council, most recently on 27 March 2025 and Members agreed the Treasury Management Strategy Statement. The consolidated HIP as set out within this report reflects decisions made by Council over the past year on capital project priorities and budgets, and the HIP will continue to operate within the agreed funding and affordability envelope. The report highlights some emerging cost pressures that require to be managed within the totality of the agreed HIP, with the report describing the methodology and process for doing so.
- 3.2 **Legal** delivery of the HIP will significantly assist the discharge of various statutory powers and duties of the Council, including those related to Roads, Education and Health and Safety.
- 3.3 **Risk** the HIP is taken forward with appropriate project and programme management arrangements in place. Project risks are managed at project/project board level, and with appropriate reporting/escalation via the Officer Capital Programme Board and Strategic Committees as required.
- 3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** – the adopted approach to health and safety was included in the December 2023 report to Council. This set out a hierarchical approach to where we would prioritise capital resources, specifically: "where the health and safety of staff and other service users, stakeholders, or visitors are at actual or potential risk (section 9.5)."

3.5 **Gaelic** – The HIP will have a positive impact in relation to maximising the objectives of the Gaelic Language Plan. Several schools that currently deliver Gaelic Medium Education will be in scope for investment, with others potentially having the capacity to expand their provision. There are also opportunities to engage with the Scottish Government to secure capital finding for the specific purpose of investing in Gaelic education. The implementation of this approach will be modelled as part of the ongoing process.

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 This is a monitoring and update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

5 Background

- 5.1 Prior to the establishment of the Highland Investment Plan, the Council maintained a rolling multi-year capital programme, which in recent years was based on a 5-year forward plan. The current 5-year capital programme runs up to and including 2028/29 and was last considered and approved by Council in <u>June 2024</u>. **Appendix 1** of this report sets out that agreed programme. The intent is, through this report, this programme is consolidated within the overall Highland Investment Plan which was agreed by Council on 27 March 2025 (**Appendix 2** contains the list of agreed Phase 1 HIP Projects)), giving a single and complete HIP setting out all General Fund Investment priorities for the forthcoming 5-year period.
- 5.2 The profile of that legacy programme, was and remains significantly front loaded, for a range of reasons covered in past reports to Council, including:-
 - legacy of past capital programmes and decisions made at those times which had front-loaded investment;
 - increased inflation driven costs on existing project commitments;
 - year on year slippage in project delivery, and carry forward commitments; and
 - the accumulated effect of the above, reflected particularly across 2024/25 2026/27.
- 5.3 The tapering down of that part of the capital investment profile in the latter years (2027/28 and 2028/29), was based upon:-
 - the need to ensure capital investment was affordable, prudent and sustainable;
 - September 2023 decisions to re-base capital to address those concerns; and
 - the introduction of the HIP and principle of 2% earmarking, which gave the opportunity and foundation to take a longer-term, strategic, and sustainable approach to capital investment.

5.4 When the existing 5-year programme and the HIP profile agreed 27 March 2025 are consolidated, the current consolidated HIP is as summarised below. This takes account of the estimated carry forward from 2024/25, which is subject to finalisation of the Annual Accounts and year-end position. As was noted in reports considered on 27 March, this profile of capital is forecast to be within the Prudential Indicators agreed by the Council, including the 10% cap.

	24/25 £m	25/26 £m	26/27 £m	27/28 £m	28/29 £m	29/30 £m	5 Year Total £m
HIP - 27 March 25 - Roads & Buildings	0	25.3	50.3	100.5	126.9	94.2	397.2
5 year investment plan - June 24	155.2	100.6	91.9	52.4	40.5	41.0 *	326.4
Estimated c/fwd from 2024/25	-32.7	32.7					32.7
Net Consolidated HIP Totals	122.5	158.6	142.2	152.9	167.4	135.2	756.3
*estimated new year 5 added							

6 Funding and Affordability Context

- 6.1 The figures as set out within this report are founded on the HIP funding strategy as agreed by Council, i.e., the earmarking annually of a sum equivalent to 2% of Council tax income year on year, and overall borrowing costs remaining within 10% of the total revenue funding of the Council. The 10% cap applies across the totality of the Council's General Fund capital investment and is a key measure to ensure plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable.
- 6.2 A core underlying assumption within that strategy and reflected within the May 2024 report to Council that established the HIP, is that the core investment programme (see section 5 and **Appendix 1**) is based on an annual core capital allocation 2029/30 onwards (i.e. beyond the duration of what was the current 5-year capital programme) of c£40m net p.a. to provide a baseline level of capital, which is supplemented by the HIP and 2% funding envelope.
- 6.3 That c£40m funding basis was founded upon the following principles, and to provide for a core level of capital to meet a range of needs including amongst others, the property estate generally, school improvements, infrastructure including flood schemes, waste, harbours, bridges etc, fleet, equipment and ICT.
 - Current levels of Scottish Government General Capital grant continuing at circa £20m p.a. on an ongoing basis.
 - Borrowing to support this core investment programme element of £20m p.a.
 - Combined giving a c£40m capital funding envelope (net) with scope for this being supplemented by other external funding streams (develop contributions, other grant funding and external contributions).
 - The rolling forward of current 'generic' capital programme budgets at current levels, plus an inflation allowance, which could be accommodated within that c£40m estimate.

6.4 While this report reflects the addition of a 2029/30 core investment programme assumption of £41m, on the basis as described above, the intent is this will be populated by the rolling forward of the generic capital programme budgets with specific project priorities and commitments, as is the case now, being considered via the respective Strategic Committee at the appropriate time. There are no new or additional project priority decisions / recommendations reflected within this report.

7 Project Cost Updates and Revisions

- 7.1 There are inevitably changes that arise across the broad range of projects being taken forward by the Council. Costs will change and in the current inflationary environment the live risk is project costs are continuing to rise. There can also be changes in funding assumptions, representing both opportunities for new or additional funding, and also managing implications for any reduction in funding assumed. Past reports to Council have referenced increases in Scottish Government capital grant funding for 2025/26 which can assist with managing project cost pressures. Project delivery timescales can also alter, and new or amended needs can arise. The Officer Capital Programme Board, chaired by the Assistant Chief Executive Place, provides Senior Officer oversight, delivery and management of the Investment programme as agreed by Council.
- 7.2 This report describes a number of known or estimated project level cost and related revisions that require to be addressed. These are summarised in **Appendix 3** and will be managed as set out in 7.3 below.
- 7.3 Given the absolute need to ensure the HIP remains with the overall budget and affordability parameters already agreed by the Council, the following strategy for addressing these matters will be progressed.
 - For 2025/26, it is proposed that a 10%/£15m 'over-programming' is built into the HIP. This reflects an intentional and deliberate objective of programming spend beyond the intended budget level. This is a legitimate programme management approach and is intended to recognise that the scale of investment planned, and likelihood of some project slippage, is such that the out-turn position for the year should still be able to be managed within budgeted totals. This also provides a mechanism, short-term only, to manage some of the cost pressures described above within 2025/26;
 - Over-programming is not a funding solution however, and therefore to maintain within agreed totals and affordability parameters, in the period 2026/27 and beyond there will be a need to re-profile project plans to compensate for the cost pressures as described. Given the cost pressures represent only around 2% of the totality of the 5-year investment, it is not unreasonable to expect this can be managed over the subsequent period of the programme; and
 - The Officer Capital Programme Board, chaired by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place will progress the re-profiling activity, taking account also of the final 2024/25 year-end position and carry-forward once known.

- 7.4 There are a number of other matters which are not addressed within this report but will be reflected in future reports to Members:-
 - the final out-turn position for 2024/25 will be formalised as part of year end Annual Accounts closure by 30 June, with the result that carry forward (of over and underspends) from 2024/25 will need reflected in revised project budgets for 2025/26 and beyond;
 - following decisions made by the Council within its revenue budget, regarding the capital staff recharge multiplier, there is ongoing officer work to re-based project fee budgets in light of those decisions and the increased revenue funding provided to address the legacy issues arising from the multiplier; and
 - as referenced above, any resulting re-profiling in future years to compensate the over-programming and management of pressures in 2025/26.

Designation:	Assistant Chief Executive – Place
Date:	6 May 2025
Authors:	Brian Porter, Chief Officer – Corporate Finance Finlay MacDonald, Chief Officer – Property and Assets Robert Campbell, Service Lead – Capital Planning and Estate Strategy
Background Papers:	None
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – 5-year Investment Plan June 2024 Appendix 2 – Highland Investment Plan March 2025 Appendix 3 – List of known or estimated project cost revisions

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APPENDIX 1

	Total	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	28
	Net	Net	Net	Net	Net	-
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£
CHOOLS - MAJOR PROJECTS	25,050	3,550	1,550	10,050	8,800	1
narleston Academy	1,500	300	300	300	300	
lloden Academy	3,500	1,500	500	500	500	
ockton Residence	1,500	300	300	300	300	
auly Primary School	800	200	200	200	200	
Invegan Primary School	1,500	1,100	100	100	100	
rk Primary School	250	50	50	50	50	
Clement's School	500	100	100	100	100	
magrain Primary School	15,500	-	-	8,500	7,250 ·	-
HOOLS - LEIP FUNDED	110,700	55,656	34,973	18,771	1,300	
n 3-18 Campus - LEIP 1	36,956	34,156	1,800	1,000	-	
irn Academy - LEIP 2	54,771	14,000	24,000	15,771	1,000	
oadford Primary - LEIP 2	18,973	7,500	9,173	2,000	300	
HOOLS - ESTATE MANAGEMENT	25,740	4,658	5,155	5,136	5,264	ł
hool Estate Improvement Programme	25,125	4,547	4,774	5,013	5,264	
hool Residential Properties	615	111	381	123	-	
OPERTY ESTATE ASSET MANAGEMENT	45,546	8,243	8,655	9,088	9,542	1
uncil Property Estate Investment	45,546	8,243	8,655	9,088	9,542	1
MMUNITY AND LEISURE FACILITIES	2,221	402	422	443	466	
H Properties - Life Cycle Investment	1,358	246	258	271	285	
mmunity & Leisure Facilities	863	156	164	172	181	
EALTH & SOCIAL CARE PROGRAMME	2,696	488	512	538	565	
ult Services (NHS)	2,000	362	380	399	419	
ildren's Services/Out of Authority	696	126	132	139	146	
USING (NON-HRA)	8,600	2,466	1,634	1,500	1,500	
vate Sector Housing Grants	7,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	
ngman Travelling People Site	1,100	966	134	-	-	
ADS	95,334	23,025	21,956	27,305	12,955	1
ads General Infrastructure Improvements	79,045	20,710	21,160	21,559	7,809	
90 Stromeferry Rockface Stabilisation	1,750	550	50	550	50	
51/B862 South Loch Ness Road Improvements	2,500	400	500	600	500	
hes Roundabout	9,900	150	150	4,500	4,500	
ngwall Development Infrastructure	740	-	50	50	50	
er Routes to School/Cycle Walking Safer Streets	1,399	1,215	46	46	46	
IDGES	21,091	8,787	6,048	2,033	2,257	
jor Bridges	8,936	1,617	1,698	1,783	1,872	
63 Invercoe Bridge, Lochaber	120	120	-	-	-	
ver Bridge	11,500	6,900	4,350	250	-	
irmary Bridge	535	150	-	-	385	
TIVE TRAVEL	4,419	800	840	882	926	
Shelters	109	20	21	22	23	
tive Travel Transformation	4,310	780	819	860	903	

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APPENDIX 1

	Total Net £'000	24/25 Net £'000	25/26 Net £'000	26/27 Net £'000	27/28 Net £'000	28/29 Net £'000
CAR PARKS Rose Street Multistorey	707 707	417 417	200 200	30 30	30 30	30 30
LIGHTING & COMMUNICATIONS Lighting Structural Works	2,206 2,206	400 400	419 419	440 440	462 462	485 485
FLOOD PROTECTION	3,855	2,284	365	383	403	420
Surface Water Management Plans	248	45	47	49	52	55
Coastal Flood Protection Studies	271	49	51	54	57	60
Coastal Change Management Flood Risk Management Act	299 1,400	299 254	- 267	- 280	- 294	- 305
Caol FPS	1,637	1,637	-	-	-	-
COASTAL ROCK ARMOUR REFURNISHMENT	210	210	-	-	-	-
Braehead Coastal Protection	210	210	-	-	-	-
HARBOURS & FERRIES	21,528	3,978	8,039	7,869	1,400	242
Harbours Health & Safety and General Structural	1,100	200	209	219	230	242
Kinlochbervie Harbour	3,000	-	-	2,000	1,000	-
Lochinver Harbour	3,000	500	2,500	-	-	-
Portree Harbour	2,000	20	-	1,980	-	-
Uig Ferry Terminal and Link Span*	2,428	2,428	-	-	-	-
Corran Ferry Infrastructure	10,000	830	5,330	3,670	170	-
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT	11,109	9,850	1,259	-	-	-
Inverness Castle*	10,823	9,564	1,259	-	-	-
Town & Countryside Regeneration	185	185	-	-	-	-
Wester Ross Visitor Hubs	63	63	-	-	-	-
Misc Assets, Bridges & Structures	38	38	-	-	-	-
	6,140	2,325	1,075	2,191	470	79
Landfill Restoration Programme Fort William WTS	4,032 1,853	481	972 55	2,140	416	23
Household Green Bin Replacements	1,853	1,798 35	55 37	- 39	- 41	- 43
Waste Recycling Centre Office/Welfare Facilities	60	11	11	12	13	43 13
BEREAVEMENT SERVICES	4,168	1,100	1,575	405	565	523
Crematorium	1,200	50	1,150	-	-	-
Burial Ground Kilmorack	120	-	-	-	120	-
Burial Ground Glen Nevis	265	265	-	-	-	-
Burial Ground Dores	254	254	-	-	-	-
Burial Ground Alness	130	130	-	-	-	-
War Memorials	1 25	1	-	-	-	-
Memorial Safety Bereavement Services General	25 2,173	5 395	5 420	5 400	5 440	5 518
PUBLIC CONVENIENCES	166	30	32	33	35	36
Public Convenience Upgrades	166	30	32	33	35	36

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	Total Net £'000	24/25 Net £'000	25/26 Net £'000	26/27 Net £'000	27/28 Net £'000	28/29 Net £'000
PLAY PARKS	732	732	-	-	-	-
Play Parks Renewal	732	732	-	-	-	-
VEHICLES & PLANT	13,268	2,753	2,753	2,654	2,554	2,554
Vehicle & Plant Purchases	12,768	2,553	2,553	2,554	2,554	2,554
Mechanical Street Sweepers	500	200	200	100	-	-
ICT	15,788	3,688	3,123	2,200	2,892	3,885
ICT Core Equipment	13,068	1,988	2,103	2,200	2,892	3,885
Care First System Replacement	500	250	250	-	-	-
SWAN2 Implementation*	2,220	1,450	770	-	-	-
COMMUNITY REGENERATION CAPITAL GRANTS	331	331	-	-	-	-
Nature Restoration Fund	331	331	-	-	-	-
ESTIMATED BUDGET CARRY FWD FROM 23/24 NEAR FINAL	19,014	19,014	-	-	-	-
CAPITAL PROGRAMME TOTALS	440,619	155,187	100,585	91,951	52,386	40,510

Project additions arising from the Highland Investment Plan (May 2024) will be reflected in due course and based on subsequent decisions on project cost, phasing and future year funding decisions.

*Project budgets are either wholly or partly self-funded (ie from income generated or savings).

Appendix 2 - Phase 1 HIP Projects - Capital Expenditure Profiles 27 March 2025

Location	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Tatala
Location	24/25 £m	25/26 £m	26/27 £m	27/28 £m	28/29 £m	29/30 £m	30/31 £m	31/32 £m	Totals
Beauly		3.0	8.0	8.0	1.0				20.0
Charleston		1.0	4.0	28.0	28.0	10.0	8.0	1.0	80.0
Dingwall		2.0	5.0	17.0	17.0	8.0	1.0		50.0
Dunvegan		4.0	10.0	3.0	1.0				18.0
Fortrose		2.0	5.0	6.0	6.0	4.0	1.0		24.0
Inverness High		2.0	4.0	7.0	6.0	4.0	1.0		24.0
Thurso		1.0	3.0	4.0	40.0	40.0	11.0	1.0	100.0
Sub-Totals	0.0	15.0	39.0	73.0	99.0	66.0	22.0	2.0	316.0
Programme Contingency		1.0	2.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	1.0		16.0
Sub-Totals	0.0	16.0	41.0	77.0	103.0	70.0	23.0	2.0	332.0
Other Priorities (Averaged Over Yrs. 2-7)		9.33	9.33	9.33	9.33	9.33	9.33		56.0
Total Expenditure	0.0	25.3	50.3	86.3	112.3	79.3	32.3	2.0	388.0
Indicative HIP Quantum	47.9	51.9	56.0	50.3	55.5	60.4	66.0	0.0	388.0
Cumulative HIP Quantum	47.9	99.8	155.8	206.1	261.6	322.0	388.0	388.0	
Cumulative Expenditure Totals	0.0	25.3	75.7	162.0	274.3	353.7	386.0	388.0	
Over/Under-Programming	-100.0%	-74.6%	-51.4%	-21.4%	4.9%	9.8%	-0.5%	0.0%	

Summary Totals – 27 March 2025

Total Expenditure – HIP Buildings	0.0	25.3	50.3	86.3	112.3	79.3	32.3	2.0	388.0
Total Expenditure – HIP Roads	-	-	-	14.2	14.6	14.9	15.3	-	59.0
Total Expenditure – HIP Total	0.0	25.3	50.3	100.5	126.9	94.2	47.6	2.0	446.8

Appendix 3 - Estimated Project Cost Revisions				
	Additional			
Project	Cost Impact	Comments		
	(£m)			

Previously approved additional funding allocations, which were to be accommodated within the current approved capital programme funding envelope, based on the funding principles agreed in May 2024.

Dingwall Business Park	F0 150	Additional funding was approved in December 2024 for ongoing flood mitigation works, to offer a solution to some of the risks to the town from flooding on the River Peffery that will help unlock some of the planning issues.
Nairn Academy	1 +6305	Additional funding was approved in 2024 to allow the project to progress as planned. Work commenced in July 2024 and is on programme to be operational by August 2026.
Various Schools	£0.650	Additional funding was approved in June 2024 for further essential works at Beauly Primary and St Clement's Schools and the new access road at Dunvegan Primary School.
Sub-Totals	£7.105	

Generic budget headings - various pressures and unplanned expenditure in recent years.

Bereavement Services	£0.750	Essential works at Crematorium to support ongoing operations and service provision
Non HRA - Spean Bridge Travellers Site	£0.210	Essential health and safety and compliance works
Private Sector Housing Grants	£0.838	Increase to allow obligations to be met and support persons remaining within their homes
Property Estate Asset Management	£5.000	Contingency related to recent pressures include HAAC and RAAC remedial works at locations such as Thurso High School, Charleston Academy and existing Nairn Academy. Quantum to be confirmed following year end finalisation.
Public Conveniences	£0.170	Cost pressures arising from project profile and delivery
Roads	£0.700	Cost pressures arising from project profile and delivery
Sub-Totals	£7.668	

Major projects where there are known or potential budget pressures that are currently being evaluated.

Major Projects		
Inverness Castle	ТВС	There is the potential for some increase costs arising as the project nears completion
Naver Bridge	£2.600	Works on site and increase costs estimated. This major bridge replacement is currently under construction and is part of a wider replacement programme, increased costs on this project will be reprofiled from existing allocation from the generic budget line for Major Bridges.
Tornagrain	ТВС	The approved capital programme included an assumed level of developer contributions over the 5-year period. These are currently being reviewed based on actual completions and future development rates which may impact income cashflow.