

The Highland Council

Agenda Item	5
Report No	CCC/12/25

Committee: Climate Change

Date: 21 May 2025

Report Title: Highland Adapts Update and Funding Request

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive – Place

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report outlines Highland Adapts' progress in delivering a collaborative, place-based response to the region's climate risks. It highlights the economic and social urgency of adaptation, provides a summary of achievements, and presents a forward programme aligned to the Council's forthcoming Adaptation Strategy.
- 1.2 The report seeks approval for a £15,000 contribution to ensure the partnership's continued delivery and evolution in 2025/26.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:-
- i. **Note** progress to date, the current and planned activities, and the partnership's role in supporting the Highland Council's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy;
 - ii. **Note** the national recognition of Highland Adapts' approach as a model for regional adaptation partnership; and
 - iii. **Agree** to recommend to the Council the approval of £15,000 of funding to support the Highland Adapts partnership during financial year 2025/26.

3 Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** - There are financial resource implications associated with this report in the request for a funding contribution of £15,000, alongside other partner organisations, to support Highland Adapts over financial year 2025/26. As Highland Adapts are performing an integral function in the development of the Council's adaptation strategy development, funding requirements were known for 2025/26 and are included in the funding awarded to the Net Zero Programme under the delivery plan.

It should be noted that currently there is no funding stream identified beyond 25/26 so future funding will need to be identified and secured to deliver the Council's future support of this valued regional programme.

- 3.2 **Legal** - There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. However, 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 ensures that the key cross-cutting risks of climate change are identified and addressed, thereby helping to protect service delivery.
- 3.3 **Risk** - There are financial and reputation risks relating to this report from the Council in not taking sufficient action to prepare for changes due to climate change impacts. The increasing public awareness of the climate and ecological emergency, and the increasing frequency of extreme weather events support these risks.
- 3.4 **Health and Safety** (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people) - There are no Health and Safety implications arising directly from this report; however, inaction may lead to health and safety implications in the future due to the impacts of climate change affecting plant, process and people.
- 3.5 **Gaelic** - There are no Gaelic implications arising from this report.

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 making any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.

- 4.3 This is an update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

5 Background Context to Highland Adapts

- 5.1 The Highland Region is already experiencing climate change impacts, including warmer temperatures, shifting rainfall patterns, rising sea levels and an increase in flooding, wildfires, and landslips. These impacts are expected to intensify, affecting people, infrastructure, services, and the environment.
- 5.2 Climate change has far-reaching effects on the economy, society, and natural environment. Because climate change risks are interconnected, organisations, businesses, and communities must work together to build resilience, for instance, transport disruption can directly impact healthcare delivery and other essential services.
- 5.3 Adaptation involves preparing for and responding to climate-related risks to build resilience. Terms like "climate readiness" and "climate-proofing" are often used interchangeably.

- 5.4 Established in 2021, Highland Adapts is a place-based partnership bringing together communities, businesses, land managers, and the public sector to create a climate-ready Highland. The partnership is governed by nine founding organisations: The Highland Council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Zero Waste Scotland, Verture (formerly Sniffer), NatureScot, Forestry and Land Scotland, The Highlands and Islands Climate Hub, Changeworks, and NHS Highland. Its broader network spans Scotland, and beyond.
- 5.5 The partnership's initial workplan focused on key three areas:-
1. **Governance and leadership** – Establishing robust governance arrangements.
 2. **Understanding the challenge** – Conducting a regional risk and opportunity assessment.
 3. **Planning and implementation** – Engaging stakeholders to build shared understanding and drive coordinated action.
- 5.6 The Highland Council hosted the partnership's budget and staff until April 2024, when this enabling function transferred to Verture (formerly Sniffer), which also delivers the Adaptation Scotland Programme.

6 Highland Adapts – Achievements to date

6.1 Economic Analysis of Climate Change Impacts on Highland:

In September 2024, Highland Adapts published the regions first economic assessment of climate change impacts. This included [regional](#) and sector specific reports on [energy](#), [food and drink](#), and [forestry and timber](#). Key findings include: -

- Gross Domestic Product (GDP) losses of up to -1.5% annually by the 2050s, rising up to -3.3% annually by the 2080s.
- Flood-related damages are estimated to double from £20m annually mid-century to £40m annually by the end of the century.
- The economic costs of wildfires, currently estimated at £0.3bn/year, could quadruple by mid-century.
- Significant risks to energy generation, distribution, and net zero delivery, with minor benefits from reduced wintertime heating.
- Increased climate risks to salmon and whisky production.
- Higher costs in the forestry and timber sector, due to high winds, drought, pests, disease, and wildfires.

- 6.2 The findings highlight the urgent need for climate adaptation strategies. Highland Adapts will support priority actions emerging from this analysis during its next phase.

6.3 **Promoting knowledge exchange on climate resilience, and climate risks and opportunities.** This has included:-

- **Public Sector Adaptation Gatherings** – Regular events for sharing experiences, learnings, and challenges relating to adaptation.
- **Highland Weather & Climate Story Map** – An online resource collecting experiences of weather and climate impacts on the Highland region.
- **Community Climate Advocates** - A regional network ensuring adaptation is embedded in community action and authors of the first Highland Climate Charter.
- [The Highland Charter for Climate, Nature, and Health](#) – Relaunched in 2024 with an expanded focus, this pledge integrates climate and nature with wellbeing goals.

7 **Programme of Activity 2025-26**

7.1 Highland Adapts will focus on completing key outputs, strengthening its structure, and launching community resilience projects:-

- **The First Highland Climate Risk and Opportunity Assessment:** The full regional assessment will be completed by December 2025.
- **Highland Community Planning Partnership:** Ongoing assistance to integrate climate risk into local plans and processes.

7.2 **National Leadership:** Place-based collaboration is a key objective of Scottish National Adaptation Plan 2024-2029 (SNAP3). Highland Adapts has been nationally recognised as a leading model for regional adaptation partnerships in Scotland. This recognition reinforces the partnership's role in supporting local implementation of national climate policy and offers opportunities to share learning with other regions.

7.3 **Partnership Development:** A business plan and funding strategy will be produced to ensure sustainability, alongside research into best practices and success indicators.

7.4 **Circular Economy Research:** Analysis on the role of circular economy principles in climate adaptation, with a focus on future supply chain risks in the Highlands. The research concentrates on the food and drink sector.

7.5 **Phase 2:** A restructured model will be launched in Q2, with Highland Adapts moving, in Q4, towards supporting action directly within Highland communities. This phase will include identifying and catalysing the first round of priority community-focused projects.

8 **Supporting the Council's Adaptation Strategy**

8.1 Highland Adapts will support the Council by:-

- providing local data to identify climate vulnerabilities and future costs; and
- facilitating access to policy insights and peer support via national networks.

This ensures the Council's strategy reflects local risks and aligns with national best practice.

9 Financial Information

- 9.1 The Highland Council has supported Highland Adapts as a core partner since its inception in 2019. A breakdown of income and expenditure for financial years 2024/25 and 2025/26 is set out in Appendix 1. Projected costs for 2025/26 are £92,856, with £56,309 already secured from partners. A £15,000 Council contribution is requested to sustain delivery through the next phase.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

Date: 10 April 2025

Authors: Claire Weaver, Climate Change Coordinator (Adaptation)

Background Papers: Highland Adapts Progress [Report](#)

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Highland Adapts Income and Expenditure for 2024/25 and 2025/26

Highland Adapts Budget Update
April 2025

Appendix 1.

2025-26							
			Confirmed	Projected	Remaining funding required		TOTAL
INCOME	Core function	24-25 Carry Over	£ 16,714				
		HIE	£ 26,309				
		Climate Hub (subject to approval)		£ 5,000			
		Highland Council (subject to approval)		£ 15,000			
		NHS Highland	£ 15,000				
		Forestry and Land Scotland	£ 15,000				
			£ 73,023	£ 20,000	£ -		£ 93,023
	Project funding	Scottish Government (proposal submitted)		£ 60,000			
				£ 60,000			£ 60,000
	GRAND TOTAL		£ 73,023	£ 80,000	£ -		£ 153,023
			Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
EXPENDITURE	HA Climate Resilience Manager (FTE April 2025 - March 2026)	Payroll costs + 30% overheads +10% contingency.	£ 17,776.48	£ 17,776.48	£ 17,776.48	£ 17,776.48	£ 71,106
	Additional Verture staffing: - 15 days Head of Climate Ready Placemaking - 5 days Communications Manager	Based on standard Verture day rates	£ 3,063	£ 3,063	£ 3,063	£ 3,063	£ 12,250
	Communications budget	Risk assessment design and print				£ 5,500	£ 5,500
	Travel budget	Baed on 24-25 plus inflation	£ 200	£ 200	£ 200	£ 200	£ 800
	Accommodation budget	Based on 24-25 plus inflation	£ 175	£ 175	£ 175	£ 175	£ 700
	Website and other IT costs (annual)	Based on 24-25 costs plus inflation	£ 375	£ 375	£ 375	£ 375	£ 1,500
	Meeting costs (catering, room hire etc)	Including away day in Q1	£ 550	£ 150	£ 150	£ 150	£ 1,000
	TOTAL		£ 22,139	£ 21,739	£ 21,739	£ 27,239	£ 92,856
			Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
	Additional freelance support for risk assessment completion	SG funded		£ 5,000	£ 5,000		£ 10,000
	Implementing governance transition	SG funded		£ 10,000	£ 20,000	£ 20,000	£ 50,000
	TOTAL						£ 60,000
	GRAND TOTAL						£ 152,856
	Balance						£ 167

**Highland Adapts Budget
Final Position 2024/2025**

	2024-25			Whole year
Income	Core function	23-24 contributions carried over		£ 75,000
All income is confirmed.		Remaining balance transferred from Highland Council		£ 11,447
		Highland Council		£ 15,000
		Zero Waste Scotland		£ 15,000
		Accrued Interest		£ 689
		Subtotal		£ 117,136
	Project funding	Zero Waste Scotland - Circular Economy Research		£ 16,200
		Scottish Government - Business Development		£ 39,840
		Subtotal		£ 56,040
		GRAND TOTAL		£ 173,176
Expenditure	Core function expenditure	Verture expenditure Jan - Mar 2024 (invoiced April 2024)	See start of year budget for breakdown	£ 15,716
		HA Climate Resilience Manager (FTE April 24 - Mar 25).	Payroll costs + 30% overheads +10% contingency (NB does not include time allocated to Business Development project - see below)	£ 62,658
		Additional Verture staffing: - 15 days Head of Climate Ready Placemaking - 1 days Managing Director - 5 days Communications Manager	Verture standard day rates	£ 9,957
		Remaining Communications budget (design and launch for Risk Assessment)	Will not be required in 24-25	£ -
		Commonplace- final contract extension		£ 1,380
		Economic Assessment Design and Print		£ 2,258
		Facebook promotion for Story Map		£ 570
		Travel budget		£ 506
		Accommodation budget		£ 588
		Website and other IT costs (annual)		£ 1,437
		Meeting costs (catering, room hire etc)		£ 353
		Highland Adapts contribution towards HA Climate Resilience Manager HR	Split with Verture	£ 4,997
		Subtotal		£ 100,422
	Project expenditure	Zero Waste Scotland - Circular Economy Research	Verture Staffing	£ 1,200
			Grant/contract for research	£ 15,000
		Scottish Government - Business Development	Contract for Business Development work	£ 23,000
			Verture Staffing (including HA Climate Resilience Manager)	£ 16,840
		Subtotal		£ 56,040
		GRAND TOTAL		£ 156,462
		Balance		£ 16,714