

Agenda Item	9
Report No	NC/13/25

The Highland Council

Committee: Nairnshire Committee

Date: 26 May 2025

Report Title: Place Planning Update: Our Nairnshire – Local Place Plan

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report invites Members to have regard to and take note of the Nairnshire Local Place Plan – [Our Nairnshire](#) (**Appendix 2**) as a statement of community priorities and aspirations for the Nairnshire area in relation to spatial planning, asset management, development and investment, and community action. In this regard, the Plan has potential to guide and support future activity and fundraising for the benefit of Nairnshire undertaken by not only the local development trust who facilitated development of the plan, but equally any other community actors, public sector partners and potential investors.
- 1.2 Our Nairnshire acts as a hybrid Local Place Plan and Area Place Plan, representing the Community Council areas across Nairnshire, and providing a vision for vibrant and sustainable communities. This is explained further in Section 6. Based on extensive public and stakeholder engagement, the plan brings together proposed priorities for action by the local community and public agencies to address issues of local significance - including environmental sustainability, employment, town centre regeneration, green spaces and leisure, and ‘getting around’ (travel, transport and accessibility).

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
 - i. Note Our Nairnshire is both a Local Place Plan under national planning legislation and an Area Place Plan, in line with Highland’s Place Based Framework for Planning and Investment in Communities (HC/34/21).
 - ii. Note that when validated and registered as a Local Place Plan by Highland Council’s Development Plans Team, the Plan will be taken into account as a source of evidence, alongside other sources of evidence, in preparation of the Highland Local Development Plan (HLDP) - required by the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019.
 - iii. Agree to adopt the plan as a source of evidence of community aspiration, to inform wider decision making about spatial planning, service delivery, options

for asset management, development and investment for the Nairn and Cawdor Ward.

3 Implications

- 3.1 Resource: No additional resource is requested. In the event of prospective Highland Council support for initiatives proposed in the Plan, future resource implications would be subject to appropriate Committee or Service decision making.

Future public agency support for place planning activity will require input from services across the Council and beyond to provide further informed guidance as to the deliverability and appropriate approach which may be taken for community aspirations to deliver interventions identified in the Plan.

Place Plans provide a framework to inform targeting resources, service delivery and attract external investment according to local need. Plans such as Our Nairnshire 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: In accordance with the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, registered Local Place Plans form part of the evidence reviewed in preparation of the new Highland Local Development Plan.
- 3.3 Risk: Developing a place-based approach is encouraged through the Scottish Government's Place Principle, the Christie Commission recommendations and Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. Our Nairnshire aspires to enhance community voice and participation in determining priorities for local development and investment across the area. For community action to deliver the plan to be feasible, this will require clear communication and coordination between community actors, public sector partners and elected members – including appropriate guidance on relevant regulatory strictures, as well as opportunities and limitations regarding available resources.
- 3.4 Health and Safety: no implications.
- 3.5 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 is 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

4.3.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment screening has been undertaken and is set out at Appendix 1. The conclusions have been subject to the relevant Manager Review and Approval.

4.3.2 The Screening process has concluded that there are positive impacts on promoting equality, addressing inequality and targeting the priorities of people across Nairn and Cawdor Ward area – therefore a full impact assessment is not required. Members are asked to consider the following summary to support the decision-making process.

4.3.3	Impact Assessment Area	Conclusion of Screening
	Equality	Children and Young People – <i>Positive</i> Children affected by disability – <i>No impact</i> Older adults – <i>No impact</i>
	Socio-economic	<i>Positive</i>
	Human Rights	<i>No impact</i>
	Children's Rights and Well-being	<i>No impact</i>
	Island and Mainland Rural	<i>No impact</i>
	Climate Change	<i>Positive</i>
	Data Rights	<i>No impact</i>

5 Background

5.1 Our Nairnshire is both a Local Place Plan and an Area Place Plan. The Plan was initiated by Nairn Improvement Community Enterprise (NICE) following a mandate arising at a community stakeholder meeting facilitated by HIE, Highland Council and Community Enterprise Scotland, in March 2023, which identified place planning as a key priority for the community and local economic development.

5.2 The process for preparation of the Plan was overseen by a steering group of community representatives comprising a member from each of the active community councils from Nairn and Cawdor Ward, the Trust (NICE), Nairn Business Improvement District and advisory representation from Highland Council's Place Planning Project Manager. Coordination of the process was supported through the Community Regeneration Fund. Community engagement to identify local priorities and subsequent authoring of the draft plan were also delivered by Planning Aid Scotland (PAS) through support from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. While the plan has been prepared and registered in the Trust's name (as a valid 'Community Body' in terms of the Community Empowerment Act), its representativeness of a wider community voice has been delivered through a robust, transparent and participative process. Plan preparation was overseen by a group of community stakeholders with ad-hoc guidance from relevant public officials and independent oversight from PAS as a leading authority on place planning, ensuring that the *content* of the plan is robustly representative of community voice as identified through an extensive process of public engagement.

5.3 The Plan sets out the aspirations and ambitions of the Nairnshire community which:

- Articulate long term shared strategic outcomes for the area.

- Support community action and provide partners with evidence for funding bids.
- Support informed local and national decision making about planning policy, public services, budgeting, and other policy areas.
- Build on the good work that is already happening across Nairnshire to make the most of future opportunities and new investment.
- Provide a framework for individual local communities to prepare their own more detailed plans should they wish.

6 Understanding the hybrid nature of *Our Nairnshire*

What is an Area Place Plan?

- 6.1 In partnership with local communities, public agencies, private and third sector, Highland Council has facilitated the development of 'place-based' approaches to planning for the future of each sub-regional area. During 2023 - 2025, area-based plans have been produced for each area, as a statement of local priorities for development and investment, service delivery and community action.
- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 In Highland, sub regional Area Place Plans have been developed to bring forward increased clarity on local priorities alongside an overview of existing plans and strategies with a bearing on the area, so, collectively, we are clearer on what we are working towards. Where feasible, these Area Place Plans have been led by local community anchor organisations (as an alternative to direct facilitation by public agencies), in partnership with public agencies and other community stakeholders. Our Nairnshire is one such example of a community led Area Place Plan, alongside others undertaken by community bodies representing the Black Isle, Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh and North West Sutherland. Community engagement undertaken in preparation of these place plans has brought forward detailed views on local priorities which build a shared understanding of how Place underpins development, service delivery and how communities and organisations can work together. Area Place Plans will be a future guide to help get the best impact for people living in an area, based on shared understanding of local priorities and aspirations.
- 6.4 **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 and use of land and buildings in their local area. 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. Where proposed plans are determined to have complied with the requirements of the National Planning Framework 4 and associated regulations, they are 'validated' by the Development Plans Team, following which they comprise a source of evidence for preparation of the Local Development Plan. While Local Place Plans have a particular role in the planning system, they may also highlight other priorities for service delivery and community action on a non-statutory basis.

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

7 How the Plan was prepared

7.1 The Plan's content was developed through extensive public and stakeholder engagement undertaken over 2023 and 2024. This involved a varied and phased approach:

- Pre-engagement awareness raising - promotional stalls at Nairn Highland Games, Farmers' Show, Riverside Picnic.
- Online & postal survey (SWOT analysis of issues, opportunities and concerns sent to all residents of the plan area) – 455 responses.
- 9 public drop-in events across Nairn & Nairnshire – 690 comments.
- 6 Community stakeholder workshops on issue prioritisation, facilitated by Planning Aid Scotland.
- Workshops with 75 pupils at Nairn Academy.
- 120 survey returns from school pupils.
- Survey of Grigorhill Business Group.
- Statutory consultation of elected members and community councils, in parallel with discretionary final public consultation on draft plan content – 206 comments.

7.2 Planning Aid Scotland (PAS) compiled and categorised public comments and stakeholder discussion at workshops as a basis for their operations manager to draft the plan, with reference to guidance from the community steering group.

7.3 Illustration 1: Mapping & discussion at PAS workshops



7.4 Comments on community priorities not relating to spatial or place planning, but of potential relevance to Community Planning, were collated and provided to the Nairn & Nairnshire Community Partnership for consideration as part of its action planning.

7.5 The draft place plan was then made public for final comment and suggestions as part of a statutory notice period. Resulting feedback was then reviewed by a stakeholder workshop with representatives from each community council within the plan area (and

Fornightly hall as a proxy for East Nairnshire community), NICE directors, Nairn BID, HIE Strengthening Communities and Highland Council Development Planning and Place Planning officers. Deliberation at this workshop provided guidance to the NICE project coordinator to action final amendments to the draft plan.

8. Our Nairnshire – setting out a vision for the future

- 8.1 The headline vision set out in the plan is for Nairn and Nairnshire to be “a vibrant, welcoming community that sustains and nurtures its residents, visitors, employers, and investors”, with a “thriving environment where people can live happily, businesses can prosper, and the local economy flourishes.”
- 8.2 To achieve this vision, the Plan further sets out the following priority outcomes to be progressed by the community, public and private sectors:
- Sustainable Futures: promoting sustainability, resilience and environmental stewardship, but also sustaining a population.
 - Jobs & Business: creating the space and conditions for businesses to expand and accommodate growth, business support and employment conditions.
 - Town & Village Centre regeneration: revitalising town and village centres to create vibrant, attractive and functional places. Sustaining and protecting village facilities.
 - Green spaces & Leisure: enhancing green spaces for recreation, nature and community wellbeing.
 - Getting Around: improving transportation infrastructure and connectivity for all modes of travel.
- 8.3 Based on public feedback, the plan identifies 43 specific proposals for action to deliver against the priority outcomes identified by the plan, in addition to mapping 49 sites of strategic significance to plan’s vision for the future of the area.

9 How the plan can be used:

- 9.1 The Plan has been written for the local community, community organisations, businesses and public agencies. To achieve the outcomes set out in the plan will require all partners, community, public, third and private, working together on a common vision. The Plan should be used as it is intended – as a tool enhance understanding of community priorities within decision making on development and investment, to foster achievement of better outcomes for the community.
- 9.2 The Plan is an ambitious, evidenced based statement of the community’s aspirations, based on sound and robust community engagement. It therefore provides a valid source of evidence to inform decision making by all who are responsible for delivering services, looking after assets or with an interest in development and investment across Nairn and Nairnshire.
- 9.3 The Plan calls for cross-sector and community-wide collaboration based around two key principles – resetting the relationship between the public sector and local communities and marshalling local community capacity, funding and resources around identified priorities. The Plan will help foster opportunity to:
- Support and enable the community to understand and influence decisions impacting their future,

- Inform and enable more trust and collaboration between community and public authorities.
- Empower the local community as an active partner, including the role of NICE as a local development trust in facilitating community action for the betterment of Nairn and Nairnshire.

9.4 To support this in practice, Public Sector partners and funders are asked to have regard to the Plan to inform deliberation and decision making relating to development, investment, service delivery and budgetary allocation. This can be achieved by Members, Council officers, statutory and community partners considering the Plan in various forums, e.g.:

- Area Business Meetings
- HC Area Service Meetings
- Nairn & Nairnshire Community Partnership

9.5 As the Development Trust (NICE) moves from overseeing plan preparation towards mobilising further community and agency support for delivery of actions arising from the Plan, it can continue to act as a tool which brings different interest groups together to collaborate on a shared vision for the future. This endeavour to broaden local participation in community action will benefit from continued support and encouragement of a robust approach to process and an inclusive approach to planning and delivery, including the guidance and participation of Elected Members, officers, community councillors and, importantly, the wider Nairn and Nairnshire community.

9.6 Commensurate with the process undertaken in preparation of the Plan, successful delivery will depend upon upholding exemplar features of best practice in community empowerment and a collaborative approach to community development:

- Community led - the plan being prepared by, and for, the community with support from public, private and third sector partners;
- Elected Member engagement and participation throughout;
- Considered and extensive community engagement, consistent with national standards of community engagement, with particular focus on reaching out to *quieter voices*;
- Collaborative and transparent, keeping communities up to date throughout;
- Testing and confirmation of priorities, the extent of agreement and dissent, to ensure content of the plan represents the community as a whole;
- Having regard for existing plans and information to provide 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 a local place plan, community action plan and area place plan; and
- Support and guidance from public officials and subject experts to enable informed planning and activity by local volunteers and community actors.

9.7 The anticipated benefits and impact of the Nairnshire-wide Place Plan are therefore that it will inform, support and enable:

- Consolidation of local priorities from across a variety of plans and strategies – national, regional and local.
- A shared understanding of our communities' priorities and opportunities for the future.

- A framework informing delivery of a shared vision, priority outcomes and actions in a way that is tailored to the needs of Nairnshire communities.
- Improved clarity on what current projects and interventions are working towards, when they will be delivered and who is responsible.
- Targeting of resources, investment and action in line with local priorities.
- Tracking and promoting public understanding of the impact of spending and project delivery against local priorities.
- Re-set of relationships, by prioritising collaborative working and trust between communities, public, private and third sectors through transparent communication, consensus building and respect for diverging views.

9.8 In view of the potential role that the plan can play, subject to validation as an LPP by the Council's Development Plans Team, the Area Committee is asked to consider whether it wishes to adopt the plan as a statement of community priorities and aspirations. This can help to clarify the status of the plan as a consideration for future decision making, although adoption does not represent Council support for any of the proposals or ambitions set out.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive – Place

Date: 30.04.2025

Author: Ewen McIntosh – Community Support Officer

Background Papers: Future Highlands Strategic Partnership Priority 4: Place Based Planning and Investment in Communities ([HC/34/21](#))

[Our Nairnshire: \[Proposed\] Local Place Plan](#) (status pending validation by Development Plans Team)

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Integrated Impact Assessment
Appendix 2 – Our Nairnshire (Place Plan)

Appendix 1: Nairnshire APP Integrated Impact Assessment

Impact Assessment Area	Conclusion of Screening / Full Assessment
Equality	The Plan has been developed by the community for the community. It sets out a vision and priorities which aim to improve the lives for residents, visitors, businesses and community groups across the Nairn & Cawdor Ward. This Plan has a positive impact on promoting equality and addressing inequality (including socio-economic), targeting the priorities of the people of Nairnshire.
Socio-economic	
Human Rights	No negative impact. No human rights will be negatively impacted by the plan. A rights-based approach has been taken to the co-production of the plan. This will continue into delivery, monitoring and evaluation.
Children's Rights and Wellbeing	The Plan is intended to be for all generations; there was targeted engagement with young people in developing the Plan and their suggestions and ideas have fed into the Plan. Due regard was given to advancing the equality of opportunity for young people. Targeted engagement with children and young people took place in primary and secondary schools, resulting in 110 children and young people engaged through surveys and focus groups.
Island and Mainland Rural	The plan highlights issues faced by communities living in remote small towns and remote rural areas.
Climate Change	The overarching outcomes set out in the plan include promoting sustainability, resilience, and environmental stewardship, as well as active travel and protecting green spaces, biodiversity and the natural environment.
Data Rights	No impact

Appendix 2: Our Nairnshire (Place Plan)

Web Version: <https://ournairnshire.org/>

Pdf Version: <https://nairn.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/nairnshire-lpp.pdf>