

Agenda Item	13.
Report No	EDU/18/25

The Highland Council

Committee: Education

Date: 4 June 2025

Report Title: High Life Highland Progress Report

Report By: Chief Executive, High Life Highland

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report is in three parts:

Part one - presents information on the performance of High Life Highland (HLH) during the operating period to 31 March 2025, including information on HLH's contributions to the Highland Council Corporate Plan 2022-27 and the annual performance indicators specified in the Contract between THC and HLH.

Part two - provides general updates since the last report to the Highland Council's Education Committee in November 2024.

Part three – provides information on an aspect of the work of HLH, this time, the music tuition service.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to note:

- i. the performance of High Life Highland (HLH) during the operating period to 31 March 2025, including HLH's contributions to the implementation of the Highland Council Corporate Plan in **Appendix A**;
- ii. the general updates provided in **Appendix B**;
- iii. the information on the music tuition service in **Appendix C**.

3. Implications

3.1 Resource - there are no resource implications associated with Elected members agreeing the recommendations in this report. The HLH services fee is part of THC's budget as considered at the Highland Council meeting held on 6 March 2025 and information on HLH's budget in the current financial year is provided in paragraph 6.1.

3.2 Legal - there are no legal implications for the Council arising from the recommendations in this report.

3.3 Risk - there are no risk implications arising from the recommendations in this report. The HLH Board has a Corporate Risk Register and associated risk management plans.

3.4 Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)
- there are no health and safety risks associated with the recommendations in this report.

3.5 Gaelic - there are no Gaelic implications arising from the recommendations in 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. Due regard must be given to the findings of any assessment when taking any decision,

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

5. Background

5.1 HLH's purpose is **Making Life Better**. It was established as a charity by the Highland Council (THC) in October 2011 to deliver its Public Services Obligations (PSOs) in: archives; community venues and engagement; countryside rangers; leisure; libraries; museums and galleries; music tuition and sports development. The Council has a Contract in place to ensure that HLH delivers the specified Council PSOs. The contract was reviewed and updated by the Education Committee at its meeting held on 21 November 2024.

5.2 The HLH reporting to the Education Committee is specified in the Contract as detailed in the table below:

May/June Meeting	November/December Meeting
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contributions to the Council's Corporate Plan.• Annual Performance Indicators: customer engagements (split into in person and digital engagements); services fee as percentage of HLH expenditure; and number of members for the following services: leisure; libraries; music; sports development.• General updates.• Information on an area of work or focus topic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The HLH Annual Report.• Customer satisfaction levels.• General updates.• Information on an area of work or focus topic.

5.3 HLH was established to deliver services on behalf of THC and at the same time deliver savings and protect, improve, and develop services. Each year, Arm's Length External Organisation (ALEO) status saves THC c. £2.5m p.a. through non-domestic rates relief.

- 5.4 HLH has consistently returned revenue savings for THC with recent (5 year) savings averaging £1.55m p.a. (9% of 2025/26 Services Fee). Savings have been achieved through income and efficiencies, whilst minimising service reductions. The partnership has been hallmarked by HLH assuming responsibility for additional services at the request of THC, with 43 new services and facilities having been added to HLH since it was established in 2011.

6. HLH Governance

- 6.1 HLH Directors are appointed by THC (8 independent Directors and 4 Councillor Directors). The HLH Directors can be found on the HLH web site: <https://www.hIGHLIFEhighland.com/about/board-directors/>.
- 6.2 The HLH Trading Board Directors are appointed by the HLH Board (a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 4 HLH Board Directors with the remaining independent). The trading company Directors can be found on the HLH web site: <https://www.hIGHLIFEhighland.com/about/trading-company-directors/>
- 6.3 Following the regular process of retirements as required in HLH's Memorandum and Articles of Association, the Council has recently appointed three new independent Directors to the HLH Board effective from the March HLH Board meeting.

7. Financial Position

- 7.1 The funding provided by THC to HLH as a Services Fee is £16.4m (2025/26). The post-pandemic operating environment (particularly staff pay inflation) has meant that the Council has had to provide additional funding to HLH from Council reserves to help protect services. HLH has mitigated a forecast £3.179m budget gap in 2025/26 by £2.285m through a combination of income and efficiencies. As part of a 3-year plan to return to a surplus position, the remaining £0.894m has been funded in 2025/26 from Council reserves. This was included in the budget when it was agreed at the Highland Council meeting held in March 2025.

8. Part One - Service Delivery Contract Monitoring

8.1 Our Future Highland - Highland Council Corporate Plan 2022-2027

- 8.1.1 A summary of HLH's contributions to the Council's Corporate Plan 2022-27 can be found in **Appendix A**.

8.2 Performance Indicators

- 8.2.1 HLH reporting has changed as part of the contract review. Reporting on customer numbers has been split into in-person and digital engagement and reporting member numbers is now broken down by service. Adult learning and youth work figures are up to the end of November 2024 as those services transferred to THC on 1 December.
- 8.2.2 The tables below show **customer engagements** for all of HLH's services:
- In-person customer visits to HLH services in 2024/25 were almost 5m, a 9% increase on the previous financial year.
 - Adult Learning and Youth Work transferred to THC on 1 December and the figures shown for those services are up to the end of December and have been excluded from the change and percentage change calculations.

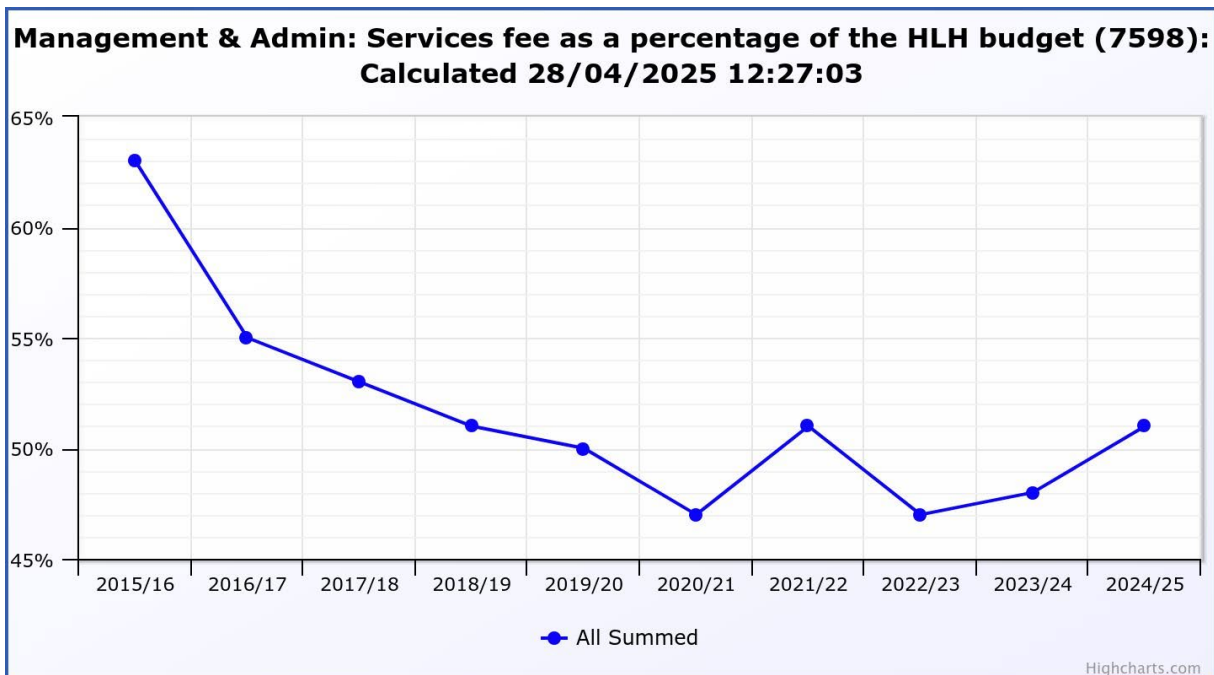
- The reduction in libraries digital engagements is largely attributable to a reduction in the use of the Press Reader online newspaper service following Press Reader changing its model.
- HLH continues to prioritise in-person customer engagements with those being most relevant to highland communities and making the greatest contributions to making life better for people in the Highlands.

In Person Visits by Service	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Change 23/24-24/25	% Change
Adult Learning ¹	13,668	14,310	8,841	NA	NA
Archives	11,981	12,711	12,810	99	1%
Countryside Rangers	13,400	14,401	15,794	1,393	10%
Leisure	2,178,579	2,420,457	2,574,052	153,595	6%
Libraries	1,367,390	1,595,401	1,86,5923	270,522	17%
Museums & Galleries	131,496	150,830	155,463	4,633	3%
Music Tuition	105,817	100,745	101,646	901	1%
Sport	274,822	277,706	325,748	48,042	17%
Youth Work ¹	74,595	81,606	41,851	NA	NA
Total	4,171,748	4,668,167	5,102,128	433,961	9%

Digital Engagements by Service	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Change 23/24-24/25	% Change
Archives	1,984,304	2,312,140	2,418,215	106,075	4%
Countryside Rangers		23,875	95,045	71,170	298%
Libraries	820,493	929,186	879,713	-49,473	-5%
Museums & Galleries	100,451	73,342	74,518	1,176	2%
Total	2,905,248	3,338,543	3,461,172	122,629	4%

8.2.3 The **services fee as a percentage of the HLH budget** is used by the Council as a measure of the efficiency of HLH. Note that this does not include property and other costs which are paid by THC as it was more efficient for THC to retain responsibility for some support services, avoiding duplication that would be needed if HLH was to, for example, establish its own property function. The following graph tracks progress over time.

¹ Adult learning and youth work transferred from HLH to THC on 1 December 2024 and customer numbers are therefore shown up to that point. 2024/25 figures are not, therefore, comparable with the previous financial year.



The improvement over time has been achieved largely through HLH increasing income through the leisure service. The 2024/25 figure is subject to HLH's accounts being prepared/audited with the draft figure being 51%, a 2% increase on the previous year. The percentage is forecast, based on the 2025/26 budget, will reduce to 47% following the removal of additional financial support as part of the three-year agreement with HLH referred to in paragraph 7.1 above.

- 8.2.4 The **number of members** gives an indication of HLH's reach into the Highland population. These are provided by individual service where customers register to receive the service. For Leisure and libraries, customers can choose to participate without joining as members, so these figures are a conservative estimate of reach into the population.
- 8.2.5 This information is new as requested as part of the revised Contract with HLH and comparative information will become available over time. For all services, the number of members is a count of people who have used the service in the past year. The leisure members count all people who use the service including people who are on low incomes and participate using the budget scheme. The figure for libraries active membership is a count of unique users who have borrowed a book or accessed a computer or Wi-Fi using their library card. The reach figures for leisure and libraries are for the whole highland population and into the school roll for music tuition and sports development as those services are for school aged children and young people.

	Members	Reach into Highland population
Leisure	62,050	26%
Libraries	27,536	12%

	Members	Reach into school population
Music Tuition	4,090	14%
Sports Development	10,732	36%

9. Part 2 – General Updates

- 9.1 As part of HLH's reporting, general updates since the previous report to the Education Committee are provided and **Appendix B** provides updates and good news stories since the November 2024 meeting.
- 9.2 The Inverness Castle Experience project is being progressed by the Council and preparations are being made by HLH for its opening:
- The revised work programme for the main construction contractor and fit out contractor is now in operation.
 - The new programme aims to achieve an opening date of late summer / early autumn 2025.
 - The Visitor Services Manager, Food and Beverage Manager, Retail Manager, HR and Training Officer and Head Chef have been appointed.
 - The pricing structure for the visitor experience has been approved.
 - The retail consultants have been sourcing Highland based product lines and orders have been placed.
 - New staff accommodation has been secured, adjacent to the Castle.
 - The posts of Head Chef and Clerical Assistant have been advertised.
 - The main bulk of recruitment of the Inverness Castle Experience Team is planned for late May / Early June.

10. Part 3 – Music Tuition Service

- 10.1 The school's music tuition service is provided in addition to curricular music and pupils who participate receive individual or small group lessons each week. The service also provides extra-curricular music opportunities through area and regional groups and orchestras. **Appendix C** contains the annual service review for the music tuition service. A video of pupil experiences in the music tuition service will be shown at the Education Committee meeting.

Designation: Chief Executive, High Life Highland

Date: 2 May 2025

Authors: Steve Walsh, HLH Chief Executive
Douglas Wilby, HLH Director of Corporate Performance

Appendices:

Appendix A – HLH Contributions to the Council's Corporate Plan

Appendix B – General Updates/Good News Stories since May 2024 Education Committee Meeting

Appendix C – Annual report for the music tuition service

Appendix A

HLH Contributions to the Council's Corporate Plan

1. Fair and Caring Highland Gàidhealtachd Chothromach agus Choibhneil	
Work together to improve quality of life and opportunities for Highland people	
<p>1.1 Improve outcomes including attainment, achievement, positive destinations for all children and young people with a particular focus on literacy, numeracy, and our most vulnerable learners.</p>	<p>HLH runs a Young Persons' Leadership Programme. So far, this academic year, 912 young people joined the programme, 928 leadership hoodies have been awarded (young people can gain more than one hoodie in a year) and 23,200 leadership hours have been delivered by participants.</p> <p>HLH operates a range of activity programmes for children and young people across its leisure facilities. These include both primary school swimming lessons and learn to swim programmes across Highland ensuring that children and young people learn this essential life skill.</p> <p>The active schools and countryside rangers programmes provide a wide range of activities. A key focus of the Active Schools Programme is equality, diversity and inclusion and targeted programmes are being developed to reduce barriers to participation.</p> <p>HLH library staff deliver an extensive programme of activities to support early years literacy and numeracy, including Bookbug sessions and early years/family STEM activities. Book collections to support reading for learning and recreation are provided in both hard copy and digital format. Libraries also support learning and teaching through the provision of the school library service.</p> <p>HLH Libraries enjoyed over 1.8m visits in 2024/25 with almost 0.9m on-line/digital engagement in addition to that.</p> <p>High Life Highland delivers weekly Instrumental Music Tuition to 4,000 young learners across Highland. Music tuition adds to each pupil's development in a broad range of ways, including increasing personal responsibility, focus and concentration in addition to the broader numeracy & literacy benefits. Young people also have access to a wide range of music ensembles led by HLH Instructors, at school, area and regional levels (Highland Young Musicians) affording them an insight into the cooperation, discipline and focus required to make a valuable contribution to these kind of groups – and the bearing these experiences will have on life skills beyond school age. For session 2024/25 HLH introduced 2 new groups to the HYM family – Beira (a 2nd small folk ensemble) and High Life Highland Pipe Band.</p> <p>The Highland Archive Service (HAS) works closely with schools and home-schooling groups across the area, offering both visits to and from archive centres and providing content via Google Classroom. HAS supports and enriches the Curriculum by bringing a unique local focus to topic learning and uses archive material as prompts for discussion and creativity on a wide variety of subjects, encouraging empathy and emotional intelligence in pupils of all ages. In 2024/25 44 bespoke activities were provided to schools reaching 1266 pupils, teachers, and parents/carers. HAS also welcomed collegiate visits from teaching staff, and HAS's Community Engagement Officer was a keynote speaker at the national conference for school archivists, to share</p>

	HAS's education engagement work to inspire and inform the work of other archives.
1.2 Tackle child poverty including promoting access to welfare support.	<p>HLH provides access to its leisure centres for fifty pence per visit for adults and children of families who are in receipt of income related benefits. This includes access to gym, group fitness, single court activities and swimming, across the Highlands.</p> <p>The Active Schools Programme continues to provide free physical activity sessions to school pupils in Highlands before school, during lunch time and after school delivered by a dedicated network of volunteers.</p> <p>Access to HLH libraries' wide range of resources and services remains free of charge to all. Libraries offer children and families a warm, welcoming, and safe environment where they can benefit from free access to books, computers and a wide range of activities that can support learning, economic wellbeing, and social and digital inclusion.</p>
1.3 Secure positive destinations including Modern Apprenticeships.	<p>HLH provides modern apprenticeships through its leisure facilities including qualifications in group fitness, personal training and gym instruction which supports young people who wish to remain in the area, developing their careers at home.</p> <p>Inverness Museum and Art Gallery hosts an annual placement of a UHI Fine Art student and Highland Folk Museum hosts a twelve-month Historic Environment Scotland Fellowship trainee.</p> <p>In collaboration with the Council's Employability Team the Museums and Archive Centres regularly host work placements, paid and unpaid, to help young people get into work, including currently at Inverness Museum & Art Gallery through the "Aim High" scheme.</p> <p>High Life Highland libraries support work placements and offer volunteering opportunities for young people, through the High Life Highland Leadership programme.</p>
1.4 Work with partners on suicide prevention.	<p>HLH is supporting the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) work to deliver the Suicide Intervention and Prevention Programme (SIPP) training. SIPP is led by the Health Improvement Team within Public Health in NHS Highland and supported by all community planning partners. HLH colleagues, from a range of HLH services, have been trained as trainers to deliver the SIPP programme and are co-delivering, with colleagues from various Community Planning Partners, as part of the Highland wide training roll out across Highland. SIPP training aims to improve awareness of suicidal thinking, increase confidence to ask someone if they are feeling suicidal, and to support them to seek further help, the training is open to anyone to attend participate. Local partners, including the Samaritans and James Support Group promote and deliver services through libraries.</p> <p>HLH's sports team has a relationship with SAMH (Scottish Action for Mental Health) and has up-skilled staff in suicide prevention awareness and is developing projects to support suicide prevention at a community level focussing on young people in Community Sports Clubs.</p>
1.5 Encourage a diverse range of traditional and emerging sporting activities and active lifestyles.	Through the partnership with sportscotland , the Active Schools and Community Sports Hubs programmes supports local volunteers and clubs to deliver a diverse range of sporting and physical activity opportunities.

	<p>In Term 1 and 2 this academic year there have been 242,908 visits to Active Schools sessions, an increase of 38,672 visits from the same period the previous academic year. These activities and opportunities are made possible by almost 1200 volunteers who support the Active Schools Programme and collectively have delivered 6,108 activity sessions in Term 1. Secondary School pupils remain the largest group who support the delivery of activities whilst also developing their own skills and confidence through the HLH Leadership Programme. The Community Sport Hub Programme continues to provide support for community-based sports clubs and activity groups.</p> <p>The 13 active community sport hub projects supported 187 community organisations in the 24/25 financial year, an increase of 28 organisations from the previous year. These community-based groups provide vital sustainable opportunities for people to take part in sport and physical activity opportunities in their local communities.</p>
1.6 Promote fair access through co-located services across the Highlands.	<p>There are a number of joint school and community leisure centres and libraries across the Highlands and the experience of them is that the co-location increases footfall to all of the services delivered. Larger examples include Portree, Wick, Aviemore and Alness with there being similar but smaller scale provision in smaller communities such as Ardnamurchan and Kinlochleven.</p> <p>The Music Tuition team has pioneered the continued use of online tuition delivery in order to offer instrumental tuition access to more remote schools.</p>
1.7 Work with partners to improve the levels of mental health and wellbeing experienced by people in our communities.	<p>All of the services delivered by HLH contribute towards mental health and wellbeing. The evidence based “5 ways to wellbeing” highlights there are steps people can take to improve their mental health: connect; get active; mindfulness; learn; give. HLH provides opportunities for people to take each of the steps outlined in the 5 ways to wellbeing from engaging in arts and cultural activities, which can help to manage mental health and support recovery, to participating in learning opportunities facilitated by all services.</p> <p>The links between mental health and wellbeing and physical activity are well established and it is widely recognised that activities which engage people and reduce social isolation and loneliness make a positive contribution to the mental health and wellbeing of individuals and communities. The <i>highlife</i> leisure membership scheme is premised upon accessibility at an affordable price; the budget membership scheme provides a safety net for hard-pressed families to enjoy access to facilities at an affordable price.</p> <p>High Life Highland Libraries offer programmes of activities within libraries to support mental health and wellbeing, including Tai Chi, Chair Yoga, Meditation classes, reminiscence groups, and a range of sensory activities. There are a wide of range of book titles to support people’s mental health and wellbeing included within the services collections.</p> <p>Targeted projects which HLH is delivering which contribute to improving mental health and wellbeing include: falls prevention; cardiac rehabilitation; cancer rehabilitation; older adults health and wellbeing; type II diabetes and physical activity; physiotherapy in leisure centres; pain management; the GP movement and activity programme and dementia</p>

	<p>friendly initiatives including the museums' service led "House of Memories". Inverness Museum and Art Gallery has a long-standing relationship with the mental health charity Keltic Care, whereby some of its service users are supported to therapeutically engage with the visual arts. The Countryside Rangers deliver the healthy minds initiative and branching out programmes, which harnesses green health benefits to assist those with mental health conditions. There are over 1800 highlife members taking part in HLH's targeted health and wellbeing programmes.</p> <p>In collaboration THC and HLH have developed an initiative called Mental Health Reps to promote positive mental health in the workplace, support and comfort any employee experiencing mental health difficulties, encourage conversations on mental health, support employees through a mental health crisis, and signpost to appropriate support.</p>
1.8 Develop whole family support approach to ensure families stay together and thrive in their local communities.	<p>HLH seeks to support families by offering an all-inclusive leisure subscription which is one of the best value in the country and covers a whole household (two adults and all dependent children under 18). Children's activities, gym, swim group fitness single court activities (such as badminton) and swimming lessons are included in the subscription. There are currently over 62k leisure members. In addition, there is a specific scheme for families in receipt of income related benefits whereby the adults and children can access activities for fifty pence per visit.</p> <p>Family friendly sessions are being delivered and developed through Active Schools with an emphasis on recruiting and supporting parent volunteers to deliver activities to young people. The Countryside Rangers and Library services offer a range of family learning opportunities throughout the year.</p> <p>HLH operated museums offer no-cost family leisure and learning opportunities both day-to-day and through structured activity programmes.</p> <p>HLH Libraries offer no-cost family activity programmes that support literacy, STEM learning, digital and social inclusion.</p>
1.9 Work with partners to develop early intervention for drug and alcohol reduction.	<p>Sport and Leisure services are working jointly with NHS Highland and the Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership on the Planet Youth Initiative. The pilot project was initially based around Tain, Dornoch, Golspie and Caithness focussing on early intervention and using sport and physical activity as a preventative measure. With success over the past year, this project is set to be expanded to 10 schools throughout the 2025/26, all of which will continue to be supported by HLH.</p>
1.10 Facilitate strategic sports and cultural planning across the Highlands.	<p>A partnership agreement with sportscotland commenced in April 2023 which secured over £1m investment per annum in the Highlands and delivers an active school's programme in every Associated School Group (ASG) in Highland as well as a community sports hub programme.</p> <p>An Active Highland Strategy Group has been established, made up of representatives from the CPP plus sportscotland and with input from Public Health Scotland. The aim of the Active Highland Strategy Group is to create a framework that enables people to be active through, movement, play, physical activity, and sport in Highland with full commitment from all key partners and reporting to the Highland CPP Board. HLH is fully engaged and supporting the work of the Active Highland Strategy Group.</p>

<p>1.11 Continue to promote Gaelic language and cultural development.</p>	<p>HLH collaborates with THC’s Gaelic Team to deliver specific targets within the Gaelic language plan and supports the promotion of Gaelic language and culture primarily through its Archives, Museums, Countryside Rangers, and Music Tuition services.</p> <p>Am Baile, a bi-lingual cultural heritage website managed by the HLH Highland Archive Service has seen increasing customer engagement. The site has bilingual descriptions of content and new Gaelic content is added on a regular basis using skilled Gaelic translators. A third of all social media posts are now bi-lingual and customer feedback illustrates that these posts are proving useful as a resource in Gaelic medium education and for Gaelic learners seeking to improve their language skills. Community heritage groups are increasingly seeking to use Am Baile as a digital place of deposit for their digital heritage collections and they are supported to create Gaelic content as part of their projects.</p> <p>Within museums, all interpretation at Inverness Museum and Art Gallery is bilingual and the museum offers two permanent display sections explaining and promoting Gaelic, including an interactive exhibit that gives visitors the opportunity to learn Gaelic words and try out the Gaelic language. At Highland Folk Museum visitors can experience Gaelic language and traditions in a variety of living history settings, including Gaelic psalms singing in the church and regular waulking the cloth demonstrations.</p> <p>Skye and Lochaber Archive Centres regularly support and work in partnership with Gaelic medium schools in their areas and are also in ongoing collaboration with Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and several community groups undertaking initiatives that aim to sustain and develop Gaelic language and culture.</p> <p>The Inverness Gaelic Society Library is housed within Inverness Public Library and Gaelic book collections are also available throughout all Highland Libraries. Regular Gaelic Bookbug sessions (0-4 age rhyme, song, and storytelling sessions with parents/carers) and storytelling sessions are delivered from multiple library locations.</p> <p>The Countryside Ranger Service regularly engage in Gaelic medium sessions for the Gaelic medium schools within their area.</p> <p>The successful Gaelic Sports Leadership Course ran over recent years is being planned again for this year.</p> <p>HLH Sports Team in collaboration with THC Gaelic Team celebrated World Gaelic Week by running a Sports Fèis for more than 200 local school children across Skye and Lochalsh. High Life Highland’s Active Schools Coordinators in Skye and Lochalsh – with help from Young Leaders – hosted two days of activities and games all delivered in Gaelic. P1-P4 children who attended the Sports Fèis played football, shinty, took part in multi sports and various other games.</p>
<p>1.12 Promote and enhance the Highland’s rich heritage and culture.</p>	<p>HLH operates the two regional museums, the Highland Folk Museum and Inverness Museum and Art Gallery and one county museum, the North Coast Visitor Centre. They offer the opportunity to experience and understand the uniqueness of the Highlands and to be part of carrying</p>

	<p>forward its traditions and heritage. In addition to the core offer of visiting the museum and self-guiding through the exhibits, the museums offer an ongoing programme of classes, events, and opportunities to engage further. HLH has a heritage ranger post which teaches traditional crafts keeping heritage alive by passing on skills. In addition, HLH operates two visitor centres which display local heritage, Caithness Broch Centre and Ferrycroft visitor centre.</p> <p>HLH's four Archive Centres, in Inverness, Lochaber, Skye and Lochalsh and Caithness, similarly enable people to explore and understand Highland's heritage.</p> <p>The digital archive Am Baile gives access to thousands of items from archives, libraries, museums, and private collections spanning the history and culture of the Highlands.</p> <p>Countryside ranger programmes and activities also contribute to this outcome.</p> <p>The Music Tuition team has positive national reputation for delivering high quality piping, pipe band drumming lessons and promoting fiddle as part of its string instrument delivery. It provides many opportunities for involvement in school and community ensembles which focus on traditional music including 3 flagship Highland Young Musicians groups - 'Snas and Baira (folk groups) and High Life Highland Pipe Band.</p> <p>Local history collections are available at all High Life Highland Libraries. Rare book collections related to the Highland's rich heritage and culture are housed within Inverness Library. In collaboration with UHI, a series of interactive workshops called 'Meet The Books' are delivered at Inverness Library to raise awareness of these rich and diverse local heritage collections.</p>
2. Resilient and Sustainable Communities Coimhearsnachdan Fulangach agus Seasmhach	
Help our communities to be prosperous, sustainable, and resilient, making a positive difference to the lives of people.	
2.1 Develop affordable and reliable public transport.	HLH has played a supporting role with the Council and other partners in providing locations at its facilities for sustainable transport including cycle racks, e-bike storage/charging and car charging points.
2.2 Continue to work with partners to develop and promote Road Safety and Water Safety.	<p>Support for Bikeability training is provided through Active Schools programmes, upskilling local volunteers to deliver, and developing afterschool and club cycling opportunities.</p> <p>High Life Highland runs a learn to swim programme delivering lessons to both children and adults across the Highlands. In addition, HLH offers swimming lessons to all Primary school children in P4/5.</p>
2.4 Develop place-based plans that focus on quality neighbourhoods and direct local funding opportunities towards local priorities.	<p>High Life Highland contributes to local community planning and other partnerships with partnership development areas in youth work, literacy and numeracy, access to services, refugee resettlement, health and wellbeing and mental health and wellbeing.</p> <p>HLH staff, learners and partners have worked together with THC staff to increase the range of voices and influences contributing to the current</p>

	development of the East Ross Place Plan. This has been with particular emphasis on marginalised and vulnerable groups and has benefitted from community engagement due to the wide partner use of HLH facilities in the area including Joss Street Hall Invergordon and the Alness Youth Centre.
2.5 Support communities to help each other live well and independently.	<p>HLH provides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a falls prevention, strength and balance exercise programme developed in partnership with NHS Highland which is available in most HLH leisure centres and online to support older people to remain active and independent in their communities. • Specialist exercise classes for people affected by Parkinson's disease are being offered in a range of leisure centres and online. These classes have been developed in partnership with Parkinson's UK and NHS Highland • "Dynamic Wellbeing" which is a programme targeting people with a range of long-term health conditions including arthritis, respiratory illnesses, and neurological conditions to safely get active and stay active both online and face-to-face in leisure centres. • People experiencing pain from osteoarthritis are able to access pain management classes delivered in HLH leisure centres to help manage pain and improve quality of life. • the "You Time" programme is delivered across Highland and includes activities delivered by archives; leisure facilities; libraries; countryside rangers; and is supporting older people to sustain and improve their physical and mental health and wellbeing and reduces social isolation and loneliness. • The GP Movement and Activity Programme is testing how collaborating with primary care in NHS Highland can help people to experience everything <i>highlife</i> offers to benefit their physical, mental, and social health and wellbeing. As part of the initiative participants can be signposted to High Life Highland leisure services and offered a free 7 session pass to a leisure centre to help improve all aspects of participants health and wellbeing. • The library service works in collaboration with NHS Highland to offer Near Me points within buildings. Near Me allows those without access to digital devices to book a private space in libraries where they can attend online NHS health appointments. • HLH, working with third sector partners, embedded in communities Highland's created the "House of Memories," an App based resource which benefits people living with dementia and their carers to access museum collections. • The museums and archives services regularly collaborate with Alzheimers Scotland, and the Badenoch Shinty and Inverness Football Memories projects to offer a range of enjoyable and beneficial opportunities to people living with dementia and their carers. • HLH offers supported and personally rewarding volunteering opportunities throughout the Highlands.
2.6 Work with partners to promote visitor management.	<p>HLH operates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 70 libraries on behalf of THC. • the two regional Museums, the Highland Folk Museum and Inverness Museum and Art Gallery, and the County Museum North

	<p>Coast Visitor Centre and is supporting the ongoing work of the Council to develop the Inverness Castle/Spirit of the Highlands programme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The four Archive Centres, in Caithness, Skye, Lochaber and Inverness and provides Am Baile, the extensive, web-based heritage resource, which attract ancestral tourists from all over the world. • 22 stand-alone and joint school/ community leisure centres. • HLH operates the following visitor centres, Broch Centre, Ferrycroft, Ben Nevis and Inverness Botanics. • HLH leads on the LeisureLink partnership which mutually provides free leisure access for members while visiting Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, Angus, Argyll & Bute, the Borders, Highland, Moray, Orkney, Shetland, and The Western Isles.
2.7 Work with communities and partners to keep public spaces clean and safe.	The Countryside Ranger team continues to carry out site checks on behalf of the Council and facilitate safe and responsible access to the outdoors through its schools and community programme of activities. They arrange volunteering events to undertake beach cleans and community clean ups.
2.8 Support Scottish and UK Government initiatives to ensure maximum digital connectivity across the area.	<p>Libraries provide free public access computers in sixty locations across the highlands which is a significant contribution to social inclusion. In addition, there is free Wi-Fi in all libraries and the majority of leisure/community centres.</p> <p>In partnership with NHS Highland, iPads are available for free loan to Diabetes patients across the Highlands via Library loans.</p>
2.9 Work with the Scottish Government on the delivery of improved transport infrastructure throughout the Highlands.	Some of the HLH Community Centres, Leisure Centres and Libraries in Inverness and Fort William are partner facilities in the HI-BIKE electric bike share system. This contributes to the Council and its partners objectives on travel carbon reduction.
2.10 Encourage private sector and public sector economic development partners in ensuring that Highland remains a top destination for inward investment.	HLH is continually engaging with Highland businesses to offer them an employee wellbeing membership highlife subscription package for their staff. There are currently provide employee wellbeing solutions to 87 businesses in the scheme with 4,577 employees as members.
2.11 Work with partners to develop a community wealth building strategy.	HLH actively promotes volunteering and has a volunteering policy which includes recruitment, induction, training, and review for volunteers. In the past financial year there were 1200 Active Schools volunteer deliverers over the three school terms captured in that period.
3 Accessible and Sustainable Highland Homes Dachaighean Gàidhealach So-ruigsinn agus Seasmhach	
Build houses to support communities and economic growth	
3.4 Support the needs of veterans through the Armed Forces Covenant.	<p>HLH has achieved the Armed Forces Covenant, Employer Recognition Scheme, Gold Award and offers a discount on its leisure subscriptions and advertises posts to armed forces leavers as part of it support under the covenant. There are 224 Armed Forces subscriptions.</p> <p>In addition, HLH has designated an officer to represent the Charity on the local Military Liaison Group (MLG), contributing updates to its quarterly newsletter. HLH's Leadership Programme Officer has been working closely with the Army Welfare Officer to create a leadership training programme specifically for Army families.</p>

4. A Sustainable Highland Environment and Global Centre for Renewable Energy Àrainneachd Ghàidhealach Sheasmhach agus Ionad Cruinneil airson Lùth So-ùrachaid	
Accelerate our response to the climate and ecological emergency. Make the most of the financial and environmental opportunities arising from the huge renewable energy potential in the Highlands.	
4.1 Promote active travel infrastructure across Highland.	HLH promotes active travel through the provision of cycle facilities at many of its sites. Some of the HLH Community Centres, Leisure Centres and Libraries in Inverness and Fort William are partner facilities in the HI-BIKE electric bike share system in Inverness and Fort William. This contributes to the Council and its partners objectives relating to travel carbon reduction.
4.2 Promote greener transport including low carbon public transport and the development of hydrogen hubs throughout the area.	The Council has installed electric charging points for cars at some HLH facilities.
4.3 Work with communities to find local solutions and lever funding.	The provision of local facilities minimises the requirement to travel and HLH provides facilities in communities throughout the Highlands on behalf of the Council. HLH provides mobile libraries which operate throughout the Highland area.
4.4 Value and protect Highland's natural environment.	<p>HLH provides a range of educational activities through museums, archives, rangers, and library services that protect and enhance the environment as well as encouraging people to enjoy environmental activities and participate in environmental education projects. Countryside ranger programmes further contribute to this outcome, through active conservation and nature restoration supporting a move in communities toward environmental stewardship.</p> <p>HLH is an active member of the Highland Green Health Partnership and contributes to the development of opportunities and building on existing resources to support individuals and communities to improve their health and wellbeing and build resilience through engaging with and appreciating the natural environment.</p>
4.5 Encourage greater use of land and seas being well managed for nature and adaptation including blue economy, carbon sequestration, and peatland restoration.	<p>The Countryside Rangers work with community volunteers to ensure habitats are well managed and monitored.</p> <p>The wildflower mosaic project is designed to help raise awareness of the wide range of the importance of biodiversity and pollinator species within the highlands. Engagement was working with schools and the public to find out more about the varied Highland species, their distribution both historic and at present and to teach the importance to highland ecology. The rangers engaged widely across Highlands on the project and further afield via online talks. Meadows map – Highland Environment Forum</p> <p>The Highland Folk Museum is participating in the supporting infrastructure for the reintroduction of beavers and wildcats in the Cairngorm National Park, by hosting camera traps and is also participating in the invasive species defence programme.</p>
4.7 Achieve our Net Zero targets.	<p>Inverness Botanic Gardens is fully committed to 100% recycling and is a sector leader in terms of carbon reduction and biodiversity.</p> <p>The Council and HLH work in partnership to install energy efficient systems such as LED lighting, biomass, solar panels with funding available to the Council – e.g. Salix funding.</p>

	<p>The Highland Folk Museum has earned recognition for its commitment to sustainable tourism, holding the esteemed Green Tourism Gold Award</p> <p>Inverness Leisure is due to be equipped with various net zero measures including the installation of solar panels along with the rejuvenation of the combined heat and power plant. Additional measures will be incorporated within the facility through the installation of energy efficient pumps and pool plant equipment. Additional net zero works are anticipated for the Nairn Leisure Centre in due course, along with other sites, as the energy efficiency audits are completed.</p>
4.9 Identify and commit to renewable energy investments to reduce the overall energy costs for the Council.	<p>The Council has installed Hydro Ness which provides power for Inverness Leisure.</p> <p>THC and HLH continue to work together to seek support from THC to undertake energy efficiency audits by the Councils energy team at its high use sites to support the strategic reduction of emissions and save on energy costs.</p> <p>The Highland Archive Centre is also a participant in the Council's 'Passive Buildings' pilot.</p>
4.11 Promote a "Just Transition" by moving to a more environmentally sustainable economy in a way that's fair to everyone.	<p>HLH contributes to this outcome through the provision of its services and facilities throughout the Highland Council area. Its approach to low-cost access to leisure facilities has achieved and sustained high participation rates as well as an improved financial provision. Archives, museums, and visitor attractions also form part of what the Highlands has to offer, and they improve the quality of life for residents and improve the visitor experience.</p>
5. A Resilient and Sustainable Council Comhairle Fhulangach agus Sheasmhach	
Work with partners to address service delivery challenges with a positive approach to change.	
5.1 Grow and retain our own talent within the Council.	<p>HLH currently has modern apprenticeships in Leisure Centres, trainee archivist positions and works with UHI on student placements and training through its Memorandum of Understanding with UHI.</p> <p>The Archives Service supports a number of trainee posts, which enable staff to become professionally qualified whilst working within the service and then be retained in the promoted, professional posts.</p>
5.2 Work with public and private sector partners to coordinate employment opportunities.	<p>The Council and HLH have a redeployment agreement to protect staff and jobs in the context of both organisations being committed to exploring service delivery redesign in response to constrained budgets to ensure the sustainability of the Council. HLH attends Developing Young Workforce career fairs as part of the work which schools are doing with their pupils to support them in positive destinations and has signed up to the Young Person's Guarantee and works with THC's Employability team to host paid work placements within HLH.</p> <p>The museums and archives services regularly host work placements, Fellowships, and internships.</p> <p>The library service supports work placement opportunities and offers volunteering opportunities to young people through the High Life Highland Leadership programme</p>
5.4 Actively redesign service delivery in response to	<p>The Council and HLH have reviewed the Service Delivery Contract between them which has included a focus on the sustainability of HLH.</p>

constrained budgets to ensure the sustainability of the Council.	
5.5 Work together with communities and partners to produce local plans which meet communities' needs	HLH staff work with local community partnerships along with Ward managers on local service and community plans.
5.6 Develop place-based partnership strategies to coordinate investment and rural repopulation	HLH delivers services right across the Highlands and employs local staff, thereby supporting local communities and their economies.
5.7 Continue the Council's success in attracting rural tourism infrastructure funding to provide improvements to local infrastructure.	HLH delivers a number of services which support tourism including visitor attractions; museums; countryside rangers; libraries; and leisure centres.
5.8 Accelerate the delivery of our Asset Management approach to increase efficiency and reduce overheads and carbon impact	HLH has vacated a total of 8 facilities generating potential for a capital receipt (c £400k), along with circa £87k revenue savings for utilities and maintenance. There are further opportunities to rationalise buildings from which services are delivered which will be explored through the sports facility's strategy and the HC community points of delivery model to enable services and agencies to support communities under one roof as a single point of delivery model.

Appendix B

General Updates/Good News Stories – November 2024 to April 2025

As part of HLH's reporting general updates and good news stories are provided since the previous reporting to the Education Committee.

High Life Highland is Seriously good when it comes to being green

High Life Highland came out tops for its environmental credentials in the first ever Seriously Social Awards! Organised by Community Leisure UK – a members' association that specialises in charitable organisations delivering public leisure and culture services across the UK – the prestigious national awards ceremony took place in Manchester 13th November.

The charity's range of services featured in the submission from the GROW gardeners project at the Inverness Botanic Gardens and the restoration of the Highland Folk Museum's curling pond with the Cairngorms National Park Junior Rangers, the Learning for Life team have been supporting asylum seekers learning English to explore the local environment and the library service has seen many of its facilities become green hubs of environmental education and climate engagement.

Cafe Botanics wins!

Inverness Botanic Gardens and Cafe came out tops to win Best Cafe in Inverness at the Scotland Business Awards on 6th April. This award was open to the public to vote therefore the result was a huge testament to the staff and the excellent customer service it provides as well as the quality of catering on offer!

Inspiring i-care awards evening for High Life Highland staff and volunteers

The historic Strathpeffer Pavilion was the venue, Thursday 7th November for the 2024 High Life Highland i-care awards with over 100 people attending to celebrate the many ways in which staff and volunteers Making Life Better for residents and visitors across the Highlands. Hosted by STV's Nicola McAlley and with musical entertainment from High Life Highland's music tuition service, the evening saw awards presented to outstanding employees, inspiring young people, and inspirational volunteers as well as members of staff receiving long service awards.

Funding to help gather the stories of the Herring Girls

In November, funding was secured for a joint project to be run by High Life Highland's Archive Service in partnership with Suffolk Archives, the Norfolk Record Office, and Tasglann nan Eilean (the Hebridean Archives) to capture the stories of the Herring Girls; the backbone of the UK's fishing industry for over 100 years.

The grant funding, awarded by Lloyds Register Foundation, enables the partners to research and tell the story of the herring girls who travelled round the coast, following the fishing fleets and undertaking the backbreaking work of gutting and barrelling the catch. A sometimes-overlooked part of the UK's maritime history, the women played a substantial role in both the economy and the community of fishing towns in Scotland and England, becoming seasoned travellers, often marrying and settling far from home.

Conservation studio spotlight

In December, Press and Journal featured the Highland Archive's professional conservator's expert services, writing an interesting article on the work the department conducts for individuals, museums, archives, universities, and even whisky distilleries. The piece offered an insight into the delicate work being done on items such as the Mary Queen

of Scot's letter from 1546 as well as details about bookbinding, photo restoration, and map repair.

Highland Heritage Day

Alasdair and Lorna attended Highland Heritage Day at Dingwall Academy in March. It was a pleasure for the archivists to chat with friends and colleagues from so many other organisations who all have preservation of, and access to, Highland heritage at their hearts.

Caithness Family History Society

Senior Conservator, Richard, joined Caithness Family History Society on Tuesday 11th February to deliver a free online workshop to talk about the work of the High Life Highland Conservation Service. He also gave tips and tricks on how to care for family papers and photographs at home.

And another green accolade for High Life Highland!

The High Life Highland Countryside Ranger Service was recognised in the annual Green Apple Environment Awards. They were awarded gold in the Education and Training: Conservation and Wildlife Projects category for the Highland Wildflower Meadow Mosaic Project. The Green Apple Environment Awards, launched in 1994, recognises, rewards, and promotes environmental best practice around the world.

HLH Countryside Rangers have been instrumental in the creation of the Highland Wildflower Meadow Mosaic project along with the Highland Environment Forum, which has resulted in around 100 vibrant little meadows being created in communities across the region, supported by a band of volunteers.

Wildflower meadows have declined by 97% since the 1930s, so a project such as this offers a significant boost, enhancing local biodiversity and proving invaluable for a host of pollinators. All the planting, whether it's in a community garden, school, leisure centre or church, is all thoroughly considered and uses seeds collected in Scotland.

Homes for wildlife as volunteers get crafty

A group of conservation minded volunteers built new homes for local wildlife in Caithness, with help from High Life Highland Countryside Rangers. Caithness Environment Volunteers gathered at High Life Highland's ranger base at the Seadrift Centre in Dunnet for a productive and inspiring session focused on creating habitats to boost biodiversity and support wildlife across the county.

The industrious group had a fantastic day crafting a variety of homes for different species. Their efforts included two bat boxes, four hedgehog boxes, and two tawny owl boxes destined for Wick Riverside, alongside two rabbit escape tunnels for the Farr Glebe Bumblebee conservation site, which has recently had rabbit proof fencing added to secure the site from grazing. Additionally, the Seadrift Centre itself benefited from their work with the creation of eight new house martin nests, enhancing the centre's contribution to local biodiversity.

Celebrating half a century of Dingwall Leisure Centre

The weekend of the 22nd – 24th November marked the golden anniversary of Dingwall Leisure Centre, which has been at the centre of the community since it was built in 1974. As part of the celebrations, *highlife* members and non-members streamed through the doors to and took part in a variety of fun free activities including 70s themed roller-disco, swimming, body pump, yoga and much more.

Corporate Membership re-launches as Employee Wellbeing Membership Scheme

With businesses becoming increasingly focused on the health and wellbeing of their employees, High Life Highland is supporting those efforts with its refreshed corporate membership offering. '*Employee Wellbeing Membership from highlife*' aims to make it as easy as possible for businesses and organisations to foster healthier, happier workforces.

The charity rebranded its previous corporate membership programme to better reflect a desire from employers to support both their employees and their families physical and mental health, which in turn helps foster positive working environments. Numerous studies have shown that being active daily is not only good for a person's physical wellbeing it also boosts mood and can greatly help with improved mental health and can offer many social benefits too.

Ever increasing in popularity, over 120 businesses have now signed up to the HLH Employee Wellbeing Membership scheme.

A High Life kickabout to support men's health

November marked Men's Health Month – a global campaign designed to raise awareness of key health issues, particularly mental health and suicide prevention and cancer. With the growing popularity of walking football, men are getting the opportunity to relive those feelings over again – and it's having a massive impact on their physical and mental health. In Lochaber, High Life Highland runs a men's walking football group in Fort William on Monday nights, led by Leisure Manager Gary Davidson. Walking football is for people age 50+ and is exactly what it sounds like – a standard game of football where players walk instead of run. It is designed to help people get fit or maintain an active lifestyle no matter what their age and fitness, as well as support people getting back into football if they have given it up due to age or injury.

Leven Centre Open Day

Leven Centre hosted an Open Day on Saturday 1st February where both highlife members and non-members were given the opportunity to try out the wide range of equipment, facilities, and group fitness classes on offer – among other things! The Open Day was completely free and gave members of the community the chance to experience the recently refurbished fitness suite – equipped with Technogym equipment as well as a dedicated strength and conditioning area with tours and gym inductions happening throughout the day.

There were also kettlebells sessions, indoor cycling, and racket sports along with classes specifically aimed at older members of the community such as Otago, an exercise class aimed at preventing falls, injuries and improve cognition, working on increasing strength, balance, and flexibility. An intrepid group of ten senior gym goers with a collective age of 837 decided to take on a recent challenge at the Leven Centre Open Day, raising an amazing £2237.50 to help young carers. Tutor/coach with High Life Highland, Maria MacDonald helped set the challenge, which involved participants choosing 10 exercises to complete from a long list. The activities included 10 minutes on the treadmill, bike, rower, or cross trainer as well as sets of squats, lateral pulls, bicep curls, leg presses and many more.

The fabulous fundraisers are all regular attenders at Maria's Dynamic Wellbeing, Fit Plus, Otago and Escape Pain classes at the Leven Centre and the Lochaber branch of Connecting Young Carers are the grateful recipients of their exercising efforts!

Healing hearts with High Life Highland

To coincide with Valentines Day and promotion of health hearts, HLH highlighted its partnership with NHS Highland in the delivery of cardiac rehabilitation classes. In 2024, HLH helped over 100 individuals recover from heart related conditions. Cardiac rehab is an individualised exercise, education and support programme built around personal circumstances and is seen as a vital part of a person's recovery – and every bit as important as medication.

Amy Sutherland works at High Life Highland's Thurso Leisure Centre and leads weekly cardiac rehab classes: "Anyone who is suffering from a heart condition – they might have had a heart attack or surgery – will be offered seven free cardiac rehab sessions by their GP or physio therapist. They are referred to us at High Life Highland and from there we gently ease them back into exercising in a safe environment, building fitness, strength and helping to restore confidence so they can get back to living a normal life."

Drumming up some support for World Parkinson's Day

To mark World Parkinson's Day (11 April), Inverness Leisure hosted an afternoon of free activities for people in the Highlands who are living with Parkinson's, including the introduction of a brand-new class.

Parkinson's Beat – a form of cardio-drumming – is now a regular fixture on the programme at Inverness Leisure. Exercise drumming can help improve muscle tone, strength, balance, and coordination as well as help people to think more clearly, by giving them practice in matching rhythm to movement, and learning and repeating patterns. This new class takes place every Wednesday from 12.45pm – 1.45pm.

People were also given tester classes in Parkinson's exercises with zumba shakers, exercises with pilates balls and various games as well as the chance to socialise with others over tea, coffee, and baking. NHS Highland estimates that there are around 600 people in the Highland area living with Parkinson's and there are thought to be around 13,000 across the whole of Scotland.

New libraries on wheels will be ready to roll this summer

The Highland Council and High Life Highland announced the purchase of two new mobile libraries, with the vehicles being ready to hit the road this summer. The Highland Council invested £332,000 on purchasing two new vehicles – including conversion works and signwriting, etc. – which will be deployed in the north and west where a temporary delivery service has been in operation. The news was very well received by local communities and the local media.

Inshes Library and Fèis a' Bhaile team up for community piano project

High Life Highland and Fèis a' Bhaile joined forces to launch an exciting project to bring music into the heart of the local community and develop the library as a creative and nurturing space. Inshes Library secured funding from The Highland Council Ward Discretionary Fund for the creative project, a major part of which was the purchase of an electric piano, which now sits in the library and is free for all to play – with headphones available so as not to disturb readers.

Growing Greener Communities with High Life Highland Libraries

The formation of four new Green Hubs across High Life Highland Libraries aims to transform these locations into innovative centres for community climate engagement. Highland Libraries Green Hubs will promote community involvement and awareness on environmental issues by demonstrating affordable and practical ways for communities to come together and care for the planet.

Funding has been secured from CILIPS Green Libraries Scotland, and this will contribute to the development of hubs in Dingwall, Caol, Wick and Ardnamurchan libraries. Each hub will hold a core collection of climate themed books alongside regular displays highlighting local and national environmental initiatives. An engaging programme of climate themed activities run in collaboration with the High Life Highland Countryside Rangers and other community partners are also on offer.

Trio of art venues collaborate to celebrate Gaelic culture

Inverness Museum and Art Gallery, Eden Court Galleries and Wasps' Inverness Creative Academy collaborated to bring together a multi-site exhibition presenting a range of works from artists who are inspired by the Gaelic language, culture, and a connection to the land. 'Buaile' presented 20 artists from across Scotland who create their individual work processes through a Gaelic perspective.

The natural world inspires works of art

From fulmars to furniture, two of High Life Highland's Inverness venues have been recently offering visitors a unique view of Scotland's natural environment. At the Inverness Museum and Art Gallery, an exhibition showcased the Ash tree and its beauty and importance as a material for distinctive furniture and artworks. A short stroll away – through the beautiful Ness Islands – people could enjoy the energy of Scotland's coastal birdlife at the Inverness Botanic Gardens and Café. Highland artist Renate Jephcott's latest exhibition 'Cacophony' could be viewed within the Inverness Botanic Gardens Café until the end of April. Her colourful works are a celebration of the start of the breeding season with field sketches and more complete works masterfully capturing the energy, noise, and movement of these busy seabird colonies.

Portree flute player wins Highland Young Musician of the Year

Following a triumphant, sell-out Highland Young Musicians Concerts Festival at Eden Court on Saturday 22 March, some of the young musicians involved went straight into a completely different musical environment the following day. Megan Campbell, 15, from Portree High School, was awarded the coveted title of Highland Young Musician of the Year 2025 on Sunday 23rd March.

Megan impressed the judges with her flute programme in which she performed 'Sentimentale' by Claude Bolling; 'Petite Valse' by Andre Caplet and Leonard Bernstein's 'Mambo.' She will now represent the Highland region in the Scottish Young Musician of the Year competition, which is being held in May at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in Glasgow.

Tide Lines lead singer owes "head start" to Highland Youth Music

Robert Robertson of Tide Lines was the guest performer at a special High Life Highland ceilidh on 25th January, which was organised to raise funds towards helping two particular Highland Young Musicians bands attend upcoming competitions and performances. 'Beira' and members of the High Life Highland Pipe Band provided entertainment at the event alongside Robert and there were some excellent ceilidh tunes courtesy of High Life Highland music instructors. Speaking after the sell-out fundraising concert at the Strathpeffer Pavilion, Robert Robertson praised High Life Highland's Music Service for the chances it gives young people regardless of whether they intend to pursue a professional music career or just enjoy it as a hobby.

Diamond for Orlagh

Fortrose Academy pupil and Young Leader Orlagh MacIver has been presented with her Diamond Hoodie, marking over 1,000 hours of volunteering with the High Life Highland Young Leadership programme. The Diamond Hoodie presentation happened 20th

February at Fortrose Academy. Orlagh (16) has been volunteering in a number of capacities for the last five years including at the Cromarty Youth Café. She's been leading multi-sports sessions, arts, and craft groups as well as intergenerational gatherings in her local community. She has also been involved in fundraising for the James Support Group and Mikeysline – which helped her achieve her Platinum Hoodie, which she was presented with last summer. Orlagh is also a recipient of an Eric Liddell Award – which recognises individuals who give selflessly to their local communities – resulting in a meeting with The Princess Royal at the awards ceremony in Edinburgh. A moment which she describes as one of her greatest experiences of her volunteering career!

Primary pupils set the pace at McRobert Cup

Over 750 primary school pupils from Inverness and the surrounding area donned their trainers and determination on 26 March in a bid to bag a podium finish at the one of the Highland's most prestigious sporting events! The 20th McRobert Cup was held again this year at Torvean Park, which offers runners a fun and challenging course in beautiful surroundings. The race for Highland primary school pupils is proving more popular than ever with a record number of entries. The weather proved favourable and with lots of family and friends there to support the runners from 36 different schools, the atmosphere was electric. With thanks to Cllr Alex Graham, Cllr Michael Gregson and High Life Highland Board Member David Finlayson who presented the medals and trophies on the day.

Gold for Team GB's ATAS athlete Emily!

16-year-old, Emily Rothney, from Carrbridge wrote her place in GB sporting history at the 17th European Youth Winter Olympic Festival in Bakuriani in Georgia. Emily has been supported in her sports progression by the Highland Athlete Travel Award Scheme (ATAS). ATAS is delivered through a partnership between sportscotland and High Life Highland and is designed to help performance level athletes living within the Highland area who face considerable travel costs for training and competitions.

'Kit For All' will help more young people get active in Inverness

Active Schools Coordinators for the Inverness High School High cluster have established two 'Kit for All' drop off points in Inverness where sports clothing and footwear – which is no longer used but still in good condition – can be donated and then distributed to young people in the community who'll benefit the most. The project, which is supported nationally by **sportscotland**, was launched at Inverness High School. The Highland Council generously donated two blue recycling bins for the initiative, and these will be located at Inverness Leisure and at the Forge Gym on Carsegate Road North, with the items collected being distributed to the Inverness High School's cluster primaries.

MUSIC TUITION

ANNUAL REVIEW – SESSION 24/25

**MAKING
LIFE
BETTER**



Some facts & stats

Head of Music Development – Norman Bolton



My role:

- Management of Music Tuition across Highland schools
- Management of Youth Music Initiative projects across all Highland Primary schools, including collaboration with Fèisean nan Gàidheal & Drake Music
- Collaboration with all HLH services where appropriate
- Joint projects and external partnership activities
- Advocacy at national level for HLH Music Tuition service
- Norman.bolton@highlifehighland.com



Working with a team of:

- 3 Principal Instructors (full time teaching)
- 51 Music Instructors (46.5 fte)
- 6 Youth Music Initiative tutors (4.4 fte)
- External Youth Music Initiative (YMI) Partners
- 1 musician in residence post – Inverness HS ASG (2 x 0.4 fte)



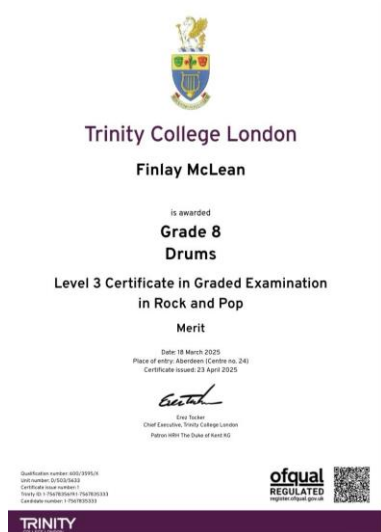
We deliver:

- c.4200 weekly instrumental lessons (with home practice expectations) – free to all
- School ensembles; performances; assemblies; occasions; concerts
- Area ensembles (typically covering several schools) – usually weekly practices at end of school day or evening. Regular community performances + additional activities. Run voluntarily by HLH Music Instructors & volunteers
- Highland Young Musicians (regional ensembles) – by invitation & with additional membership cost contribution
- Suitable preparation & experience leading to membership of national music groups (eg. National Youth Orchestras; National Youth Choir; National Youth Jazz Orchestra) – auditioned & at considerable parental investment
- Weekly YMI sessions in Primary schools –
 - Kodaly musicianship (contracted HLH tutors)
 - Trad music sessions (contracted out to FnG)
 - Special school sessions (contracted to Drake Music Scotland)



Aiming to achieve...

- Access to tuition & music activities in as many schools and centres as possible across Highland
- Pathways for young people to progress through appropriate performance opportunities at school; area and regional level
- Development opportunities for excellence through the activities of Highland Young Musicians ensembles
- The health, wellbeing & social benefits of music making
- Enhanced attainment and achievement of our pupils
- The support required to enable young people's progression from Highland activities into the work of national organisations



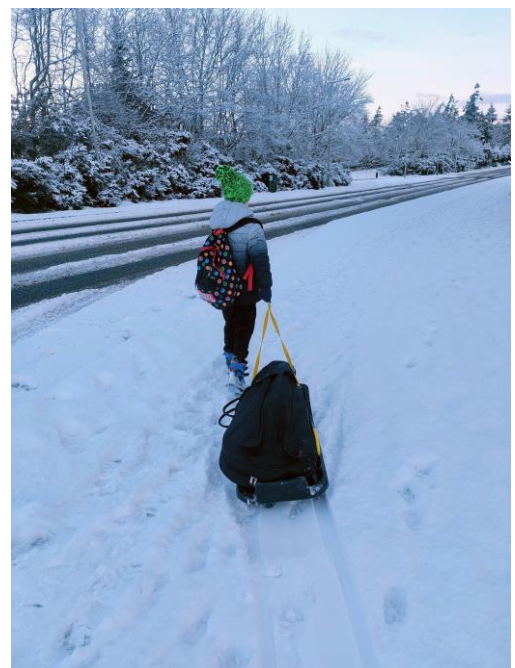
Using innovative delivery methods...

- Majority of lessons are face to face in schools
- Blended delivery methods via Google Meet:
eg: 3 weeks online, 1 face to face
week about online/face to face
alternate weeks f2f/online
maintenance of service delivery in bad weather
- these kinds of arrangements give Instructors less travelling time & pupils have more responsibility for managing the technical aspects of online
- access to tuition for more remote schools beyond an Instructors core ASG schools
- Google Meet & Classroom allow greater communication + opportunity for remote collaborations with minimal rehearsal time spent at events.



Online tuition requires more focus!
We continue to harness the positive aspects of online tuition learnt during lockdown.

For some pupils, NOTHING stops them getting to their lesson!



HLH Music Instructors recruit pupils at various stages throughout the year (depending on timetable capacity in each school they visit)



MUSIC TUITION
OIDEACHADH CIÙIL

Check online to see
what's available in
your school

- Strings
- Brass
- Woodwind
- Percussion
- Drumkit
- Guitar
- Voice
- Piping
- Pipe Band Drumming
- Whistle
- Piano
- Recorder
- Bass Guitar
- Ukulele
- Cajon Drum

Visit highlifehighland.com/music for more information

High Life Highland is a company limited by guarantee registered in Scotland No. SC420111 and is a registered Scottish charity No. SC042013.

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ABOUT MUSIC TUITION

Playing a musical instrument
could benefit your child's wider
education in the following ways

- Improves health and wellbeing
- Promotes good discipline and organisation
- Provides a sense of achievement
- Provides life long skills
- Improves self confidence
- Promotes fun and enjoyment

Playing and performing as part of a group builds vital social skills and the ability to co-operate with others. High Life Highland Instructors run groups in schools which can lead to wider opportunities. Highland Young Musician groups allow musicians from across Highland to play and perform at the highest levels.

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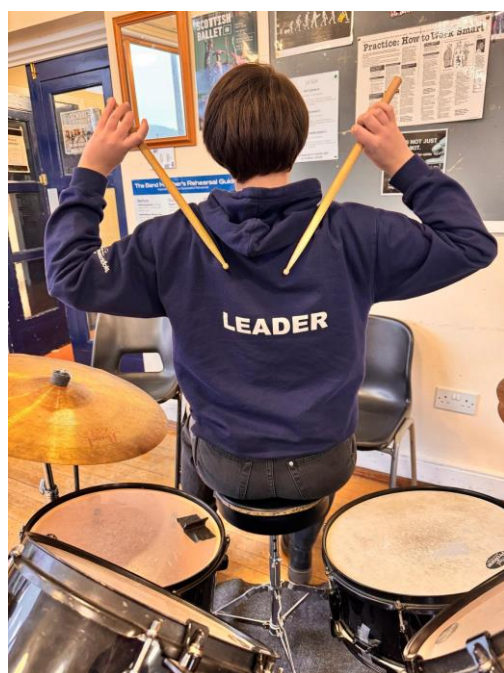
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Beyond weekly lessons...

HLH Instructors continue to offer a wide variety of school & Area ensemble opportunities beyond the school day. These are all led on a voluntary basis by HLH Instructors & often include pupil and adult volunteers. This is a tiny snapshot...



Highland Young Musician of the Year 2025

Our annual competition in which some of our most able pupils have the opportunity to perform, with the winner representing Highland at the Scottish Young Musician competition held in May each year in RCS, Glasgow. Our 2025 Highland Young Musician is Megan Campbell, Portree High School.



Week of Rock 2025 – our 3rd year of running this Easter holiday activity...4 days working with young musicians who have never played together as bands, culminating in an end of course gig.



And finally - our flagship HIGHLAND YOUNG MUSICIANS ensembles...

- c.250 participants in 2024/25 from all across Highland
- 4 intensive rehearsal Saturdays, leading to...
- Concert Festival – a sell-out celebration of musical excellence in Eden Court Theatre

8 ensembles run in a unique way like nowhere else due to Highland geography!

- Highland Regional Youth Orchestra
- Highland Schools Wind Band
- Highland Youth Big Band
- Highland Youth Chorus
- Highland Youth String Orchestra
- 'Snas
- Beira
- High Life Highland Youth Pipe Band



L: HYWB
R: HYC

L: HRYO
R: HYSO



L: HYBB



R: 'SNAS

'missing' from our Concerts Festival, were Beira & HLH Pipe Band.

These groups have been formed with the aim of creating musical collaborations with each other whilst also having the option to perform independently.

They have had a number of successful local, Scottish & European ventures in the short time they have been together...debut performances at Schots Weekend, Alden Beisen, Belgium in September 2024 (with HLH Pipe band gaining a 3rd overall in their competition debut); amazing performances at Scottish Schools Pipe Band Championships 2025 in piping & freestyle competitions (with HLH Pipe band gaining a 2nd overall in their competition); ceilidh in Strathpeffer Pavilion (with Robert Robertson, Tidelines as our special guest) – and now working towards our HLH Fiddlers Rally (Inverness Leisure, June 14th 2025) before Beira's Eden Court Under Canvas final day support gig in August (the actual main band is a secret!) & then both groups off to Belgium again in September 2025 with additional playing commitments & Beira being elevated to main stage status after impressing the organisers so much last year!

