

The Highland Council

Agenda Item	9
Report No	ECI/30/25

Committee: Economy and Infrastructure

Date: 21 August 2025

Report Title: Community Wealth Building Strategy Update

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive – Place

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 Community Wealth Building (CWB) provides an alternative approach to economic development and a practical response that aims to keep wealth within a local area. It is often described as a people centred approach to economic development and aims to ensure every area and community can participate in, and benefit from, economic activity.
- 1.2 At the Council meeting in September 2024, a CWB Strategy and Action Plan as detailed in **Appendix 1** was agreed, along with a commitment to provide bi-annual progress reports to the Economy and Infrastructure Committee. This report builds on the report considered at the February Economy and Infrastructure Committee and provides an update on progress against the actions contained within the CWB action plan. The report also provides a summary of next steps and the approach that will be adopted to updating the plan going forward.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:-
 - i. **Agree** as set out in section 6 progress against the Community Wealth Building Action Plan; and
 - ii. **Note** the next steps in terms of embedding Community Wealth Building as an approach and updating the action plan.

3 Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** – The strategy is being delivered within existing budgets. It therefore aims to embed CWB as an approach into our activity and adapting our approaches to maximise the opportunities this approach brings to our communities and the local economy. The action plan has been aligned to the Council's Operational Delivery Plan and the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan.

3.2 **Legal** – The Community Wealth Building (Scotland) Bill was introduced on 20 March 2025 by the Scottish Government and seeks to address economic and wealth inequality by establishing a statutory framework for implementing the CWB model across Scotland. The main provisions of the Bill are:-

- Scottish Ministers must publish a Community Wealth Building statement outlining national measures;
- Local authorities, in collaboration with public bodies (e.g., health boards), must develop and implement CWB Action Plans for their areas; and
- Ministers are also required to issue guidance on how to develop and implement these plans.

3.2.1 The Bill is currently at Stage 1 of the Scottish Parliament's legislative process during which the Economy and Fair Work Parliamentary Committee will:-

- examine the general principles of the Bill;
- further evidence from stakeholders, experts, and the public: Highland Council submitted combined views from the Scottish Local Authorities Economic Development (SLAED) Group and the Highland Community Planning Partnership (HCPP); and
- produce a Stage 1 Report with recommendations.

This process will be completed in November 2025 and full Parliament will then debate and vote on whether to agree to the general principles of the Bill.

Based on the current outline of the Bill, Highland is already complying with the duties proposed for Local Authorities within the Bill.

3.3 **Risk** - CWB encompasses a considerable range of activity. A core consideration is about embedding CWB approaches in our business-as-usual activity. It is also important to note that whilst elements of community wealth building are directly at the hands of the Council, partnership working will be fundamental to realising other benefits.

3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** – There are no implications.

3.5 **Gaelic** – there are opportunities to be realised through the development of skills and employment pathways related to Gaelic language and culture and wider economic benefits through the promotion of Gaelic culture.

4 Impacts

4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.

4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.

- 4.3 An Integrated Impact Assessment screening was undertaken as part of the development of the Community Wealth Building Strategy. This concluded that no negative impacts were identified, and positive impact anticipated, particularly in relation to socio-economic impact. The original impact screening can be found [here](#).

5 Highland Council's Action Plan

- 5.1 The Council's Community Wealth Building Action Plan is set out within **Appendix 1**. The action plan sets out the intended outcomes and proposed actions for each of the 5 pillars of Community Wealth Building:-



- 5.2 By delivering against these pillars, the aim is to increase the flow and retention of wealth within a local area. It is important to note however, that many of the actions contained in the plan have their own governance arrangements in place to ensure successful implementation and scrutiny. Consequently, the following paragraphs highlight notable areas of progress against the agreed actions, as opposed to an exhaustive assessment.
- 5.3 Section 6 of the report provides a summary of progress against the 5 pillars of the Action Plan. Further details can be found in the Action Plan within **Appendix 1**.

6 Action Plan Updates

6.1 Spending

The objective of the spending pillar is to use public spend to deliver community benefit, fair work and build local supply chains.

6.1.2 **Community Benefits** – One of the main actions contained within the Action Plan relates to the Council's approach to realising community benefit from its procurement activity. Since the introduction of the Council's Community Benefit Policy in September 2024, there has been a gradual implementation of the policy across all Council procurement activity. Community benefits must be considered for contracts and frameworks of all values without exception, with a requirement for Fair Work practices, promotion of the real living wage, and prompt payment within supply chains to be included as standard clauses where it is 'relevant and proportionate' to do so.

6.1.3 The policy also encourages Council officers to consider:-

- 1) If contracts can be broken down into smaller lots, to allow SMEs and third sector organisations the opportunity to bid for contracts.
- 2) How larger contracts can promote the use of local supply chains and SMEs.
- 3) To maximise opportunities in relation to job creation, skills, training, and development.
- 4) How community benefits can support educational activities and pathways into a variety of sectors. e.g., construction, green / low carbon energy, digital, health and social care, tourism etc., aligned with the My Highland Future portfolio with the Council's Delivery Plan.
- 5) In-kind professional support for community groups, communities and third sector organisations to help build resilience and capacity.

6.1.4 Significant work has commenced to further embed other key elements of the policy:-

- Online webinars and briefing sessions have taken place to update staff as to the implementation of the policy and its underpinning links to community wealth building.
- Community benefits are scrutinised by the Council's Procurement Approval Group monthly when future procurement activities are presented to the panel.
- A steering group of Community Planning Partnership stakeholders are collectively developing a 'Highland Project Bank'; a key outcome of the community benefit policy and HOIP delivery plan, the project bank will be a mechanism to facilitate private sector organisations' engagement with communities and the third sector to enable the delivery of community benefit requirements and to support community projects and initiatives. It is anticipated that the project bank will be introduced by September 2025.

6.1.5 A review of the policy, and an evaluation of its outcomes during the first 12 months of implementation will be reported to the Communities and Place Committee in November 2025.

6.2 **Workforce / Fair Employment**

Activity linked to this objective aims to ensure that the Highland workforce is in well paid jobs that benefit from an effective voice, security and flexibility.

- 6.2.1 **The Employer Charter** – developing and implementing an Employer Charter is a core element of the My Highland Future Portfolio and also a key action under the Community Wealth Building cross-cutting theme within the 2024–2027 HOIP Delivery Plan. The Employer Charter aims to promote Fair Work practices and support local businesses in becoming employers of choice. Implementation has been formalised into 4 phases of work which aim to launch the initiative effectively and support chartering select groups of businesses to develop the chartership process and build business confidence before widespread adoption.

Promotion of the Employer Charter is now being included as a voluntary commitment in Council procurement activity.

- 6.2.2 The initial phase aims to support development of the charter as an equitable initiative for all business sectors and sizes, with Phase 4 being dedicated to the launch of a digital platform which will host the charter, application process and register of businesses. This activity is being funded via the 2025/26 UKSPF allocation. Phase 1 continues to progress well with 8 major employers (targeting key skill sectors) in the region, who are undergoing chartership and awarding before the end of August 2025. Phase 2 is currently being planned with 10 to 15 key skill sector focused SMEs across urban and rural highland locales, alongside engagement with local industry events. A more detailed update on the My Highland Future Portfolio will be considered by Economy and Infrastructure (E&I) Committee in November.
- 6.2.3 **Delivering childcare solutions** – The Council and partners successfully secured the second tranche of £60,000 from the Scottish Government's Addressing Depopulation Fund for spend during 2025/2026. The purpose of the Fund is to support the implementation of bespoke, pathfinder measures in support of population attraction and retention in selected local authorities. Following the 2024/2025 funding which included feasibility studies on innovative childcare solutions, the current work is focussed on developing a model for a Subsidised Childminder and is being delivered in partnership between the Council's Early Years and Economic Development team.
- 6.2.4 Whilst the Scottish Government is interested in the other potential childcare solutions which were examined the previous year, namely a Rural Childcare Practitioner (a childminder working from a non-domestic setting) and a Single Care Model (where childcare and adult social care could be delivered by staff with a single registration and single employer, potentially from the same setting), they are currently subject to legislative and policy framework which create barriers to implementation. However the Single Care Model is being taken forward to the pathfinder pilot stage by Care and Learning Alliance (CALA) in partnership with two identified rural communities.
- 6.2.5 To support this work, in April 2025, an Evidence Report on the issues of Childcare in Rural and Island Communities led by Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) was delivered on behalf of the Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership (HIREP) and presented to the Convention of the Highlands and Islands (COHI) in May 2025. The report demonstrates the scale, urgency and impact of the childcare crisis facing the region and assesses the feasibility, potential impacts and deliverability of proposed actions to respond to and address these challenges including legislative and regulatory changes needed. This has subsequently been submitted to Scottish Government for consideration.

- 6.2.6 Scottish Government have reported they are currently reviewing the detail of the report so that Ministers can take an informed view of the findings and liaise with the Care Inspectorate and COSLA on those aspects of the report which are relevant to them.

6.3 **Land and Property**

The objective of the Land and Property pillar aims to ensure that communities maximise benefit and generate wealth from local land and property.

- 6.3.1 **Housing** - In June 2024, the Council agreed a Highland Housing Challenge in recognition of both the issues in meeting the current need for housing across communities in Highland and the anticipated future demand for housing based upon the economic opportunities coming to the area.
- 6.3.2 A Partnership Action Plan to address the Highland Housing Challenge was agreed at Council in June 2025. The plan is a live document that will flex to reflect progress over time and was developed following a Housing Summit in Aviemore in October 2024 and a follow up seminar in Inverness in June 2025. Developed in conjunction with partners across the public, private and third sectors, it outlines important areas of activity, outlines targets and timescales and locks in partner contributions and commitments for action in three key thematic areas:-
- Land;
 - Finance; and
 - Developer Capacity
- 6.3.3 Progress to date includes:-
- Established a call for sites which has delivered 250 sites, with a potential 25,000 housing units which will support deliver against the target of an additional 12,000 houses over the next 10 years;
 - Agreed an approach for identifying and progressing masterplan consent areas to support accelerating building across Highland;
 - Established an integrated property service which will support accelerating the pre-application processes for developments;
 - Working with Scottish National Investment Bank, good progress is being made in establishing a new public/private joint venture model;
 - Agreed for the Council to progress developing and delivering mid-market rental properties, with a particular focus on key worker accommodation; and
 - Through the Social Value Charter, SSEN Transmissions have committed to delivering on legacy housing for Highland, with a minimum of 400 housing units.

6.3.4 ***Supporting Community and Local Ownership***

Supporting Energy Resilience and Community Generation - In parallel, we are working to strengthen regional energy resilience by supporting community-led renewable generation in remote and island areas:-

- Supporting the development of local generation projects that improve energy security in off-grid and vulnerable locations.
- Enabling renewable infrastructure that underpins transport decarbonisation, such as EV charging hubs and low carbon mobility corridors.
- Building local capacity to ensure long-term community benefit and reduce exposure to volatile energy markets.

This strategic support enhances regional self-sufficiency and aligns with our wider investment and infrastructure objectives.

6.3.5 Regional Shareholding in Renewable Energy Projects: To further embed community wealth building into the energy transition, we are designing a regional model for public and community shareholding in commercial renewable energy projects.

This includes:-

- Mapping opportunities for Council and community equity participation in both new and operational energy projects.
- Developing financial structures that deliver long-term revenue return to local areas.
- Embedding principles of governance, reinvestment, and local benefit into project design and delivery.

This work reinforces our commitment to a fair and inclusive energy economy, ensuring the Highlands is not only a producer of renewable power - but also a long-term beneficiary of its value.

6.4 **Financial Power**

The Financial Power pillar aims to ensure that the flows of wealth generated within the local economy works for the wellbeing of communities and businesses.

6.4.1 ***Maximising Community Benefit from Renewables:***

Social Value Charter - On the 27 June 2024, the Council agreed to adopt and the immediate use of the Highland Social Value Charter in all engagement with renewable energy investors in Highland. The Charter aims to:-

- embed an approach to community wealth building into Highland;
- maximise the economic benefits arising from our geography and unique appeal to energy companies;
- engage and involve relevant stakeholders to understand how we can continually improve our impact; and
- unlock economic opportunities for area

6.4.2 An update was provided to this Committee in May 2025, and a further detailed progress update will be reported in November 2025.

In summary, recent activity has focused on:-

- Ongoing industry engagement
- Development of Partnership Agreements – committing developers and the Council to activities in support of the charter on a case-by-case basis.
- Recruitment of 4 FTE officers within the Community Support and Engagement Team, focusing on support communities across Highland with capacity building and maximising community benefit opportunities through renewable developments.
- Development of a Highland Strategic Investment Plan, which includes:-
 - the creation of a Strategic Investment Plan – consultation events have identified potential themes and projects to be supported;
 - establishing a Strategic Fund; and
 - facilitating the creation of a Strategic Fund Partnership, to manage the Fund

The Council has commissioned external legal support to develop and appraise governance models for the Strategic Investment Plan.

6.4.3 Strategic Renewable Energy Development: Work is underway to advancing a suite of renewable energy projects that directly support the ambitions of the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) and align with wider place-based decarbonisation planning.

Key projects include:-

- The development of District Heat Networks in identified priority zones to decarbonise heat supply and reduce long-term energy costs.
- Progression of solar farm proposals to meet the energy demands of the public estate and enable future grid contribution.
- Strategic planning at Torvean Quarry to enable clean energy storage and distribution, supporting green industrial growth and infrastructure integration.

These initiatives demonstrate a clear shift towards infrastructure that is locally anchored, carbon reducing, and economically regenerative.

6.5 **Inclusive Ownership**

A key element of Inclusive Ownership focuses on advancing inclusive economic ownership models such as local SMEs, employee-owned businesses, social enterprises and mutually owned companies and thus enable more wealth generated locally to stay within the community.

6.5.1 In November 2021, Highland Council and the Highland Community Planning Board agreed to develop a Place Based Framework across each Committee Area within Highland, including the development of an Area Place Plan (APP) for each Area. The aim was to consolidate local priorities already within existing plans and draw together community aspirations with priority issues and outcomes for local development and community planning to secure a clear, shared and accepted way forward for each area. The process means understanding communities and delivering a shared vision by targeting resources, investment and action, achieved by working and collaborating together and provides a method to track and promote the impact of both spending and project delivery.

6.5.2 Work continues to progress, and the status of each Plan is as follows:-

Black Isle

- Community Led, this Local and Area Place Plan was agreed by Committee in August 2024, and a local steering group is now overseeing delivery of the actions and priorities.

Caithness

- Highland Council led the preparation of an Area Place Plan (APP), and this was adopted in April 2025. Next steps are now underway to start the prioritisation and delivery of projects.

Dingwall and Seaforth

- Highland Council led on the preparation of an Area Place Plan under the guidance of a steering group of public and third sector stakeholders, and this was adopted by Area Committee in February 2025. A delivery group has been meeting over the past few months to identify and deliver priorities

Easter Ross

- Easter Ross Community Partnership has now finalised a plan for the area, and this was adopted by the Area Committee in May 2025. Next steps for delivery of actions are being considered.

Inverness and Area

- The Inverness Strategy package provides a portfolio for those with a shared interest in the future of development and investment across Inverness and the wider area. This was considered by City Committee in February 2025.

Nairn

- Community led, the local place plan for Nairn has set out the priorities and future vision for Nairn and Nairnshire and was adopted by Area Committee in May 2025.

Lochaber

- Highland Council has finalised the collaborative preparation of an Area Place Plan which collates an overview of local priorities development, investment and service delivery across the area. The Plan was adopted in January 2025, and a delivery group is being formed to progress actions.

Sutherland

- Highland Council in collaboration with Sutherland Community Partnership and Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust prepared an Area Place Plan (APP) which has collated an overview of local priorities development, investment and service delivery across the area. This APP was adopted by Sutherland County Area Committee in June 2025. Next steps for creation of a delivery plan are now underway.

Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh

- On behalf of the Council and partners, Wester Ross UNESCO has prepared the Area Place Plan (APP) which collates an overview of local priorities development, investment and service delivery across the area - identified through stakeholder and public engagement, in addition to reviewing the content of existing plans and strategies across public and community partners. Adopted by the Area Committee in January 2025, the APP will comprise a key source of evidence for consideration in development planning, future service delivery and community action.

Badenoch & Strathspey

- The Highland Council is leading on work with partners and communities to collate recent studies and existing plans to identify local priorities, we will engage with communities to test and inform those priorities. This work will form the basis for an Area Place Plan which will be reported to Area Committee in November

Eilean a'Cheò

- Skye and Raasay Futures (SARF) is considered to be the Area Place Plan for the Eilean a'Cheò Ward and was adopted by the Area Committee. Delivery of priorities is ongoing.

7 Embedding Community Wealth Building

- 7.1 As noted in section 5, Community Wealth Building was agreed as one of the 7 cross-cutting priorities within the HOIP Delivery Plan. Whilst there are specific areas for action for individual partner organisations to pursue and deliver, only by working in partnership and aligning activity will the full benefits of CWB be realised for communities across Highland. The inaugural meeting of the Highland Community Wealth Building (CWB) Partnership was held on 15 April 2025. This Partnership aims to foster joint discussion and sharing of best practices across the Highland Community Planning Partnership, pooling actions from various community wealth building strategies to identify overlaps, gaps, and opportunities for collaboration.
- 7.2 An evidence-gathering exercise is underway to map community wealth building activities within each organisation to inform the collective plan. The group agreed on the importance of a comprehensive understanding of existing activities to identify opportunities for collaboration and avoid duplication as well as to ensure compliance and maximise the benefits of the Community Wealth Building (Scotland) Bill.

7.3 In addition, the Council continues to participate in the Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership (HIREP) CWB Group and the Scottish Local Authorities CWB Practitioners Network. Both groups aim to progress and promote the development of a collaborative approach to CWB across the region and across Scotland. Opportunities for facilitating joint working, promoting best practice and advancing specific activity around agreed CWB pillars have been identified as key objectives.

7.4 Specifically, the HIREP CWB Group is developing a Highland and Islands Action Plan with a proposed focus on: -

- 1) local economic empowerment;
- 2) inclusive growth; and
- 3) sustainable development

Officers will continue to work collaboratively with anchor organisations and wider stakeholders to develop opportunities for facilitating joint working, promoting best practice and advancing specific activity around agreed CWB pillars that support both a Highland and wider regional approach to CWB.

7.5 Within the Council, work is under way to embed CWB knowledge across all services, with a focus on developing awareness as to how each service can contribute to the Council's strategy across their own areas and activities. Adopting a business-as-usual approach to CWB across the organisation means that the monitoring and evaluation of CWB outcomes should not be seen or reported in isolation. In addition to the bi-annual strategy updates to the Economy and Infrastructure Committee, progress should be reported across all strategic committees and Full Council, as illustrated in the updates in section 6 and in the Action plan in **Appendix 1**.

7.6 Activity will take place to review current performance, through PRMS and other key performance indicators to identify existing measures relating to CWB and identify any gaps of future development of CWB related measures.

7.7 The intention to review the CWB Strategy action plan on a bi-annual basis to monitor the effectiveness of our approach and identify new CWB activities and opportunities. In addition, officers will monitor the development and requirements of the Community Wealth Building Bill, with a view to implementing any changes or requirements in relation to the Council's strategy.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive – Place

Date: 23 July 2025

Author: Michelle Hardie, Economic Adviser
Gail Ward, Community Benefits Manager
Alison Clark, Chief Officer Housing and Communities

Background Papers: Developing a Community Wealth Building [Strategy](#)
Community Wealth Building [Strategy](#)

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Action Plan

What we will do to deliver - Action Plan and Update August 2025

Objective	Outcome	Actions	Lead	Timescales
Spending	Increase community benefit from procurement activity	<p>Implement the Community Benefit from Procurement Policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop Highland Project Bank – This is now linked to the SVC as well as THC Procurement. <p><i>Update: We have set up a sub-group of the CWB Partnership Group to look specifically at how a CPP wide project bank could potentially work linked in also to the HTSI Volunteer Academy.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated procurement documentation <p><i>Update: 1) All Procurement Approval Forms to seek procurement authority now include a section on community benefit. Any potential community benefit activity is scrutinised as part of the approval process. 2) The Council's Contract Standing Orders have been updated to include reference to the community benefit policy.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidance for staff and suppliers <p><i>Update: 1) In addition to the changes to the documents used in the procurement approval process. Services across the council have engaged in online briefing sessions to discuss how the community benefit policy impacts across individual service level. 2) Advertised tenders now include a Community Benefit Guidance document which states the required community benefit requirement on a case-by-case basis. It also signposts suppliers to specific sources of support depending on the community benefit requirement.</i></p>	Community Benefit Manager & Strategic Commercial Manager	Updated to December 2025 (from December 2024)

Objective	Outcome	Actions	Lead	Timescales
Spending	Maximise local spend through procurement practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a targeted supplier development programme which will support Highland SMEs, Social Enterprises, Supported Businesses and the Third Sector to develop tendering skills, and gain experience in identifying and bidding for contract opportunities across the public sector. <p><i>Update: - Programme for financial year 24-25 contained key events/news items for suppliers. Plan for 25-26 contains some further targeted events/support for national events and development of business breakfasts locally to share key information with the supply base in Highland including SMEs, Social Enterprises, Supported Businesses and the Third Sector.</i></p> <p><i>In addition to the below Steps Taken to Facilitate Supported Businesses</i></p> <p><i>Commercial & Procurement Shared Services (C&PSS) has initiated and contributed to several national conversations and research initiatives involving Sencot, Social Firms Scotland, Glasgow Caledonian University and Scottish Government regarding supported businesses. Solutions-focused areas for exploration have been put forward by C&PSS in the hope that central government guidance/clarification will follow e.g.:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The ability of a supported business to compliantly subcontract services/works not performed by disabled/disadvantaged persons;</i> <i>The ability of supported businesses to form multi-disciplined consortia/partnerships (perhaps with one entity/special purpose vehicle as the lead)</i> <i>Treatment of volunteers (as potential employees) for the purposes of applying the 30% "disabled or disadvantaged" workforce threshold.(on the basis a volunteer will become an employee following award of contract)</i> 	Strategic Commercial Manager	March 2026

Objective	Outcome	Actions	Lead	Timescales
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential reform of "light touch" regime to open up contract opportunities to more local 3rd sector organisations in relation to certain community focused requirements. 		
Spending	Build capacity within third sector to support commissioning activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and deliver a thematic approach to capacity building <i>Part of the Person-Centred Solutions Delivery Plan portfolio, the project aims to deliver direct capacity building resource on a thematic basis, in order to build service delivery capacity across the third and community sectors, delivered in partnership with HTSI and other community planning partners. This will support other strands of the Delivery Plan focused on creating stronger and sustainable commissioning frameworks, specifically adult commissioning, early learning and childcare and workforce for the future – tackling inequalities.</i> <i>An update on progress was considered at Communities and Place Committee in May 2025.</i> 	Person Centred Solutions Portfolio	March 2027
	Supporting small business growth and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work to support Highland based businesses to start up and grow <i>Update: As well as support through the Procurement Service (as detailed above), ongoing support is available to Highland businesses through Business Gateway Highland: over 2350 local businesses in 2024/25 benefitted from local advisers, thematic workshops, specialist advice and grants for start-ups and growing businesses.</i> 	Economy & Regeneration Team	Ongoing

Objective	Outcome	Actions	Lead	Timescales
Fair Employment	Developing a workforce for the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a Partner Sector Skills Board and 7 sector reference groups to identify skills needs, gaps and build career pathways <p><i>Update: Research conducted, engaging with employers and Workforce North partnership, Industry Skills Board Terms of Reference template drafted, Project Manager resource appointed April 2025.</i></p> <p><i>Updated action: Establish Industry Sector Skills Boards to identify skills needs, gaps and build career pathways, priority sectors: Construction and Hospitality/Tourism</i></p>	My Highland Future Portfolio	Priority Boards by: October 2025 (Previously March 2025)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an Employer Charter that will support fair work and the living wage <p><i>Update: Highland Employer Charter developed, and pilot started with small mixed group of employers in June 2025 – pilot will work with employers to shape Charter delivery. Phased roll-out targeting different types and sizes of employers to further test concept and improve delivery.</i></p>	My Highland Future Portfolio	Next phase: September to November 2025
		<p>Develop a joint talent attraction and marketing programme for Highland (internal retention and external attraction)</p> <p><i>Update: The Highland Council Talent Strategy has been developed. The portfolio project team are now working with Workforce North to plan and co-ordinate delivery of a Highland-wide programme of promotional activity.</i></p> <p><i>Workforce North partnership – THC will contribute to developing and delivering a collaborative family and school campaign of promotional packages to highlight future economic opportunities and help secure future talent pipeline</i></p>	My Highland Future Portfolio – in partnership with Workforce North	Ongoing promotional content developed and coordinated: August 2025 to September 2026

Objective	Outcome	Actions	Lead	Timescales
Fair Employment	Developing a workforce for the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a shared approach to promoting the offering of public sector agencies in Highland – e.g., apprenticeships, housing, skills and training, upskilling = career pathways, benefits <i>Update: Portfolio projects – Council Future Workforce, Schools Curriculum & Business Links, Sector Skills Boards, and Apprenticeship development projects – are developing pathways within the Council and into other public sector agencies, which will have coordinated promotion through Workforce North activity.</i> 	My Highland Future Portfolio – in partnership with Workforce North	Ongoing activity: August 2025 to September 2026
	Maximising skills and innovation opportunities from the Green Freeport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the 10-point skills plan as part of the Green Freeport Delivery <p><i>Update: There has been a focus on young people engagement (with various schools' sessions and engagement with teaching staff), STEM work through the UHI and emphasis on creating and filling apprentice opportunities via the Powering Futures programme pilot and working with main employers such as Sumitomo. The Powerhouse Advisory Panel which has been formed with representatives from across the partnership has recently been established to help deliver skills plan and advise on the use of the NICS fund.</i></p>	Green Freeport Partnership	Ongoing

Objective	Outcome	Actions	Lead	Timescales
	Delivering childcare solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop multi-generational models for childcare <p><i>Update: A model for a subsidised childminder is being developed by Highland Council in partnership with Scottish Government with the aim of piloting in Highland this year.</i></p> <p><i>Evidence Report on Issues of Childcare in Rural and Island Communities (written by HIE on behalf of HIREP) presented to Scottish Government in May 2025.</i></p> <p>A detailed update on progress to deliver childcare options was considered at Education Committee in February 2025 as part of the Person Centred Portfolio Board Update.</p>	Person Centred Solutions Portfolio	March 2026
Fair Employment	Improved local transport solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop the evidence base to identify community transport gaps and opportunities across Highland <p><i>Update: The Local Transport Strategy (LTS) was approved by committee in February 2025. The Delivery Plan phase of the LTS has now commenced with the aim to take this back to committee in February 2026.</i></p> <p><i>A workshop with community transport providers is being co-ordinated by the public transport team.</i></p>	Transport Partnership	March 2026

Objective	Outcome	Actions	Lead	Timescales
Land and property	Supporting community and local ownership	<p>As part of the asset rationalisation process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pro-actively engage with local communities on potential uses for assets that align with community aspirations and delivery of local priorities <p>Update: <i>Supporting community generation - Work is ongoing to support the development of community owned energy generation projects, with a focus on off-grid and vulnerable locations, enabling renewable infrastructure and a focus on building local capacity to ensure long term community benefit.</i></p>	Community Support and Engagement Team	Ongoing
	Increasing the supply of affordable housing	<p><i>Shared ownership – work is taking place to design a regional model for public and community shareholding in commercial renewable energy projects.</i></p> <p><i>Place Planning - Area Place Plans identify community priorities including those requiring investment in assets and/or community ownership. The Council has a well-developed Community Asset Transfer (CAT) process to support communities to lease or take ownership of Council owned land or buildings to help meet those priorities. The creation of delivery mechanisms for the Area Place Plans, involving the Council, partners and communities, will facilitate a proactive approach using place planning and CATs to increase community ownership.</i></p> <p>As part of the Housing Challenge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop options for increasing finance for housing Develop options for increasing the number and variety of developments Develop options to increase land supply <p>Update: <i>A Partnership Action Plan has been developed in conjunction with Public, Private and Third sector partners, with commitments for action on land, finance and developer capacity.</i></p>	<p>Chief Officer – Economy and Planning</p> <p>Chief Officer – Housing and Communities</p>	March 2027

Objective	Outcome	Actions	Lead	Timescales
		<i>An update on progress and detailed actions to be progressed can be found in the update to Council in June 2025</i>		
Financial Power	Maximising community benefit from renewables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the Social Value Charter for Highland including creation and delivery of a Strategic Investment Fund <i>Update: SVC implemented September 2025. Ongoing activity with developers. Strategic Investment Plan currently in development.</i> Promote the aims and opportunities of the Social Value Charter with stakeholders and communities <i>Update: 4 FTE Officers appointed to support communities, developers and stakeholders in the implementation of the Charter. Ongoing activity to produce resources to support capacity building across Highland,</i> 	Assistant Chief Executive - Place	Ongoing
	Attracting inward investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with potential investors, landowners, ports and developers to maximise the benefits of inward investment to the local supply chain. <i>Update: There has been a range of activities to promote investment opportunities and boost the local supply chain such as:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The launch of Highland Council's Invest Highland website in early 2025</i> <i>Ongoing involvement with Scottish Cities Alliance (promoting investment opportunities and long-term strategic partnerships), including attendance at the following events:-</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Scottish Cities Week, London, January 2025</i> <i>UK Real Estate and Inward Investment Forum (UKREiiF), Leeds, May 2025</i> 	Assistant Chief Executive Place Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership	Ongoing

Objective	Outcome	Actions	Lead	Timescales
Financial Power	Supporting business growth and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work to identify and secure funding to encourage and support Highland based businesses to start up and grow <p><i>Update: £797K secured from UK Shared Prosperity Fund in 24/25 for business support: start-up grants, growth grants and expert business advice & support. £400K secured from UKSPF in 25/26 for business support.</i></p>	Economy and Regeneration Team - Business Gateway and HOIL	Ongoing
Inclusive ownership	Increasing community ownership in Highland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work to promote different models of community ownership including social enterprises, co-operatives and community owned enterprises <p><i>Update: Through stakeholder engagement, partnership working and Business Gateway Highland, this piece of work is ongoing.</i></p>	Economy and Regeneration Team	Ongoing
	Delivering local priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with local partnership – community, third, public and private sector – to deliver local priorities and aspirations through place planning <p><i>Update: Area Place Plans are now in place for all Committee areas in Highland apart from Badenoch and Strathspey which will following in the autumn. The focus is now shifting to developing actions to deliver Area Place Plan priorities, through a range of local approaches including local Community Planning Partnerships, community-led steering groups and the creation of cross-service Delivery Groups.</i></p>	Community Support and Engagement Team	Ongoing