

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL
NORTH PLANNING APPLICATIONS
COMMITTEE

23 April 2025, 9.30AM

MINUTE / ACTION NOTE

Listed below are the decisions taken by Committee at their meeting and the actions that now require to be taken. The webcast of the meeting will be available within 48 hours of broadcast and will remain online for 12 months: <https://highland.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

A separate memorandum will be issued if detailed or further instructions are required, or where the contents of the memorandum are confidential. Please arrange to take the required action based on this action note.

Committee Members Present:

Ms S Atkin
Ms B Campbell
Ms L Dundas - remote
Mr R Gale
Mrs A MacLean (from item 5.1)
Ms J McEwan - remote
Mr D Millar
Ms M Paterson
Mr M Reiss
Mr K Rosie - remote
Ms M Smith (from item 6.1)

Non-Committee Members Present:

Mr M Cameron
Ms M Hutchison
Mr P Oldham
Mrs M Ross

Substitutes:

Mr A Jarvie (except item 6.8)

Apologies:

Mr M Baird
Mr R Bremner
Ms T Collier
Ms L Kraft
Mr C Munro

Officers participating:

Mr D Jones, Area Planning Manager – North (DJ)
Mr P Wheelan, Planning Team Leader (PW)
Mr M Fitzpatrick, Principal Planner (MF)
Ms S Hadfield, Planner (SH)

Mr R Strachan, Planner (RS)
 Mr A Fraser, Principal Engineer (AF)
 Ms R Banfro, Solicitor (Planning) and Clerk
 Ms R Ross, Committee Officer

ITEM NO	DECISION	ACTION
1	Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan	n/a
2	Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt	n/a
3	Confirmation of Minutes Dearbhadh a' Gheàrr-chunntais There had been submitted for confirmation as a correct record the action note and minute of the meeting of the Committee held on 12 March 2025 and continued on 18 March 2025 which was APPROVED .	n/a
4	Major Development Update Iarrtasan Mòra There had been circulated Report No PLN/024/25 and Report No PLN/024A/25 PAN Update Report by the Area Planning Manager - providing an update on progress of all cases within the "Major" development category currently with the Infrastructure and Environment Service for determination. During discussion, information was sought and provided on the reasons for some information appearing to be out of date. Members were advised that a 2024 report had been erroneously circulated, however an updated report had been sent to all Members, which may explain why some of the information appeared out of date. The Committee NOTED the current position with the applications.	PW
5	Continued Items Cuspairean a' Leantainn	
5.1	Applicant: Renantis (formerly Falck Renewables Wind Limited) (23/02998/S36) (PLN/025/25) Location: Land 1800M NE of 12 Upper Feorlig Dunvegan (Ward 10). Nature of Development: Ben Aketil Repowered and Extended Wind Farm - Decommissioning and removal of 12 existing turbines and related infrastructure, erection and operation of 9 turbines with a maximum blade tip height of 200m, up to 20MW Battery Energy Storage System, anemometer mast, access tracks, up to two borrow pits, and all associated infrastructure. Recommendation: Raise an Objection	MF

The Committee **AGREED** to continue to **RAISE AN OBJECTION**.

The Committee **AGREED** to the removal of Reason 1:

The application does not accord with the provisions of Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 by virtue of not demonstrating sufficient regard to the desirability of, and failing to reasonably mitigate effects detrimental to, conserving flora and physiographical features of special interest by virtue of failing to demonstrate that the mitigation hierarchy has been adequately applied in respect of national priority peatland habitats and therefore does not accord with the provisions NPF 4 Policy 5a) and HwLDP Policies 67 (Renewable Energy Developments), 28 (Sustainable Design) and 55 (Soils).

The removal of Reason 2 which is as follows:

The application does not accord with the provisions of Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 by virtue of not demonstrating sufficient regard to the desirability of, and failing to reasonably mitigate effects detrimental to, conserving flora and physiographical features of special interest by virtue of failing to demonstrate sufficient mitigation and enhancement measures to compensate for priority peatland habitat losses such that the proposal does not accord with NPF 4 Policy 3b), HwLDP Policies 67 (Renewable Energy Developments), Policy 60 (Other Important Habitats), and 28 (Sustainable Design).

the amendment of Reason 3 which is as follows:

The application does not accord with the provisions of Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 by virtue of not demonstrating sufficient regard to the desirability of, and failing to reasonably mitigate effects detrimental to, preserving natural beauty and conserving physiographical features of special interest because the proposal would result in Significantly detrimental landscape effects on Landscape Character Areas LCT 359 Upland Sloping Moorland, LCT 360 Stepped Moorland and LCT 357 Farmed and Settled Lowlands – Skye and Lochalsh, Significantly detrimental visual effects at 11 Viewpoints, leading to Significantly detrimental visual effects for residential, recreational, and road user receptors at several locations to the northeast, northwest, west, southwest, and south of the proposal site. The proposal would result in Significantly detrimental effects on the Dynamic Coastline Special Quality of the North West Skye Special Landscape Area that are not clearly outweighed by social, environmental, or economic benefits. Consequently, the proposal does not accord with NPF4 Policy 11 (Energy) at d) and e), Policy 4 (Natural Places) at d) and engages the provisions of NPF4 Policy 4a) as well as HwLDP Policies 67 (Renewable Energy Developments) and Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance, 28 (Sustainable Design), 57 (Natural, Cultural and Built Heritage), and 61 (Landscape).

and subject to Reason 4 which is as follows:

The application does not accord with the provisions of Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 by virtue of not demonstrating sufficient regard to the desirability of, and failing to reasonably mitigate effects detrimental to, protecting a site and building of architectural and historic interest because the proposal would Significantly adversely impact important views to, and

	adversely effects the integrity of the setting of, Dunvegan Castle Inventory Garden and Designed Landscape. Consequently, the application is contrary to NPF4 Policy 7 Part (i), NPF4 Policy 11 part (e) (vii), and Highland-wide Local Development Plan Policies 57 (Natural Built and Cultural Heritage), and 67 (Renewable Energy).	
5.2	<p>Applicant: Energiekontor UK Ltd. (24/02094/S36) (PLN/026/25)</p> <p>Location: Land 1150M SW Of Tigh An Alt, Acheilidh, Rogart (Ward 04).</p> <p>Nature of Development: Acheilidh Wind Farm - Erection and operation of a wind farm for a period of 35 years, comprising of 12 wind turbines with a maximum blade tip height of between 200m and 230m, battery energy storage system (BESS), access tracks, borrow pits, substation, control building, and ancillary infrastructure.</p> <p>Recommendation: Raise No Objection</p> <p>Motion from Mr R Gale, seconded by Ms J McEwan:-</p> <p>This Committee raises an objection to this development on the basis that the proposal gives rise to unacceptable landscape and visual effects, including cumulative effects, for landscape and visual receptors in the surrounding and wider area in particular as experienced from Struie Viewpoint and travellers along the B9176. This proposal is considered to be significantly adverse to the effects on Special Qualities of the Dornoch Firth NSA and is not outweighed by the economic or environmental benefits. Therefore, this proposal is considered to be contrary to policy 4(c)(ii) of NPF4.</p> <p>Amendment from Mr D Millar seconded by Mr K Rosie to Raise no Objection for the reasons detailed in the report.</p> <p>On a vote being taken there were 5 votes for the motion and 5 votes for the amendment with no abstentions, votes being cast as below:-</p> <p>For the Motion:- Ms L Dundas, Mr R Gale, Ms J McEwan, Mrs M Paterson, Mr M Reiss.</p> <p>For the Amendment:- Ms S Atkin, Ms B Campbell, Mrs A MacLean, Mr D Millar, Mr K Rosie.</p> <p>There being 5 votes for the motion and 5 votes for the amendment, the Chair used his casting vote in favour of the Amendment.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to RAISE NO OBJECTION for the reasons detailed in the report.</p>	MF
6	Planning Applications to be Determined Iarrtasan Dealbhaidh rin Dearbhadh	
6.1	<p>Applicant: Lockett Agri-Environmental (25/00190/FUL) (PLN/027/25)</p> <p>Location: Land 110m North of Nsl Ltd, 6 Druimchat View, Business Park, Dingwall (Ward 08).</p> <p>Nature of Development: River Peffery flood management measures.</p> <p>Recommendation: GRANT</p>	SH

	The Committee AGREED to GRANT the application subject to the conditions detailed in the report.	
6.2	<p>Applicant: Lockett Agri-Environmental (25/00191/FUL) (PLN/028/25) Location: and 210m NE of Dingwall Childrens Nursery, Fodderty Way, Business Park, Dingwall (Ward 08). Nature of Development: River Pefferey flood management measures. Recommendation: GRANT</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to GRANT the application subject to the conditions detailed in the report with the final wording of the condition relating to flood mitigations measures being delegated to officers.</p>	SH
6.3	<p>Applicant: Graham MacGregor Joinery Ltd (19/04687/FUL) (PLN/029/25) Location: 3a Inchrory Drive Dingwall Business Park (Ward 08). Nature of Development: Erection of commercial storage and office unit. Recommendation: GRANT</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to GRANT the application subject to the conditions detailed in the report with the final wording of the condition relating to flood mitigations measures being delegated to officers.</p>	SH
6.4	<p>Applicant: Fraser Electrical (20/01019/FUL) (PLN/030/25) Location: Land 110m NE of 3b Inchrory Drive, Dingwall (Ward 08). Nature of Development: Erection of office and workshop building. Recommendation: GRANT</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to GRANT the application subject to the conditions detailed in the report with the final wording of the condition relating to flood mitigations measures being delegated to officers.</p>	SH
6.5	<p>Applicant: Firth Plumbing Heating and Roofing Ltd (21/05232/PIP) (PLN/031/25) Location: 1 and 3 Blairnaparc Rd, Dingwall Business Park (Ward 08). Nature of Development: Installation of storage unit and associated parking arrangements . Recommendation: GRANT</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to GRANT the application subject to the conditions detailed in the report with the final wording of the condition relating to flood mitigations measures being delegated to officers.</p>	SH
6.6	<p>Applicant: Church of Scotland (24/04988/FUL) (PLN/032/25) Location: Church Of Scotland, 24 High Street, Rosemarkie, Fortrose, IV10 8UF (Ward 09). Nature of Development: Installation of external heat pump, reinstatement of stone cross, installation of double-glazed windows and timber door including internal alterations . Recommendation: GRANT</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to GRANT the application subject to the conditions detailed in the report.</p>	RS

6.7	<p>Applicant: Church of Scotland (24/04990/LBC) (PLN/033/25) Location: Church Of Scotland, 24 High Street, Rosemarkie, Fortrose, IV10 8UF (Ward 09). Nature of Development: Installation of external heat pump, reinstatement of stone cross, installation of double-glazed windows and timber door including internal alterations. Recommendation: GRANT</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to GRANT the application subject to the conditions detailed in the report.</p>	RS
6.8	<p>Applicant: Mey Energy Storage Limited (24/06261/S36) (PLN/034/25) Location: Land 700M East Of Woodlands, Mey (Ward 03). Nature of Development: Installation of a battery energy storage system and associated infrastructure with a generating capacity of up 300mw located on land at Phillips Mains Farm. Recommendation: RAISE NO OBJECTION</p> <p>Motion from Mr K Rosie seconded by Mr D Millar to RAISE NO OBJECTION subject to the reasons detailed in the report.</p> <p>Amendment from Mr R Gale seconded by Mr M Reiss:-</p> <p>This committee proposes an amendment to this application to lodge an objection on the grounds that the cumulative effect of this development along with nearby existing and proposed developments is contrary to Policy 57 of the Highland Wide Development plan and as such does not ensure the distinctive character of the rural area and the natural assets and cultural heritage are safeguarded and enhanced. specifically the close proximity of the Castle of Mey.</p> <p>On a vote being taken there were 4 votes for the motion and 7 votes for the amendment with no abstentions, votes being cast as below:-</p> <p>For the Motion:- Ms I Campbell, Mrs A MacLean, Mr D Millar, Mr K Rosie.</p> <p>For the Amendment:- Ms S Atkin, Ms L Dundas, Mr R Gale, Ms J McEwan, Ms M Smith, Mrs M Paterson, Mr M Reiss.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to RAISE AN OBJECTION for the reasons set out in the amendment.</p>	Liam Burnside
7	<p>Decision of Appeals to the Scottish Government Planning and Environmental Appeals Division Co-dhùnadh mu lartas do Bhuidheann-stiùiridh Riaghaltas na h-Alba airson Lùth agus Atharrachadh Aimsir</p> <p>Applicant: Organic Sea Harvest Ltd Location: Land 1520 metres north-east of Bridge End Cottage, Trotternish, Isle of Skye, IV51 9XA</p>	

	<p>Nature of Development: Marine Fish Farm, Atlantic Salmon, Comprising 10 X 120 metre circumference pens with 14 by 14 metre Feed Barge and Ancillary Equipment</p> <p>The Committee NOTED the decision of the Scottish Ministers to allow the appeal and grant planning permission subject to the conditions detailed in the Decision Notice.</p>	
	<p>The meeting ended at 3.30pm.</p>	

The Highland Council
South Planning Applications
Committee

Council Chamber, HQ, Wednesday 14 May 2025, 10:45am

Minute / Action Note

Listed below are the decisions taken by Committee at their recent meeting and the actions that now require to be taken. The webcast of the meeting will be available within 48 hours of broadcast and will remain online for 12 months: <https://highland.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

A separate memorandum will be issued if detailed or further instructions are required, or where the contents of the memorandum are confidential. Please arrange to take the required action based on this action note.

Committee Members Present:

Mr C Ballance
Mr D Fraser
Mr L Fraser (present to item 6.2)
Mr R Jones
Mr B Lobban
Mrs I MacKenzie
Mr A MacKintosh

Mr D Macpherson
Mr P Oldham
Ms M Reid
Ms L Saggars
Ms K Willis

Substitutes: Mr D MacDonald for Mr K Gowans

Officers participating:

Mr P Wheelan, Strategic Projects Team Leader (PW)
Mr B Robertson, Acting Area Planning Manager – South (BR)
Mr R Dowell, Planner (RD)
Mr R Cubey, Graduate Planner (RC)
Ms J Mair, Planner (JM)
Ms J Bain (JAB)
Mr J Kelly (JK)
Mr M Clough, Senior Engineer, Transport Planning (MC)
Ms A Gibbs, Principal Solicitor
Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Administrator
Ms K Arnott, Committee Administrator

ITEM NO	DECISION	ACTION
1	Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan Mr K Gowans, Mr A Graham, Mr T MacLennan	
		n/a
2	Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt	
	None.	n/a

3	Confirmation of Minutes Dearbhadh a' Gheàrr-chunntais	
	There had been submitted for confirmation as a correct record the action note and minute of the meeting of the Committee held on 2 April 2025 which was APPROVED .	n/a
4	Major Development Update Iarrtasan Mòra	
	<p>There had been circulated Report No PLS/23/25 by the Area Planning Manager - providing an update on progress of all cases within the "Major" development category currently with the Infrastructure and Environment Service for determination.</p> <p>Members' attention was drawn to updates to two recent decisions to two windfarms, Chrathaich Windfarm and Tomcrasky Windfarm, both previously reported to the committee. Scottish Ministers' had granted consent following the recommendation by the Council to raise no objection.</p> <p>The Committee NOTED the current position with the applications.</p>	BR
5	Major Developments – Pre-application consultations Leasachaidhean Mòra – Co-chomhairle Ro-iarrtais	
5.1	<p>Description: Entrance and path improvement works, pond habitat enhancement, stone walling, drainage works</p> <p>Ward: (Ward 15)</p> <p>Applicant: Culduthel Woods Group (24/04228/FUL) (PLS/24/25)</p> <p>Site Address: Land 75M NE Of Culduthel Avenue, Inverness</p>	RC
	Agreed: to GRANT planning permission subject to the conditions recommended in the report, and an additional condition on planting at the edge of the site so as to protect the amenity of neighbouring properties, the wording of which to be delegated to Area Planning Manager – South in consultation with local Members.	
6	Planning Applications to be Determined Iarrtasan Dealbhaidh rin Dearbhadh	
6.1	<p>Applicant: Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission Plc (25/00051/S37) (PLS/25/25)</p> <p>Location: Deanie Power Station, Deanie, Strathfarrar, Kiltarlity, Beauly, IV47JX (Ward 12)</p> <p>Nature of Development: Glen Strathfarrar Vista - Construction of a replacement steel lattice tower with 132kV and 33kV downleads into a combined cable sealing end compound (CSE). Installation of new overhead line between the proposed new Tower 13R and existing Tower 14, along with the construction of a dedicated permanent access track from the new CSE compound to Glenstrathfarrar Road.</p> <p>Recommendation: RAISE NO OBJECTION</p>	RD
	Agreed: to RAISE NO OBJECTION subject to the conditions listed in Section 11 of the report with amendments to conditions 9, 11, 12 and 13 with the additional point (s) to condition 8 relating to active travel, and the Committee's concerns about the extent of the working area corridor, the comments	

	received from the Beaully Fish Board and the Council's ecology team would be shared with the Energy Consents Unit.	
6.2	<p>Applicant: Mr W MacIntyre (24/04051/FUL) (PLS/26/25) Location: Land 90M SW Of Brackletter Lodge, Spean Bridge (Ward 11) Nature of Development: Erection of 3 holiday pods (retrospective) Recommendation: GRANT</p> <p>During discussion, Members expressed concern that the 25% additional fee for retrospective planning permission was not enough of a deterrent and should be higher.</p>	WL
	<p>Agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. to GRANT planning permission subject to the conditions recommended in the report; and ii. that the Area Planning Manager – South write to the applicant to express the Committee's disappointment that planning permission was not sought prior to the commencement of the development. 	
6.3	<p>Applicant: Mr J Sweeney (25/00196/FUL) (PLS/27/25) Location: Land 15M East of Milnfield, 83 Kingmills Road, Inverness (Ward 16) Nature of Development: Change of use from garage/workshop to house Recommendation: GRANT</p>	JAB
	<p>Agreed: to GRANT planning permission subject to the conditions recommended in the report, with the addition of two informatives: one reminding the applicant that the extent of their planning permission did not allow them to undertake work on third party land, and another reducing construction hours to between 8am and 6pm Monday - Friday.</p>	
6.4	<p>Applicant: Mr & Mrs Paula Grant (25/00486/FUL) (PLS/28/25) Location: 10 Kingston Place, Stratton, Inverness, IV2 7BH (Ward 17) Nature of Development: Erection of extensions Recommendation: GRANT</p>	JM
	<p>Agreed: to GRANT planning permission subject to the conditions recommended in the report, and an additional condition securing the timing of the parking spaces.</p>	
7	<p>Decision of Appeals to the Scottish Government Planning and Environmental Appeals Division Co-dhùnadh mu larrtas do Bhuidheann-stiùiridh Riaghaltas na h-Alba airson Lùth agus Atharrachadh Aimsir</p>	
7.1	<p>Applicant: Gilkes Energy Ltd on behalf of Earba Ltd (24/01056/S36) (PLS/29/25) Location: Land 4200M SE of Moy Lodge, Tulloch, Roy Bridge (Ward 21) Nature of Development: Earba Pumped Storage Hydroelectric Scheme - Construction and operation of a pumped storage hydroelectric scheme with a generating capacity of 1,800MW and a 40GWh storage capacity</p> <p>The Clerk highlighted that this report was an Energy Consents Unit decision</p>	RD

	for noting and not a notice of intention as indicated on the agenda.	
	NOTED the decision of the Energy Consents Unit.	
	The meeting ended at 1.45pm.	

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL
NORTH PLANNING APPLICATIONS
COMMITTEE

11 June 2025, 9.30AM

MINUTE / ACTION NOTE

Listed below are the decisions taken by Committee at their meeting and the actions that now require to be taken. The webcast of the meeting will be available within 48 hours of broadcast and will remain online for 12 months: <https://highland.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

A separate memorandum will be issued if detailed or further instructions are required, or where the contents of the memorandum are confidential. Please arrange to take the required action based on this action note.

Committee Members Present:

Ms S Atkin
Mr R Bremner
Ms B Campbell
Mr J Edmondson
Mr R Gale
Ms L Kraft
Mrs A MacLean
Ms J McEwan
Mr D Millar
Mr M Reiss
Mr K Rosie
Mr R Stewart

Non-Committee Members Present:

Substitutes:

Mr S Kennedy
Mr H Morrison
Mrs M Ross

Apologies:

Ms T Collier
Ms L Dundas
Mrs M Paterson
Mr K Rosie

Officers participating:

Mr D Jones, Area Planning Manager – North (DJ)
Mr P Wheelan, Planning Team Leader (PW)
Ms C Farmer-McEwan, Principal Planner (CF)
Mr D Borland, Planner (DB)
Ms L MacDonald, Planner (LM)
Mr C Simms, Planner (CS)

Ms J Bridge, Senior Engineer (JB)
 Ms R Banfro, Solicitor (Planning) and Clerk
 Ms R Ross, Committee Officer

ITEM NO	DECISION	ACTION
1	Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan	n/a
2	Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt Mr M Reiss – item 6.3 Ms J McEwan-item 6.4 Ms S Atkin-item 6.4	n/a
3	Confirmation of Minutes Dearbhadh a’ Gheàrr-chunntais There had been submitted for confirmation as a correct record the action note and minute of the meeting of the Committee held on 23 April 2025 which was APPROVED .	n/a
4	Major Development Update Iarrtasan Mòra There had been circulated Report No PLN/035/25 by the Area Planning Manager - providing an update on progress of all cases within the “Major” development category currently with the Infrastructure and Environment Service for determination. An update was sought and provided on the status of the Novar I windfarm extension. The Committee NOTED the current position with the applications.	PW
5	Major Developments – Pre-application consultations Leasachaidhean Mòra – Co-chomhairle Ro-iarrtais There had been circulated Report No PLN/036/25 by the Area Planning Manager – North. The Committee is invited NOTED the current pre-application notices.	PW
6	Planning Applications to be Determined Iarrtasan Dealbhaidh rin Dearbhadh	
6.1	Applicant: GAA per Mr Gary Hull (24/03390/FUL) (PLN/037/25) Location: Land 115M NE Of Fuaran, 9 Columba Court, Laide (Ward 01).	LM

	<p>Nature of Development: Siting of 3 glamping pods (as amended) Recommendation: GRANT</p> <p>Motion from Cllr Kraft seconded by Cllr Gale, to refuse planning permission for the following reasons:-</p> <p>While the revised layout mitigates the identified flood-risk issue, the proposed development is considered to represent a clear over-development of this severely constrained plot: the combined pod footprints and parking bays would blanket almost the entire site, producing a visually dominant enclave of built form and hard surfacing that is wholly out of keeping with the scale and character of the adjoining dwellinghouses. Consequently, the proposal is contrary to Policy 14 (a) and Policy 29(b).</p> <p>Attention was drawn to a correction to the report which should have stated that the application was in ward 5 rather than ward 1.</p> <p>Amendment from Cllr Bremner seconded by Cllr Millar to grant planning permission subject to the conditions in the report.</p> <p>There were 3 votes for the motion and 9 votes for the amendment, and 1 abstention, the votes having been cast as follows:</p> <p>For the motion:- Mr R Gale, Ms L Kraft, Mr M Reiss</p> <p>For the amendment:- Ms S Atkin, Mr R Bremner, Mrs I Campbell, Mr J Edmondson, Mrs A MacLean, Ms J McEwan, Mr D Millar, Mr H Morrison, Mrs M Ross</p> <p>Abstentions:- Mr S Kennedy</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to GRANT planning permission for the reasons detailed in the report.</p>	
6.2	<p>Applicant: Mr C Parrino (24/02000/FUL) (PLN/038/25) Location: Land 165M East Of Northern Lights Caravan Park, Badcaul, Dundonnell (Ward 05). Nature of Development: Erection of house, erection of wind turbine, formation of access, siting of 2no. cabins for holiday letting and erection of kayak shed and dock Recommendation: GRANT</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to GRANT planning permission subject to the conditions laid out in the report.</p>	LM
6.3	<p>Applicant: Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission Plc (25/00106/S37) (PLN/039/25) Location: Chleansaid Wind Farm, Dalnessie, Rogart (Ward 01). Nature of Development: Erection and operation of a 10.5km 132kV overhead electricity line, approximately 3 km to the north of Lairg between Chleansaid Wind Farm and Dalchork Substation.</p>	PW

	<p>Recommendation: Raise No Objection</p> <p>Declaration of Interest – Mr M Reiss, as he had previously publicly expressed his views on continued renewable energy production, left the meeting for this item.</p> <p>The Committee to RAISE NO OBJECTION planning permission subject to the conditions detailed in the report.</p>	
6.4	<p>Applicant: The Highland Council - Housing (23/05598/MSC) (PLN/040/25) Location: Land 370M NE Of Cromlet House, Cromlet Drive, Invergordon (Ward 06). Nature of Development: Phase 02 erection of 57 dwellings and associated infrastructure at Cromlet Drive, Invergordon (application for matters specified in conditions 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 11, 13, 14, 16, 23, 24 and 25 of 21/03683/PIP) Recommendation: APPROVE</p> <p>Declaration of Interest – Ms J McEwan, as the presenting officer was a close family member. Ms S Atkin as the Vice-Chair of the Housing and Property Committee. Both Members left the meeting for this item.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to GRANT planning permission subject to the conditions detailed in the report.</p>	CF
6.5	<p>Applicant: Three UK (24/01014/FUL) (PLN/041/25) Location: Land 3935M SE Of Tigh Annag, Glencalvie, Ardgay (Ward 01). Nature of Development: Installation of 25m high tower with ancillary development, formation of access track. Recommendation: GRANT</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to GRANT planning permission subject to the conditions detailed in the report.</p>	LB
6.6	<p>Applicant: Mr D and Mrs W McConnachie (25/00778/FUL and 25/00785/CON) (PLN/042/25) Location: An Cardach, Gilchrist Square, Dornoch, IV25 3HG (Ward 04). Nature of Development: Demolition of house and erection of replacement house. Recommendation: GRANT</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to GRANT planning permission subject to the conditions detailed in the report.</p>	DB
6.7	<p>Applicant: Mr Marcus MacKay (25/00235/FUL) (PLN/043/25) Location: Land 60M South Of Helmie Autoshine Glebe Terrace Helmsdale (Ward 04). Nature of Development: Establishment of a Commercial Garage Workshop. Recommendation: GRANT</p>	Aiden Brennan

	The Committee AGREED to GRANT planning permission subject to the conditions detailed in the report.	
6.8	<p>Applicant: Cairngorm Properties Ltd (24/00865/PIP) (PLN/044/25)</p> <p>Location: Land At Knockbreck Farm And Burgage Farm Knockbreck Road, Tain (Ward 07).</p> <p>Nature of Development: Erection of up to 250 houses, associated community uses, open space and business/tourist related uses.</p> <p>Recommendation: GRANT</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to GRANT planning permission subject to the conditions detailed in the report.</p>	CS
7	<p>Decision of Appeals to the Scottish Government Planning and Environmental Appeals Division Co-dhùnadh mu larrtas do Bhuidheann-stiùiridh Riaghaltas na h-Alba airson Lùth agus Atharrachadh Aimsir</p> <p>Applicant: Acorn Bioenergy</p> <p>Location: land 350m south of Fearn Aerodrome, Fearn IV20 1XY</p> <p>Nature of Development: Erection and operation of an anaerobic digestion plant and ancillary infrastructure</p> <p>The Committee is NOTED the decision of the Scottish Ministers to allow the appeal and grant planning permission subject to the conditions detailed in the Decision Notice.</p>	
8.	<p>Additional Urgent Item - Skye Reinforcement Section 37 Determination</p> <p>The additional urgent item had been added to advise the Committee of the decision of the Scottish Ministers which was of regional interest and issued to the planning authority following the publication of the agenda.</p> <p>During discussion the following main points were raised:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • disappointment was expressed at the decision not to go to a public enquiry; • information was sought and provided regarding the possibility of a judicial review; • on the point being raised, it was explained that the recent update to the Scheme of Delegation would allow timeous holding objections to be submitted going forward; • it was queried what implications this decision would have on the community in Skye; • a summary of the decision to help Members explain it to the public was requested; and • the need to accept the decision and not undermine the Councils planning service was emphasised. <p>The Committee NOTED the decision of the Scottish Ministers to allow the appeal and grant planning permission subject to the conditions detailed in the Decision Notice.</p>	

	The meeting ended at 1.20 pm.	

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Harbours Management Board** held in **Lochinver Harbour Office** on **Friday, 23 May 2025** at **11.15am**.

Present:-

Mr I Brown

Mrs M Hutchison

Mr M Green (Chair)

Mr H Morrison

In attendance:-

Ms T Urry, Head of Roads & Infrastructure

Mr J MacKay, Interim Harbours Manager

Mr G Smith, Service Lead – Infrastructure

Mrs O Marsh, Committee Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Ms J McEwan, Ms L Niven. Mr R Stewart and Mrs T Robertson.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement

There were no Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statements.

3. Minutes of Last Meeting

The Board **NOTED** the Minutes of Meeting of the Harbours Management Board held on the 28 February 2025.

4. Uig Harbour Redevelopment

There is circulated Report No HMB/05/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

In amplification of the report Mr G Smith Service Lead – Infrastructure, delivered a presentation updating the Board on the Uig Harbour redevelopment project, including progress on terminal infrastructure, outstanding contractual issues and the new ferry vessels currently under construction.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the main construction works were complete, although a contractual dispute was ongoing regarding the design and damage to the walkway shelter. The matter might need to proceed to legal resolution;
- concerns were raised about pedestrian safety due to the unresolved walkway shelter. Interim options were being discussed with CalMac, including the potential use of a temporary barrier or water-filled bollards to separate pedestrians from vehicles;
- there were health and safety issues due to the absence of a dedicated pedestrian route to the ferry terminal, particularly with increased footfall

expected over the summer period. In this regard a temporary solution was being considered to designate one side of the access route for pedestrians and the other for vehicles, although this was not ideal, but endorsed that further discussions would be required to determine responsibility and implement a safe solution;

- the new ferry vessels, currently under construction in Turkey, were scheduled for delivery in October 2025. A draft timetable was under consultation, with expectations that the vessels would operate jointly during the summer and revert to a single-vessel service in the winter, depending on network deployment;
- it was confirmed that the post-construction study would be presented to the Harbours Board once complete, and Members acknowledged the local community's interest in the findings;
- support was expressed for capturing drone footage of the first ferry's arrival to mark the completion of the project;
- it was confirmed that electric vehicle charging points had been included in the development, with specific provision near the terminal building;
- clarification was sought on the purpose of the recreation area adjacent to the terminal. In this regard, it was confirmed that this space was intended as a public open area with seating for passengers waiting for the ferry; and
- CalMac had expressed reluctance to take responsibility for the installation of such barriers, asserting that the walkway was the Council's responsibility.

The Board **NOTED** the position.

5. Harbour Dredging update

There is circulated Report No HMB/06/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- Members felt that the inclusion of historical dredging tonnage would improve the overview of the report;
- dredging was required at several harbours, including Helmsdale and Nairn, with applications submitted and further information requested by Marine Scotland, including detailed sediment analysis and tonnage estimates;
- dredging at Helmsdale would likely require three spring tides to complete, due to limited working windows during each cycle, equating to approximately six weeks of work;
- concerns were raised regarding the cost and frequency of dredging, particularly at Helmsdale, where recent dredging works had already begun to silt up again due to further sedimentation. It was suggested that additional dredging might be required as early as January 2026. The estimated cost of £30,000 was highlighted as having a significant impact on the harbour's annual operating budget, effectively consuming its entire income for the year. Members acknowledged that without dredging, the harbour would become non-operational, resulting in loss of income, and that this created a

challenging financial balancing act between essential maintenance and long-term sustainability;

- Members emphasised the importance of keeping harbours operational to maintain income, especially where there were waiting lists for berths. It was acknowledged that failure to dredge would result in loss of revenue and service disruption;
- clarification was provided that each harbour required a separate licence, and that sediment analysis, costing approximately £1,200 per site, would still be required for each dredge. In addition, Members welcomed confirmation that licences covering periods of up to four years could be applied for, which would support more efficient long-term planning and reduce administrative burden;
- engagement had taken place with Mr Fergus Ewing MSP, who expressed satisfaction with the Council's response and offered his support for the proposed works, including assistance in resolving consultation delays with non-statutory bodies such as Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and Nature Scotland. In this regard, Members were advised that both RSPB and Nature Scotland had since responded to the Council's request for information, which had been incorporated into the application;
- support was expressed for continued engagement with Marine Scotland and the Scottish Government to streamline the process, and for communicating the Council's investment in harbour maintenance to local communities, particularly in Helmsdale; and
- Members were advised that communication with Marine Scotland was currently managed through a generic email address, and it was suggested that establishing a more direct liaison could improve coordination and efficiency.

The Board **NOTED** the contents of the report.

6. Asset Management Review of Council Harbours

There is circulated Report No HMB/07/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- Members emphasised the importance of retaining essential operational users such as vessel agents and Marine Scotland, particularly in whitefish ports, and highlighted the need to avoid rent increases that could lead to remote working or relocation;
- Members stressed the importance of maintaining affordability for key users whose presence supported harbour income through fuel sales and landing dues;
- the broader economic contribution of harbour users, including fuel sales and port activity, was highlighted, and it was requested that this be considered in the review to ensure a balanced and sustainable approach to rental charges;
- the current flat rate of 53p per kWh for electricity was deemed excessive for long-term tenants and charities, despite being appropriate for vessel use. In

this regard, Members requested that options be explored for differentiated rates based on user type and lease length, while maintaining consistency and fairness. The need for consistency and fairness in applying any revised charging structure was emphasised, with caution advised to avoid setting precedents that could be exploited;

- the need to preserve the operational success of harbours without pricing out key users was emphasised. The rate of 53p per kWh did not increase annually with inflation and could result in disproportionately high costs for non-vessel users, with some tenants reportedly paying over £4,000 per year in electricity alone;
- organisations such as the Coastguard, lifeboat stations and fishery officers might warrant revised terms given their strategic roles;
- reference was made to the development of a masterplan for Kinlochbervie Harbour Estate, and it was proposed that the draft be brought to the next meeting of the Board to allow Members to engage directly with those preparing the plan and raise concerns about safeguarding existing harbour operations. In this regard, it was confirmed that the masterplan was being led by planning officers, with input from those previously involved in harbour-related work, and that their attendance at the next meeting would be beneficial;
- in relation to the old fish market building in Kinlochbervie, Members were advised that its structural condition was being assessed to determine whether refurbishment or demolition would be more cost-effective. The building was currently underused but remained strategically important for harbour-related storage. It was felt that the Council should retain ownership of the site and explore options for redeveloping it for harbour use, rather than transferring it to external agencies such as HIE, however caution should be taken based on its structural condition; and
- based on the suggestion that the Kinlochbervie Harbour Estate masterplan be brought to the next meeting for discussion, it was proposed that the next meeting be held in Kinlochbervie and that the previously scheduled meeting in Portree be postponed for next year.

The Board:-

- i. **NOTED** the contents of the report; and
- ii. **AGREED** that the Kinlochbervie Harbour Estate masterplan be brought to the next meeting for discussion; and
- iii. **AGREED** that the next meeting on the 5 September 2025 be held in Kinlochbervie .

7. CalMac Draft Timetable for Little Minch Routes

There is circulated Report No HMB/08/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- Members were informed that two proposed timetables had been presented for the Little Minch routes, offering either two or three sailings per day. The

proposals included consideration of community and island benefits, turnaround times and service efficiency;

- it was acknowledged that while the timetable had not yet been finalised, indications suggested that a three-sailings-per-day model was likely to be adopted for the summer period, with a reduced service expected in winter. In this regard, Members recognised that the adoption of a three-sailings-per-day model would likely result in increased operational costs, including staffing, pier maintenance and support services, which would need to be factored into future budget planning ;
- Members expressed the need for the timetable to be confirmed as soon as possible to enable timely planning and coordination across services, highlighting the difficulty in planning for harbour dues adjustments and operational budgets without early clarity; and
- continued engagement with CalMac and relevant departments was required to assess the financial and logistical impact of the proposed service changes and ensure readiness for implementation.

The Board **NOTED** the contents of the report.

The meeting ended at 12pm

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport Monitoring Group** held in **Leader's Meeting Room, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness** on **Thursday, 12 June 2025** at **3.30pm**.

Present:-

Mr K Gowans	Mr G MacKenzie
Mr M Green	Mrs A MacLean
Mr S Kennedy	Mrs M Reid
Mr D Loudon (remote)	

Non-Member also present:

Mr J Edmondson

In attendance:-

Ms S Armstrong, Chief Officer – Revenues and Commercialisation
Mr D Mudie, Strategic Lead (Planning and Building Standards)
Mr N Osborne, Climate Change Manager
Mr A Webster, Economy and Regeneration Manager
Mr D Chisholm, Tourism & Inward Investment Team Leader
Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager

Also in attendance:-

Mr C MacPherson, Chief Executive, ICF Green Freeport

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mrs H Crawford, Mrs T Robertson and Mr R Stewart.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement

There were no Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statements.

3. Latest position on Full Business Case

Mr MacPherson, Chief Executive of ICF Green Freeport, delivered a verbal update confirming that the Full Business Case (FBC) had been formally approved, enabling the £25 million seed funding projects to proceed. This marked a significant milestone, enabling the project to progress to its next phase

The Group was informed that the FBC had been submitted one year ago, with initial expectations for approval by October 2024. Although the process experienced delays, the final outcome was still welcomed. Members

acknowledged the considerable efforts made in recent months to support the case, including engagement with key stakeholders and representation in London.

The approval was recognised as a positive development, bringing a sense of relief and renewed momentum. Members expressed optimism about the opportunities the investment would bring to the Highlands and emphasised the importance of continued collaboration as the project progressed.

The Group **NOTED** the current status and recent developments.

4. Update on Key Workstreams

The Group received verbal updates on the following key workstreams:

a) Tax Site Developments

- it was confirmed that a recent announcement had enabled the release of £25 million in seed funding. This funding supported a suite of projects previously developed to Outline Business Case stage by a partnership including the Highland Council. The next key step identified was the finalisation of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Council, the Freeport Board, and the Scottish UK Governments. An early draft of the MoU had already been shared with officials for consideration. It was emphasised that the MoU was not intended to create new obligations but to formalise commitments already outlined in the FBC. In this regard, Members were advised that the signing of the MoU would unlock a further £55 million in funding, bringing the total anticipated investment to approximately £80 million. This funding would support a range of projects across the Moray Firth, Easter Ross, Ardersier and Inverness areas. Following earlier delays, there was now a strong sense of urgency to progress these initiatives. Members also sought assurance that the mechanism for the return of non-domestic rates to the Highland area would be clearly defined within the MoU;
- in relation to tax site developments, Members were informed of ongoing commercial sensitivities. Companies from Norway, Finland and Denmark had recently engaged with port authorities to explore pricing structures. While these discussions did not necessarily indicate firm investment intentions, they reflected the highly competitive international landscape. It was also highlighted that the European Investment Bank was offering significant incentives to encourage manufacturing within the EU;
- Members were informed that a major marshalling and assembly contract had been secured in Easter Ross, with the development expected to generate several hundred jobs over the next 3–5 years. This was recognised as a significant boost for the local area;
- it was reported that Cromarty Firth Port had been awarded £55 million through the Floating Offshore Wind Manufacturing Investment Scheme (FLOWMIS). While securing match funding remained an ongoing challenge, the port was actively exploring a range of potential funding options to support the next stages of development;

- Inverness Port was progressing longstanding ambitions to expand its land area. Although limited by its shallow depth, it was exploring opportunities to support the renewables sector and other associated developments;
- Ardersier Port had recently hosted a visit from investors with interests in infrastructure and housing. Encouraging feedback was received from housing developers, with indications that investment returns in the Highlands were becoming comparable to those in the Central Belt. A list of over 140 local contractors involved in Ardersier-related developments was being compiled, with 111 located within approximately one hour's travel of the site;
- Inverness Campus had attracted interest from the Global Energy Group, which was exploring options for larger office accommodation. Any future development would be subject to the appropriate planning processes;
- Aurora Energy Services had recently established a new offshore wind safety training facility at Inverness Harbour. The facility was already attracting trainees from a wider geographic area, reflecting the growing demand for specialist skills in the renewables sector;
- it was highlighted that over £875 million of investment had already been secured across the Freeport zone, placing it among the most successful Freeports in the UK, with only Teesside and Thames reporting higher figures; and
- it was further stated that governance arrangements, including the Council's role as the accountable body with a right of veto on spending proposals, had already been established in both the Outline and FBCs. This veto was designed solely to safeguard the appropriate use of funds and to provide confidence to all stakeholders.

b) Workforce & Skills

- progress had been slower than anticipated due to the need to finalise the FBC for the Freeport. However, significant groundwork had been laid in the interim;
- Highland Council, in partnership with Skills Development Scotland and other stakeholders, had contributed to the Workforce North Initiative, recognising the importance of aligning skills development with regional economic growth;
- it was emphasised that workforce planning extended beyond the Freeport, encompassing developments across the Highlands, including recent announcements at Kishorn and ongoing housing projects;
- concerns were raised regarding the potential impact of Freeport recruitment on existing engineering firms across the region, from Fort William to Wick. It was stressed that a balanced approach was required to avoid drawing young talent away from other local employers;
- a Member of the Freeport's Project Acceleration and Coordination (PAC) team had been working closely with the Highland Council's Education team, regularly visiting schools to promote career opportunities linked to the Freeport and associated industries;
- a recent engagement exercise, conducted in collaboration with Associated British Ports, involved 500 young people in Easter Ross and revealed key concerns among youth. Many expressed a strong desire to remain in the Highlands, provided that viable employment opportunities were available. However, transport challenges, particularly in rural areas, were cited as a significant barrier. Young people frequently highlighted the difficulty of accessing work and training without

reliable public transport, with many expressing that obtaining a driving licence was essential for independence and opportunity;

- the Highland Council had also engaged with the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust and the Officers' Association, recognising the potential to attract skilled individuals leaving the armed forces, particularly from nearby Moray, into the Freeport workforce; and
- the National Insurance Contributions (NIC) Holiday Scheme was now operational, allowing Freeport employers to claim up to £3,000 per new employee in NIC relief. To support local skills development, the Council has requested a £600 contribution per employee over three years from participating businesses. This fund is considered essential in light of the current shortage of further education funding in the Highlands, which has resulted in young people being turned away from apprenticeship opportunities. In this regard, early estimates suggested that approximately 150 new employees had started work on Freeport sites in the past six months. Based on this, the Council anticipated recovering around £63,000 through the NIC contribution scheme, subject to confirmation from participating employers.

c) Planning

- the consultation on the Evidence Report and Call for Sites, as part of the new Local Development Plan process, remained open until early May. This engagement would help shape future development priorities across the region;
- Members were advised that regular engagement was ongoing with major landowners and developers in key strategic locations. Progress was acknowledged in relation to forthcoming planning applications and active construction projects, with notable input and support from Council Building Standards officers;
- in relation to the Green Freeport developments, Members were informed that associated workstreams were progressing at pace. Significant activity was underway across areas of strategic importance, with planning applications expected in several key locations later in the year;
- a housing needs and demand assessment had recently been commissioned, with results expected before the end of the year. The findings would inform future housing allocations and the delivery of supporting infrastructure. In parallel, the Call for Sites exercise had identified potential capacity for approximately 25,000 homes. However, only those sites with a committed landowner and an engaged developer would be progressed. Masterplan consent areas were recognised as an effective mechanism to ensure a sufficient housing land supply, particularly near key investment zones;
- a cumulative transport assessment was also underway to evaluate wider capacity and connectivity implications, particularly along the trunk road network. This had been identified by Transport Scotland as a key requirement of the Local Development Plan process; and
- in response to queries, it was acknowledged that while greenfield land continued to dominate new development proposals, opportunities for brownfield redevelopment remained under active consideration. Challenges such as contamination and viability persisted, but support through Scottish Government funding streams and social value agreements could help unlock the potential of these sites.

d) Net Zero / Hydrogen

- Members were advised that one of the key drivers behind the Green Freeport initiative was to accelerate the Scottish Government's net zero ambitions through the development of renewable energy projects. As part of the Freeport agreement, all developments within designated sites were expected to align with this objective. While much of the early work had focused on business case development, significant engagement had taken place with site developers to explore opportunities and constraints;
- in relation to hydrogen, it was reported that recent discussions had highlighted both opportunities and challenges. It was disappointing that no Highland-based projects had progressed in the latest round of UK Government funding, primarily due to the inability to guarantee 100% green electricity for electrolysis. However, ongoing dialogue with stakeholders suggested that a revised approach could address this issue, with confidence growing that Highland could still play a significant role in future hydrogen production. A consultation on Common Good land was also underway, alongside a Council-led request for information on hydrogen offtake and production potential across the region. This work aimed to support a strategic assessment of Highland's capacity for future energy development, in collaboration with both Scottish and UK Governments;
- Members acknowledged that the Freeport programme cut across multiple sectors and services, including planning, education, and trading standards. The importance of developing educational pathways to support emerging industries, particularly in hydrogen and renewables, was emphasised. Engagement had commenced with school leaders to raise awareness among pupils in S3 and S4 of career opportunities in the energy and engineering sectors;
- Inverness College UHI had received approximately £200,000 through the Shared Prosperity Fund to invest in virtual welding trainers and other training equipment. While this represented a welcome step forward, Members emphasised that the scale of the challenge required sustained investment and cross-sector coordination. Colleges within the UHI partnership were already making significant contributions, particularly in construction-related skills. However, structural limitations in the current apprenticeship credit allocation model continued to constrain capacity. Despite ongoing representations to the Scottish Government and the Scottish Funding Council, there was concern that the region was still not receiving the level of support needed to meet its distinctive workforce development needs;
- while apprenticeship numbers were on the rise, Springfield for example, had recently committed to 15 new apprentices, uncertainty remained around future workforce requirements. Estimates indicated a need for approximately 600 welders by 2027, though this demand was expected to grow incrementally. Members also emphasised that modern welding roles would increasingly rely on robotics, design and specialist disciplines such as metallurgy;
- it was acknowledged that, as with other major infrastructure projects, there would likely be a period during which overseas workers would be brought in to meet immediate demand. The long-term ambition, however, remained to retain workers locally, support population growth and maximise community benefit. Members stressed the need for workforce planning to be aligned with housing, healthcare and other essential services to ensure sustainable growth;

- reference was made to recent reports from the National Grid ESO highlighting the high cost of constraint payments. Members emphasised the importance of making better use of locally generated renewable energy, which could support hydrogen production and reduce waste. It was concluded that continued lobbying of the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (OFGEM) and the UK Scottish Governments would be essential to unlocking the region's full potential; and
- it was confirmed that the UHI partnership was actively exploring partnerships with institutions elsewhere in the UK and internationally, including early-stage discussions around green hydrogen, ammonia and methanol technologies. Members welcomed this direction and encouraged continued collaboration to ensure the Highlands could contribute meaningfully to the national energy transition.

e) Communications and engagement

- communication and engagement remained an area with scope for further development. Since the previous update, officers had participated in a range of Community Council meetings and local events, including Dingwall Day, which involved active participation from councillors and community representatives. Despite limited staffing capacity, efforts had been supported by external partners and Inverness-based organisations, both of which had established community programmes and funding streams;
- constructive feedback from Members had helped shape the current approach. Officers had delivered several evening presentations to local communities in response to demand and to raise awareness of ongoing developments. Engagement had also extended to youth and senior groups, including three well-attended sessions with the University of the Third Age, where over 100 retired professionals participated. These sessions had been both insightful and thought-provoking;
- community newsletters had been distributed locally, though coverage could be improved through better use of Council and Community Council distribution lists. In parallel, regular press articles had been published to address misinformation, particularly around wages and employment terms. These communications clarified that employment protections were in place, including standard contracts and the absence of zero-hour arrangements;
- engagement had taken place in relation to Local Place Plans, particularly in areas such as the Black Isle, with feedback contributing to broader community conversations and informing local priorities. Environmental engagement had also been explored in collaboration with NatureScot and Council officers, focusing on delivering a smaller number of impactful biodiversity projects rather than dispersing efforts across numerous minor schemes;
- port authorities and landowners had undertaken their own engagement activities to varying degrees. Officers had also engaged with island and west coast communities, including Orkney, Skye, Kintail, Wick, Thurso, Tain, Kyle and Fort William. Local businesses in these areas had been involved in contract opportunities, reflecting the wider regional economic impact of the project;
- an online community update webinar, held over a year ago, had been well received, attracting 138 participants. It was proposed that this become an annual event, with future sessions potentially supported by Council digital services to reduce reliance on private contractors;

- in light of increased momentum around national developments, it was suggested that engagement meetings be held more frequently. Proposals included hosting a future meeting in Ardersier to improve visibility and accessibility, and inviting a representative from each of the ports to future quarterly meetings, subject to agreement by the Chair;
- Members emphasised the importance of clearly communicating the wider benefits of Freeport activity, particularly to communities beyond the East Coast, to address perceptions of exclusion and ensure inclusive messaging. It was also highlighted that negative media coverage, particularly around housing developments in Inverness, had not reflected the full context. A more balanced communication strategy was encouraged to inform the public of positive developments and wider infrastructure needs; and
- while some external stakeholders had previously expressed scepticism about the project's deliverability, recent milestones had helped to build confidence and shift perceptions. Looking ahead, communications activity would be scaled up, with support from Council communications teams where appropriate to ensure consistency and reach across all communities.

Thereafter, the Group **NOTED** the progress and key developments across each workstream.

The meeting ended at 4.30 pm.