Agenda Item	**4i**
Report No	**CCC/25/25**

The Highland Council

Committee: **Climate Change**

Date: **5 November 2025**

Report Title: **Net Zero Programme Update**

Report By: **Assistant Chief Executive - Place**

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Net Zero Programme and to present the fifth tranche of projects for inclusion in the Programme.

1.2 The content and structure of the report is intended to:-

- assist Member scrutiny and performance management;
- inform decision-making and aid continuous improvement; and
- provide transparency and accessibility

2 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:-

i. **Scrutinise** and **note** progress to date as outlined in the report and Appendix 1 of the report; and
ii. **Agree to recommend to Council** the approval of the project brief templates in Appendix 2 of the report for inclusion in the Council's Net Zero Programme.

3 Implications

3.1 **Resource -** A revised approach for the future delivery of the Net Zero Strategy was approved by the Climate Change Committee in May 2024. The Climate Change and Energy Team (CCET) continues to work closely with services to develop and deliver projects that will accelerate the Council's transition to Net Zero and becoming a climate-ready organisation. Resource implications (staff and funding) will be considered on a project-specific basis.

3.2 **Legal** - The Council has several requirements in respect of reporting against its climate change obligations, in addition to being required to directly support Scotland's target to end its contribution to climate change no later than 2045.

3.3 **Risk** - Failure to proactively address the climate and ecological emergency across all service delivery areas carries significant reputational and operational risk. It may also limit access to external funding limit opportunities to secure external funding.

Audit Scotland's briefing highlights that urgent action is needed to build resilience against climate impacts already underway. Without swift action to reduce emissions and improve adaptation, severe and widespread disruption is expected, particularly to essential systems such as food supply, water resources, housing and infrastructure.

3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** - There are no implications arising from this report. However, health and safety will be addressed in the Council's Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan.

3.5 **Gaelic** – There are no implications arising from this report.

4 Impacts

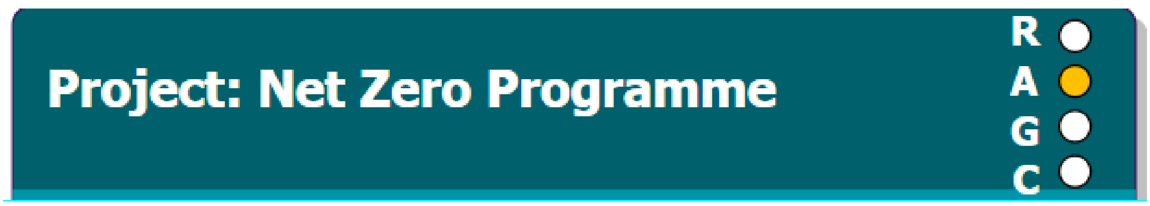
4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact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

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

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

5 Net Zero Delivery - Net Zero Programme

5.1 Overall RAG Status



While progress continues across several workstreams, the overall status of the Net Zero Programme is currently assessed as **Amber**, due to slippage in four out of six key milestones. To recover timelines across the affected milestones, continued cross-service collaboration and targeted resource support will be critical. These actions will help ensure delivery remains aligned with strategic objectives and that momentum is maintained across the programme.

5.2 Key Milestones & Requests for Change

The Net Zero, Energy, Investment & Innovation (NZEII) Portfolio Board approved amendments to the following milestone end dates:-

Approved on 20 August 2025:-

- **Shared Procurement Service to evaluate and propose alternative carbon budgeting tools** (amended from May 2025 to September 2025);
- **Service carbon budgets/emissions targets approved** (amended from August 2025 to June 2026); and
- **Agreement and introduction of core KPIs to be reported at both a Corporate and Service Level** (amended from June 2025 to October 2025)

Approved on 1 October 2025:-

- **Net Zero embedded in Capital Programme** (amended from September 2025 to November 2025)

Milestones currently set up in PRMS to monitor progress of the programme are as follows:-

Timeline	Milestone	Current Status	Comments
Completes March 2027	Develop proposed projects for inclusion in Net Zero Programme	Some slippage	The Climate Change & Energy Team, in collaboration with the Net Zero Strategy Group, has been actively progressing a number of approved projects, with several more currently in development. While good progress has been made, it has not been possible to meet the target of bringing five new projects to the November Committee. Updates on the pipeline will continue to be shared as projects advance.
Completes September 2025	Shared Procurement Service to evaluate and propose alternative carbon budgeting tools	Some slippage	Additional information has now been received from Oxygen, enabling the next stages of work to progress on the introduction of service carbon budgets/emissions targets.

			Alongside this, the Climate Change & Energy Team is exploring an alternative tool that potentially provides real-time data insights. The provider is currently finalising configuration of fleet and energy data, with a platform trial by Highland Council scheduled to begin w/c 6 October and run throughout the month.
Completes June 2026	Service carbon budgets/emissions targets approved	On Target	Additional information has been received from Oxygen, enabling the next stages of work: Q3 2025: Data received to be budget mapped using analysis and data skills, producing a high-level carbon view by Service. Q4 2025: Present analysis to Services; internal strategy working group to plan launch of programme to Suppliers and Services. Q1 2026: Develop the first version of a multi-stage, multi-year programme to collaborate with Suppliers and Services. This will prioritise actions based on the analysis to support emissions reduction.
Completes November 2025	Net Zero embedded in Capital Programme	Some slippage	On 25 August, the Capital Board agreed the three projects to be included in the trial - Corran Ferry infrastructure, Broadford Primary School (new build) and Tigh Na Sgire (retrofit).

			Delays in identifying projects for inclusion in the pilot have resulted in slippage against the original timeline, which was scheduled to start in July. Trial underway w/c 6 October.
Completes October 2025	Agreement and introduction of core KPIs to be reported at both a Corporate and Service Level	Some slippage	This workstream has identified gaps in representation from key services and teams that play a critical role in delivering the Council's Net Zero Strategy. A proposal is being developed for submission to the NZEII Portfolio Board, recommending a restructure of the Net Zero Strategy Group.
Completes August 2025	Approval of an Adaptation Strategy for the Council	Completed	Climate Change Adaptation Strategy approved by Council on 18 September 2025.

5.3 <u>Measures of Success</u>

Net Zero Programme: Grant funding secured [reporting starts tbc]	
Net Zero Prog: % Carbon emissions reduction [reporting starts 23/24]	9.5 %
Net Zero Prog.: The number of projects proposed to the Climate Change Committee [annual]	10
Net Zero Prog.: % of Business Continuity Plans aligned with Council's Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan [reporting starts 2025/26]	
Net Zero Prog: % of capital projects that have defined level of carbon impact prior to approval of capital spend [reporting starts 2025/26]	
Net Zero Prog.: Highland Council Carbon Budget [reporting starts 24/25] - Tonnes of CO2 equivalent (tCO2e)	29,597
Net Zero Prog.: Service-level Carbon Budget Targets - Corporate [reporting starts 2025/26]	
Net Zero Prog.: Service-level Carbon Budget Targets - People [reporting starts 2025/26]	
Net Zero Prog.: Service-level Carbon Budget Targets - Place [reporting starts 25/26]	

5.4 Financial Summary

i) **Savings -** The Net Zero Programme has a projected long-term benefit and savings target of £5m that will start to be realised from financial year 2026/27 onwards.

ii) **Investment** - The Net Zero Programme has approved investment of £630,000 to cover months 1-36 of the Delivery Plan.

The table below shows spend against this investment for 2025/26:-

Net Zero Programme: Investment	M6 25/26	
	Current Forecast	Actual to Date
	£272,868	£124,277

The actual to date figure above relates to staff costs for April-September 2025.

iii) Mitigations are currently not required for the Programme.

5.5 Key Risks

The key risks for the programme currently being managed and monitored via PRMS are as follows:-

KEY RISKS ASSESSED / RESPONSE	CURRENT RISK RATING	RESPONSE
Net Zero: Failure to align our budget expenditure	16	Treat
Net Zero: Emissions Targets Not Met	9	Tolerate
Net Zero: Service Engagement with Net Zero Agenda	9	Tolerate

There are no identified changes to the key risks identified for the Programme. The impact and likelihood score of the above key risks were reviewed at the end of Q2, and no changes are required to the scoring.

1. Failure to Align Budget Expenditure

The associated Risk Actions to mitigate the risk are:-

Risk Action	RAG Status
Carbon Budgeting	**GREEN**
Additional information has now been received from Oxygen, enabling the next stages of work to progress on the introduction of service carbon budgets/emissions targets. Alongside this, the Climate Change & Energy Team is exploring an alternative tool that potentially provides real-time data insights. The provider is currently finalising configuration of fleet and energy data, with a platform trial by Highland Council scheduled to begin w/c 6 October and run throughout the month.	

Establish Performance Reviews	GREEN
The introduction of service carbon budgets and emissions targets, alongside the agreement and introduction of core KPIs at both Corporate and Service levels, are fundamental components in establishing regular performance reviews across service clusters. Progress on the Net Zero Programme is reported quarterly to the Climate Change Committee. The Council provides an annual report on its emissions in line with the Public Bodies Climate Change Duties requirements. The next PBCCD return, and programme update will be brought to the Climate Change Committee in November 2025.	
Integrate Net Zero into financial decision-making frameworks	**AMBER**
In May 2025, the Capital Board approved a three-month trial to evaluate tools for assessing embodied, operational, and maintenance carbon emissions across capital projects. On 25 August, the Board confirmed the three projects selected for inclusion in the trial:- • Corran Ferry infrastructure (infrastructure); • Broadford Primary School (new build); and • Tigh Na Sgire (retrofit) Due to delays in identifying suitable projects, the trial experienced slippage against the original timeline, which was scheduled to commence in July. The trial is now underway from week commencing 6 October, with the revised end date set for end of November 2025.	
Service Net Zero Programme Reporting	
This will be reported annually from November 2025 as part of the Public Bodies Climate Change Duties Reporting.	

6 Net Zero Programme – Quarterly Projects Updates

6.1 **Appendix 1** outlines progress of the projects approved to date.

7 Net Zero Thematic Group Updates

7.1
- An interim update from the Built Estate & Energy Thematic Group is included on this agenda as Item 4ii. A detailed update on workstreams being progressed through the Thematic Group will be presented to the Climate Change Committee in January 2026.
- An update from the Social Housing & HRA Thematic Group is included on this agenda as Item 4iii.

8 Net Zero Programme – sixth tranche of projects

8.1 Three project templates within **Appendix 2** have been developed for consideration by the Committee detailing the planned activity, milestones and measures of success for each project.

8.2 An additional project template slide has been included under Item 6 of today's agenda. This template relates specifically to recommendations to strengthen the implementation and effectiveness of the Climate Change Impact Assessment Process.

Designation:	Assistant Chief Executive - Place
Date:	6 October 2025
Author:	Fiona Daschofsky, Programme Manager
Background Papers:	None
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Net Zero Programme – Project Updates Appendix 2 – Net Zero Programme – Project Brief Templates

Built Estate & Energy						
Project	**Activity**	**Project Elements**	**Measures of Success**	**Milestones**	**Update - August 2025**	**Update - November 2025**
Net Zero Transition Surveys	Undertake surveys of 300 non-domestic Council properties to evaluate and identify measures required to transition to Net Zero carbon emissions	• Carry out physical surveys and associated analysis to prepare site-specific reports detailing measures required to transition to Net Zero • Compile database of costed opportunities • Identify, and where deemed cost-effective, to progress implementation of cost reduction opportunities and projects	• Year 1 – 35% of properties surveyed • Year 2 – 65% of properties surveyed • Year 1 – £0.20m of opportunities implemented • Year 2 – £0.45m of opportunities implemented • Year 3 – £0.45m of opportunities implemented	M1 - Plan agreed - Apr 24 - Aug 24 M2 - 1st Tranche properties surveyed - Apr 24 - Mar 25 M3 - 2nd Tranche properties surveyed - Apr 25 - Mar 26	Programme progressing in line with schedule. Cumulatively 163 surveys undertaken, 75 reports completed. Liaison ongoing with Property with respect to scheduling and implementation of related energy efficiency projects.	Programme progressing in line with schedule. 186 surveys undertaken, 133 reports/Net Zero analysis completed. In total 1,295 energy efficiency opportunities have been identified and evaluated. To date 107 opportunities have been implemented with cost and carbon benefits as summarised below. £48,298 and 70.3tCO2e attributed to summer heating savings. £85,010 and 78.3tCO2e to other projects e.g. lighting upgrades and behaviour/on-site maintenance measures. Total annual savings achieved: £133,308 and 148.6tCO2e.
Solar PV Council Estate	Optimisation and expansion of solar PV across the Council's non-domestic, non-commercial estate to supply green energy by direct wire; delivering a financial and carbon saving and protecting against future carbon tax liability.	• Identify and rank Council-owned/occupied sites • Undertake any remedial works required • Design and install • Maintenance regimes, compliance and certification built into management of the sites	• 100% existing sites operational and generating energy • Income: £1.3m by year 3 rising to £2m p/a • Increase in installed generation capacity • Reduced electricity costs for service users • Reduction in Council CO2 emissions	M1 - 04/24: >50% of total generation re-activated M2 - 04/24: Financial model signed off M3 - 05/24: 2024/26 Project and Programme in place M4 - 03/25: 60% of 1MW of new installation completed M5 - 09/25: 1MW of additional new installation completed M6 - 03/26: 1MW additional generation p/a up to 5 years	Work progressing with respect to implementing an inspection and maintenance programme utilising the Council's Energy Efficiency Framework. (10 Solar PV Contractors). Deshar PS scheduled for installation Jul/Aug 25 (summer holiday period). Remaining scheduled sites continue to be developed, however SSEN engagement and approval for grid connections have proven to be longer than anticipated. To maintain momentum the following sites, which have no SSEN limitations, are planned to be progressed in the short term: Thurso Swimming Pool, Broadford Roads Depot, Poolewe PS, Cromarty PS, Deshar PS (Nursery), Banavie PS. Inverlochy PS.	Recent completed installations include: UIG Harbour Deshar PS Programme for installation of 1 MW of solar PV in place for the remainder of the financial year 24-25. Procurement scheduled to be undertaken in Oct 25. Development of maintenance contract scheduled to be completed by end Oct 2025, and subsequently procured.
Conversion of Fossil Fuel Systems	Undertake detailed heating system options appraisals for properties with aged and poor condition fossil-fuel based heating systems.	• Carry out options appraisals to determine how the heating systems can be converted to non-fossil fuel alternatives that support the transition to Net Zero carbon emissions	• Undertake 6 options appraisals on heating systems which have less than 5 years' life expectancy • Define and consult upon report format and content to ensure fitness for purpose • Complete by end of December 2025	M1 - 08/24 - Agree selected properties M2 - 12/24 - Complete options appraisals and associated reports for internal issue for review M3 - 02/25 – Incorporation into planned maintenance works for approved projects	Work undertaken upon specific request by Property, including Council HQ and Kilchoan PS.	Work undertaken upon specific request by Property.
Net Zero Design Standards	Determine and agree net zero design standards applicable for non-domestic new builds and refurbishments.	• Review current guidance and legislation to determine the appropriate design standard for all categories • Update and publish technical specifications and associated guidance documentation • Information and knowledge through workshops for dissemination to relevant parties	• Production of technical standards and guidance • Production of compliant life cycle analysis reports for new buildings • Post occupancy evaluation demonstration of meeting operational energy targets • Compliant building carbon strategy documentation	M1 - 08/24: Solar PV technical specification adopted for all new domestic and non-domestic applications M2 - 01/25: Interim technical specification and guidance M3 - 01/26: Update of interim technical specification and guidance M4 - 08/26: Finalised technical specification and guidance published	No further progress.	No further progress.

Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP)	Embed Net Zero and climate resilience principles across the three core components of the Council's Strategic Asset Management Plan (currently in development): •Asset Management Policy •Asset Management Strategy •Asset Management Working Action Plan	• Ensure the Strategic Asset Management Plan fully aligns with the Council's Net Zero Strategy. • Integrate carbon reduction and climate adaptation measures into a whole lifecycle approach to asset management, ensuring that sustainability, operational efficiency, and climate resilience are considered at every stage.	• The SAMP acknowledges and supports the Council's Route Map to Net Zero and associated targets. • Net Zero considerations are integrated as part of asset management processes and evaluations. • Public and private sector investment is leveraged with respect to Net Zero alignment and compliance.	05/25: First draft developed, led by members of the Built Estate & Energy Thematic Group. 06/25: Review of SAMP by CCET. 08/25: Strategic Asset Management Plan brought to Reconfiguring Our Asset Base Portfolio Board (07/08) and Redesign Board (28/08). 09/25: Approval of SAMP by Members (HC meeting 18/09). 10/25: Implementation of SAMP and supporting comms to all relevant stakeholders to ensure strategy is embedded. 10/26: Annual review of Asset Management Strategy. Ongoing: Continuous management, monitoring, and updating of the Asset Management Action Plan.		07/25 SAMP approved by ROAB board, to be considered as adopted by board (Noting action plan to be reduced). SAMP to go to H&P Committee in November 11/25 SAMP on agenda to be reviewed and agreed at H&P committee. SAMP then will be published and promoted to raise awareness as part of the action plan.
Planning, Land Use & Environment						
Project	**Activity**	**Project Elements**	**Measures of Success**	**Milestones**	**Update - August 2025**	**Update - November 2025**
Address Ecological Emergency	Implement priority actions identified in the Council's Ecology Strategy	• Map and quantify greening opportunities across Council Estate • Utilise biodiversity in green space to reduce grass cutting across Council Estate • Develop and deliver a suite of greening projects across Council Estate • Secure external funding to support Council and community greening projects (Nature Restoration Fund) • Strategies and policies developed aligned to the Ecology Strategy • Secure funding and further develop management plan for World Heritage Site (WHS)	• 10 Council estate Greening projects delivered annually • Pipeline of projects identified, and delivered for biodiversity • Management plan for WHS finalised • Ash dieback mapped and managed across the estate • Identify number of policies to be aligned to the Ecology Strategy • Major planning apps assessed in line with NPF4 biodiversity policies • Funding secured for WHS (£600k) • Recruitment of planning ecologists	M1 - Q2 24/25: Nature Restoration Fund Community grant scheme launched M2 - Q3 24/25: Complete recruitment of Planning Ecologist M3 - Q4 24/25: Review and agree approach to Ash dieback M4 - Q4 24/25: First tranche WHS funding secured M5 - Q1 25/26: WHS staff recruited M6 - Q1 25/26: Opportunity map completed M7 - Q3 25/26: Adoption of Forestry and Woodland Strategy	M1 complete M2 complete M3 Started in post end March 2025. Currently reviewing methodology for identifying and mapping ash dieback. M4 complete M5 complete. Both Flow Country Partnership Manager (start date 7 July 25) and World Heritage Site Coordinator recruited (start date 11 August 25) M6 Community food growing opportunity mapping completed - internal consultation to be arranged. M7 Pending. NRF - Community grant scheme to be relaunched later this quarter. New shared Biodiversity Officer post created to lead on deliverying against Actions in the Ecology Strategy and to support Amenity Services.	M3 - Ash dieback work underway. M4/5 - Both Posts now working. Focus is on pipeline peatland restoration projects, planning responses & tourism seminar. M6 - opportunity map completed - discussion needed with community development managers to progress. M7 - delayed, scope of work to be agreed Q4 with delivery 26/27. NRF community grant scheme now live. Biodiversity Officer/Nature Conservation Officer recruited 03/09/25.

Nature Networks	Create Nature Networks by identifying and mapping Nature Networks in Highland and strengthening connections between them to support improved ecological connectivity	• Identify and map potential high level Nature Networks across Highland. • Carry out workshops with partners and stakeholders to refine existing and potential new local Nature Networks • Identify, with partners and stakeholders, and map the first phase of Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCSs)	• Nature Networks identified and mapped as part of the Local Development Plan. • Identify 10 opportunities to strengthen or create new Nature Networks. • Establish panel to identify and designate LNCSs. • Through the planning process Nature Networks provide opportunities for developers to focus and deliver biodiversity enhancement obligations.	M1 - 11/24: Establish baseline GIS dataset to include statutory and non-statutory designations, HABMap and key geographical map data M2 - 11/24: Start mapping potential existing Nature Networks (focusing on Inner Moray Firth area) M3 - 12/24: Carry out first workshops (focusing on Inner Moray Firth area) with stakeholders to refine map-based Nature Networks M4 - 04/25: Identify LNCS (ongoing) and start the designation process (April 2025) M5 - 08/26: Completion of Highland Nature Networks	M1 complete M2 Underway for the IMF area. M3 Workshops and stakeholder group meeting completed on ??? and ???. Further engagement to take place with NatureScot 1 July 25. M4 Underway for IMF area. This is a component part of Nature Network mapping. LNCS currently being identified and mapped - consultation and designation aligned with LDP timescales. M5 first iteration of Nature Networks will be completed in line with LDP timescales.	M2 - IMF, Caithness and Sutherland, West Highlands and Islands NN complete for 30X30 connections. Non 30X30 sites will be ongoing task. M3 - Stakeholder workshops for 30x30 sites complete, additional stakeholder workshops to be held for Fisheries Trusts and SEPA to follow. M4 - Ongoing, part of NN work but will take longer to complete than initially estimated but will align to LDP timetable. M5 - see above, target to be merged with M2.
Kingussie Flood Protection	The Gynack Burn, which flows through Kingussie, overtops during high rainfall events, resulting in flood damage to roads, railway, parks and buildings within the village. Previous modelling work by the Council has established the main cause of the problem being reduced capacity under road and rail bridges due to build-up of sediment and gravel beneath the bridges. Flooding leads to costly and energy intensive clear up operations as well as increased watercourse maintenance works to remove the large build-up of sediment that has raised the bed of the channel. The works proposed involve the stabilisation of the banks of the Gynack Burn further upstream where erosion is prevalent, the methods proposed are green bank protection providing a natural response, reducing sediment load in the watercourse.	• Identification of environmental constraints • Design of natural bank protection works • Establishment of joint working with Network Rail • Collaboration with Estate • Procurement of Contractor to undertake works. • Construction Works • Monitoring	• Stabilisation of previously erodible banks • Reduction in sediment transportation in watercourse and subsequent deposition below road/rail bridges. • Reduction in future watercourse maintenance works (dredging) • THC/Network Rail collaboration to deliver project. • Progression to next section of erodible banks.	M1 - 02/24: Fluvial Audit (complete) M2 - 04/24: Bank stabilisation design (complete) M3 - 09/24: Return of Tenders for works M4 - 10/24: Award construction works M5 - 12/24: Complete works on site	Review of potential in channel interventions identified no feasible measures. Property level resilience for at risk properties being investigated. No works within financial year 24/25.	No further works planned on this project due to cost prohibitive solutions to erosion protection measures.

Coastal Change Adaptation Plan (CCAP)	Within The Highland Council area, the coastal zone is home to much of the population, and contains significant infrastructure such as roads, railway lines, bridges, harbours etc. These coastal areas help to drive the economy within the Council area and as such a more adaptive approach is required to ensure our communities and infrastructure remain resilient in the future. The CCAP will provide an overview of the risks across The Highland Council coastal area, identifying locations and infrastructure that are least resilient to climate change and rising sea levels, providing a framework and flexible approach to address these risks over time.	• Development of a CCAP • Case Studies – focus on Relic Defences at 2 locations	• Develop a plan to address the highest risk areas of coastal flooding. • Improve community understanding of coastal flooding and erosion risks.	M1 - 10/24: Finalisation of Regional level Coastal Change Adaptation Plan M2 - 04/25: Case Study Report	Regional Coastal Change Adaptation Plan approved at May I, E & E Committee. Local CCAP for Avoch - Study currently out to tender. Golspie - Successful bid for further case study to develop design and obtain approvals for new groyne at old pier. Partnership working with local community. Design estimated to be complete July 2026. Nairn - Ongoing relic defences study currently underway. Estimated completion Dec 2025. Further case study funding bid successful to undertake assessment of potential beach recharge. Project anticipated to be complete October 2026.	Local CCAP for Avoch - Study awarded to consultant and project underway. Golspie pier groyne study ongoing. Partnership working with local community. Design estimated to be complete July 2026. Nairn - Relic defences study completed. Further case study funding bid successful to undertake assessment of potential beach recharge. Project awarded and about to commence.
Highland Local Development Plan (HLDP) – Evidence Report	The Development Plans Team is progressing the HLDP, in close collaboration with statutory key agencies, wider Council services, the development industry, and local communities. The first mandatory milestone is the submission of the HLDP Evidence Report. This project template slide focuses on the development of Chapter 4: Climate Change and Energy.	A comprehensive review has been undertaken by the Climate Change & Energy Team to inform the development of Chapter 4: Climate Change and Energy of the HLDP. This Chapter summarises key evidence and insights relating to: • National Context • Climate Emissions and Impacts • Climate Mitigation and Adaptation • Energy • Heat and Cooling	• All five areas are comprehensively covered. • Evidence sources are up-to-date, and aligned with national policy and the Council's Net Zero Strategy. • Peer review confirms the robustness of the evidence base. • Climate Change & Energy Team engagement completed within agreed timeframe.	07/25: Engagement with relevant CCET team members. 08/25: Completion of evidence review across all five areas. 08/25: Revisions to Chapter 4 based on feedback from CCET. 09/25: Feedback from Key Agencies on draft Chapter 4. 10/25: Finalisation of Chapter 4 content, with statements of agreement from Key Agencies and integration into HLDP Evidence Report. 11/25 Report to E&I Committee on HLDP Evidence Report update.		07/25: Engagement with relevant CCET team members. 08/25: Completion of evidence review across all five areas. 08/25: Revisions to Chapter 4 based on feedback from CCET. 09/25: Feedback from Key Agencies on draft Chapter 4. 10/25: Finalisation of Chapter 4 content, with statements of agreement from Key Agencies and integration into HLDP Evidence Report. 11/25 Report to E&I Committee on HLDP Evidence Report update.
Social Housing & HRA						
Project	**Activity**	**Project Elements**	**Measures of Success**	**Milestones**	**Update - August 2025**	**Update - November 2025**
Housing Strategy/ Policy	Enhance the Council's approach to achieving the Local Housing Strategy 2023-28 Outcome 4, "Partnership and innovation builds capacity in Highland so that housing condition and energy efficiency improve and all homes to move towards net zero." This will be achieved through reviewing existing housing stock with a focus on energy efficiency status, adopting whole house retrofit approach to support the reduction of fuel poverty and improving the efficiency of Council properties in line with Net Zero Standards. Review of HRA Capital Plan to remove barriers in achieving targets while incorporating the requirement to secure external funding to support delivery.	• Review stock information to derive a clear understanding of current energy efficiency status and the works required to achieve proposed Social Housing Net Zero Standard (SHNZS). • Review HRA budget allocations • Revise area-based funding allocation to ensure that properties of the greatest need (energy inefficient, off-gas, rural properties in Council tax bands E-G) are prioritised for energy efficiency works. • Undertake feasibility studies for energy efficiency projects including costings. • Review current process for tenant opt-out.	• Approach established for achieving proposed SHNZS and alleviating fuel poverty in the Highlands. • Establish accurate costing against housing stock types. • 5 whole house retrofit feasibilities completed per annum. • Increased HRA capital budget allocation to energy efficiency works. • Pipeline of shovel-ready energy efficiency projects. • Tracking the reduction in carbon emissions (aligned with Highland Council carbon emission targets).	M1 - 11/25: Report to Housing and Property Committee outlining analysis of stock, understanding of current energy efficiency and requesting approval to change current HRA funding structure. M2 - 11/25: Review of Policy approach/Amendment Review progress of Local Housing Strategy. M3 - Ongoing: Identification of priority projects.	Significant progress has been made with Finance colleagues to provide a rent model to develop a longer-term rent strategy. The focus of the rent strategy is to ensure that borrowing against the Housing Revenue Account is sustainable and that this provides the funding needed for a new Housing Capital Programme 2027-2032. The new Capital Programme will target energy efficiency work to our stock and the allocated investment will allow external funding to maximise the extent of energy and external fabric works across more of our houses. The proposals around the new Capital Programme and the funding to sustain it, will be presented to November Housing & Property Committee.	The longer-term rent strategy has been modelled on the principles of maintaining and investing in Council housing, while keeping rents affordable and ensuring the loan charge ratio is reduced over time. The rent strategy is being presented to Housing & Property on 5 November, ahead of the annual tenant rent consultation which will inform the rent increase decision-making in January 2026. As part of this, the new Capital Programme will detail the proposed investment in energy efficiency measures in existing stock and also the building of new Council housing to a high energy efficiency level.

Energy Efficient Homes - Caol	Utilise grant funding to support the delivery of a retrofit project to 32 properties located in Caol. Properties are all Swedish Timber construction, off gas and existing roof contains asbestos. Scope of works includes; external wall insulation, removal of asbestos roof, new roof with in-roof solar, insulation lofts (where required) and installing air source heat pumps (some properties already have a heat pump). Project to achieve a minimum of 50% external funding on eligible works.	• Align delivery of retrofit works to social & private properties in Caol. • Maximise and manage external funding, including ECO4 and Scottish Government EES:ABS enabling funds. • Improve condition of housing stock and reduce fuel poverty.	• 90% of allocated properties improved • 50% (min) of external funding leveraged • 100% of properties EPC C or above • Meeting standards, including EESSH2 • Delivery of place-based project including socially and privately owned properties.	M1 - 07/24: Completion of 2 pilot properties M2 - 08/24: Building Warrants approved M3 - 06/25: Project completion M4 - 09/25: Project close report, including monitoring and evaluation	M1 - complete M2 - complete M3 - Delayed by 2 weeks M4 - on track - DNO approval received **Additional comments:** 32 Council properties instructed - 2 opt-outs **Progress to date:** - 23 properties complete, pending final snagging list review and sign off by the 11-July-25 - 7 properties signed off - 2 partial opt-outs. Works to 49 private properties are complete.	M1 - complete M2 - complete M3 - Delayed by 2 months due to sub-contractor issues. M4 - Delayed by 4 weeks as awaiting architect report. - DNO approval received. **Additional comments:** 32 Council properties instructed - 30 properties improved (94%) - 2 opt-outs **Progress to date:** - 30 properties complete, with final 5 pending final snagging list review and sign off by 21st-October-25. - 25 properties signed off. - 2 partial opt-outs. Delivered as a place based project and incorporated works to 49 private properties. All private works are complete. Community benefits - an early years Talking Tub was funded for the local primary school.
Energy Efficient Homes – Balintore (mixed tenure)	Utilise SHNZF, ECO4 and EES:ABS funding to support the delivery of a mixed-tenure retrofit project to properties located in Balintore. Properties are all Norwegian Timber construction and off gas. Scope of works includes; external wall insulation, new windows & doors, new roof with in-roof solar, insulation lofts (where required) and installing air source heat pumps (some properties already have a heat pump). Project to achieve a minimum of 50% external funding on eligible works.	• Align delivery of retrofit works to social & private properties in Balintore. • Secure external Social Housing Net Zero Funding (SHNZF) and ECO4 funding. • Improve condition of housing stock and reduce fuel poverty. • Support regeneration of the area.	• 80% of allocated properties improved • 50% (min) of external funding leveraged • 100% of properties EPC C or above • Meeting standards, including EESSH2 • Delivery of place-based project including socially and privately owned properties.	M1 - 07/24: Submit revised project plan to SG M2 - 08/24: Procurement complete M3 - 09/24: Building warrants approved M4 - 10/24: Installations commence M5 - 06/25: Project completion M6 - 09/25: Project close report, including monitoring and evaluation	M1 - complete M2 - complete M3 - complete M4 - complete M5 - delayed 2 weeks M6 - on track DNO approval received **Additional comments:** 8 additional properties were instructed - 1 opt-out - 1 opted-out mid-way through A further 20 additional properties instructed - works commenced mid-June 25 **Progress to date:** - 10 properties complete, pending final snagging list review and sign off - 35 Properties signed off Works to 10 Private properties have been completed.	M1 - complete M2 - complete M3 - complete M4 - complete M5 - Complete M6 - Delayed by 4 weeks as awaiting architect report DNO approval received **Additional comments:** 45 additional properties were instructed. - 1 opted out - 1 opted out mid-way through A further 20 additional properties instructed. - works commenced mid-June 25 **Progress to date:** - 65 properties complete - 65 properties signed off Delivered as a place based project and incorporated works to 10 private properties. All works are complete. Community benefits - an early years Talking Tub was funded for the local primary school and the contractor made a contribution towards the upgrades of the playpark towards a new fence.

Energy Efficient Homes – Full Retrofit Balintore (Highland Council)	Prioritise economies of scale and full house retrofit approach while delivering Energy Efficiency measures as part of Capital Investment in Highland Council properties. Utilise available capacity to deliver 2 simultaneous projects to one area, 2 project management teams – 2 contractors, same energy efficiency measures. 59.55% properties in area included. Introduce ECO4 funding to our current capital works delivery programme to enhance project's scope. Properties are all Timber construction and off gas. Scope of works includes; external wall insulation, new windows & doors, new roof with in-roof solar, insulation lofts (where required) and installing air source heat pumps.	• Steer capital investment towards a retrofit approach. • Explore externally funded opportunities and mix tenure project delivery. • Improve condition of housing stock and reduce fuel poverty. • Support regeneration of the area.	• 100% of properties EPC C or above • Meeting standards, including EESSH2 and future compliance • 80% of allocated properties improved • 50% (min) of external funding leveraged	M1 - 01/24: Initial tenant engagement and opt-in exercise M2 - 07/24: Two projects initiated – 2 contractors appointed M3 - 08/24: Second tenant engagement – Housing needs M4 - 09/24: Technical specifications agreed M5 - 10/24: Installations commence M6 - TBC: Project completion M7 - TBC: Project close report, including lessons learnt	M1 – Completed M2 – Completed M3 – Completed M4 – Completed M5 – on track M6 – on track	M1 - Completed M2 - Completed M3 - Completed M4 - Completed M5 - Completed M6 - On track
GBIS - CWI for Social Properties	Utilise Great British Insulation Scheme (GBIS) to deliver cavity wall insulation (CWI) to Council-owned houses. Eligible properties will be insulated and ventilation upgraded (where required) as part of this project. Align delivery of HRA and private properties to create economies of scale and maximise external funding.	• Determine eligible properties • Maximise and manage external funding • Improve the energy efficiency of properties • Undertake external drill tests to confirm property suitability • Review opportunities to scale up the project	• 100 properties to receive CWI • 97% external funding leveraged • Delivery of place-based project including socially and privately owned properties • EPC improvements, including increase in SAP rating and reduction in carbon emissions	M1 - 09/24: Project approval M2 - 03/25: Project completion M3 - 05/25: Project close report, including evaluation M4 - Ongoing: Identification of priority areas	Project superseded to the D-C Highlands Project (ECO).	Project superseded to the D-C Highlands Project (ECO).

D-C Highlands - Council Properties (ECO funded)	Utilise the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) funding to deliver insulation measures, including cavity wall insulation extraction and fill, room-in-roof insulation, loft insulation, internal wall insulation, and cavity internal wall insulation but excluding external wall insulation (EWI) at this stage. Additionally, install Solar Photovoltaic (Solar PV) panels and Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHP) in Council-owned properties. Where insulation is installed, ventilation will be upgraded as required. Measures will be installed based on the properties' eligibility and suitability as outlined by the funding criteria. Align the delivery of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and private properties to create economies of scale and maximise external funding.	• Determine eligible properties • Maximise and manage external funding • Improve the energy efficiency of Council properties • Undertake external drill tests to confirm property where required suitability • Review opportunities for fully and partially funded projects.	• % of dwellings with a SAP rating of C or above after energy efficiency works • Leverage over £6m of external funding • Delivery of place-based project including socially and privately owned properties • % tenant opt-in for energy efficiency works	M1 - 01/25: Project approval M2 - 12/25: Project completion M3 - 05/26: Project close report, including evaluation M4 - Ongoing: Identification of priority areas	M1 - complete M2 - on track M3 - on track M4 - ongoing, initial areas have been identified **Additional comments:** - Installations have been completed or partially completed in Ross and Cromarty, Caithness, and Lochaber. We are now in the process of contacting residents and scheduling surveys in Badenoch and Strathspey, as well as Inverness. **Progress to date:** - 19 Surveys booked - 474 Surveys complete, booking for install (including partial installs) - 207 Projects complete (including submitted) **Measures installed (complete):** - 48 Cavity wall insulation - extraction and refill - 10 Cavity wall insulation - virgin fills - 217 Solar PV - 73 Air source heat pumps - 6 Room-in-roof insulation - 23 Loft insulation	M1 - complete M2 - on track M3 - on track M4 - ongoing, initial areas have been identified **Areas:** Installs completed in: - Ross & Cromarty - Caithness - Lochaber - Badenoch & Strathspey - Inverness - Nairn - Sutherland The project team is in the process of contacting residents and scheduling surveys in Skye & Lochalsh. **Progress to date:** - 44 Surveys booked - 324 Surveys complete, booking for installs (including partial installs) - 358 Projects complete (including submitted) **Measures installed (complete):** - 100 Cavity wall insulation - extraction and refill - 12 Cavity wall insulation - virgin fills - 356 Solar PV - 132 Air source heat pumps - 7 Room-in-roof insulation - 35 Loft insulation
Educational Resources	Development of educational resources to support behaviour change and raise awareness of energy efficiency measures. Energy efficiency improvements can result in lower energy costs for tenants which in turn can reduce fuel poverty. This initiative aims to reduce the number of tenant opt-outs per project, particularly in relation to air source heat pumps. Tenant opt-out rates can impact the Council's ability to leverage external funding for energy efficiency programmes.	• Development of new website. • Creation of series of engaging videos showcasing the energy efficiency measures delivered as part of the various projects. • Produce FAQ documents. • Resources will be developed in conjunction with tenant feedback.	• % reduction of tenant opt-outs for energy efficiency works.	M1 09/25: Creation of resources. M2 09/25: Approval of resources. M3 10/25: Roll-out of resources. M4 Ongoing: Review to identify any additional requirements incorporating feedback from users.		M1 - FAQ documents developed internally and will be shared with the Tenant Participation Group for comment. In addition, a series of short videos have been produced to inform tenants on what to expect and help set expectations. M2 - delayed by approx 6 weeks. M3 - delayed due to the current redesign of the Council website. M4 - work is ongoing, with regular monitoring in place to ensure continued progress.
Integration of ECO funding	Integration of Energy Company Obligation (ECO) funding to support the delivery of works under the current Heating Framework to maximise Council HRA budget and increase delivery. Work with contractors on the Heating Framework to identify opportunities for ECO funding and support to access funds.	• Determine eligible properties • Maximise and manage external funding alongside HRA budget • Improve the energy efficiency of Council properties	• % of dwellings with a SAP rating of C or above after energy efficiency works • Leverage over £1m of external funding • % tenant opt-in for energy efficiency works • Positive feedback from tenants	M1 ongoing: Discussions with contractors to secure external funding. M2 ongoing: Identification of eligible properties. M3 Q3 25/26: Project approval. M4 Q3 25/26: Project Delivery.		M1 and M2 are ongoing. Pilot projects have been identified with contractors and funding proposals have been received for internal review. M3 - on track M4 - on track Despite progress being slower than anticipated, discussions and proposals received to date have been positive and work is ongoing to integrate ECO funding to support the delivery of works delivered under the heating framework.
Waste						
Project	**Activity**	**Project Elements**	**Measures of Success**	**Milestones**	**Update - August 2025**	**Update - November 2025**

Recycling Infrastructure Improvements across the Estate	Introduce twin-stream recycling systems across the Council Estate to accelerate progress towards meeting targets. Reducing non-recycling waste and increasing the quality and quantity of recycling will reduce carbon emissions associated with residual waste treatment, additionally, costs associated with waste disposal and processing recycling will reduce. These changes will also be accompanied by the expansion of food waste collection in specific geographical areas.	• Benchmarking recycling rates in schools to gauge progress. • Improve recycling infrastructure across the Council estate through the roll out of twin-stream recycling systems. • Expand the food waste collections in schools and other Council premises in specific geographical areas. • Targeted communications campaign to support the roll out of new recycling systems. • Development of Waste E-learning module as part of Mandatory Net Zero training	• 15% reduction of total waste by 2025 • Reduce food waste by 33% by 2025 • Recycle 70% of remaining waste by 2025 • Send no more than 5% of remaining waste to landfill by 2030 • Cost savings benefits (£0.365m 24/25 and £1.695m 25/26 – total external and internal waste) associated with waste disposal. • Net reduction in carbon emissions	Recycling infrastructure improvements initiated aligned to the following phased service change timeline: M1 - 05/24: Ross & Cromarty M2 - 07/24: Nairn and Inverness M3 - 09/24: Badenoch & Strathspey M4 - 10/24: Sutherland M5 - 11/24: Caithness M6 - 03/25: Skye & Lochalsh M7 - 09/25: Lochaber	An update on the work being progressed through the Waste Thematic Group will be presented to the Climate Change Committee in August. This will include: •An overview of the waste audits completed at Kingussie High School, Inverness Royal Academy and HQ, Inverness. •A summary of next steps, including the development of a Corporate Waste Strategy for all Council premises.	•Waste and recycling infrastructure continues to be rolled out across the Council estate, with completion of the programme expected by mid-October. However, challenges remain due to lack of funding to support internal infrastructure within Council premises. •Targeted communications in development in response to the waste audit completed at HQ, Inverness. This will include engagement with Facilities Management staff. •Follow-up actions from the waste audit at Inverness Royal Academy will be progressed in Q4.
Re-Use Portal	Develop and pilot an in-house portal to redistribute resources within the organisation such as furniture, fixtures, fittings, school materials and office consumables. Additionally, identify companies that would purchase used furniture, and/or organisations/charities that would take assets no longer required by the Council to avoid items being sent for disposal	• Development of platform that allows activities to be user-led or automated to minimise the resources required to run the platform • Development of guidance including items that can be redistributed via the portal (e.g. ICT equipment must be returned directly to ICT) • Identification of companies and/or organisations/charities that would buy or reuse assets no longer required by the Council	• Reduced procurement spend • Reduced waste disposal costs • Minimisation of waste • Reduced associated carbon emissions • Cost avoidance – subscription fees of using an external provider in respect of the portal	M1 - 01/25: Develop and test portal M2 - 02/25: Draft guidance to address potential issues such as electric items with no current PAT test; suitably trained officers for heavy lifting; expected minimum condition of furniture etc. M3 - 02/25: Launch and promotion of portal M4 - 08/25: Evaluate pilot	•Storage and transport of assets remain key challenges. However, a dedicated storage solution has been established in Inverness to help address this issue. •In parallel, new processes are in development.	On 22 September, Officers met with two suppliers to explore opportunities for resale and reuse of office furniture. The suppliers advised that, following the COVID-19 pandemic, there is now effectively no resale market for second-hand office furniture - particularly larger desks. This reflects a broader shift in office design, with organisations increasingly prioritising breakout spaces and adapting to hybrid working models. Staff working from home typically require smaller, more flexible furniture solutions, further reducing demand for traditional office items. Further engagement with additional suppliers is underway to confirm whether this trend reflects wider industry consensus.
Reusable Lunch Packaging Pilot	Pilot reusable lunch packaging in Kingussie High School with the aim of reducing the amount of single-use canteen containers disposed of. This activity is part of a wider project to benchmark waste and recycling rates in schools.	• Conduct waste audit to identify baseline waste composition and associated carbon and cost. • Identify and implement recycling infrastructure requirements in KHS. • Communication and engagement activities to support the roll out of new infrastructure and reusable pilot. • Roll-out reusable lunch packaging to Kingussie High School. • Promote, support and integrate waste hierarchy principles into the Sustainable Learning Settings' 4 C's (Curriculum, Campus, Culture and Community) through engagement, learning and incentives.	• Reduced procurement spend • Reduction in waste, associated disposal costs and carbon emissions	M1 - 03/25: Waste audit undertaken at Kingussie High School M2 - 03/25: Cross-service meeting held with representatives from KHS, Facilities Management, Catering, Waste and CCET M3 - 09/25: Programme of Communication and Engagement activities to support the roll out of recycling infrastructure and reusable pilot M4 - 09/25: Roll out of recycling Infrastructure at KHS M5 - 09/25: Roll out reusable Lunch packaging at KHS M6 - 04/26: Evaluate pilot and consider further roll-out	•Waste audit results will be presented to the Climate Change Committee in August. •Reusable items have been ordered. •Communications and engagement materials are in development to support the pilot of the reusables and the recycling infrastructure.	• Recycling infrastructure and reusable containers pilot began during w/c 8 September. • A comprehensive programme of communication and engagement activities has been delivered to pupils, Catering, and Facilities Management staff to support the pilot. • Initial feedback indicates that pupils are engaging well with the new recycling bins, resulting in a significant improvement in litter levels across the school, which is an unexpected but positive outcome. Contamination levels have been reported as low. • Monitoring of external bins is underway to assess any reduction in non-recyclable waste. • A repeat waste audit is scheduled for Q4. • All meals are now being served in reusable containers, with the number of meals recorded via the catering system. Some concerns have been raised by catering staff regarding the suitability of some of the container types; this feedback will inform the selection of alternative containers to support future rollout.

Members' Catering	At the January Climate Change Committee, Members requested a project template be developed and brought to the May Committee regarding Members' catering and the potential to reduce food waste. Avoidable food waste costs Scotland £1.1billion a year. A third of all food produced globally is thrown away, while food production and consumption account for around a third of global greenhouse gas emissions. When we waste food, we also waste all the energy and resources that went into producing, processing, transporting, and cooking it.	• Review current process for ordering catering • Assess feasibility to introduce process to determine understanding of in-person Member attendance (will require Member engagement)	• Reduced food waste • Reduced costs	M1 - 05/25: Review current process M2 - 08/25: Provide recommendations to Members Group	A proposal will be presented to the Senior Leadership Group, following recess, outlining the key issues relating to food waste in relation to Members catering, and proposing recommendations aimed at reducing waste.	Proposal developed for discussion with Members.

Sustainable Travel						
Project	**Activity**	**Project Elements**	**Measures of Success**	**Milestones**	**Update - August 2025**	**Update - November 2025**
Sustainable Travel Through Operational Efficiencies	The Council currently utilises a range of vehicles for business travel including white fleet (vehicles under 3.5T), grey fleet (employee owned vehicle use for work purposes), car club and car hire. This project aims to conduct a comprehensive review of these travel methods with the aim of optimising costs, reducing carbon emissions and improving efficiency while ensuring compliance with relevant policies and regulations.	• Data collection: - Gather data on white fleet, grey fleet, car club and casual car hire. - Review relevant policies, contracts and existing reporting mechanisms • Analysis and reporting • Develop comprehensive reporting detailing findings and recommendations for potential cost savings and emission reductions • Dashboard design • Create a user-friendly dashboard that integrates relevant data and established key performance indicators for efficient business travel • Implementation and training • Pilot dashboard with key services and gather feedback • Monitoring and continuous improvement	• Improved vehicle utilisation in alignment with prescribed travel hierarchy • Utilise data to inform demonstratable reductions in travel costs across all Services • Utilise data to inform demonstratable reductions in emissions across all Services • Improved fleet utilisation through the reduction in use of more expensive travel options • Adoption of use of dashboards across Services	M1 - (Date TBC): Data collection M2 - (Date TBC): Delivery of analysis report M3 - (Date TBC): Dashboard prototype developed M4 - (Date TBC): Pilot testing of dashboard completed M5 - (Date TBC): Dashboard rollout M6 - (Date TBC): Training/comms around use of dashboards M7 - (Date TBC): Implementation review	High-level data presented to Climate Change Committee in May. Further analysis of the data has identified opportunities to target under-utilised vehicles. The second phase of the fleet replacement programme is currently on hold, pending a comprehensive fleet review. A summary of the high-level data will form the basis of a reporting dashboard currently in development.	Phase one is underway, targeting cars/small vans with utilisation under 4,000 miles / year. The aim is to dispose of these low-usage vehicles and transition to other modes such as Car Club and shared vehicles. 65 emails issued, requesting individual business cases. These will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Phase 2 to follow will focus on business travel and commuting mileage. Phase 3 will address the heavy fleet.
Active Travel	Developing infrastructure to enable and encourage staff to choose active travel is a key area of focus highlighted in the Council's Net Zero Strategy. An employee travel survey will be conducted in Autumn 2024 to provide an updated evidence base to help identify actions to support a shift in travel choices for employee travel for commuting and work-related purposes.	• Develop, implement and analyse an employee travel survey • Refresh the existing Travel Plan for the Council HQ building in Inverness, considering both health and wellbeing, equalities and sustainability requirements • Design and facilitate focus groups with staff to help encourage greater engagement with the Highland Council Travel Plan • Provide a summary presentation/briefing of survey findings and subsequent actions/approaches as appropriate • Work with key stakeholders such as HITRANS to maximise impact	• Increase in active travel • Removal of barriers to staff using active travel	M1 - 09/24: Creation of an online employee travel survey M2 - 10/24: Focus Group sessions held M3 - 12/24: Production of a summary presentation/ briefing with findings and subsequent actions M4 - 01/25: Refreshed Highland Council Travel Plan M5 - 01/25 and ongoing: Delivery of actions	A cross-service team is currently developing a survey to gather data from Council and High Life Highland staff. Several key workstreams under the Delivery Plan are seeking similar baseline data. To reduce survey fatigue and secure buy-in from the Corporate Management Team, a collaborative approach has been adopted. Input has been provided to date from HR, Asset Management, New Ways of Working, and the Climate Change & Energy Team. The survey includes questions relating to commuting to work and work-related travel. The draft survey is currently under review to capture any further requests or issues prior to circulation.	On 1 October, the Net Zero, Energy Efficiency, Investment & Opportunity Board agreed to support a collaborative staff survey designed to gather baseline data required by multiple Delivery Plan workstreams. The Board also agreed that the Assistant Chief Executive - Place will seek approval from the Corporate Management Team for the survey's deployment.
EV Policy	Development of policy around the efficient use of council-operated electric vehicles (EVs) charging infrastructure	• Development of policy • Development and delivery of communications and training to support the policy implementation	• Increased network availability • Enhanced staff awareness and behavioural change • Mitigated reputational risk for the Council	M1 - 04/25: Policy Drafted M2 - 05/25: Present draft policy to Communities & Place Committee for approval M3 - 06/25: Roll out of communications and training	First draft in development.	Fleet will prepare policy and guidance documentation in conjunction with EZO (formerly EasyGo) once service implementation stage is reached.
Elected Member Travel	Develop reporting to provide meaningful and understandable information regarding Member Travel, including associated costs and carbon emissions.	• Review of current Member Travel including mode e.g. car club, lift share, own vehicle (grey fleet) • Create a user-friendly dashboard that integrates relevant data • Implementation and training in respect of dashboard • Identify champion to encourage other Members to carpool, use car club or alternatives to trave	• Adoption of dashboard • Reduction in mileage, leading to decreased carbon emissions and costs • Improved utilisation of Council vehicles e.g. car club instead of Grey Fleet • Increased levels of lift share, carpooling	M1 - 03/25: Data collection M2 - 05/25: Delivery of analysis report to Climate Change Committee M3 - 05/25: Identification of champion M4 - 05/25: Development and testing of dashboard M5 - 06/25: Training/comms around use of dashboard	High-level data presented to Climate Change Committee in May. Members workshop to be arranged as per request at the Committee meeting in May.	Members workshop to be prepared and delivered prior to June 2026.

Light Fleet - Optimal Utilisation	Review utilisation levels and actual business requirements for the Council's light fleet	• Develop a vehicle report template to highlight and report key metrics • Analysis of fleet data and individual vehicle reports to adopt a data driven approach for determining the optimal fleet size • Identify underutilised vehicles and opportunities to downsize the fleet or vehicle size, and determine where vehicles could be shared to ensure full utilisation • Strengthen guidance around misuse of vehicles to develop awareness across all members of staff as to the appropriate use of vehicles	• Improved fleet utilisation • Transition of high grey fleet usage/mileage to fleet vehicles • Reduction in the use of more expensive travel options, such as casual car hire • Additional financial savings, including reduced maintenance and insurance costs	M1 - 03/25: Data modelling completed M2 - 04/25: Completion of high-level Light Fleet Utilisation reporting M3 - 05/25: Individual vehicle reporting template finalised M4 - Ongoing: Monitoring and engagement with Services	As above, a comprehensive review of the Council's fleet is now underway following analysis of high-level data.	Phase one is underway, targeting cars/small vans with utilisation under 4,000 miles / year. The aim is to dispose of these low-usage vehicles and transition to other modes such as Car Club and shared vehicles. 65 emails issued, requesting individual business cases. These will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. This approach is expected to increase overall fleet utilisation through vehicle sharing.
Light Fleet - Process	Comprehensive review of process to acquire a new fleet vehicle or replace an existing vehicle. Staff will be signposted to alternative options such as Car Club where mileage does not justify allocation of a fleet vehicle. In cases where a vehicle is approved, a ULEV will be provided as standard wherever possible. The process will also consider the opportunity to 'pool' vehicles to ensure the correct size and type of vehicle is utilised. This would negate the need to lease larger vehicles required infrequently (e.g. where a smaller vehicle is sufficient most of the time).	• Review whole end to end process for light fleet • Develop new process and form for instigating a request for new or replacement light fleet vehicles • Develop decision making process / hierarchy to outline where a dedicated light fleet vehicle may not be the most appropriate option	• Data driven decision making • Robust approval process • Increased scrutiny • Cost and carbon savings	M1 - 04/25: Identify Key Performance Indicators M2 - 04/25: Review and revise current processes and policies M3 - 05/25: Light Fleet Request platform developed, tested and launched M4 - Ongoing: Monitoring	In development. In parallel, a new cross-service fleet-user group will be established to support two-way communication around fleet processes and policies.	Fleet user group is now in progress. Fleet processes are being reviewed to develop a business case led approach.
E-Bike Scheme	As part of the Council's approach to fleet decarbonisation, the Council has participated in an E-cargo bike pilot scheme for business travel. The pilot has highlighted challenges around the storage of bikes; charging/storage of batteries; and staff being unable to use the bikes for commuting purposes due to insurance exclusions. Initial feedback has suggested e-bikes would be preferable for several teams that have participated in the pilot. Further work is required to determine the future delivery model	• Evaluation of E-cargo bike pilot • Assess leasing options to include the provision of e-bikes/e cargo bikes, servicing, maintenance and insurance • Undertake comparison of resources (staffing and costs) to deliver in-house vs leasing • Work with key stakeholders such as HITRANS to determine future delivery model, including the feasibility of a shared scheme with partner organisations/open access to the public	•Expansion of accessible e-bike scheme • Alleviation of current challenges regarding maintenance and insurance • Increased uptake of low-emission business travel • Reduction in fleet usage and associated emissions and costs	M1 - 01/25: Evaluation of pilot M2 - 02/25 Identify journeys currently undertaken using fleet vehicles, where use of an e bike may be more appropriate M3 - 03/25 Comparison of costings M4 - 08/25 Determine future delivery model following discussions with partner organisations	Funding secured from HITRANS to install external charging infrastructure at HQ, Inverness. A number of e-bikes have been issued to teams with the intention of alleviating the need for a fleet vehicle.	Highland Council continues to participate in a pilot scheme offering staff access to e-cargo bikes for business travel. A key barrier to the effective use and adoption of both e-cargo and e-bikes has been the charging and storage of batteries. The Council has successfully secured funding from HITRANS to install charging infrastructure (charging lockers) at HQ. Project template slide developed for consideration by the Climate Change Committee.
Transitioning the Light Fleet	Within our light commercial fleet (vehicles under 3.5T), Highland Council has introduced 93 low emissions vehicles, representing 13% of the light fleet total (715 vehicles). The 93 low emission vehicles can be broken down to 30 electric and 63 petrol hybrid. The Fleet Service will continue to implement a prioritised fleet replacement programme to transition the light fleet to Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEV).	• Replacement of 41 diesel small light commercial vans with 41 plug-in hybrid small vans • Development and roll-out of staff training/induction process around the use of ULEVs and charging infrastructure • Policy around the efficient use of council-operated EVs charging infrastructure (this project element was brought to the Climate Change Committee in January but is highlighted as an essential component in transitioning the light fleet)	• Increase in number/percentage of ULEV vehicles in the Council's fleet • Reduced carbon emissions and running costs	07/25: Policy on EV infrastructure use 09/25: Training on use of ULEVs and Charging Infrastructure 11/25: Replacement of 41 vans	First phase (replacement of 41 vehicles) on track. The second phase of the fleet replacement programme is currently on hold, pending a comprehensive fleet review.	Long-term plan (10-year plan) to be developed for full transition of all fleet, wherever practical and wherever technology allows.

Local Transport Strategy 2025-2035 Delivery Plan	The Highland Local Transport Strategy (LTS) 2025 to 2035 sets out the future policy direction and focus for how the transport system in Highland will be maintained, managed and improved, and responds to national Net Zero commitments over the next 10 years. Following the Council's adoption of the LTS in February 2025, a detailed Delivery Plan will be developed.	• Establishment of Steering Group, comprising senior representatives from across the Council and other relevant organisations, to provide strategic oversight and support the delivery of the LTS. • Develop a detailed set of actions to progress the LTS policies to achieve the overarching vision and objectives for the transport network in Highland as laid out in the LTS. • Review of existing plans and strategies including the Council's Net Zero Strategy. • Collaboration with Council teams to gather insights from existing work plans, including the in-house bus service and other initiatives. • Identification of roles and responsibilities for each action to embed accountability and facilitate effective delivery.	• Delivery Plan includes a prioritised list of actions aligned with LTS objectives. • 100% of actions assigned to relevant team/organisations. • Monitoring framework established with KPIs and reporting schedule (annual report template). • Delivery Plan approved within target timeframe.	Q2: LTS Steering Group established and Terms of Reference finalised. Q3: Actions identification – preparation of database. Q3/4: Production of Delivery Plan and Monitoring Proposals. Q4: Delivery Plan presented to the Economy & Infrastructure Committee.		Milestone one: Complete Milestone two: Underway

Net Zero Delivery

Project	Activity	Project Elements	Measures of Success	Milestones	Update - August 2025	Update - November 2025
Capital Projects - Net Zero	The Highland Council is committed to achieving Net Zero carbon emissions, in line with national targets. Capital projects represent the Council's largest source of carbon emissions, making it crucial to adopt a rigorous approach to reducing these emissions. An assessment process for capital projects will be developed to ensure statutory climate and ecological targets are met.	• Working group established. • Develop clear guidance for incorporating Net Zero into Capital Project planning and design. • Develop pilot projects to validate and refine the approach. • Establish a framework to track and report on metrics and weighting as outlined in Capital Programme Bid Evaluation and Prioritisation Matrix approved by Council on 14/03/24. • Revise policy documents reflecting the integration of Net Zero considerations.	• Establish business case model to ensure consistency of assessment of projects • Approval of guidelines and implementation of process • Successful delivery of two pilot projects that demonstrate whole life cost approach • Approval of standardised business case documentation and reporting frameworks for all new Capital Projects • 100% compliance with new guidelines adopted after policy change	M1 - 08/24: Project initiation M2 - 11/24: Development of clear guidance M3 - 11/24: Develop pilot projects M4 - 01/25: Implementation of framework M5 - 03/25: Policy updated and approved by Council	On 26 May, the Capital Board agreed to a three-month trial to evaluate various tools to assess embodied, operational, and maintenance carbon emissions. It was agreed that three live projects (new build, retrofit, infrastructure) would be identified and nominated, with the trial commencing in July. At the Capital Board on 23 June, the Corran Ferry was confirmed as the infrastructure project. The retrofit and new build projects will be agreed at the upcoming Property and Education & Learning Capital Programme Board meeting.	On 25 August, the Capital Board agreed the three projects to be included in the trial - Corran Ferry infrastructure, Broadford Primary School (new build) and Tigh Na Sgire (retrofit). Delays in identifying projects for inclusion in the pilot have resulted in slippage against the original timeline, which was scheduled to start in July. Trial underway w/c 6 October.
Inverness Castle – Sustainable Operations	The Inverness Castle Experience (ICE), set to open in 2025, aims to become a premier visitor attraction. There is an expectation ICE will look to attain gold standard in the Green Tourism Award, as an exemplar to tourist attractions throughout the Highlands.	• Baseline assessment – review current/proposed sustainability practices. • Identify and address key operational, environmental and engagement factors across core sustainability themes, including: Energy & Carbon; Water Use; Waste Management; Sustainable Procurement; Biodiversity & Nature; Community & Destination Engagement; Transport & Travel; and Communication & Marketing. • Implement sustainable technologies and policies. • Apply for certification.	• Environmental, Social and Governance solutions embedded in operations and practices. • Implementation of measures to reduce carbon footprint. • Achievement of sustainability certification. • Enhanced reputation – competitive advantage.	M1 - 03/25: Identify cross-service representatives for working group. M2 - 04/25: Inception meeting of working group. M3 - 04/25: Assess current & proposed sustainability measures. M4 - 05/25: Set goals – identify key focus areas. M5 - 07/25: Engagement. M6 - 07/25: Develop training and educational resources. M7 - 10/25: Implement sustainable policies & technologies. M8 - 01/26: Apply for certification, working with assessors. Ongoing: Continuous monitoring and improvement.	Criteria for the Green Tourism Award has been reviewed, with tailored guidance and signposting developed to support compliance. An internal working group has been established to embed sustainability practices and address the diverse requirements necessary to achieve the award. Ongoing collaboration with HLH includes regular meetings to develop and implement an action plan that evidences sustainable operations.	Progress continues, building on the initial groundwork laid in previous quarter. Although tangible outcomes are still emerging, the structures and relationships now in place provide a strong foundation for the next phase of the project.

Thematic Group

Net Zero Strategy Group

Project

Highland Climate Change Risk & Opportunity Assessment

Responsible Officer: Net Zero Programme Manager

Net Zero Programme

Senior Responsible Officer: Climate Change & Energy Manager

Project Sponsor: ACE - Place

Activity

Highland Adapts is leading on the first regional Climate Change Risk & Opportunity Assessment to identify and prioritise climate-related risks across Highland. A regional scoring workshop will be held in December. To ensure the Council's input is reflected, an internal workshop will be held shortly after to review and refine scoring. This approach supports alignment with the Council's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and will directly inform the development of the Council's Climate Change Corporate Risk & Opportunity Assessment.

Measures of Success

- Internal workshop held with broad cross-service participation
- Strengthened regional priorities through Council contribution
- Reduced duplication between regional and internal assessments
- Council's Corporate Risk & Opportunity Assessment and Adaptation Action Plan informed by regional assessment

Project Elements

- Attendance at regional workshop by the Net Zero Programme Manager and Climate Change Coordinator (Adaptation).
- Internal workshop held following the regional session.
- Engagement with key Council services including Resilience, Flood Prevention, Planning, Infrastructure, Environment, Economy, Housing, Energy, Transport, and Tourism.
- Review and sense-check of scores from regional workshop to ensure Council priorities are accurately reflected.
- Outputs to inform development of the Council's Corporate Risk & Opportunity Assessment.

Milestones

Q3 2025/25: Regional workshop held - 11 December 2025.

Q3 2025/25 : Internal workshop – planning, delivery, and outputs shared

Q3 2025/25 : Synthesis of workshop outputs for internal alignment

Q4 2025/25: Production of the Council's Corporate Climate Risk & Opportunity Assessment

Q4 2025/25 : Publication of Highland Climate Change Risk & Opportunity Assessment

Programme Theme 4) A Sustainable Highland Environment and Global Centre for Renewable Energy

Links to Performance Plan targets:

4.2

Links to Programme:
Place – Achieve our Net Zero Targets
Links to Delivery Plan:

Key Risks

- Limited cross-service engagement
- Tight timeline for input and coordination
- Misalignment between regional and Council priorities

Thematic Group

Sustainable Business Travel

Project

E-bike Charging Infrastructure

Responsible Officer: Net Zero Programme Manager

Net Zero Programme

Senior Responsible Officer:
Climate Change & Energy Manager

Project Sponsor:
ACE - Place

Activity

A key barrier to the effective use and wider adoption of e-cargo and e-bikes has been the charging and storage of batteries. Funding has been secured to install safe, secure, and accessible external charging infrastructure at Highland Council HQ. This will enable reliable charging, support the expansion of the e-bike fleet and promote sustainable business travel across Council services.

Measures of Success

- Increased uptake of e-bike and e-cargo bike use
- Reduction in business miles travelled by diesel and petrol vehicles
- Enhanced safety and security of charging infrastructure
- Fleet vehicles offset through increased use of sustainable travel options
- Health and wellbeing benefits reported by staff using active travel modes

Project Elements

- Charging infrastructure site identification and assessment
- Procurement of appropriate infrastructure
- Installation of charging infrastructure
- Development of operational framework, including usage guidelines, safety protocols, and maintenance schedule
- Communication and engagement activities to promote e-bike travel and raise awareness of infrastructure developments

Milestones

- **Q3 2025/26:** Infrastructure site identified and approved
- **Q3 2025/26:** Procurement process completed and installation initiated
- **Q4 2025/26:** Charging infrastructure installed and operational
- **Q4 2025/26:** Communication and engagement activities delivered to promote uptake and raise awareness

Programme Theme 4) A Sustainable Highland Environment and Global Centre for Renewable Energy

Links to Performance Plan targets:

4.1 & 4.7

Links to Programme:
Place – Achieve our Net Zero Targets
People – Promote active travel infrastructure across Highland
Links to Delivery Plan:
Net Zero Programme

Key Risks

- Site constraints or delays identifying a site
- Resource limitations affecting acquisition of additional e-bikes
- Reluctance to offset fleet vehicles with e-bikes due to operational preferences or perceived limitations
- Reluctance of staff to undertake journeys via e-bike

Thematic Group

Planning, Land Use & Environment

Project

Nature Restoration Fund

Responsible Officer: Environment Team Leader

Net Zero Programme

Senior Responsible Officer:
Service Lead

Project Sponsor:
ACE - Place

Activity

Highland Council has been allocated funding of £600K for 2025/26 through the Nature Restoration Fund. This is a capital and revenue fund designed to help support projects that will deliver nature restoration, safeguard wildlife, and tackle the causes of biodiversity loss due to climate change. This funding will enable the delivery of targeted projects.

Measures of Success

- Number of community applications received
- Number of successful applications and the associated outputs identified to deliver
- Number of Council projects delivered
- Area of improved habitats created/restored/safeguarded

Project Elements

- Funding of £300k will be made available for community groups and organisations.
- Funding of £300K will be directed to internal Council-led projects. Projects currently under consideration include:
  - Woodland Management Plans for key Council woodlands
  - Initial works to support the establishment of a new Local Nature Reserve at Ardersier Common
  - Work with Amenities to deliver a range of grassland/biodiversity projects Urban tree planting to restock areas where mature trees have been lost through age or disease
  - Support delivery of Nature Networks

Milestones

- **August 2025:** Launch of NRF Community Grant Programme
- **October 2025**: Recruitment of officer to manage grant programme
- **March 2026:** Commitment of Funds by March 2026
- **April 2026**: Annual report to Scottish Government

Programme Theme 4) A Sustainable Highland Environment and Global Centre for Renewable Energy

Links to Performance Plan targets:

4.4
4.7

Links to Programme:
Place – Achieve our Net Zero Targets

Links to Delivery Plan:

Key Risks

- Delivery timescale - annual allocation
- Low uptake of grant scheme
- Non–completion of projects by applicants
- Long-term security of fund.