

## **The Highland Council**

Minutes of Meeting of the **Economy and Infrastructure Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday, 13 November 2025 at 9.30am.

### **Present:**

Mr A Baxter	Mr R Jones
Mr I Brown	Mr W MacKay (Remote)
Mr M Cameron (Remote)	Mr D Macpherson
Mr S Coghill (Remote)	Mr H Morrison (Remote)
Mr J Edmondson	Ms L Niven (Remote)
Mr K Gowans	Mrs T Robertson
Mr M Green	Mr R Stewart
Mr A Graham (Substitute)	Ms K Willis

### **Non-Members also present:**

Mr D Fraser (Remote)	Ms Liz Kraft (Remote)
Mr J Finlayson (Remote)	Mr T MacLennan (Remote)
Mr R Gale (Remote)	Mr J McGillivray (Remote)
Ms C Gillies (Remote)	Mr D Millar (Remote)
Dr M Gregson	Ms M Reid
Mr M Hutchison (Remote)	

### **Officials in Attendance:**

Mr M MacLeod, Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy  
Ms D Sutton, Chief Officer - Operations & Maintenance  
Mr P Reid, Chief Officer - Facilities & Fleet Management  
Ms T Urry, Head of Roads & Infrastructure  
Ms C Pieraccini, Strategic Lead Finance  
Mr T Stott, Development Plans Manager  
Mr M Bailey, Programme Manager  
Mr D Cowie, Principal Planner  
Ms M Maguire, Principal Planner  
Mr A Tryon, Principal Engineer  
Mr S Farrow, Principal Engineer  
Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager  
Mrs O Bayon, Committee Officer

**An asterisk in the margin denotes a recommendation to the Council. All decisions with no marking in the margin are delegated to Committee.**

**Mr K Gowans in the Chair**

### **Business**

#### **1. Calling of the Roll and Apologies for Absence Gairm a' Chlàir agus Leisgeulan**

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Mr J Bruce, Mr P Logue and Mr A Sinclair.

## **2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt/Aithris Fhollaiseachd**

The Committee **NOTED** the following Transparency Statement:-

Item 8 – Mr J Edmonson

## **3. Good News Naidheachdan Matha**

### **Maid of Glencoul**

The Maid of Glencoul, which continued to operate at Corran on behalf of Highland Council, had been placed on the National Register of Historic Vessels. This brought the vessel into a register of over 1,500 craft.

### **Construction Technology Prizegiving**

On 31 October, Kimberley Young, a Roads Technician in Sutherland, received the Best Work-Based Evidence award for her Year 2 submission for the BEng Civil Engineering degree at UHI Inverness. Apprenticeships provide an opportunity to earn while learning with a strong focus on practical application, so recognition for this core aspect of the degree was considered especially rewarding.

### **Flow Country - UK National Awards Finalist**

The Planning Team and Flow Country Partnership were confirmed as one of ten finalists in the Excellence in Plan Making category of the RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence for the Flow Country World Heritage Site Plan. The winner was scheduled to be announced at the national ceremony in London on 27 November.

### **Access Rangers - End of Season**

The seasonal Access Ranger team completed another season of promoting responsible behaviour in the countryside. The team of 18 Rangers worked with communities, land managers and partner organisations to identify and address issues. Between June and October, they engaged with 22,632 people during 1,755 patrols, visiting 21,358 sites.

### **Feshie Bridge Repairs**

In October, masonry parapets at Feshie Bridge near Kingussie, damaged by vehicle impact, were rebuilt. A temporary road closure was implemented for safety and the works were scheduled during the autumn school holidays to minimise disruption. The Council's contractor, Strath Civil Engineering, completed the repairs within 15 days.

## Highland Archaeology Research Conference

In September, the Council hosted the 31st Annual Highland Archaeology Research Conference, organised by the Historic Environment Team. Over two days, 18 speakers, including academics, professional archaeologists and community groups, presented research from projects across the Highlands. More than 170 delegates attended, with costs recovered through ticket sales.

During discussion, Members raised the following points:

- Members welcomed the update on the Maid of Glencoul but commented that the proposal to recognise the vessel had originally been intended to highlight its age and fragility. It was stated that while the Committee presented this as good news, communities in Lochaber, Nether Lochaber and the Ardnamurchan peninsula did not share that view and would prefer to see the vessel replaced;
- Members also queried the Council's approach to recovering costs for bridge damage caused by hauliers or transport companies. Questions were asked about whether the Council had achieved success in pursuing those responsible or whether the cost continued to fall on Highland taxpayers; In response, it was confirmed that the Council had insurance arrangements in place and that all incidents were investigated, with efforts made to ensure those responsible met the costs; and
- Members echoed positive comments regarding the repair of Feshie Bridge, acknowledging that local communities had been distressed by its condition and welcomed the contractor's timely work. It was highlighted that Tromie Bridge on the B970, a similar structure, had been damaged for over a year and appeared to have been missed during inspection. A request was made that repairs be prioritised, observing that the cost was not significant and that communities were concerned about the delay. In this regard it was confirmed that the matter would be looked into.

The Committee **NOTED** the Good News and **AGREED** that officers would investigate the condition of Tromie Bridge on the B970 and prioritise repairs where feasible.

#### 4. **Revenue Budget Monitoring Report for the period Q2 2025/26** **Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Buidseit Teachd-a-steach airson Ràithe 2 2025/26**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/33/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:

- concern was expressed regarding the projected overspend of approximately £6 million, with Members observing that this figure was not highlighted in the opening section of the report and emphasising the need for transparency in future reporting;
- reference was made to the overspend within the Climate Change and Energy Team, with clarification sought on whether external grant income had been considered. Officers advised that external grant funding did not affect the revenue position and confirmed that delays in implementing solar PV

schemes were the main cause of the overspend, although long-term savings were anticipated;

- concern was raised about the rising cost of achieving Net Zero targets and the perceived lack of measurable progress. It was suggested that the financial burden on taxpayers was unsustainable and that greater scrutiny of value for money was required;
- Members highlighted persistent issues with income targets, particularly in relation to car parking and harbour fuel sales;
- disappointment was expressed that the in-year budget recovery plan had not yet been presented to Committee. In this regard, it was confirmed that the plan was being prepared to improve cost control and operational efficiency without reducing essential maintenance;
- concern was expressed regarding proposed savings of £1.5 million from the roads maintenance plan. Members queried the potential impact on service delivery, including pothole repairs and winter resilience;
- reference was made to delays in implementing solar PV schemes and grid connection challenges, which were affecting projected income from renewable energy projects. Members questioned the reliance on these income streams and called for realistic forecasting;
- concerns were raised about the timeliness of financial reporting, highlighting that appendices were dated August and requesting that future reports provide more up-to-date information;
- observations were made regarding the need for improved processes to assess whether certain works should be delivered in-house or contracted externally, with suggestions that outsourcing could offer efficiencies in some cases; and
- issues relating to gully maintenance were highlighted, with Members citing examples of blocked drains contributing to flooding. Officers confirmed that gully emptying continued on a programmed basis and records were available for review.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the forecast financial position for 2025/26 as set out in the report and Appendices 1 and 2 of the report;
- ii. **NOTED** the explanations provided for the material variances and actions taken or proposed;
- iii. **NOTED** the update provided regarding savings delivery; and
- iv. **AGREED** that the budget recovery plan and associated mitigation measures be presented to Committee at the earliest opportunity.

## **5. Capital Monitoring Q2 2025/26 Sgrùdadh Calpa R2 2025/26**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/34/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- Members welcomed the overall progress on capital projects but highlighted concern regarding the Uig Harbour position, remarking the significant cost increase since contract award. Assurance was sought that Highland

taxpayers would not bear the additional £1.5 million cost, and confirmation was requested that Transport Scotland funding would cover the overspend;

- reference was made to the recent pilot involving buses and refuse vehicles running on vegetable oil. Questions were raised about the capital cost of associated storage tanks and whether this represented value for money given higher fuel costs. In this regard it was confirmed that tanks were provided free as part of the pilot;
- a query was raised regarding Kinlochbervie Harbour and whether a site visit by the Harbours Board was necessary at the current design stage. It was suggested that a visit would be more appropriate once detailed plans were confirmed. Officers advised that reports outlining planned improvements and the wider masterplan would be presented at the forthcoming meeting, providing clarity on next steps;
- Members welcomed the reopening of Infirmary Bridge, emphasising its importance as part of Inverness's active travel network with usage estimated at around 40,000 crossings per month and requested that traffic monitoring be installed to provide accurate data for future investment decisions. Officers confirmed that repairs were scheduled for next year and undertook to explore options for deploying an active travel counter;
- concern was expressed regarding the potential underspend from the Timber Transport Fund, and Members requested that the B970 be considered for improvement should funds become available;
- an update was sought on the CCTV project intended to link Inverness with Wick, Thurso and the Kessock Bridge, highlighting its importance for public safety and emergency response. In this regard it was confirmed that the project was progressing and undertook to circulate a briefing to Members; and
- observations were made regarding recent capital investments in facilities such as the Bught Park Stadium and Northern Meeting Park. Members requested that all Councillors be invited to openings or pre-opening events to enable wider promotion of these projects within communities. It was clarified that invitations for certain events were managed by external funders under the UK Government Levelling Up scheme.

Thereafter, the Committee **APPROVED** the financial position as of 30 September 2025, **NOTED** the estimated year end forecast and **AGREED** that updates on the Timber Transport Fund, Infirmary Bridge monitoring and the CCTV project be provided to Members.

## **6. Highland Local Development Plan - Progress Update** **Plana Leasachadh Ionadail na Gàidhealtachd – Cunntas air Adhartas**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/35/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- Members acknowledged the technical nature of the report and welcomed the update on progress towards preparing a single Local Development Plan for Highland. It was observed that the revised timeline aimed to reduce the risk of the evidence report being rejected at the initial gate check stage and to allow for completion of national datasets and agreement from key agencies;

- concern was expressed regarding the challenges faced by community councils in preparing Local Place Plans. It was highlighted that some communities had access to community benefit funds to employ consultants, while others did not, creating a disparity. It was suggested that financial assistance be considered to ensure fairness and improve the quality of plans;
- the importance of infrastructure delivery alongside housing development was emphasised. Examples were cited of communities experiencing pressure on GP practices and other services despite ongoing housebuilding. It was stressed that a more joined-up approach with NHS and other agencies was required to ensure capacity was in place before further growth;
- observations were made regarding the need to accelerate housing delivery and avoid allocating sites that were unlikely to come forward. Members urged closer engagement with landowners to confirm intent and ensure that allocated sites were viable. Officers acknowledged this issue and confirmed that future plans would seek stronger commitments from landowners;
- concern was raised about planning decisions that appeared inconsistent with approved development plans, particularly where local communities supported proposals and no objections were received. Members called for greater alignment between decision-making and the content of adopted plans;
- clarification was sought, and provided, on the consequences of failing to meet Scottish Government targets for plan adoption;
- questions were asked about the relationship between the Highland Local Development Plan and the Cairngorms National Park Plan. In this regard, it was confirmed that the plans were separate but data was shared and regular engagement took place to ensure compatibility of housing targets; and
- Members stressed that new housing should be accompanied by amenity and active travel infrastructure to avoid creating car-dependent estates. It was emphasised that future development must support quality of life and sustainable communities.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- NOTED** the progress to date on gathering, analysing, collating and reporting sufficient evidence to produce the new Highland Local Development Plan (HLDP), including public consultation on “topic” and “place” based evidence, further stakeholder engagement undertaken, the advancement of a number of key audits and assessments and progress on drafting of the Evidence Report itself;
- NOTED** the next steps, including requirements for completion of the Evidence Report for approval by Committee and Full Council and subsequent submission to Scottish Ministers for independent Gate Check;
- AGREED** the revised HLDP timeline as set out at paragraph 8.1 of the report, to be formally communicated through an updated Development Plan Scheme to be published by 31 January 2026; and
- AGREED** that updates on infrastructure capacity and Local Place Plan support be provided to Members as work progresses.

## 7. Masterplan Consent Areas: Potential Sites Sgìrean Aonta a’ Phlana Mhaighstir: Làraich airson a’ Chomhairleachaidh Phoblach Tùsail

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/36/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- Members welcomed the report and emphasised that Masterplan Consent Areas (MCAs) represented an important mechanism to accelerate housing delivery without bypassing planning processes, while ensuring full community involvement. It was highlighted that the approach was essential to meet the Council's housing challenge of 24,000 homes over the next decade;
- it was clarified that MCAs combined zoning, planning consent and a Section 75 agreement in one process, providing a streamlined approach to delivery;
- reference was made to the importance of effective consultation with communities. Members stressed that engagement must be meaningful and reflected in outcomes to maintain public confidence in the process;
- concern was expressed regarding the alignment of MCA proposals with the Notice of Motion agreed by the Highland Council meeting on 30 October 2025 relating to infrastructure planning along the A9 corridor. It was requested that this be reflected in the report to Full Council. In this regard, it was confirmed that the recommendations were for the Highland Council meeting decision and that infrastructure constraints would be addressed during master planning;
- Members questioned the inclusion of Inverness East in the long list, observing that the area was already subject to a development brief. It was suggested that this be reviewed rather than progressed as an MCA;
- clarification was sought on the scale of the housing challenge and the timeline for adoption of the Highland Local Development Plan. Concern was raised that the statutory process could delay delivery;
- observations were made regarding the need for an iterative review of MCA sites to avoid artificially constraining supply and inflating land values. Members suggested that future consideration include opportunities for remote and rural areas experiencing depopulation, not solely those linked to the Green Freeport;
- Members highlighted the importance of addressing infrastructure needs, including schools, health services and transport, alongside housing delivery. It was stressed that these factors must be integral to MCA planning;
- reference was made to the Embo site and its potential to support wider economic development linked to the Coul Links project, including housing, employment, transport and childcare provision. Members welcomed the opportunity for private sector-led investment to support community wealth building in fragile areas;
- concern was expressed about affordability of new council housing in rural areas and the need to ensure that investment was not concentrated solely in Inverness. Suggestions were made to link procurement for urban and rural projects to secure equitable delivery;
- MCA proposals had to remain flexible and subject to ongoing review, with clear communication to communities throughout the process; and
- concern was raised about funding for Freeport-related housing and whether this should be met by private investment rather than council house rents.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the corporate commitment, re-affirmed at Council in June 2025, to take forward three MCAs as part of the Highland Housing Challenge Partnership Action Plan;
- ii. **NOTED** that the now published Call for Development Sites submissions to the Highland Local Development Plan process informed the selection of a “long-list” of potential MCA sites;
- \* iii. **AGREED** to recommend to Council the “long-list” of potential Masterplan Consent Areas as listed in section 8 and mapped at Appendix 1 of the report, with a firm preference to progress sites at Essich Road, Embo and Ardersier;
- \* iv. **AGREED** to recommend to Council that urgent work was carried out to identify a fourth preferred site on the west coast, in relative proximity to the Kishorn Yard, to support the ongoing investment in that area; and
- \* v. **AGREED** to recommend to Council that the Council’s Scheme of Delegation with particular reference to the role of both E&I Committee and PACs be amended as set out in Appendix 2 of the report to reflect the proposed governance of the MCA process.

## 8. Road Structures Annual Report 2025 Aithisgar Bhliadhnaile Structaran Rathaid 2025

**Transparency Statement: Mr J Edmonson made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as he regularly used a bridge listed. However, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/37/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

Members received a presentation from the Principal Engineer outlining the scale and condition of the Council’s road structures. Highland Council maintained almost 4,000 structures, including 1,900 bridges, making it one of Scotland’s largest bridge-owning authorities. An ongoing inspection programme delivered condition scores and informed prioritisation based on technical risk and network impact. The current five-year capital programme included major schemes such as Naver Bridge (£11m), due to open Easter 2026, and planned refurbishment of Ness Bridge in 2026.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- Members welcomed the comprehensive presentation and suggested it be shared with Area Committees and Ward meetings to improve understanding of infrastructure challenges;
- concern was expressed about the disparity in funding between Highland Council and Transport Scotland, given the strategic importance of many local bridges. Members called for stronger lobbying of the Scottish Government for fairer funding;
- Members highlighted the social impact of bridge failures, particularly lifeline bridges where communities would be cut off, and supported clearer identification of these bridges in future reports;
- questions were raised about prioritisation criteria, including weighting of diversion length and whether social and economic impacts were considered.



In this regard, it was confirmed that technical data drove scoring, with lifeline bridges receiving the highest diversion score;

- some bridges had remained on priority lists for over a decade, reflecting funding constraints and inflationary pressures. Concern was expressed about escalating costs and the risk of managed decline;
- reference was made to heavy vehicle use, including timber haulage, and Members asked whether Forestry and Land Scotland and the Strategic Timber Transport Scheme (STTS) could contribute to repair costs;
- Members stressed the need for improved signage during closures, citing issues at Infirmary Bridge, and requested better communication with communities;
- queries were raised about maintenance practices, including the use of salt on metal bridges. Officers confirmed that salting policy varies by bridge type and undertook to review practices for vulnerable structures;
- Members requested updates on specific structures, including Bonar Bridge repainting (expected within two years), Waterloo Bridge and Raigbeg Bridge, and asked that ward meetings be briefed on bridges in managed decline;
- observations were made on the scale of the challenge, with calls for clearer communication of Highland's geographic context when lobbying for funds. Suggestions included comparing landmass and coastline to other UK regions to emphasise logistical pressures; and
- Members welcomed progress on Naver Bridge and commended officers and contractors for strong community engagement during works.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED:-**

- i. the current position in Highland in relation to the number of structures inspections undertaken as in section 6.2 of the report;
- ii. the position of the Bridge Stock Condition Indicators in Highland as in section 7 of the report;
- iii. the risks that were carried by the Council in relation to its road structure as in see section 3.3 of the report;
- iv. that due to insufficient funding for bridge schemes, some structures were to be put into 'managed decline' leading to eventual closure as in see section 9.7 of the report;

and **AGREED:-**

- v. that future reports identify lifeline bridges within priority lists.

## **9. Section 37 Interim Report on Flood Risk Management Plan Actions Aithisg Eadar-amail Earrainn 37 mu Phlanaichean Gnìomha Stiùireadh Cunnart Thuiltean**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/38/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

Members received an interim update on flood risk management and the challenges associated with delivering flood prevention measures across Highland. It was highlighted that flood prevention had become a critical issue for many communities, with increasing certainty of future flooding events and shortening timeframes. Reference was made to the significant potential impact

on areas such as Nairn, where flooding could result in loss of coastal assets and recreational facilities. Members were advised that remedial works following major flooding events elsewhere had cost in the region of £180 million, illustrating the scale of financial risk. Officers emphasised that current funding constraints presented a major barrier to progressing flood studies and implementing schemes, and that national funding remained limited.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- concern was expressed about the lack of national funding and the need for a strategic approach to flood prevention, including consideration of ring-fenced investment within future Council budgets;
- Members highlighted the importance of prioritising flood prevention given the cost of inaction and suggested that the Council explore innovative funding models for major schemes;
- questions were raised regarding the clearance of watercourses and the frequency of inspections. It was confirmed that inspections were carried out on a prioritised basis, ranging from monthly to annual, and that maintenance was undertaken where flood risk was identified. Larger works requiring mechanical clearance were scheduled with the Roads Operations team;
- Members queried the status of flood studies for communities listed in section 6.7 of the report, observing that several were not expected to progress within cycle two due to funding constraints. Officers advised that while these studies were likely to remain priorities, inclusion in cycle three could not be guaranteed and would be subject to review against emerging risks;
- reference was made to recent storm damage and tree fall, with suggestions that community involvement in removing debris could assist recovery efforts. Concern was expressed that unremoved debris could increase flood risk and impact future maintenance;
- Members stressed the importance of routine gully maintenance to prevent avoidable flooding and sought assurance that gully clearance would be incorporated into flood management plans; and
- observations were made regarding the need for clear communication with communities on flood risk and the limitations of current resources, to ensure realistic expectations and encourage local resilience measures.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the contents of The Highland Council Actions table in Appendix 1 of the report with progress made on the Actions within the current Highland and Argyll Local Flood Risk Management Plan and the Findhorn, Nairn and Speyside Local Flood Risk Management Plan;
- ii. **AGREED** to make the Section 37 Interim Report for the Highland and Argyll Local Plan District available to the public on the Council's website; and
- iii. **NOTED** that Moray Council would approve and publish the Section 37 Interim Report for the Findhorn, Nairn and Speyside Local Plan District.

## **10. Inverness and Highland City Region Deal - 2024/25 Annual Report Cùmhnant Baile Roinne Inbhir Nis agus na Gàidhealtachd – Aithisg Bhliadhna 2024/25**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/39/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

Members considered an update on the Inverness and Highland City Region Deal, which had reached year nine of its ten-year programme. The Deal was acknowledged as having delivered significant benefits for Inverness and the wider Highland area, with projects evolving over time to ensure broader regional impact.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- Members welcomed the progress achieved but emphasised the need for continued momentum on key projects, particularly Corran Ferry replacement vessels;
- concern was expressed regarding the future of air services for Skye, with reference to the safeguarding of the airfield in the Local Plan. Members sought assurances that delivery partners would raise concerns about any proposals that could compromise aviation use;
- questions were asked about the remaining funding within the deal and whether any balance would be retained for future projects. Officers confirmed that approximately 50% of the funding remained to be spent after March 2027, with the full allocation of £188.1 million secured for Highland;
- it was important to plan for the next phase beyond the current deal and called for early engagement with UK and Scottish Governments to secure successor funding. It was suggested that the Council should develop a clear vision for future investment, with proposals such as relocating Inverness railway and bus stations and improving strategic junctions cited as potential priorities;
- the Council should not adopt a passive approach and should actively lobby for a new regional deal or equivalent funding mechanism, given the unique challenges facing Highland, including infrastructure pressures and depopulation;
- Members acknowledged the political opportunities presented by forthcoming elections and stressed the need to position Highland's case strongly at national level; and
- engagement with UK Government officials was ongoing and that recent feedback had been positive regarding the Council's management of the current deal, which was considered a strong foundation for future negotiations.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the IHCRD Annual Report as a record of the activity and delivery during 2024/25 and **AGREED** that officers liaise with HITRANS regarding air access for Skye and report back on any implications for safeguarding aviation use.

#### **11. UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Delivery Plan Progress Update 2025/26 Maoin Soirbheachas Co-roinnte na RA – Cunntas air Adhartas a' Phlana Lìbhrigidh 2025/26**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/40/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

Members were advised that this was the last year of UKSPF funding and that UK and Scottish Governments were developing new investment programmes, including Pride in Place and the Local Growth Fund.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- Members welcomed the update but queried why details of the Pride in Place Fund, announced in September, were not included on the agenda. The fund totalled £20 million over ten years and concern was expressed about rumours suggesting all funding would be directed to Inverness. Members requested confirmation of governance arrangements and timescales for reporting;
- clarification was provided that the Pride in Place Fund was a UK Government initiative, not directly managed by the Highland Council. The fund would be overseen by an independent chair appointed by an MP, with community engagement informing decisions. The Highland Council might have representation within the governance structure, but final decisions rested with UK Government;
- Members emphasised the importance of transparency and early communication with communities to manage expectations and avoid misinformation;
- reference was made to opportunities arising from the recent Gaelic Conference, with suggestions that media and film development could form part of future economic priorities alongside employability initiatives; and
- a question was raised regarding the Highland-wide mobility hub feasibility study. Officers confirmed that site information would be circulated to Members following the meeting.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the update on the 2025/26 UKSPF Delivery Plan;
- ii. **AGREED** that officers circulate details of sites under consideration for the Highland-wide mobility hub feasibility study; and
- iii. **AGREED** that Members be kept informed of governance arrangements and timescales for the Pride in Place Fund as soon as further information becomes available.

## **12. Delivery Plan Budget Monitoring and Progress Update Q2 2025/26 Sgrùdadh Buidseit agus Cunntas air Adhartas a' Phlana Lìbhrigidh R2 2025/26**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/41/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

The Committee **NOTED** the report, including progress to date and next steps.

## **13. Performance Monitoring Report Q2 2025/26 Aithisg Sgrùdadh Coileanaidh R2 2025/26**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/42/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

Members queried the absence data for the quarter, and it was confirmed that the delay was due to system reporting timescales and that updated information would be available in the next report.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the Service's performance information.

#### **14. Appointment to Outside Bodies**

##### **Cur an Dreuchd gu Buidhnean air an Taobh A-muigh**

#### **a) HITRANS Tier 1 Ferry Users Consultation Groups**

##### **Buidhnean Co-chomhairleachaidh Luchd-cleachdaidh Aiseagan Ìre 1 HITRANS**

The interests of ferry users were previously represented by the Scottish Executive's Ferry Users Consultation Group. However, this was disbanded and a three-tier system was set up to cover issues at all levels from local through to national.

Following recent resignations by Members previously appointed to represent the Council on the Argyll, Lochaber and Skye, and Hebrides Ferry Users Groups, new appointments were required. Nominations were tabled at the meeting and considered by the Committee.

In this regard Ms C Gillies was nominated by Mr K Gowans to be appointed to the Lochaber and Skye Group, and this was seconded by Ms K Willis.

Mr A Baxter was nominated by Mrs T Roberston to be appointed to the Lochaber and Skye Group, and this was seconded by Mr J Edmondson.

In a vote between the two candidates, Ms C Gillies received 8 votes and Mr A Baxter received 6 votes - with no abstentions.

It was therefore **AGREED** that Ms C Gillies should be appointed to the Lochaber and Skye Group – the votes having been cast as follows:-

##### **Votes for Ms C Gillies:**

Mr I Brown, Mr M Cameron, Mr K Gowans, Mr M Green, Mr R Jones, Mr H Morrison, Ms L Niven, Ms K Willis.

##### **Votes for Mr A Baxter:**

Mr A Baxter, Mr S Coghill, Mr J Edmondson, Mr A Graham, Mr D Macpherson, Mrs T Roberston.

- \* Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to Council the appointments to the following Tier 1 Ferry Users Consultation Groups established by HITRANS:

- i. Argyll Group – covering Oban, Colonsay, Iona, Lismore, Coll, Tiree, Barra, South Uist and Ardnamurchan – Mr T MacLennan;
- ii. Lochaber and Skye Group – covering the Small Isles, Mallaig, Armadale, Raasay, Kilchoan and Lochaline – Ms C Gillies; and
- iii. Hebrides Group – covering Barra, North and South Uist, Harris, Lewis and links to Skye – Ms C Gillies.

**b) Flood Area Risk Management – Local Plan District Executive Steering Groups**

**Rianachd Cunnairt Cheàrnaidhean Thuiltean – Buidhnean Stiùiridh Gnìomhach Sgìre a' Phlana Ionadail**

The Highland Council were designated as the Lead Local Authority for the “Highland and Argyll Local Plan District” and as a Responsible Authority within the “Findhorn, Nairn and Speyside Local Plan District”, the latter Local Plan District being led by Moray Council. Executive Steering Groups for each Local Plan District help to direct and facilitate all work that results in the agreement of the Flood Risk Management Strategy and the delivery of the Flood Risk Management Plan.

Following the resignation of Ms S Fanet, the Committee **AGREED** to appoint Mr M Green to serve on both Executive Steering Groups.

**15. Membership of the Harbours Management Board  
Ballrachd Bòrd Stiùiridh nan Calachan**

Members were advised of the recent change to the political balance of this Board, which was now SNP – 3, Independent – 2, Liberal Democrat – 2, Highland Alliance – 2, with the final place tied between the Scottish Liberal Democrats and the Highland Independent. For information, details of the calculation were requested.

The Committee **AGREED** the membership of the Harbours Management Board to be as follows:-

- Mr I Brown, Mr J Edmonson, Mr M Green, Ms M Hutchison, Mr W Mackay, Mr D Macpherson, Mr H Morrison, Ms L Niven, Mrs T Robertson; and
- \* • to **RECOMMEND** to Council the appointment of Mr R Cross.

**16. Minutes  
Geàrr-chunntas**

The Committee **NOTED** the Minutes of the Planning Applications Committees (PAC) for:-

- i. North PAC – 11 June 2025;
- ii. South PAC – 18 June 2025;
- iii. North PAC – 6 August 2025;
- iv. South PAC – 22 August 2025;

and, **APPROVED**:-

- v. Inverness Cromarty Firth Green Freeport Monitoring Group held on 2 September 2025.

The meeting ended at 1:15 pm.