

Highland Council: Questions: 11 December 2025

Public Question

L Graham

To the Leader of the Council

Please can the council tell me what community impact assessment has been undertaken is or planned to be undertaken with regards to surroundings and boundaries of the site's security, community security services, public health services and what public consultation has been or is planned on the Home Office's proposal to temporarily house 300 asylum seekers at Cameron Barracks?'

RESPONSE

The Council has written specifically to the Home Office and asked for copies of the appropriate impact and risk assessments for the site. The Council have also asked for assurances that there will be no detrimental impact on local services, especially health and housing. We have not yet received a response to these questions and the documentation has not been provided. We have been given no indication by the Home Office that there is an intention to undertake a public consultation on the proposal.

Member Questions

1. Mr A Christie

To the Leader of the Council

In the Budget passed on the 29 February 2024 a reserve of £20m for Adult Social Care Redesign was established. The purpose of the reserve was "to support the Adult Social Care budget on a multi-year basis, and the process of change and transformation.

Please could you detail, with a descriptive analysis and value that would enable a good understanding of the aims of the project, the proposals that have been approved up to the 20 November 2025, together with any positive outcomes already seen as well as any projects that are in the pipeline that may receive funding by 31 March 2026?"

RESPONSE

The overall aim of the Adult Social Care (ASC) Transformation Programme, working in partnership with colleagues in NHS is to deliver the Joint Strategic Plan for Adults within an agreed financial envelope. The Plan relies on the development and delivery of several pan Highland Strategies including:

- Self-Directed Support
- Handyperson Scheme
- Care at Home and Care Home future strategy informing a market facilitation plan
- Managing Complex Cases

- Shared Lives
- Workforce Strategy
- Housing Strategy
- Telecare and Digital Strategy.

The programme consists of two over-arching projects – (i) Accommodation Solutions/Shifting the Balance of Care and (ii) Improving Transition Outcomes.

To date, £7,974,585 has been spent (including a £5.6m year-end adjustment to NHS in March 2025) with a further £2m committed for this financial year and £2m in the financial year 2026/27.

Projects that have received funding and are currently underway include...

1. Local Care Models - £1.15m committed over the next two years. The development of Local Care Models is a key initiative aimed at expanding the capacity of Adult Social Care across Highland communities. These models are designed to be responsive, community-driven, and tailored to local needs.
2. Shared Lives - £567,000 committed in 2026/27. Shared lives schemes support adults with learning disabilities, mental health problems or other needs that make it harder for them to live on their own. A procurement exercise is currently underway to find a suitable organisation to deliver a Shared Lives service across Highland.
3. Handyperson Scheme - £780,000. This was an existing initiative which has recently been re-tendered, and this additional funding has enabled both organisations (THC/NHS) to continue to delivering services to the same levels across Highland in 2025/26.
4. TVI Vocals - £92,000 – a Proof-of-Concept of an Alexa-style natural voice technology. Vocals – based on a standard Amazon Alexa – will be deployed to up to 50 adults with learning disabilities across four independent care providers.

The Programme is also supporting the Housing Development Needs Assessment and work is also underway on the development of a Strategic Commissioning Strategy and Care at Home and Care Home Strategies as well as a data modelling tool using resources funded by the Programme.

Projects currently being developed and where funding is likely to be approved by 31 March 2026 include:-

1. Self-Service and Income Maximisation - a forward-thinking initiative designed to empower individuals and families before they reach a point of needing formal care. At the heart of this project is the development of a user-friendly self-service portal. This digital platform will provide easy access to:
 - i. information and advice on care options
 - ii. guidance and support for navigating services
 - iii. signposting to community organisations that can offer help in the short to medium term.

2. Lochaber Project - focused on developing long-term, sustainable care models tailored to the unique needs of the Lochaber area.

2. Mr A Christie

To the Leader of the Council

Will the Administration be holding any public meetings to consult on the Council Budget for 2026/27?

RESPONSE

Experience in recent years is that public meetings are no longer the preferred way in which people like to engage. Attendance has generally been low. As noted in the Medium-Term Financial Plan Report, a series of activities are planned as part of the budget engagement process, including meetings with key sectors/groups but not public meetings.

3. Ms K Willis

To the Chair of Economy and Infrastructure

The frequency and intensity of storms is increasing due to climate change, with storms often causing widespread damage across Highland. What has the cost been to Highland Council of each named storm in the Highlands since 2015? Please can the chair provide a breakdown of costs for each named storm.

RESPONSE

We do not hold information on costs incurred by each named storm. However, details held on costs incurred in relation to road, housing and property weather events are as follows:

Roads costs:

	£
19/20	195,973
20/21	7,365
21/22	19,757
22/23	4,631
23/24	232,597
24/25	108,485
Total	568,808

Housing costs:

	£
21/22	23,840
22/23	200,070
23/24	560,000
Total	783,910

Property costs:

	£
19/20	1,743.97
21/22	111,983.03
22/23	129,343.22
23/24	264,790.97
24/25	73,965.89
25/26	222,584.90
Total	£804,411.98

4. Mr A Graham

To the Chair of Economy and Infrastructure

In the October 2025 Roads Factsheet, current financial year performance is reported as follows:

No. of work instructions raised (to 01/10/2025): 1,163

No. of work instructions completed (to 01/10/2025): 583

Please explain why only 50% of instructions have been completed, and your plans are to improve our roads.

RESPONSE

Works instructions for road maintenance are raised following public reports, inspections, or operative feedback, covering issues from potholes to signage and drainage. While most repairs are completed promptly, recording closures can lag due to workload pressures and the very recent move from a paper-based, to a cloud-based system. This affects reported figures, but not actual work done. Larger defects may require inclusion in capital programmes, and seasonal factors such as annual leave, winter preparations, and weather, all impact productivity. The Road Redesign Project is reviewing processes to improve efficiency, reduce duplication, and enhance closure rates.

5. Mr R Stewart

To the Chair of Health, Social Care and Wellbeing

When does he anticipate the Council will be in a position to award contracts for Women's Refuge Services across the Highlands.

RESPONSE

A review of housing provision for victims- survivors of domestic abuse is currently underway and this includes consideration of refuge provision. At this stage, the Council is not able to confirm what the outcome of this process will be. However, the Council is committed to continuing funding for existing refuge provision until the review is complete, to ensure continuity of support for those who need it.

6. Mrs I MacKenzie

To the Chair of Health, Social Care and Wellbeing

The Food Train's, 'Malnutrition Risk Prevalence in the Community Report (September 2025)', <https://thefoodtrain.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Malnutrition-Screening-Report-September-2025.pdf> highlights growing levels of malnutrition risk among older people living at home across Scotland, including the Highlands. Given the serious impact malnutrition has on healthy life expectancy, hospital admissions, social care demand, and the ability of older residents to live independently, will the Council confirm:

How it will work jointly with NHS Highland, community partners, and the wider social care sector to investigate the scale and underlying factors causing malnutrition risk in Highland?

RESPONSE

The Council will work with colleagues in the public health team at NHS Highland to establish how to better understand the extent of the risk of malnutrition among older people living at home across Highland. This issue will also be raised at a future Highland Community Planning Partnership meeting.

7. Mrs H Crawford

To the Leader of the Council

Will you provide a table setting out which developers have signed up to the Social Values Charter, the value of contributions made to date, the value of contributions that have been committed but not yet delivered together with a detailed breakdown of the type of each contribution thus far committed.

RESPONSE

Scottish Southern Energy Networks Transmission are the only developer to sign the charter to date, although negotiations are at an advanced stage with a number of other developers.

SSEN's commitments are circulated at appendix 1.

8. Mrs B Jarvie

To the Leader of the Council

Could I have statistics on staff assaults over the past 5 years, under the headings of verbal, physical, and sexual assault and workplace heading, with ages of the person committing the assault and month of year to see if there is a seasonal correlation with behaviour please.

RESPONSE

As part of our commitment to support the wellbeing of our staff, we have recently introduced a new way of corporately recording violent incidents, on a system called Assure. This system only went live in February 2025 and since then it is intended to provide an annual report to both the Corporate Resources Committee. The Central Safety Committee receives quarterly updates of all data held on Assure.

9. Mrs A MacLean

To the Chair of Health, Social Care and Wellbeing

The Highland Council has stated it is committed to supporting all victim-survivors of domestic abuse. This vision was outlined at an elected members' workshop earlier this year. Their aim is to establish a Highland-wide Domestic Abuse Service for all victim-survivors, irrespective of location, sex or gender.

What evidence base of need a decision has been reached to move in this direction, given that it seems to be a departure from a gendered approach to service provision for women and girls impacted by VAWG. As a departure from the nationally agreed political position under Equally Safe, when was the political decision taken and at what committee was it agreed?

RESPONSE

Highland Council has publicly committed to supporting all victim-survivors of domestic abuse, regardless of location, sex, or gender identity. Our stated aim is to establish a Highland-wide domestic abuse service to improve equity, access, and support. This was confirmed in official statements and procurement notices.

We fully support the principles of Equally Safe, which recognise that violence against women and girls is rooted in gender inequality and requires specialist, women-only services. At the same time, we acknowledge that men and non-binary individuals also experience domestic abuse and need appropriate support. To uphold these principles, our approach will ensure that services for women and girls remain specialist and gendered, while separate provision is commissioned for other victim-survivors.



Part 1

Social Value Charter Commitments – SSEN Transmission

1. Community Fund	Retention of the existing community benefit commitment to locally impacted communities in line with Scottish Government guidance.	Timeframe for Delivery
Company Commitment	<p>SSEN Transmission will:</p> <p>Bring positive benefits and a lasting legacy to local Highland communities through the delivery of up to £62m* in community benefits as its Pathway to 2030 investment programme projects move into the construction phase in the Highland Council area. This funding will be distributed through two primary types of funds: a Regional Fund and Local Funds, each taking up to 50% of available funding. As part of the distribution of both funds, SSEN Transmission will take into account the priorities outlined in the Social Value Charter Strategic Investment Plan and the Highland Project Bank.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Fund: £31m of funding will form part of the £50m Regional Fund, which is aimed at providing structured and impactful investment across broader regions. SSEN Transmission will continue to support community led transformation through its Regional Fund focused on three core themes of People: to aid skills, training and employability, Place: to support the culture of the region and to help alleviate fuel poverty. The regional fund is associated with electricity transmission projects that are already in delivery, with £2m awarded in February 2025 and the second round of £2m expected to be awarded in February 2026. • Local Funds: SSEN Transmission's Pathway to 2030 projects will unlock up to £31 million in local funds to support Highland communities. SSEN Transmission's local funds will support Community Wealth Building in the communities close to its new infrastructure. Each local fund is shaped through consultation with communities, so local priorities are embedded in the independent decision-making process. This approach ensures local funds meet specific needs and priorities <p>Significant additional funding is anticipated as further energy generators requiring new transmission infrastructure are connected to the network. This will follow the UK Government</p>	2025 - 2030

guidance of £200,000 per kilometre of overhead line and £530,000 per substation, converter station and switching station.

SSEN Transmission's investments are the key enabler for wider renewable energy development across the Highland Council region which are also expected to deliver significant community benefit funding.

*To be delivered in line with Government [Community Benefits Guidance for Transmission](#)

Council Commitment

Highland Council will annually update the Social Value Charter Strategic Investment Plan to ensure it continues to reflect Strategic and Local priorities across the area.

Annually

2. Strategic Fund

A central fund which will support and enable economic development, increase prosperity, and achieve equity across Highland communities by supporting key strategic and infrastructure projects.

Company Commitment

SSEN Transmission will:

2025 - 2030

Support community led transformation through its community benefit funding approach outlined in Point 1 – Community Fund.

As part of the distribution of both funds, SSEN Transmission will take into account the priorities outlined in the Social Value Charter Strategic Investment Plan and the Highland Project Bank.

SSEN Transmissions £50m Regional Fund is aligned with the Highland Council's Strategic Fund and supports priority areas as follows:

- Connecting People and Place, by supporting delivery of key infrastructure and supporting local communities to deliver local place plans.
- Employment and Employability through skills development schemes.
- Reducing inequalities by supporting schemes that aim to alleviate fuel poverty.

To date £1.2 million of the initial £2m funding awarded has been awarded to initiatives in the Highlands and has supported key projects including:

- Growing2gether - £55,591 to support vulnerable young people through mentoring and youth led social action
- Feis Rois - £181, 638 to support traditional music and the Gaelic language
- UHI Inverness – £352,000 to support creation of a Sustainable Construction Centre
- Kyle & Lochlash Community Trust - £361,989 to support creation of a heritage centre that also serves as a learning hub for endangered traditional endangered skills
- Regional Screen Scotland - £350,000, to fund a new mobile cinema for remote communities in the Highlands.

Council Commitment

Highland Council will annually update the Social Value Charter Strategic Investment Plan to ensure it continues to reflect Strategic and Local priorities across the area.

Annually

3. **Housing**

Supporting the housing challenges across Highland through the provision of legacy housing or financial contribution to wider housing developments.

Company Commitment

SSEN Transmission will:

2025 - 2030

Contribute to the development of over 500 permanent homes in the Highland Council Area to support construction worker accommodation needs which, following completion of projects, will support the needs of the Council and local communities.

SSEN Transmission plans to invest over £100 million to deliver a range of solutions in partnership with The Highland Council, including:

- Temporary accommodation villages, which will provide access and services to support future affordable housing and commercial development, once projects are complete
- Refurbishment of existing housing stock
- Provision of new homes to the Highland area and unlocking various stalled sites

Of the 500+ homes enabled by the construction of SSEN Transmission's projects, over 60% of which will support affordable/social housing stock, well above the standard 25%.

Council Commitment

Highland Council will work with SSEN Transmission and its contractors to ensure delivery and transfer of the legacy affordable housing into mainstream housing after the 5-year period.

4. **Supporting Development of the Highland Investment Plan**

Direct and indirect support, financial or in kind for council and community led projects impacted by local development.

Company Commitment

SSEN Transmission will:

2025 - 2030

- Deliver the enabling infrastructure to support the Highland Investment Plan by upgrading the transmission network through the £22bn+ Pathway to 2030 investment plan. This will support the delivery of key investment programmes for the Highlands including the Green Freeport.
- SSEN Transmission is committed to supporting enhancements to roads infrastructure to support project delivery and provide improved connectivity for communities, such as extensive public road improvements. Across the full portfolio of Pathway to 2030 projects, SSEN Transmission expects to spend over £200 million on Highland roads and bridges between now and 2030. In addition to the £23 million spent to date on various upgrades, including resurfacing works on

the Kinloch Hourn Road, future proposed works include the £25 million upgrade to the Black Bridge in Kilmorack to allow for two-way traffic and larger vehicles.

- Deliver significant economic benefit to local businesses through procurement and supply chain opportunities associated with project delivery.
- Commitment to legacy developments from projects to benefit the local area

Council Commitment

Highland Council will work with SSEN Transmission and its contractors to support and enable the delivery of the infrastructure commitments to roads and bridges made as part of the legacy commitment.

Ongoing

5. **Shared Investment into Renewables** Providing opportunities to participate in shared ownership models.

Company Commitment

SSEN Transmission will:
Support opportunities for community and shared ownership renewable schemes by providing the essential transmission infrastructure to enable renewable energy generation to be connected to the grid.

Ongoing

6. **Skills & Training – Workforce for the future** Supporting and implementing a wide range of education, skills and training opportunities and Agreement, to help develop employment prospects for current and future Highland generations.

Company Commitment

SSEN Transmission will, directly and through contractors:

2025 - 2030

- Create and support an anticipated 2,200 jobs across the Highland region to support the delivery of the Pathway to 2030 projects.
- With SSEN Transmission's workforce projected to grow to over 4,000 by the end of the decade from c.2,500 today, 60% of the expected 1,500 new roles will be advertised with Inverness as an optional work location
- This includes at least 200 people that SSEN Transmission expects to recruit directly in the Highland region, in addition to the c.200 colleagues already recruited in Highland in the past two years.
- Support local skills and training initiatives through annual recruitment programmes, including apprenticeships, graduates, earn as you learn, local skills programmes and as a core theme through its Regional Community Benefit Fund.
- Commit every year to having 5% of its workforce in earn as you learn roles which means SSEN Transmission will have a minimum of 150 trainees in earn as you learn roles every year across the business.
- Support skills development through STEM events and programmes in Highland schools.

- Support Discovery Days and Discovery Work Placements for local students.
- Continue to be a Living Wage, Living Hours and Fair Tax employer and promote Fair Work through procurement and supply chain contracts.
- Adopt Highland's Employer Charter and promote principal contractors to adopt the charter.
- Remain committed to working in partnership with the public and private sector to support high quality jobs and skills in the local area.

Council Commitment

Highland Council will:

Ongoing

- work with SSEN Transmission and its contractors to facilitate and deliver STEM events, programmes and workplace programmes in Highland Schools
- ensure that SSEN Transmissions workforce requirements are embedded into the Workforce North Programme, supporting SSEN Transmission to enable local workforce development realisation of opportunities.

7. Match Funding for Local Projects

Company Commitment

SSEN Transmission will:

2025 - 2030

Where possible, supply chain partners will support local community projects in financial or in-kind contributions and be encouraged to support Highland's Project Bank.

Council Commitment

Highland Council will ensure the Highland Project Bank is kept up to date with local projects.

Ongoing

8. Fast-track for Grid Connections

Supporting a Local Area Energy Planning (LAEP) in the Highlands ensuring enhanced economic opportunities, job creation, and a supportive regulatory environment.

Company Commitment

SSEN Transmission will:

2025 - 2030

- Collaborate with the Highland Council, local stakeholders, and the energy industry to deliver essential transmission infrastructure supporting decarbonisation, energy security, system resilience and support long-term economic growth by delivering positive legacy benefits to the Highland region.

9. Maximising socio-economic prosperity through the planning system


Maximise the socio-economic benefits of development proposals taking into account the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan, the key investment priorities of the Community Planning Partnerships and the Council's Community Wealth Building Strategy and the National Planning Framework 4, particularly in relation to biodiversity and green skills.

Company Commitment

SSEN Transmission will:

2025 - 2030

- Deliver projects in line with NPF4 and align projects to the council's Highland Outcome



Improvement Plan, Social Value Charter
Strategic Investment Plan and the Highland
Investment Plan.

- Deliver at least 10% net gain in biodiversity and no net loss of woodland on all new projects, replacing any felled trees with native woodland where possible.
- Deliver sector leading first of its kind, marine biodiversity research
- Invest in a multimillion-pound nature restoration programme for the Highland area.

Implement socio-economic metrics for supply chain partners to report on.

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The Highland Council

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Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission plc