

Agenda Item	13
Report No	LA/14/26

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: **Lochaber**

Date: **26 January 2026**

Report Title: **Lochaber Area Place Plan update**

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

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report invites Members to scrutinise progress on the Lochaber Area Place Plan.

The Lochaber Area Place Plan was adopted in January 2025 and was developed using a Place Based approach which captures the common themes and priorities across communities. It serves as a comprehensive document that not only reflects the aspirations of the local community but also aligns with existing strategic and localised plans, ensuring that Lochaber thrives as a sustainable, liveable, and prosperous community.

2 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:-

- i. **Consider** progress against the Lochaber Area Place Plan; and
- ii. **Continue** to support and promote the plan where possible in terms of its consideration within other Plans, Strategies, development, and funding opportunities across or impacting the Lochaber area.

3 Implications

3.1 Resource

No additional resource is requested. Highland Council support for initiatives outlined in the Plan may have resource implications in the future which would be subject to appropriate Committee or Service decision making.

Ongoing involvement in Place Planning activity requires input and commitment from services across the Council to ensure Place Plans provide the framework to support targeting resources, service delivery and provide a clear vision for attracting external investment. The Plan helps the Highland Council, partners, and communities secure funding by evidencing the impact of every pound spent and the actions associated will provide clarity and manage expectation around how and where resources are prioritised.

3.2 Legal

There are no legal implications

3.3 Risk

The Lochaber Area Place Plan allows better coordination of future activity and investment in the area. Developing a place-based approach is encouraged through the Scottish Government's Place Principle, the Christie Commission recommendations and is required by the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 for community planning.

3.4 Gaelic

A focus on place, and considering the priorities for a local area, has potential to support a focus on Gaelic language and culture if identified by communities and partners.

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 an update report, therefore no Integrated Impact Assessment is required.

5. Background

5.1 In 2021, Highland Council made a commitment to develop Area Place Plans mainly based on Area Committee boundaries. The Plans have been developed and facilitated in various ways across Highland, as each area is different. The Lochaber Area Place Plan was developed using a Place Based approach and does not replace existing plans and policies for the area. Instead, it captures and presents what the common themes and priorities are and serves as a comprehensive document which reflects the aspirations of the local community and aligns with existing strategic and localised plans, ensuring that Lochaber thrives as a sustainable, liveable, and prosperous community.

6 How the Plan was Prepared

- 6.1 The [Lochaber Area Place Plan](#) was developed in conjunction with a wider group of stakeholders, including representation from: Highland Council (Elected Members and services); Highlife Highland; NHS Highland; Community Partnerships; Police Scotland; Scottish Fire and Rescue Service; Highland Third Sector Interface; Highlands and Islands Enterprise; Community Councils and Community Development Companies. The [Area Profile](#) provides an overview of the key information relating to Lochaber.
- 6.2 To ease linkage between the Lochaber Area Place Plan and wider statutory and strategic documents, the emerging Priorities for Lochaber are aligned to the three pillars of People, Place and Prosperity.

People

- Improving access to services
- Empowering young people
- Expanding access to diverse and inclusive activities

Place

- Develop community resilience
- Improving infrastructure
- Address climate challenges
- Enhancing the area's natural and built environments
- Well-connected and efficient transport system
- Addressing housing challenges

Prosperity

- Tourism management
- Fostering economic growth
- Strong, skilled workforce
- Collaboration and working together

7 How the plan is being used

- 7.1 The Area Place Plan is available on the Highland Community Planning Partnership website at [Lochaber CP - Highland Community Planning Partnership](#) and is being used as a reference and framework tool for all those with an interest in, or responsibility for providing services and looking after assets in Lochaber to:-
- Understand local needs and opportunities.
 - Inform decisions on service design and delivery.
 - Evidence support for funding bids for projects, and Community Asset Transfer requests.
 - Encourage public, private, and community collaboration.
 - Make best use of available resources and forward plan for when resources are available.
 - Link with local and national decision-making processes, influencing public services, budgeting, and planning policies to reflect the needs and aspirations of the Lochaber community.

7.2 Delivery of the Lochaber Area Place Plan

Since the Plan was adopted last January, desk-based work has been carried out to:-

- Identify projects and initiatives already in progress.
- Avoid duplication and ensure alignment with the Plan's priorities.
- Highlight opportunities for partnership and resource sharing.
- Provide a clear evidence base for funding and action planning.
- Ensure the forthcoming action plan builds on current projects while identifying gaps.

This review highlighted the need for a coordinated approach to engagement, better sharing of updates on ongoing projects, and improved access to support and funding opportunities for community groups. To address this, the Lochaber "Partnering for Progress" event was held in November 2025, co-hosted by Highland Community Planning Partnership, Lochaber Area Place Plan, Voluntary Action Lochaber, and Fort William 2040.

The event provided a platform for residents, partners, and agencies to collaborate on key topics aligned with the Lochaber Area Place Plan priorities.

The event was designed as a free, drop-in session and widely promoted through social media, local radio, and email. Its purpose was to reduce consultation fatigue, improve coordination, and strengthen connections between organisations and communities. The event featured presentations from Derek Brown, Chief Executive of the Highland Council, and Heather Cameron, Senior Programme Manager at NHS Highland. The speakers were introduced by Alastair Nicolson, Area Manager for Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross.

A total of thirty-one organisations exhibited, providing updates, and sharing opportunities and good practice. The Highland Council also hosted eight stalls covering a wide range of topics, including Community Regeneration Funding, Area Place Plans, Bus Infrastructure Projects, Youth Work, Adult Learning, Employability, Adult Care Provision, the Social Value Charter, and Community Wealth Building.

The event demonstrated the interconnected nature of plans, priorities, and projects across Lochaber. It fostered collaboration among partners, reduced duplication of effort, and provided clarity on how individual actions contribute to wider outcomes.

Strengthening these connections will enable partners and communities to work together more effectively, ensuring resources are maximised and engagement remains meaningful. Importantly, it gathered valuable feedback that will inform the next steps in delivering the Area Place Plan.

7.3 Next Steps

Ongoing engagement with Council services and partners will continue to identify current and planned workstreams that are in alignment with the Place Plan Priorities (e.g. Highland Investment Plan, Service Plans).

A bespoke action plan will be created to set out the route for delivery of the priorities. The action plan will seek to:-

- Further understand and develop each priority, in discussion across all sectors.
- Set out to identify the best mechanism for delivery and the range of partners to be involved.
- Assess potential barriers.
- Identify potential funding opportunities.
- Provide estimates of timescales.

Not all priorities will be achievable in the short to medium term, however, priorities within this plan have the widest community support and this plan, can be used to evidence and inform developments and funding decisions.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

Date: 18 December 2025

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Background Papers: Item 4 – Lochaber Area Place [Plan](#)

Appendices: None