

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Black Isle and Easter Ross Area Committee** held **remotely** on Monday 11 November 2025, at 10.00 am.

Present:

Sarah Atkin	John Edmondson
Sinclair Coghill	Lyndsey Johnston
Tamala Collier	Morven-May MacCallum
Richard Cross	Connie Ramsay
Laura Dundas	Maureen Ross

Participating Officials:

Mr P Tomalin, Senior Community Development Manager
Ms C MacIver, Community Development Manager
Ms L Bauermeister, Community Development Manager
Mr M Hilton, Project Manager, Energy Investment & Innovation
Ms P Betts, Common Good Fund Officer
Mr R Cheng, Property Surveyor
Mr A Byrne, Principal Housing Officer
Mr M Culbertson, Project Officer (Community Regeneration)
Ms A Tanner, Community Heritage Officer
Ms F Cameron, CRF Programme Manager
Ms M Maguire, Principal Planner, Development Planning
Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer

Also in Attendance:

Mr D McAulay, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (Item 3)

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

Ms L Johnston in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

There were none.

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

Transparency Statement
Item 10 – Ms L Dundas

Declarations of Interest
Item 3 – Ms C Ramsay
Item 10 – Ms M MacCallum, Ms M Ross

3. Scottish Fire and Rescue Services Area Performance Report
Aithisg Coileanaidh Sgìreil Seirbheis Smàlaidh is Teasairginn na h-Alba

Declaration of Interest – Ms C Ramsay declared an interest in this item as an on-call paid fire fighter and left the meeting for this item.

There was circulated Report No BIER/27/25 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

During discussion, the following issues were raised

- the work of the fire officers, the innovation with regard to recruitment, and the engagement with young people by the service, were welcomed;
- information was sought and provided on why Cromarty and Balintore did not have reported availability charts, and on the definitions and reporting of outside fires;
- it was suggested the term wildfire gave the impression of a natural phenomenon, rather than caused by humans;
- it was queried the extent to which outdoor fires were the result of reduced grass cutting around housing estates;
- the level of road casualty incidents was concerning; and
- assurance was sought and provided on work being undertaken with partners and nationally.

The Committee **NOTED** the attached Area Performance Report.

The Committee AGREED to consider Item 5 before Item 4 due to officer availability.

5. Short Term Lets Control Area
Smachd air Màil Gheàrr-ùine

There was circulated Report No. BIER/29/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

Following a presentation, the following issues were raised:

- the level of granular evidence in the report was welcomed;
- although 150 properties was a low number across the whole area, it would be an issue if the majority were concentrated in one small settlement. The logistics and challenges of creating a small Short Term Let Control Area were summarised;
- the methodology for defining short term lets was explained;
- the inclusion of certain rural areas was queried, and the boundaries for the potential control area were explained;
- it was queried whether, given the length of time it took to create a control area, it would be advisable to create one in case it was required in the future, and the reasons why this was not advised, and was unlikely to be accepted by the Scottish Government, were summarised; and
- it was clarified that the decision to delegate this matter to the Area Committees had been made at full Council.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the evidence presented demonstrating the degree of prevalence of Short Term Lets within Black Isle and Easter Ross;
- ii. **NOTED** that this evidence, at this time, did not demonstrate that the housing market within Black Isle and Easter Ross specifically, was subject to any significant pressure caused by Short Term Lets at this time, that would warrant regulation through a Short Term Let Control Area;
- iii. **AGREED** that the Black Isle and Easter Ross Area Committee did not at this time seek to progress with the process of considering the introduction of a Short Term Let Control Area covering all or part of the Black Isle and Easter Ross Area; and
- iv. **AGREED** to reconsider the evidence base regarding short term lets prevalence in Black Isle and Easter Ross within a further report brought to the Area Committee again at a future period, in 12 months' time.

4. Proposed Utility Scale Solar PV Array **Arraigh PV Grèine Meud Goireis ga Moladh**

There was circulated Report No. BIER/28/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

Following a presentation, the following issues were raised during discussion:

- the report and project were welcomed and the benefits highlighted;
- explanations were sought and provided for some of the logistical problems around transporting electricity from the site, notably the prohibitive expense of crossing the railway line;
- it was requested that income be ring fenced for specific Common Good Fund projects and that the consultation should clarify the benefits of the project to the CGF;
- assurance was sought that the remainder of the land could continue to be used for grazing;
- an explanation was sought and provided on why there was no benefit to a larger project, this being mainly the challenges and significant expense of transporting additional power from the site;
- a summary of the proposed consultation process was sought and provided;
- a rough estimate of potential income from the project was sought and provided;
- it would be helpful for the public and for Members to include a Q&A and / or a case study with the consultation;
- many of the issues raised would be properly covered during the planning application process, should the project go ahead; and
- Members clarified that they wished to agree to the consultation and that any information sought about the project at this stage was for the benefit of the community and not an indication of their approval of the project.

The Committee, with the exception of Mr John Edmonston, who asked that his abstention from the decision be recorded,:

- i. **NOTED** the contents of this report and decision by the Economy & Infrastructure (E&I) Committee Members;
- ii. **AGREED** for Officers to bring forward a detailed proposal to Members for the long-term benefits to the Tain Common Good, once available;
- iii. **AGREED** to run a Common Good Consultation on the change of use of both parcels of land for generation of renewable solar energy and report back to this Committee the outcomes of the consultation; and
- iv. **AGREED** to investigate with the Council's Legal Services the ringfencing of income should the Solar PV Array go ahead following consultation.

6. Housing Management Performance Report **Aithisg Coileanaidh Stiùireadh Taigheadais**

There was circulated Report No. BIER/30/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the detail and clarity of the report was welcomed;
- while acknowledging the complicated challenges around collecting rent arrears, it was important to find ways of communicating with people who were not engaging with the service, perhaps because of other needs which were not being met;
- it was important people were encouraged to always report incidents of anti-social behaviour in order to build up evidence;
- several Members expressed concern about the practice of, at times, encouraging tenants to remain in a property beyond the date on which they'd been asked to depart by the landlord, in order to avoid a homelessness claim. This could alienate landlords and risk reducing the willingness of a landlord to provide their properties for private rentals. It was noted that the Council's aim was to reduce the incidents of homelessness, but Members felt this policy required further scrutiny;
- assurance was sought that tenants facing arrears were provided with advice and potential referral to the Council's welfare team and / or Citizen's Advice Bureau; and
- the issue of the timing between rent being due and the payment of universal credit was at times problematic, and information was sought and provided on the automated rent arrears letters that were sent to tenants who missed deadlines. While it was acknowledged that those letters were sent at a cost to the Council despite being automated, and that it could be distressing for a tenant to receive one when the delay in rent payment was due to the universal credit payment system, the letters could prove a useful mechanism for tenants to contact the Council and discuss payment plans.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2025 – 30 September 2025.

7. Common Good Fund Consultations **Co-chomhairleachaidhean Maoin Maith Choitchinn**

- a. **Fortrose Golf Club Car Park**
Pàirc-chàraichean Raon-goilf na Cananaich

There was circulated Report No. BIER/31/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate and the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, Members welcomed the well negotiated position which would benefit the Fund. It was hoped work could continue to resolve the parking issues raised by the community and that any progress made to date on this would not be affected.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the process and outcome of the consultation as contained in section 6 and 7 and Appendix 1 of this report;
- ii. **NOTED** the representations and responses as set out in Appendix 2, taking them into account whilst having regard to the views of the inhabitants of the former Burgh of Fortrose and Rosemarkie during the decision-making process;
- iii. **APPROVED** subject to Sheriff Court consent; and
- iv. **APPROVED** the responses to the representations in Appendix 2 for publication on the Council's website.

b. Rosemarkie Caravan Park
Pàirc-chàraichean Raon-goilf Ros Maircnidh

There was circulated Report No. BIER/32/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate and the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

It was explained that, despite the rental figures being protected from publication due to their commercial sensitivity, the tenants of the Caravan Park had given permission for the rental amounts to be made public, following considerable public interest, and these were revealed to be a one-off upfront Lease Premium of £75k, and £43k annual rent to be paid to the CGF, the latter to be reviewed every five years.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- gratitude was expressed to the tenant for making the negotiated rent public following public interest, and to the officers for their work on the matter;
- public contributions to the consultation were acknowledged and their comments recognised; and
- the need for the Common Good Fund to receive a fair level of income from its assets to provide funding for projects to benefit the community was emphasised; and
- it was disappointing that some public comments wrongfully suggesting that the correct legal framework had not been followed appeared on the website, and it was emphasised that the correct legal process had been followed.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the process and outcome of the consultation as contained in section 6 and 7 and Appendix 1 of this report;

- ii. **NOTED** the representations and responses as set out in Appendix 2, taking them into account whilst having regard to the views of the inhabitants of the former Burgh of Fortrose and Rosemarkie during the decision-making process;
- * iii. **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to Full Council (see section 8 of the report) that the proposal should be **APPROVED** subject to Sheriff Court consent; and
- iv. **APPROVED** the responses to the representations in Appendix 2 for publication on the Council's website.

c. East Church Hall

Talla na h-Eaglaise an Ear

There was circulated Report No. BIER/33/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate and the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the public were thanked for their responses and officers for their work, and the project was welcomed as of great benefit to Cromarty, and a good use of the building; and
- Members requested that, if in future a Community Asset Transfer for the Hall was applied for, a new consultation be undertaken. Only the lease of the Hall was to be approved at present.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the process and outcome of the consultation as contained in section 6 and 7 and Appendix 1 of this report.
- ii. **NOTED** the representations and responses as set out in Appendix 2, taking them into account whilst having regard to the views of the inhabitants of the former Burgh of Cromarty during the decision-making process;
- iii. **AGREED** to dispose (by lease) and change the use of East Church Hall subject to Sheriff Court consent, but to **DEFER** any decision on a future disposal (by sale), pending a new common good consultation at that time if a Community Asset Transfer request is submitted; and
- iv. **APPROVED** the responses to the representations in Appendix 2 for publication on the Council's website.

8. Common Good Funds

Maoin Maith Choitchinn

a. Cromarty Common Good Fund
Maoin Math Coitcheann Chromba

There is circulated Report No BIER/34/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

The Committee **NOTED** the position of CCGF Fund as shown in the 2025/26 Quarter 2 Monitoring Statement.

b. Fortrose and Rosemarkie Common Good Fund
Maoin Math Coitcheann na Cananaich agus Ros Maircnidh

There is circulated Report No BIER/35/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

The Committee **NOTED** the position of FRCGF Fund as shown in the 2025/26 Quarter 2 Monitoring Statement.

c. Invergordon Common Good Fund
Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Ghòrdain

There is circulated Report No BIER/36/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, clarification was sought and received on the staff costs associated with the administration of the Bouchardon Bust. A Ministerial decision was awaited.

Members **NOTED** the Quarter 2 25/26 monitoring statement for the Invergordon Common Good Fund

d. Tain Common Good Fund
Maoin Math Coitcheann Bhaile Dhubhthaich

There is circulated Report No BIER/37/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion it was pointed out that further additional repair expenses might be required and this would be considered in the first instance at a Ward Business Meeting.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the Quarter 2 2025/26 monitoring statement for the Tain Common Good Fund; and
- ii. **APPROVED** a revised budget for 2025/26 for Tain Common Good Fund.

9. Ward Discretionary Awards
Duaisean fo Ùghdarris Uàird

There was circulated and **NOTED**, details of the Discretionary Budget applications that had been approved.

Cromarty Firth Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved 1st April 2025 – 31st October 2025

Alness Gala & Events – The Alness Gala	£2,000.00
Saltburn & Westwood Community Council – Annual Community Flowers	£700.00
Invergordon Lunch Club – Invergordon Lunch Club	£400.00

Highland Action for Little Ones – Bright Futures	£1,000.00
Community Food Initiatives North & East – Fareshare in Highland	£3,340.00
Poppy Wreaths	
Kiltarn Parish Church – Hot Water Upgrade	£224.93
	£600.00

Tain and Easter Ross Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved

1st April 2025 – 31st October 2025

Tain YMCA – Assistance for Running Costs	£1,500.00
Tain Task Force – Tain Environmental Improvements Worker	£3,000.00
Seaboard Memorial Hall – Village Care Assistance Scheme	£3,500.00
Tain Gala Association – Talk Car Rally & Gala	£2,000.00
Community Food Initiatives North & East – Fareshare in Highland	£164.00
Poppy Wreaths	£128.57

Black Isle Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved 1st April 2025

– 31st October 2025

Cromarty & District Community Council - Reed Loop Path Maintenance	£700.00
Go Flourish - Community Open Days	£773.00
Fortrose Academy - Young Enterprise Team Scottish Finals	£823.00
Black Isle Cares - Fortrose Community Larder	£400.00
Black Isle Cares - Meals at Home service	£300.00
Cromarty & District Community Council - Tidy up Townland	£580.00
Knockbain Community Council - North Kessock Community Youth Art Project	£950.00
Ferintosh Community Hall – Fence Replacement	£700.00
Raddery House LTD – Business Plan	£582.00
Killearn Public Hall – Upgrading Public Hall EPC Survey	£126.00
Community Food Initiatives North & East – Fareshare in Highland	£1,000.00
Chanonry Sailing Club – Accessibility & Changing Room Upgrade	£920.00

10. Community Regeneration Fund

Maoin Ath-bheothachadh Coimhearsnachd

Transparency Statement:

Ms L Dundas made a transparency statement as a director of the Seaboard Centre, Balintore. This role was on a voluntary basis, with no remuneration and despite the connection, having applied the objective test, she did not feel there was an interest to declare.

Declarations of Interest:

The following Members made declarations of interest and left the meeting during discussion of those items:

- Ms M MacCallum, as a council representative and trustee for Cromarty Courthouse, and having provided a letter of support for their funding application; and
- Ms M Ross, as a voluntary director for Friends of Fearn Abbey and Seaboard Memorial Hall.

There was circulated Report No BIER/38/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, Members queried the possibility of giving an additional grant of £1,000 to one of the applicants. It was advised that this would involve further considerations such as additionality, and should be progressed through the CRF change request process in line with agreed governance, bearing in mind that it was likely that other organisations were likely to submit applications for the remaining funds, and a fair screening process was required to be followed for all applications.

Following consideration of each application, the Committee:

- i. **NOTED** that an approval of funding should detail the amount approved and outline any conditions of funding that Members wish to attach to the approval over and above the required technical conditions. A deferral would allow an applicant to resubmit the current application at a future date with updated information or for the project to be approved subject to further funding becoming available. A rejection would mean that the application will not proceed and any future application to the fund should be brought forward initially as a new expression of interest; and
- ii. **AGREED** the approved CRF grant award, with no additional conditions, for each application as follows:

Organisation	Project Title	Grant Requested
Cromarty Community Development Trust	Renovation of East Church Hall Cromarty	£ 88,415.85
Rosemarkie Amenities Association	Grounds Maintenance Equipment	£ 10,862.80
Evanton Community Trust	Village Green Improvements including Public Convenience	£ 44,484.00
Trustees of Tore Hall	Planning Permission for Tore Hall Redevelopment	£ 29,049.00
Resolis Memorial Hall Community Centre	Re-roofing of Hall Extension	£ 31,437.00
Inver FC	Pitch Levelling	£ 17,000.00
Fearn Abbey	Multi-faceted Abbey Promotion & Marketing	£ 15,000.00
Seaboard Memorial Hall	Flooring	£ 31,000.00
Cromarty Courthouse Trust	Cromarty Museum	£ 19,200.00

11. Minutes

Geàrr-chunntas

There was circulated and **NOTED** minutes of the meeting of the Black Isle and Easter Ross Area Committee held on 11 August 2025, which was approved by the Council on 18 September 2025.

The meeting ended at 2.20pm