

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL NORTH PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE

12 September 2025, 9.30AM

MINUTE / ACTION NOTE

Listed below are the decisions taken by Committee at their meeting and the actions that now require to be taken. The webcast of the meeting will be available within 48 hours of broadcast and will remain online for 12 months: <https://highland.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

A separate memorandum will be issued if detailed or further instructions are required, or where the contents of the memorandum are confidential. Please arrange to take the required action based on this action note.

Committee Members Present:

Ms S Atkin (except item 7.1)
Mr M Baird
Mr R Bremner (from item 5)
Ms B Campbell (remotely)
Ms T Collier (remotely) (except item 7.1)
Ms L Dundas
Mr J Edmondson (except item 7.2)
Mr R Gale
Ms C Gillies
Ms L Kraft
Mrs A MacLean (from item 4)
Mr D Millar
Ms M Paterson
Mr K Rosie

Non-Committee Members Present:

Mr R Cross
Mr P Oldham
Ms I Mackenzie

Substitutes:

Mr R Gunn

Apologies:

Mr S Mackie
Ms J McEwan

Officers participating:

Mr D Jones, Area Planning Manager – North (DJ)
Mr P Wheelan, Planning Team Leader (PW)
Mr G Baxter, Principal Planner (GB)
Mr M Fitzpatrick, Principal Planner (MF)
Ms G Pearson, Principal Planner (GP)
Ms S Hadfield, Planner (SH)
Mr C Simms, Planner (CS)
Mr M Clough, Senior Engineer, Transport Planning (MC)

ITEM NO	DECISION	ACTION
1	Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan	n/a
2	Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt Item 7.1 – Ms S Atkin Item 7.2 – Mr J Edmondson	n/a
3	Confirmation of Minutes Dearbhadh a' Gheàrr-chunntais There had been submitted for confirmation as a correct record the action note and minute of the meeting of the Committee held on which was APPROVED .	n/a
4	Major Development Update Iarrtasan Mòra There had been circulated Report No PLN/001/23 by the Area Planning Manager - providing an update on progress of all cases within the “Major” development category currently with the Infrastructure and Environment Service for determination. The Committee NOTED the current position with the applications.	
5	Proposal of Application Notice Update Leasachaidhean Mòra – Co-chomhairle Ro-iarrtais 33 - 47) There had been circulated Report No PLN/058/25 by the Area Planning Manager – North. The Committee NOTED the applications.	PW
6	Continued Items Cuspairean a' Leantainn	
6.1	Applicant: Arise AB (21/04984/S36) (PLN/059/25) Location: Land At Tormsdale 1500M South of Bridge of Westerdale, Halkirk (Ward 03). Nature of Development: Tormsdale Wind Farm - Erection and operation of wind farm for period of 50 (previously 30 years), comprising of 9 wind turbines (previously 10) with maximum blade tip height of 149.9m, access tracks, substation, control building, Battery Energy Storage System, and ancillary infrastructure. Recommendation: RAISE AN OBJECTION The Committee AGREED:-	PW

	<p>i. to RAISE AN OBJECTION for reasons one, two and three as detailed in the report and to grant delegated authority to officers to withdraw reasons 1 and 2 in the event that NatureScot withdraw their objection and to proceed at Public Local Inquiry with reason 3 only; and</p> <p>ii. that officers write to the Energy Consents unit expressing members' disappointment in the lack of consideration of the democratic process which has taken up valuable time and resources for both officers and members.</p>	
6.2	<p>Applicant: Mey Energy Storage Limited (24/02621/S36) (PLN/060/25) Location: Land 700M East of Woodlands Mey (Ward 03). Nature of Development: Installation of a battery energy storage system and associated infrastructure with a generating capacity of up 300mw located on land at Phillips Mains Farm - This case will be determined by the Energy Consents Unit. Recommendation: WITHDRAW THE PREVIOUS OBJECTION</p> <p>For Motion from Mr R Gale seconded by Mrs M Paterson: -</p> <p>This committee lodges an objection on the grounds that the proposal does not comply with Policy 11(e)(xiii) of NPF4 and Policy 57 of the HwLDP. The cumulative impact of the proposed development, when considered alongside the Mey Community Wind Turbine, Gills Bay Substation, Hollandmey Wind Farm, Slickly Wind Farm, Stroupster Wind Farm, the proposed Rigifa BESS, and the proposed Lochend Wind Farm Extension, would give rise to significant adverse cumulative visual effects on road users of the A836 and the NC500 route.</p> <p>These effects would be especially pronounced within the high-tourist corridor linking John O'Groats, the Castle of Mey, and Castletown, where nationally important heritage and tourism destinations contribute to the area's distinctive character and economy. The proposal also fails to satisfy Policy 57 of the Highland-wide Local Development Plan, as the form and scale of development, in combination with others, would not safeguard or enhance natural assets and cultural heritage, and the significant adverse impacts are not clearly outweighed by social or economic benefits of national importance.</p> <p>Amendment from Mr K Rosie seconded by Mr D Millar to WITHDRAW THE PREVIOUS OBJECTION for the reasons detailed in the report.</p> <p>There were 2 votes for the Motion and 6 votes for the Amendment with no abstentions, the votes having been cast as follows:</p> <p>For the Motion: - Mr R Gale, Mrs M Paterson</p> <p>For the Amendment: - Ms S Atkin, Ms I Campbell, Ms L Dundas, Ms A MacLean, Mr D Millar, Mr K Rosie</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to WITHDRAW THE PREVIOUS OBJECTION</p>	LB
7	<p>Planning Applications to be Determined Iarrtasan Dealbhaidh rin Dearbhadh</p>	
	<p>In terms of Standing Order 9, the Committee AGREED to consider item 7.1 after item 7.5.</p>	

7.2	<p>Applicant: E Power Ltd (23/02754/S36) (PLN/062/25) Location: Land 3450M North of Kaytoo, Heights of Dochcarty, Dingwall (Ward 06). Nature of Development: Abhainn Dubh Wind Farm - Erection and operation of a wind farm for a period of 30 years, comprising of 9 wind turbines (as amended) with a maximum blade tip height of 149.9m, energy storage facility, access tracks, borrow pits, substation, anemometer mast, control building, and ancillary infrastructure Recommendation: RAISE NO OBJECTION</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to RAISE NO OBJECTION subject to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Members granting delegated authority to the Area Planning Manger – North to agree the finalised condition wording with any substantive amendments to the proposal to be subject to prior consultation with the Chair of the North Planning Applications Committee; and 2. Officers agreeing to offsite Compensatory Planting following sight of Scottish Forestry's EIA Screening Opinion and any subsequent Forestry EIA; 	PW
7.3	<p>Applicant: Whirlwind Renewables (25/01306/FUL) (PLN/063/25) Location: Achlachan Wind Farm, Watten (Ward 03). Nature of Development: Achlachan Wind Farm 2 Redesign - Erection and operation of a wind farm for a period of 40 years, comprising of up to 2 wind turbines with a maximum blade tip height of 149.9m, access tracks, hardstandings and ancillary infrastructure. Recommendation: GRANT</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to GRANT the application subject to the conditions detailed in the report.</p>	GB
7.4	<p>Applicant: Field Rigifa Limited (25/00307/S36) (PLN/064/25) Location: Land 625m southwest of 1 Phillips Mains, Mey (Ward 03). Nature of Development: Rigifa BESS - Construction and operation of Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) over 200MW with associated infrastructure including underground grid connection, landscaping and ancillary works. Recommendation: RAISE NO OBJECTION</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to RAISE NO OBJECTION subject to delegated powers being granted to the Area Planning Manager – North to finalised conditions in consultation with the Chair of NPAC.</p>	LB
7.5	<p>Applicant: J Murphy And Sons Limited (25/02502/FUL) (PLN/065/25) Location: Bridgend, Georgemas, Halkirk (Ward 03). Nature of Development: Temporary works compound in connection with the SSEN ASTI Framework - LT428 Banniskirk to Carnaig 400kV. Recommendation: GRANT</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to GRANT planning permission subject to the conditions detailed in the report.</p>	CS
7.1	<p>Applicant: Miss Sarah Renwick (25/00949/FUL) (PLN/061/25) Location: 4 Corntown Dairy, Conon Bridge (Ward 09). Nature of Development: Erection of a House.</p>	SH

	<p>Recommendation: GRANT</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to GRANT planning permission subject to the conditions detailed in the report.</p>	
8	<p>Decision of Appeals to the Scottish Government Planning and Environmental Appeals Division Co-dhùnadh mu Iarrtas do Bhuidheann-stiùiridh Riaghaltas na h-Alba airson Lùth agus Atharrachadh Aimsir</p>	
8.1	<p>Applicant: Gary Robinson (24/01710/FUL) Location: Land 75M Nw Of Pollbreac, Coldwell, North Kessock, IV1 3XQ Nature of Development: Erection of House and Garage</p> <p>The Committee is invited NOTED the decision of the Reporter to allow the appeal and grant planning permission subject to the six conditions contained in the decision notice.</p>	
8.2	<p>Applicant: Cromarty Harbour Trust (24/00352/LBC) Location: Cromarty Harbour, George Street, Cromarty, IV11 8YL Nature of Development: Erection of a new gate</p> <p>The Committee is invited NOTED the decision of the Reporter to allow the appeal and grant listed building consent.</p>	
	<p>The meeting ended at 3.30 pm.</p>	

The Highland Council

South Planning Applications Committee

Council Chamber, HQ, 8 October 2025, 9.30am

Minute / Action Note

Listed below are the decisions taken by Committee at their recent meeting and the actions that now require to be taken. The webcast of the meeting will be available within 48 hours of broadcast and will remain online for 12 months: <https://highland.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

A separate memorandum will be issued if detailed or further instructions are required, or where the contents of the memorandum are confidential. Please arrange to take the required action based on this action note.

Committee Members Present:

Mr C Ballance	Mr T MacLennan
Mr D Fraser	Mr D Macpherson
Mr A Graham	Mr P Oldham
Mr M Gregson	Ms M Reid
Mr B Lobban (in the Chair for item 7.2)	Ms L Saggars
Mr A MacKintosh	Ms K Willis

Substitutes:

Ms B Jarvie for Mr L Fraser
Mr D McDonald for Mr K Gowans
Mr J Bruce for Mr R Jones

Officers participating:

Mr B Robertson, Acting Area Planning Manager – South (BR)
Mr P Wheelan, Strategic Projects Team Leader (PW)
Mr K Gibson, Principal Planner (KG)
Ms S Tang, Graduate Planner (ST)
Mr G Baxter, Principal Planner (GB)
Ms J Bain, Planner (JB)
Mr J Kelly, Planning Team Leader (JK)
Mr D Mudie, Strategic Lead (DM)
Mr M Clough, Senior Engineer, Transport Planning (MC)
Ms A Gibbs, Principal Solicitor
Ms K Arnott, Committee Administrator

ITEM NO	DECISION	ACTION
1	Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan Mr L Fraser, Mr K Gowans, Mr R Jones and Mrs I MacKenzie	 n/a
2	Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt	

	Item 7.2 – Mr P Oldham, Ms B Jarvie and Mr M Gregson	n/a
3	Confirmation of Minutes Dearbhadh a' Gheàrr-chunntais	
	There had been submitted for confirmation as a correct record the action note and minute of the meeting of the Committee held on 22 August 2025, which was APPROVED , <i>subject to the amendment that Mr M Gregson was omitted from the Committee Members Present list on the Action Note.</i>	n/a
4	Major Development Update Iarrtasan Mòra	
	<p>There had been circulated Report No PLS/57/25 by the Area Planning Manager - providing an update on progress of all cases within the “Major” development category currently with the Infrastructure and Environment Service for determination.</p> <p>Members requested an update on Item 2.2 of the report relating to Culachy Wind Farm and Loch Liath Wind Farm PLI and when these would commence. It was anticipated these would both be heard in late October/November. Planners agreed to e-mail all Committee Members directly with exact dates for information.</p> <p>The Committee NOTED the current position with the applications.</p>	PW
5	Major Developments – Pre-application consultations Leasachaidhean Mòra – Co-chomhairle Ro-iarrtais	
	<p>There had been circulated Report No PLS/58/25 by the Area Planning Manager - South.</p> <p>The Committee NOTED the current pre-application notices.</p>	
6	Continued Items Cuspairean a' Leantainn	
6.1	<p>Applicant: Logan PM (23/04100/FUL) (PLS/59/25)</p> <p>Location: Land 500M NE of Fasnakyle, Cannick (Ward 12).</p> <p>Nature of Development: Battery energy storage facility comprising access track, compound of battery and electrical equipment, stores, meter building, water tank, ancillary structures, fencing, security cameras, landscaping bunds, new trees.</p> <p>Recommendation: GRANT.</p>	GB
	<p>REFUSED planning permission for the following reasons:</p> <p>Whilst it is acknowledged that Policy 11 of NPF4 encourages, promotes and facilitates renewable energy development, it does not give unqualified support. It is considered that this proposal will impact on the local community and individual dwellings, including residential amenity, noise, and visual impact; it will also impact on the site’s historic environment being in close proximity to two Listed Buildings (being the Fasnakyle Bridge and Fasnakyle Power Station). The proposed mitigation does not adequately address these</p>	

	<p>impacts. This is due to it being an industrial development in the gateway to Glen Affric, a rural location, characterised by open farmed valley floors, the River Glass, and surrounded by forested and wooded slopes.</p> <p>The proposal is, therefore, contrary to NPF4 Policy 11 and Policy 28 of the Highland wide Local Development Plan as it fails to demonstrate sensitive siting and high-quality design in keeping with the local character of the area.</p>	
6.2	<p>Applicant: Highland Council (25/00437/FUL) (PLS/60/25) Location: Land 110M East of Kamara, 23 Torr Gardens, Dores (Ward 12). Nature of Development: Erection of 17no. residential units and associated infrastructure. Recommendation: GRANT</p> <p>Members raised concerns about the site layout, and the impact of the proposed development the amenity of Drumashie Lodge, a listed building, with specific reference to the North Block; as well as the privacy impact on properties at Torr Gardens.</p>	KG
	<p>Agreed: to DEFER further consideration of the application to allow the Planning Service to discuss the amenity and layout concerns with the applicant, specifically the overlooking of the North Block on Drumashie Lodge.</p>	
7	<p>Planning Applications to be Determined Iarrtasan Dealbhaidh rin Dearbhadh</p>	
7.1	<p>Applicant: Anesco Ltd (24/05019/FUL) (PLS/61/25) Location: Land 100M South of Blackpark House, Nairn (Ward 18). Nature of Development: Installation of a grid battery energy storage facility (up to 30MW) with associated development. Recommendation: GRANT</p>	JAB
	<p>Agreed: to GRANT planning permission in line with the officer recommendation and the conditions as set out in Section 11 of the report.</p>	
7.2	<p>Mr P Oldham and Ms B Jarvie made a Declaration of Interest due to an ongoing formal complaint which was in the process of being investigated and, in accordance with paragraph 5.6 of the revised Code of Conduct, they left the meeting for this item.</p> <p>Mr M Gregson made a Declaration of Interest due to knowledge of objectors and supporters and, in accordance with paragraph 5.6 of the revised Code of Conduct, he left the meeting for this item.</p> <p>Mr B Lobban was in the Chair for Item 7.2.</p> <p>Applicant: Nairn Bowling Club (24/04986/FUL) (PLS/62/25) Location: Land 55M NW of Giverny, Lodgehill Road, Nairn (Ward 18). Nature of Development: Erection of bowling club house, 2No. greens and car park. Recommendation: GRANT</p>	JAB
	<p>Agreed: to GRANT planning permission in line with the officer recommendation and the conditions as set out in Section 11 of the report.</p>	

7.3	<p>Applicant: Lovat Estates Ltd (25/00426/FUL) (PLS/63/25) Location: Fanellan Farmhouse, Kiltarlity, Beauly (Ward 12). Nature of Development: Change of use from dwelling house (Class 9) into office accommodation (Class 4). Recommendation: GRANT</p>	EW
	<p>REFUSED planning permission for the following reasons:</p> <p>The Committee considered the application against the policies of the development and all relevant material considerations and refuses to grant permission as the proposed development is contrary to NPF4 Policy 29 as the proposed use of the buildings do not contribute to the viability, sustainability, and diversity of the rural community. The loss of housing is not acceptable in the context of a Highland Housing Challenge.</p>	
7.4	<p>Applicant: Loval Estates Ltd (25/00573/FUL) (PLS/64/25) Location: Lower Fanellan Cottages, Kiltarlity (Ward 12). Nature of Development: Change of use from 2no. houses (Class 9) into office accommodation (Class 4). Recommendation: GRANT</p>	EW
	<p>REFUSED planning permission for the following reasons:</p> <p>The Committee considered the application against the policies of the development and all relevant material considerations and refuses to grant permission as the proposed development is contrary to NPF4 Policy 29 as the proposed use of the buildings do not contribute to the viability, sustainability, and diversity of the rural community. The loss of housing is not acceptable in the context of a Highland Housing Challenge.</p>	
8	<p>Decision of Scottish Ministers Co-dhùnadh Ministearan na h-Alba</p>	
8.1	<p>Appeals to Planning and Environmental Appeals Division (DPEA) Ath-thagraidhean gu Roinn Ath-thagraidhean Dealbhaidh is Àrainneachd (DPEA)</p> <p>Applicant: Mr and Mrs Jochen and Fiona Schmerbitz (ENA-270-2086) Location: Ardmachree, Brinkman Terrace, Inverness, IV2 5BL (Ward 19) Nature of Breach of Planning Control: the erection of timber decking, timber screen fencing and groundworks associated with the erection of decking carried out without the required planning permission.</p> <p>The Committee NOTED the decision of the Reporter appointed by the Scottish Ministers and upheld the enforcement notice but allowed the appeal to the extent that the terms of the notice is varied by deleting the requirement in part 4ii to “reinstate the land that was reprofiled and cleared to form the area of decking”. Subject to any application to the Court of Session, the enforcement notice takes effect on the date of this decision, which constitutes the determination of the appeal for the purposes of section 131 (3) of the Act.</p>	
	The meeting ended at 1.20pm.	

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THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL
NORTH PLANNING APPLICATIONS
COMMITTEE

26 November 2025 at 9.30am continuing on 28 November 2025 at 9.30am

MINUTE / ACTION NOTE

Listed below are the decisions taken by Committee at their meeting and the actions that now require to be taken. The webcast of the meeting will be available within 48 hours of broadcast and will remain online for 12 months: <https://highland.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

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Wednesday 26 November 2025

Committee Members Present:

Ms S Atkin
Mr M Baird
Mr R Bremner
Ms B Campbell
Ms T Collier (online)
Ms L Dundas (online)
Mr J Edmondson
Mr R Gale
Ms C Gilles
Ms L Kraft
Mr S Mackie
Mrs A MacLean
Ms J McEwan
Mr D Millar
Ms M Paterson
Mr K Rosie

Non-Committee Members Present:

Ms H Crawford
Mr R Gunn
Ms M Hutchison
Mrs B Jarvie
Mr P Oldham

Substitutes: None

Apologies: None

Officers participating:

Mr D Jones, Area Planning Manager – North (DJ)
Ms L MacDonald, Planning Team Leader (LM)

Mr P Wheelan, Planning Team Leader (PW)
Mr G Baxter, Principal Planner (GB)
Mr J Wiseman, Principal Planner (JW)
Mr G Sharp, Planner (GS)
Mr P Dent, Senior Environmental Health Officer (PD)
Ms J Bridge, Senior Engineer (JB)
Ms R Banfro, Solicitor (Planning) and Clerk
Ms R Ross, Committee Officer

Also in Attendance:

Grant Allan - Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission PLC
Matthew Atkins - Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission PLC
Charlene Baker - Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission PLC
Colin Earnshaw - Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission PLC
Euan Smith - Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission PLC
Brent Munro - Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission PLC
Kathrin Haltiner – Halkirk District Community Council
Catherine MacKenzie-Third Party Objector
Daniel Burnand- Third Party Objector
Ian Kelly- Third Party Objector
David Martin- Third Party Objector

Friday 28 November 2025

Committee Members Present:

Ms S Atkin
Mr M Baird
Mr R Bremner
Ms B Campbell
Ms T Collier (online)
Ms L Dundas
Mr J Edmondson
Mr R Gale
Ms C Gilles
Ms L Kraft
Mrs A MacLean
Mr S Mackie (from item 8.4)
Ms J McEwan
Mr D Millar
Ms M Paterson (online)
Mr K Rosie

Non-Committee Members Present:

Substitutes: None

Apologies: None

Officers participating:

Mr D Jones, Area Planning Manager – North (DJ)
Ms L MacDonald, Planning Team Leader (LM)
Mr P Wheelan, Planning Team Leader (PW)
Mr M Fitzpatrick, Principal Planner (MF)

Ms G Pearson, Principal Planner (GP)
 Mr D Borland, Planner (DB)
 Mr A Brennan, Planner (AB)
 Mr C Simms, Planner (CS)
 Ms J Bridge, Senior Engineer (JB)
 Ms R Banfro, Solicitor (Planning) and Clerk
 Ms R Ross, Committee Officer

Mr D Millar in the Chair

ITEM NO	DECISION	ACTION
1	Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan There were no apologies for absence	n/a
2	Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt The Committee NOTED the following Declarations of Interest:- Mr D Millar – Item 7 and Item 8.9 Ms S Atkin – Item 8.4 Mr S Mackie – Item 6 Ms J MacEwan – Item 8.14 Mr R Bremner explained that he had recently signed the Social Values Charter on behalf of the Council, however, this had no impact on any decisions taken by Planning Applications Committees. He noted that in June 2024, Full Council had agreed that the Social Values Charter does not form any part of Planning Applications Committee (PAC) considerations, including for renewable energy schemes. Decisions on planning applications remain entirely separate from the Charter and must be taken solely on planning merits, relevant policy, material considerations, and the evidence before the Committee.	n/a
3	Confirmation of Minutes Dearbhadh a’ Gheàrr-chunntais There had been submitted for confirmation as a correct record the action note and minute of the meeting of the Committee held on 24 September 2025 which was APPROVED .	n/a
4	Major Development Update Iartasan Mòra There had been circulated Report No PLN/057/25 by the Area Planning Manager - providing an update on progress of all cases within the “Major” development category currently with the Infrastructure and Environment Service for determination.	DJ

An update was provided on the 28 November by the Clerk in respect of the ongoing Planning Enquiry concerning Melvich Windfarm.

- The update clarified that the planning inquiry had been triggered due to unresolved objections from NatureScot and the RSPB.
- During the planning inquiry process, the Applicant lodged Further Environmental Information (FEI). The FEI submitted proposed a development comprising 4 wind turbines, rather than 12 turbines, with a total overall capacity of approximately 26.8MW, supported by additional energy storage provision from an on-site battery storage facility with an indicative output capacity of 27MW.
- This FEI was reviewed by Officers at the Council and was considered to be different from what was originally submitted to the Council as part of the original planning application; therefore, the Applicant should submit a fresh planning application reflecting this new proposal.
- The Council made submissions to the Reporter requesting that the Reporter decide whether the FEI should be accepted as part of the planning inquiry process. The Reporter considered these submissions and made a preliminary ruling on the proposed FEI. The Reporter's preliminary view is that the amended proposal is fundamentally different from the original application.
- The Reporter noted that the proposed FEI would result in a development that would be approximately 20% taller, making the development visually different. The revised scheme would require aviation lighting and would introduce new landscape and visual impacts, particularly at twilight, dusk, and dawn.
- The Reporter's recommendation is now with the Scottish Ministers for their consideration and to determine whether it will be considered as part of the planning inquiry or not.
- Following the submission of the FEI to the Council, ECU, and Interested Parties, the Council agreed with the Developer to extend the PLI timetable to allow for the FEI to be presented to Committee. This extension to the timetable was agreed before the Reporter made a preliminary ruling. The case is now on hold and Officers' view is that no report should be taken to Committee, on the basis that it would be premature and abortive, until such time as the Scottish Ministers issue their decision.
- The Committee sought clarification as to whether the Council's position would be prejudiced in the event that Scottish Ministers accepted the FEI as part of the planning inquiry process.
- The Committee were advised that if the Scottish Ministers decided that the FEI should be accepted as part of the Planning Inquiry, the Scheme of Delegation would allow for a further updated holding objection to be lodged prior to a report being brought to Committee. The Committee would then have the opportunity to consider the Report and the Officer's recommendation.

The Committee **NOTED** the current position with the applications.

5	<p>Major Developments – Pre-application consultations Leasachaidhean Mòra – Co-chomhairle Ro-iarrtais</p> <p>There had been circulated Report No PLN/058/25 by the Area Planning Manager – North.</p> <p>The Committee is NOTED the applications.</p>	PW
6	<p>Pre Determination Hearing and Determination of Planning Application Èisteachd Ro-dhearbhaidh is Dearbhadh airson Iartas Dealbhachaidh</p> <p>Declaration of Interest – Mr S Mackie holds a financial interest as a Non Executive Director of Scrabster Harbour Trust who have made representations to Members regarding this item.</p> <p>Applicant: Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission Plc (24/04898/FUL) (PLN/059/25) Location: Land 360M NE Of Achalone Cottage, Achalone, Halkirk (Ward 03). Nature of Development: Banniskirk Substation - Erection and operation of an Air Insulated Switchgear 400kV substation and HVDC converter station with associated buildings, installation of new platforms, drainage infrastructure, temporary construction compound, landscaping, mounding and other ancillary works. Recommendation: GRANT</p> <p>A pre-determination hearing was held in respect of this item at which the Applicant, 5 objectors and 1 representative of the Halkirk and District Community Council were present. Parties spoke in support of the application and their representations and were asked questions by members. At the conclusion of the hearing, parties confirmed that they were satisfied with the way the hearing had been conducted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to GRANT Planning Permission, subject to the conclusion of a section 75 agreement, subject to the conditions detailed in the report with delegated powers granted to officers to amend conditions 22 and 35 to make reference to "in consultation with NPAC Ward Members" and to make reference to an additional condition in respect of FS6 gas.</p>	PW
7	<p>Continued Application Cuspairean a' Leantainn</p> <p>Declaration of Interest – Mr D Millar as the Secretary of Portree Community Council made written representations on behalf of the Community Council at the time the first application was initially considered by the Council as Planning Authority.</p> <p>Mr K Rosie in the Chair</p> <p>Applicant: Lochalsh & Skye Housing Association (21/05962/PIP) (PLN/060/25) Location: Land 380M NE Of Portree NHS Dental Clinic Sraid An Eorna Portree (Ward 10). Nature of Development: Mixed use development comprising up to 248</p>	LM

	<p>residential units, business unit, community shop, care village, landscaping and associated infrastructure.</p> <p>Recommendation: GRANT</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to GRANT Planning Permission subject to the conclusion of the section 75 agreement and subject to the conditions detailed in the report.</p>	
8	<p>Planning Applications to be Determined Iarrtasan Dealbhaidh rin Dearbhadh</p> <p>In terms of Standing Order 9, the Committee AGREED to vary the order of business as follows:</p>	
8.9	<p>Declaration of Interest – Mr D Millar as one of the objectors is a family member</p> <p>Mr K Rosie in the Chair</p> <p>Applicant: Neil and Deborah Bell (25/02768/FUL) (PLN/069/25) Location: Land 60M SW Of Half Of 7 Tote, Skeabost Bridge (Ward 10). Nature of Development: Erection of House. Recommendation: GRANT</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to GRANT Planning Permission subject to the conditions detailed in the report.</p>	GS
8.8	<p>Applicant: Mr Norman MacPherson (25/00064/PIP) (PLN/068/25) Location: Land 60M SW Of Totaig House, Colbost, Dunvegan Isle Of Skye (Ward 10). Nature of Development: Erection of house and formation of access. Recommendation: REFUSE</p> <p>During discussion it was suggested that when traffic survey work is needed it should be undertaken before the submission of an application so that there would be no need for applications to be deferred.</p> <p>Motion from Cllr D Millar, seconded by Cllr S Mackie to defer consideration Of the application to allow for further discussion between the Applicant, the Planning Authority and the Transport Planning to undertake a traffic speed survey and to provide the means, details and extent of any construction works to the Road.</p> <p>Amendment from Cllr R Bremner, seconded by Cllr S Atkin to refuse planning permission for the reasons detailed in the report.</p> <p>There were 10 votes for the motion and 6 votes for the amendment, the votes having been cast as follows:</p> <p>For the motion: - Mr M Baird, Mrs I Campbell, Ms L Dundas, Mr R Gale, Ms C Gillies, Mr S Mackie, Ms J McEwan, Mr D Millar, Ms M Paterson and Mr K Rosie</p> <p>For the amendment: -</p>	GS

	<p>Ms S Atkin, Mr R Bremner, Ms T Collier, Mr J Edmondson Ms L Kraft, Ms A Maclean,</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to DEFER the application to allow for further discussion between the Applicant, the Planning Authority and the Transport Planning to undertake a traffic speed survey and to provide the means, details and extent of any construction works to the Road.</p>	
8.1	<p>Applicant: Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission (25/01906/S37) (PLN/061/25) Location: Land 3200M NE Of Glencassley Castle, Rosehall (Ward 01). Nature of Development: Achany Wind Farm Connection - Install and keep installed 16km of 132kV overhead line (OHL) between the consented Achany Wind Farm Extension on-site substation and the operational Shin substation. Recommendation: RAISE NO OBJECTION</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to RAISE NO OBJECTION to the application thereby withdrawing the Council's previous objection for the reasons detailed in the report.</p>	GB
8.3	<p>Applicant: Field Spittal Limited (25/00498/S36) (PLN/063/25) Location: SSE, DC Site Spittal Substation, Halkirk, (Ward 03). Nature of Development: Spittal BESS - Construction and operation of Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) of up to 300MW with associated infrastructure (including cable route to substation), access and ancillary works (including landscaping and biodiversity enhancement). Recommendation: RAISE NO OBJECTION</p> <p>During discussion, the Leader of the Council agreed to make representations to Scottish Ministers concerning the Committee's concerns with National Planning Framework 4.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to RAISE NO OBJECTION to the application subject to the conditions detailed in the report together with delegated powers to officers to agree the finalised wording of the conditions including condition 13 as follows:</p> <p>f) confirmation that any extraordinary wear and tear on Highland Council roads identified by part e) shall be repaired by the developer at the developer's expense, with the applicant entering into a section 96 agreement under the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 (as amended) with the Council, and to the satisfaction of the Council within three months of the post construction survey being carried out.</p>	JW
	The following items were considered on Friday 28 November.	
8.13	<p>Applicant: Springfield Properties PLC (22/04104/PIP) (PLN/073/25) Location: Land 320M SW Of Tore Roundabout, Tore, Muir of Ord (Ward 08). Nature of Development: Phased construction and operation of a business park with low carbon vehicle hub and Park and Ride facility comprising ancillary Class 1A retail, Class 3 food and drink, Class 4 business (excluding office space development), Class 5 General Industrial (excluding heavy industry), Class 6 Storage and Distribution, and Class 7 Hotel, landscaping</p>	MF

	<p>and biodiversity enhancement, access, roads, SUDS, and associated infrastructure</p> <p>Recommendation: GRANT</p> <p>There was a motion for Cllr S Atkin, seconded by Cllr A Maclean:-</p> <p>The proposed development represents a departure from the Development Plan which cannot be supported and is considered contrary to NPF4 Policies 22, 26(d)(ii), 27(a), 29(b), IMFLDP2 Policy 9, and HwLDP Policy 65. The development lies on unallocated agricultural land outwith the defined Settlement Development Area for Tore and is not supported by any allocation in the Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan 2. Its scale and nature constitute a significant and unsustainable outward expansion of the settlement, contrary to the planned, limited growth strategy for Tore.</p> <p>The proposal does not support local living and would be heavily reliant on private car travel due to its separation from the existing settlement, its location between the A835 and A832, and the absence of safe, direct or attractive active travel connections. The development is therefore not suitably scaled, sited or designed for its rural context and does not contribute to local living nor appropriately address transport needs, contrary to NPF4 Policies 15(a) and 29(b).</p> <p>The proposed development is not served by a public foul sewer and relies on a private package treatment plant that remains high-level, unconsented and without confirmed delivery. The committee considers that the applicant has failed to demonstrate that the necessary foul drainage infrastructure required to support the development will be available, deliverable or adequate for its scale. As a result, the proposal fails to demonstrate the necessary infrastructure to enable development and is contrary to NPF4 Policy 18(b), NPF4 Policy 22(c)(ii), IMFLDP2 Policy 9, and Highland-wide Local Development Plan Policy 65.</p> <p>Cllr D Millar proposed an amendment to GRANT planning permission subject to the conditions detailed in the report with the final wording of conditions to be delegated to officers but failed to find a seconder.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to REFUSE Planning Permission for the reasons detailed above.</p>	
8.5	<p>Applicant: Telefonica UK Limited (25/01737/FUL) (PLN/065/25)</p> <p>Location: Land 3.5Km NW of Aultdearg, Lochluichart, Garve (Ward 05).</p> <p>Nature of Development: Installation of 20m tall lattice telecommunications tower, 3no. shared antennas, 2no. transmission dishes and additional equipment at 17.1m above ground level, 3no. equipment cabinets, battery energy storage system, back-up generator with 4000L fuel tank, 2no (8m tall, 3KW output) wind turbines, 24no. (total) solar panels split over 4 arrays and associated ancillary equipment within fenced compound.</p> <p>Recommendation: GRANT</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to GRANT Planning Permission subject to the conditions detailed in the report.</p>	DB
8.7	<p>Applicant: NKT HVC Ltd (25/02512/FUL) (PLN/067/25)</p> <p>Location: Land 210M NE Of Tigh Ard, Gelshfield, Halkirk (Ward 03).</p>	CS

	<p>Nature of Development: Construction of two temporary access points, to provide access to the cable corridor for construction vehicles associated with the LT360 Spittal to Peterhead High Voltage Cable project.</p> <p>Recommendation: GRANT</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to GRANT Planning Permission subject to the conditions detailed in the report.</p>	
8.2	<p>Applicant: Meall Buidhe Renewables LLP (25/02312/S42) (PLN/062/25)</p> <p>Location: Land 4420M NW Of Croick Estate, Ardgay (Ward 01).</p> <p>Nature of Development: Meall Buidhe Wind Farm - Section 42 application to vary condition 1 (time limit on commencement) and condition 6(iv) (turbine blade length) of planning permission 20/02659/FUL (consented at appeal PPA-270-2277)</p> <p>Recommendation: GRANT</p> <p>Motion for Cllr R Gale, seconded by Cllr M Baird to refuse to vary condition 1 for the following reason:</p> <p>The planning committee considers that the removal of the condition requiring the development to commence within the originally stipulated period is unacceptable. The time-limiting condition formed a fundamental component of the planning permission, ensuring that the proposal was assessed against the policy framework, environmental circumstances, and technological assumptions that applied at the time the consent was granted.</p> <p>The planning committee refuses the proposed variation of Condition 1, which seeks to extend the commencement period. The original time-limiting condition formed a fundamental part of the consent, ensuring that the development proceeded within the statutory period of three years and remained aligned with the development plan in place when permission was granted. In determining this application, the committee has had full regard to the Development Plan, including NPF4 (particularly Policies 1 and 11) and the Local Development Plan. Although the committee did not agree with the Reporter's decision to grant the original consent, it recognises that the Reporter placed significant weight on the project's contribution to climate change objectives, renewable energy generation, biodiversity enhancement and economic benefits; however, that emphasis does not justify extending the statutory commencement period. The scale and complexity of the proposal remain such that the original timeframe is adequate; no new phasing requirements have been identified; delays to grid connection represent an inherent commercial risk and, consistent with NPF4 Policy 11(e), are a matter for the developer to resolve with the network operator; and no compelling evidence has been provided that economic or supply-chain conditions now render the original period unreasonable. For these reasons, I am not satisfied that an extension is justified, and the variation of Condition 1 should be refused.</p> <p>Amendment for Cllr R Bremner, seconded by Cllr K Rosie to grant planning permission for the reasons detailed in the report.</p>	PW

	<p>There were 7 votes for the motion and 8 votes for the amendment, the votes having been cast as follows:</p> <p>For the Motion: - Ms S Atkin, Mr M Baird, Ms L Dundas, Ms J Edmondson, Mr R Gale, Ms Margaret Paterson and Ms Jan McEwen</p> <p>For the Amendment: - Mr R Bremner, Ms I Campbell, Ms T Collier, Ms C Gillies, Cllr L Kraft. Cllr A Maclean, Cllr D Millar and Cllr K Rosie.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to GRANT Planning Permission subject to the conditions detailed in the Report.</p>	
8.4	<p>Declaration of Interest – Ms S Atkin as the Vice-Chair of the Housing And Property Committee.</p> <p>Applicant: The Highland Council (25/01536/FUL) (PLN/064/25) Location: Land 150M SW Of Tesco, Mart Road, Dingwall (Ward 08). Nature of Development: Erection of 34 residential properties and Associated works. Recommendation: GRANT</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to GRANT planning permission subject to the conditions detailed in the report, subject to the amendment of condition 11 and subject to an additional condition relating to relating to the traffic management plan of the proposed development with the final wording of the conditions being delegated to officers.</p>	GP
8.6	<p>Applicant: J Murphy And Sons Limited (25/02223/FUL) (PLN/066/25) Location: Land 160m Northwest Of Tigh Ardachu, Mosshill, Brora (Ward 04). Nature of Development: Formation of temporary compound cabins and storage (retrospective). Recommendation: GRANT</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to DEFER this application to obtain further information from the Applicant.</p>	LB
8.10	<p>Applicant: Mr Steve Auckland (25/01888/FUL) (PLN/070/25) Location: Two Fishes, Cooper Street, Plockton (Ward 05). Nature of Development: Erection of domestic garage. Recommendation: GRANT</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to GRANT planning permission subject to the conditions detailed in the report and subject to an additional condition relating to the restriction of the use of the proposed development with the final wording of the conditions being delegated to officers.</p>	Jessica Forrester
8.11	<p>Applicant: Mr & Mrs Alan & Hazel Bell (25/01670/FUL) (PLN/071/25) Location: The Sheiling, Old Craigton Road, North Kessock (Ward 09). Nature of Development: Change of use of land to domestic use, demolition of building and erection of extensions Recommendation: GRANT</p>	Emma Thompson

	<p>The Committee AGREED to GRANT Planning Permission subject to the conditions detailed in the report and subject to the following additional condition:</p> <p>The hedge shown on drawing reference site plan 025.262.105C shall be retained in perpetuity.</p> <p>Reason: In order to safeguard the amenity of neighbouring properties and occupants.</p> <p>With the final wording of the conditions being delegated to officers.</p>	
8.12	<p>Applicant: Field Fyrish Ltd (25/01620/S36) (PLN/072/25) Location: Land 650M South Of Fyrish Substation, Alness (Ward 06). Nature of Development: Field Fyrish Battery Energy Storage System (BESS)- Construction and operation of a Battery Energy Storage System along with associated infrastructure and ancillary works, earthworks, access, drainage, landscaping and biodiversity enhancements. Recommendation: RAISE NO OBJECTION</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to RAISE NO OBJECTION to the application subject to the conditions detailed in the report and subject to the revision of condition 15:</p> <p>Replacement Condition 15 - CTMP No development shall commence on site until a finalised Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Planning Authority in consultation with Transport Scotland. The CTMP shall include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Identification of the routes to site for general construction traffic and details of the number, type and timing of vehicle movements during the construction period, with timing to take cognisance of cumulative traffic impact on the local community associated with other consented developments on the local road network; b) A Road Assessment to establish the current condition of Highland Council roads on the proposed HGV routing plan. This shall be carried out by a consulting engineer and will involve an engineering appraisal; c) Mitigation measures to address impacts on locations identified in the Road Assessment. Such road safety measures may include, but not be limited to structural carriageway overlay and edge strengthening; d) d)Pre and post construction surveys of Highland Council roads; e) Confirmation that any extraordinary wear and tear on Highland Council roads identified by part d) shall be repaired by the developer within three months of the post-construction survey being carried out, with the developer entering into a Section 96 agreement under the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 (as amended) with the Council; f) A procedure for the regular monitoring of road conditions and implementation of remedial works; g) Provisions for emergency vehicle access; h) A timetable for implementation of the measures detailed in the CTMP; i) i)Identification of a nominated person to whom any road safety issues can be referred and measures for keeping the Community Council 	Ross Cubey

	<p>informed and dealing with queries Mr and any complaints regarding construction traffic;</p> <p>j) Thereafter the approved CTMP shall be implemented in full prior to development commencing and remain in</p> <p>with the final wording of condition 15 being delegated to officers.</p>	
8.14	<p>Declaration of interest – Ms J McEwan as she had previously discussed this application with one of the objectors.</p> <p>Applicant: Cruive Ltd (25/02523/FUL) (PLN/074/25) Location: Land To West of Dunroamin, Dunnet (Ward 02). Nature of Development: Glamping retreat with 3 Bothies, and Service Bothy. Recommendation: GRANT</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to GRANT Planning Permission subject to the Conditions detailed in the report. The Committee also agreed to remove condition 2 and condition 3 detailed in the Report on Handling.</p>	AB
	<p>The meeting ended at 2.55 pm on Friday 28 November.</p>	

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL
NORTH PLANNING APPLICATIONS
COMMITTEE

17 December 2025, 9.30AM

MINUTE / ACTION NOTE

Listed below are the decisions taken by Committee at their meeting and the actions that now require to be taken. The webcast of the meeting will be available within 48 hours of broadcast and will remain online for 12 months: <https://highland.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

A separate memorandum will be issued if detailed or further instructions are required, or where the contents of the memorandum are confidential. Please arrange to take the required action based on this action note.

Committee Members Present:

Ms S Atkin
Mr M Baird
Mr R Bremner (remotely) (except item 4.1)
Ms B Campbell (remotely)
Ms T Collier (remotely)
Ms L Dundas
Mr J Edmondson
Mr R Gale
Ms C Gillies
Mrs A MacLean (except item 3.1)
Mr D Millar
Ms J McEwan (except item 4.1)
Ms M Paterson

Non-Committee Members Present:

Mr H Morrison
Mr J Finlayson
Mr R Jones
Mr T Robertson
Mr S Coghill

Substitutes:

Mr R Gunn
Mr P Logue

Apologies:

Mr K Rosie
Ms L Kraft

Officers participating:

Mr D Jones, Area Planning Manager – North (DJ)
Mr P Wheelan, Planning Team Leader (PW)
Mr G Baxter, Principal Planner (GB)
Mr M Fitzpatrick, Principal Planner (MF)
Mr J Bridge, Senior Engineer, Transport Planning
Ms R Banfro, Acting Principal Solicitor (Planning) and Clerk

ITEM NO	DECISION	ACTION
1	<p>Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan</p> <p>Cllr K Rosie Cllr L Kraft</p>	
2	<p>Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt</p> <p>Item 6.2 – Mr R Bremner Item 6.2 – Ms J McEwan</p>	n/a
3	Pre Determination Hearing and Determination of Planning Application	
3.1	<p>3.1 (pp 1 - 68) (Plans pp 1 - 16) (2405062/FUL) (PLN/075/25)</p> <p>Applicant: Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission Plc</p> <p>Location: Land 2430M SW Of Loch Buidhe, Bonar Bridge (Ward 01).</p> <p>Nature of Development: Carnaig Substation - Construction and operation of a 400kV substation and associated infrastructure, site access, and landscaping.</p> <p>Recommendation: GRANT</p> <p>For Motion from Mr R Gale seconded by Mrs M Paterson: -</p> <p>The proposed development does not comply with National Planning Framework 4 Policies 1, 2, 5(c)(ii), 11(e)(xiii) and 13, and Policy 56 and policy 67 of the Highland-wide Local Development Plan.</p> <p>The proposed development forms a functionally interdependent component of the wider Spittal Loch Buidhe to Beaully 400 kV electricity transmission project. The assessment identifies moderate adverse and significant cumulative landscape and visual effects, which are assessed on the assumption that construction of the substation and the associated overhead line would not overlap; however, that assumption is not secured by way of planning condition. In the event of overlapping construction, cumulative landscape and visual effects would be of greater magnitude and longer duration than those assessed resulting in significantly detrimental effects on the upland and upland fringe landscape character around Carnaig and Loch Buidhe, and the visual amenity of residents of Bonar Bridge, residents of scattered rural properties along Migdale Road and the U3521 (Loch Buidhe Road), and road users and recreational users of the surrounding area. In these circumstances, the proposal does not demonstrate how cumulative landscape and visual impacts would be appropriately mitigated and therefore the proposal fails to comply with Policy 11(e)(xiii) of NPF4 and Policy 67 of the HwLDP.</p> <p>The assessment also acknowledges the potential for cumulative construction traffic arising from the combined construction of the substation and the overhead line. These impacts are considered to be substantial given</p>	GB

the nature and scale of the development. However, while cumulative traffic effects are identified, the assessment does not provide a sufficiently robust assessment of the combined effects of HGV and abnormal load traffic on constrained local routes, including Bonar Bridge, Migdale Road and the U3521 (Loch Buidhe Road). In particular, the assessment does not identify, define or assess the specific transport mitigation measures required to accommodate this level of cumulative traffic, including the extent of road widening, strengthening and reconstruction works identified by the Council's Transport Planning advice as likely to be necessary along Migdale Road and associated sections of the local road network. The proposal therefore fails to demonstrate how the cumulative impacts on road safety, residential amenity and network capacity for residents in Bonar Bridge and for those living in scattered rural properties along Migdale Road and the U3521, and on Bonar Bridge itself, would be adequately addressed. As such, the proposal fails to comply with Policies 11(e)(xiii) and 13 of NPF4 and Policy 56 of the HwLDP.

In addition, the proposed development would involve the disturbance and removal of a substantial quantity of peat, resulting in an estimated carbon loss of approximately 110,590 tonnes of CO₂e. While the proposal relates to renewable energy infrastructure, it has not been demonstrated that peat disturbance has been avoided or minimised through appropriate siting, layout or design, nor that the resulting carbon loss would be fully mitigated so as to optimise greenhouse gas emissions reductions. As such, the proposed development does not comply with NPF4 Policies 1, 2 and 5(c)(ii).

Amendment 1 moved by Cllr Edmondson with no Seconder:

The proposed development is required to connect and operate the Spittal to Loch Buidhe to Beaully 400 kV overhead Line and therefore forms a functionally interdependent component of a wider electricity transmission project.

There is insufficient environmental information that has been provided to enable an adequate assessment of the likely significant cumulative effects of the development when considered alongside the associated Spittal to Loch Buidhe to Beaully 400 kV overhead line. In particular, the assessment of landscape and visual effects relies on assumptions that of the proposed development would not overlap with construction of the associated Spittal Loch Buidhe to Beaully 400 kV overhead line. That construction phasing is not secured, and this could result in overlapping construction and greater cumulative effects than assessed. The assessment of traffic and transportation impacts acknowledges the potential for cumulative construction traffic arising from the combined construction of the Carnaig substation and the Spittal to Loch Buidhe to Beaully 400 kV overhead Line, but does not include a quantitative cumulative assessment of combined vehicle movements, including HGV and abnormal load traffic through Bonar Bridge, along Migdale Road and the U3521 (Loch Buidhe Road).

In determining the application, under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017, the decision-maker is required to examine the Environmental Impact Assessment and to ensure that the likely significant effects of the development on the environment, including cumulative effects, are identified, described and assessed, and to reach a reasoned conclusion on those effects before planning permission is granted.

For these reasons the Environmental Impact Assessment fails to meet the requirements of Regulation 4(2) and Schedule 4, paragraph 5(e) of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 and therefore the Committee is unable to conclude that the cumulative effects of the development have been appropriately mitigated to comply with policy 11(e) xiii of NPF4.

This Amendment was subsequently **Withdrawn** by Cllr Edmondson

Amendment from Mr D Millar seconded by Mr R Bremner (*updated 21.01.26*) to **GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION** subject to (1) the conditions detailed in the report and (2) subject to the following amendments in respect of condition 20:

Replacing current subsections b), e) and f) with:

- b) Road Safety Measures within Bonar Bridge. The schedule shall include consideration of improvements at the A836/A949/U3521 junction, footway improvements, gateway features, traffic regulation orders controlling parking and speed management measures such as speed limit orders and improved signage, speed indicator devices and traffic calming features.
- e) Structural assessment of the capacity of the Migdal Road (U3521) carriageway and drainage system to support the volume and intensity of heavy vehicle axle loading generated by the construction traffic and full reconstruction where the assessment indicates the current infrastructure is not suitable to support the increased loading intensity. This will include any road drainage works required.
- f) Widening of the single lane section of Migdale Road (U3521) to 6m to allow two-way traffic. Where this is not reasonably practicable the single lane section shall be widened to 3.5m and intervisible passing places suitable for two-way HGV traffic shall be provided. Localised widening in excess of 3.5m on bends may also be required. The widening proposals will include any road drainage works required.

Adding the following:

- A joint stage 1 and 2 Road Safety Audit for the proposed mitigation works on the public road.
- A mechanism for post-implementation monitoring and review of the effectiveness of the mitigation measures throughout the construction phase with provision for adjustments if necessary. This shall include stage 3, and 4 Road Safety Audits of the mitigation works.

And subject to the following additional condition:

No development shall commence until such time as the Scottish Ministers have issued a decision notice granting consent under section 37 of the Electricity Act

	<p>1989 for planning application ECU00006008 (25/03311/S37) Spittal to Loch Buidhe to Beaully 400 kV Overhead Line, together with deemed planning permission under section 57(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997.</p> <p>Reason: The environmental effects of the proposed development are assessed on the basis that it operates as a functionally interdependent component of the Spittal to Loch Buidhe to Beaully 400 kV overhead line. The condition ensures the development is carried out only on that basis.</p> <p>There were 9 votes for the Motion and 5 votes for the Amendment with no abstentions, the votes having been cast as follows:</p> <p>For the Motion: - Ms S Atkin, Mr M Baird, Ms L Dundas, Mr J Edmondson, Mr R Gale, Ms C Gillies, Ms J McEwan, Ms M Paterson, Mr R Gunn.</p> <p>For the Amendment: - Mr R Bremner, Ms I Campbell, Mr T Collier, Mr D Millar and Mr P Logue</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to REFUSE planning permission for the reasons provided by Cllr Gale.</p>	
4.	Planning Applications to be Determined	
4.1	<p>Declaration of Interest – Mr R Bremner as a Trustee of the Flow Country World Heritage Site and Ms J MacEwan as a member of the Flow Country Steering Group. Both members left the meeting and did not participate in the meeting.</p> <p>There had been circulated Report No PLN/076/25 by the Area Planning Manager - North which is as follows: -</p> <p>Applicant: Shinness Wind Farm Ltd (24/01643/S36) (PLN/076/25) Location: Land 2290M SE Of Aultnacoarach, Shinness, Lairg (Ward 01). Nature of Development: Shinness Wind Farm - Erection and operation of a wind farm for a period of 40 years, comprising of 15 (as amended) wind turbines with a maximum blade tip height of 200m, battery energy storage system (BESS), access tracks, borrow pits, substation, control building, and ancillary infrastructure. Recommendation: RAISE AN OBJECTION</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to RAISE AN OBJECTION for the reasons detailed in the Report.</p>	MF

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **City Region Deal Monitoring Group** held remotely on Tuesday 4 November 2025 at 2.30pm.

Present:

Mr I Brown

Mrs M Reid

Mr A Christie

Mrs T Robertson

Mr K Gowans (Chair)

Mr R Stewart

Mr M Green

Officials in attendance:

Mr M Bailey, Programme Manager

Ms A Macrae, Senior Committee Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

There were apologies for absence from Mr J Bruce, Mr D Fraser, Ms L Niven.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statements

There were no declarations of interest or transparency statements.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

There had been circulated the Minutes of the City Region Deal Monitoring Group held on 19 August 2025, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

4. UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Delivery Plan Progress Update

There was circulated Report No. CRD/07/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place which provided the latest update on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Delivery Plan.

The Programme Manager provided further updates on the Inverness Campus pitches, Whaligoe Steps, Glencoe Village Car Park, and UHI Inverness Green Skills projects, and on the excellent take up of business start-up support and grant funding delivered by Business Gateway. In relation to the Ipsos Evaluation of the UKSPF, the final report for Highland was due in December 2025 and this would be shared with Members once received.

The Group **NOTED** the UKSPF Delivery Plan progress update.

5. Inverness & Highland City Region Deal Programme Report - 2025/26 Quarter 2

There was circulated Report No. CRD/08/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place which provided the 2025/26 Quarter 2 update for the Inverness & Highland City Region Deal (IHCRD).

The Programme Manager provided an overview of progress with the Time Change Extension Request and direct conversations being held with the Scottish and UK Governments and projects where there were risks and challenges.

In response to a question, an update was provided on the progress being made to secure a timeline for delivery of Transport Scotland's A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton Scheme. Reference was made to the interdependencies between this scheme, A9/A96 dualling and the Council's scheme at Inshes Junction. Scottish Government officials were to meet with Council officials to discuss this matter and Members would continue to be advised of progress going forward.

In response to further questions, Members were provided with an update on the Science Skills Academy and options being considered for its sustainability post June 2026. A meeting was to be held with Highlands and Islands Enterprise to discuss this matter, with a focus on the delivery of science skills in future and staffing.

Thereafter, concern was expressed at the ongoing sustainability of the Life Sciences Innovation Centre and the message this sent out in terms of attracting inward investment particularly with development at the Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport. Members noted that a meeting was to be held with UHI to discuss this issue and requested that the Programme Manager also write to UHI to seek further clarity on its plans for the Centre.

The Group:

- i. **NOTED** the 2025/26 Quarter 1 update for the Inverness & Highland City Region Deal; and
- ii. **AGREED** to write to the UHI seeking further clarity on its plans for the Life Sciences Innovation Centre.

6. Inverness & Highland City Region Deal Key Risks, Challenges & Opportunities

The Programme Manager gave a verbal update on the Inverness & Highland City Region Deal Key Risks, Challenges & Opportunities during which he referred to the mitigation provided through the granting of the Time Extension Change Request. He advised that there was an ongoing focus on risk management given the formal Deal end date of March 2027, notwithstanding the time extensions for specific projects post March 2027.

Thereafter, the Group **NOTED** the update.

The meeting concluded at 2.50pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Harbours Management Board** held in **Kinlochbervie Harbour Office, Kinlochbervie** on **28 November 2025** at **11.30am**.

Present:-

Mr M Green (Chair)

Ms M Hutchison

Mr D Macpherson

Mr H Morrison

Mrs T Robertson

In attendance:-

Mrs T Urry, Head of Roads & Infrastructure

Mr G Smith, Service Lead (Infrastructure)

Mr T Usher, Harbours Manager

Mr C Holmes, Property Manager

Mr J MacKay, Marine Superintendent

Mrs O Bayon, Committee Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr I Brown, Mr J Edmonson, Mr W MacKay and Ms L A Niven.

2. Declarations of Interest

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

Item 8: Ms M Hutchison

3. Minutes of Last Meeting

The Board **NOTED** the Minutes of Meeting of the Harbours Management Board held on the 23 May 2025.

4. Uig Redevelopment

There had been circulated Report No HMB/09/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

Members received an update on the progress of the Uig Harbour Redevelopment project. It was confirmed that the main civil works were largely complete and the terminal building had opened to the public at the end of July 2025. CalMac had relocated to the new facility, which included improved seating, ticketing areas and welfare provision.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- the covered walkway remained closed following storm damage. Members were advised that negotiations with the contractor had failed to reach an acceptable

remedial solution and the matter had moved to formal dispute. Adjudication was expected and the Highland Council was preparing its case with legal advisers. The desired outcome was to secure funding to remove and replace the structure with one fit for purpose and compliant with the design life requirement;

- concerns were expressed about ongoing safety risks from loose panels and debris on the damaged walkway. Officers undertook to instruct the contractor to attend site and secure or remove hazardous material;
- questions were asked about the long-term viability of a covered walkway in such an exposed location. It was acknowledged that the shelter had been a requirement of Transport Scotland and CalMac and any decision on replacement would follow adjudication and discussion with the funder;
- Members queried the readiness of the harbour for the arrival of the new Little Minch vessels. Officers confirmed that vessel fit adjustments and fender positioning had been completed, although dredging surveys might be required given the time elapsed since the last dredge and the increased draft of the new vessels;
- the delivery of the two new vessels, MV Lochmor and MV Claymore, had been delayed until 2026, with sea trials to follow;
- clarification was sought on funding arrangements. Officers confirmed that Transport Scotland had provided written assurance that additional costs would be met and the project would remain cost neutral to the Highland Council under the agreed 60% grant and 40% harbour dues model;
- a concern was raised regarding the condition of the Harbour Master's office and the lack of adequate toilet facilities. Members stressed the importance of staff welfare and asked that this issue be addressed; and
- safety implications for passengers during adverse weather were discussed. It was acknowledged that operational measures, including pier closures, were in place when conditions were unsafe.

The Board:-

- i. **NOTED** the update on the Uig Harbour Redevelopment project;
- ii. **AGREED** that officers would instruct the contractor to secure or remove loose material from the damaged walkway and review interim safety measures; and
- iii. **AGREED** that dredging requirements and Harbour Master welfare facilities would be examined and reported back.

5. Kinlochbervie Harbour – Update Report

There is circulated Report No HMB/10/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

Members received an update on the planned capital works at Kinlochbervie Harbour. It was confirmed that design and survey work was progressing and the works were scheduled to commence in spring 2026. The budget allocation of £3m remained in place, profiled across two financial years.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- questions were asked about how harbour operations would be managed during construction and what measures would be taken to minimise disruption. Officers

explained that coordination with the contractor and harbour staff would ensure continuity of operations, although some disruption could not be avoided;

- clarification was sought on the scope of works. Officers stated that repairs would include the ice plant pier and concrete works to the apron area. It was confirmed that structural inspections had not identified major issues with the fish market foundations;
- concerns were expressed regarding settlement of the fish market floor and the presence of voids beneath the structure. It was highlighted that water ingress and differential settlement were evident and could indicate underlying problems. Members stressed that these matters had been the basis of the original funding request and should be addressed;
- it was reiterated that the consultant's report had given the market structure a clean bill of health but accepted to arrange a meeting with the engineers and local representatives to review the concerns raised;
- additional issues were acknowledged, including the condition of the roof and ongoing leaks, which Members considered should be included in any future programme of works; and
- Members emphasised that the programme should not proceed until all structural concerns were fully examined and a clear plan accepted.

The Board:-

- i. **NOTED** the update on Kinlochbervie Harbour and the current programme of works; and
- ii. **AGREED** that the project should be paused pending a meeting between officers, engineers and local representatives to review structural concerns and confirm the scope of works before progressing.

6. Port Marine Safety Code and Safety Management System

There had been circulated Report No HMB/11/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

Members were provided with an overview of the Port Marine Safety Code (PMSC) and the Council's Safety Management System. It was explained that the Code, introduced following the Sea Empress incident at Milford Haven, had been in place for around 25 years and was reviewed periodically, with the latest version issued in 2025.

During discussion, the following points were raised:

- the Code was monitored by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) through health checks at selected ports. These checks reviewed compliance and made recommendations. Recent sampling included Helmsdale Harbour;
- it was confirmed that while most recommendations were minor, workload pressures meant some actions, such as regular stakeholder meetings, were prioritised based on need rather than fixed intervals;
- the Council managed approximately 90 ports and marine facilities with limited staff resources, which made full compliance challenging. A consolidated approach to Safety Management Systems had therefore been adopted;

- Members asked when Lochinver and Kinlochbervie were last inspected and whether the Council could request MCA inspections. Officers advised that inspections were at MCA discretion, but the Council could commission a designated person to review specific issues if required; and
- the importance of maintaining risk assessments and reviewing the Marine Safety Management System was acknowledged, along with the need to appoint a designated person and publish a safety plan.

The Board **NOTED**:-

- i. the contents of the Audit Report and subsequent amendments to the Safety Management Systems at Council Harbours; and
- ii. the remedial actions discussed at the meeting.

7. Grounding of the FV Silver Cloud II

There had been circulated Report No HMB/12/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following points were highlighted:

- the Chair placed on record the Board's appreciation for the professionalism and bravery of the Lochinver Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) crew and the Stornoway based search and rescue helicopter team, whose rapid intervention ensured the safe recovery of all three crew members;
- officers outlined the incident and response. The vessel issued a distress call in the early hours, prompting lifeboat and helicopter rescue of the crew. The following day, the Council's harbours team assessed navigation safety and pollution risk, working with the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, insurers and the salvage company;
- it was confirmed that the vessel could not be refloated and had since broken into sections. Salvage operations commenced on 18 October, with fishing gear and floating debris removed. A local workboat remained on standby for further clearance;
- Members queried the handling of fuel leakage. It was explained that approximately 1,500 - 2,000 litres of marine gas oil escaped, but conditions made recovery unsafe and impractical. Natural dispersion was considered the least harmful option compared to deploying absorbent materials, which would have generated significant landfill waste;
- concerns were raised about environmental impact. Officers acknowledged that pollution occurred but reiterated that safety considerations and prevailing conditions limited intervention; and
- questions were asked about the cause of the grounding. It was observed that the Marine Accident Investigation Branch was conducting a full investigation, with early indications suggesting fatigue might have been a factor.

The Board **NOTED** the contents of the report and the actions taken in response to the incident.

8. Kinlochbervie Masterplan

Transparency Statement: Ms M Hutchison made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as a relative working for the Highland council Harbours. However, having applied the objective test, reviewed her position in relation to the Item, she did not consider that she had an interest to declare.

Members received a presentation on the draft Kinlochbervie Vision Masterplan prepared by 360 Architecture. The plan set out strategic actions to address depopulation, housing shortages and economic challenges, while promoting opportunities linked to harbour development, renewable energy, and community infrastructure.

The Chair welcomed the emerging Kinlochbervie Vision Masterplan as a significant step toward securing a sustainable future for the community and emphasised the importance of prioritising harbour related investment within the overall strategy.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- the Masterplan identified housing as a critical issue, with high construction costs and limited contractor availability making delivery difficult. Members observed that tender prices for recent projects were prohibitive and stressed the need for innovative approaches to secure affordable housing;
- depopulation was highlighted as a major concern, with school rolls projected to fall significantly by 2032. Members endorsed that creating employment and housing opportunities was essential to reverse this trend;
- the harbour was recognised as central to the area's economic future. Members emphasised that competitive fuel pricing was key to attracting fishing vessels and sustaining harbour income. Current reliance on road delivery increases costs and disadvantages Kinlochbervie compared to other ports;
- strong support was expressed for developing a dedicated tanker berth to enable sea fed fuel supply. This was considered a priority investment to secure long term viability and support wider opportunities, including offshore wind farm operations and maintenance;
- Members acknowledged that a deep water berth could also facilitate larger vessels, improve laydown space and attract additional commercial activity. The potential for community benefit from renewable energy projects was welcomed;
- concerns were raised about the structural condition of the timber pier, which supported ice supply and fuelling operations. Members accepted that this required assessment to avoid future operational risks;
- it was acknowledged that funding would be critical. Members discussed the need to phase projects, prioritising the tanker berth and harbour infrastructure improvements, and to explore external funding streams, including government programmes; and
- the importance of promoting Kinlochbervie as a competitive and attractive location was stressed, alongside small scale improvements to public realm and amenities to enhance quality of life and visitor experience.

The Board:-

- i. **NOTED** the presentation and the emerging Kinlochbervie Vision Masterplan; and
- ii. **AGREED** that officers develop a phased proposal for short-term priorities, including a tanker berth and harbour infrastructure improvements, for submission to the Capital Programme Board.

9. Meeting Dates 2026

The Board **AGREED** the meeting dates for 2026 as follows:

- 13 March 2026
- 22 May 2026
- 11 September 2026
- 27 November 2026

The Chair also extended best wishes to Mrs T Urry on her retirement and recorded appreciation for her contribution to the Harbours Board, as this was her final meeting.

The meeting ended at 13.35pm

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Community Regeneration Fund Strategic Sub Group** held **Committee Leader's Room**, in the **Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness** and **Remotely** on **Tuesday 20 January 2026** at **3pm**.

Present:-

Mr I Brown (Remote)	Mr R Jones (Remote)
Mr J Finlayson (Remote)	Mrs I Campbell (Remote)
Mr K Gowans	Mr G MacKenzie (Remote)
Mr M Green	Ms K Willis (Remote)
Ms L Johnston (Remote)	

In attendance:-

Ms F Cameron, Programme Manager – Community Regeneration
Ms M Gray, Project Officer – Community Regeneration
Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager
Mrs O Marsh, Committee Officer

Mr K Gowans in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr R Gale and Mr A Jarvie.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement

The Sub Group **NOTED** the following Transparency Statement:-

Item 5: Ms L Johnston

3. Minutes of Last Meeting

The Sub Group **NOTED** the Minutes of Meeting of the Community Regeneration Fund Strategic Sub Group held on the 29 April 2025.

4. Community Regeneration Fund Budget Monitoring

There had been circulated Report No HCCF/01/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

- Members expressed appreciation to officers for the work undertaken in supporting communities and distributing funding effectively;
- clarification was sought on how areas without a coastline received allocations from the Coastal Communities Fund. It was explained that a de minimis allocation was applied to non-coastal areas, as previously agreed by the the CRF Subgroup;

- Members asked about reporting and monitoring arrangements to ensure funds were spent appropriately and project objectives achieved. It was outlined that financial monitoring was supported locally by Development officers, alongside regular progress reporting by applicants, end of project evaluation and, more recently, enhanced monitoring of social value impacts;
- clarification was sought on the extent of uncommitted funds within the current programme and whether remaining balances could be allocated before year end. It was observed that applications were in development and that decisions were expected to be taken through the Committee cycle before the end of the financial year, to avoid funds being returned to the Scottish Government;
- further explanation was requested of the funding allocation methodology, particularly in relation to variations between areas. In this regard, it was advised that Coastal Communities Fund allocations were based on coastline and sea area measures, while Place Based Investment Fund allocations followed national Scottish Government methodology, taking account of population and levels of deprivation; and
- differing views were expressed on whether future consideration should be given to increasing a central funding allocation rather than full local distribution. It was recognised that the current arrangements reflected agreed criteria attached to the funding and that any future change would require consideration through appropriate Council governance channels.

The Sub Group **NOTED:-**

- i. the commitment to date for each Area Committee as per appendix 2 of the report; and
- ii. the expectation that projects in the pipeline for the January to March Committee cycle were expected to fully utilise the tranche 1 PBIP allocation

5. Community Regeneration Fund Progress Update

Transparency Statement: Ms L Johnston made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as a relative working for the Culbokie Community Trust. However, having applied the objective test, reviewed her position in relation to the Item, she did not consider that she had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No HCCF/02/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

- Members welcomed the paper and acknowledged ongoing local involvement in the development of projects, including those progressed within Lochaber and through island based initiatives;
- clarification was sought on the outcome of the Highland Strategic Local Action Group (LAG) meeting held in January, which had reviewed the 2025/26 programme and considered the development of strategic objectives for 2026/27;
- the meeting had been the first in person session for the Strategic LAG and had been well attended, including participation from the Youth LAG. It was observed that discussion had focused on future strategic priorities and on

improving the representativeness of the group, particularly in relation to geographic coverage across Highland;

- Members were informed that actions arising included consideration of extended membership and further refinement of strategic priorities and that challenges remained due to annual funding cycles and constraints on the use of short term funding, particularly in relation to core costs; and
- reference was made to the intention to improve geographic representation within the Strategic LAG, with Members invited to suggest potential candidates (non public sector), particularly in areas currently under-represented.

The Sub Group:-

- i. **NOTED** the updates provided below;
- ii. **AGREED** to homologate the decision to submit the 5 projects noted in paragraph 6.7 of the report to the Islands Programme; and
- iii. **AGREED** homologate the decision to submit the 8 projects noted in paragraph 6.9 of the report to the Regeneration Capital Grant Fund.

The meeting ended at 3.20pm

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport Monitoring Group** held in **Committee Room 1, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness** on **Friday, 23 January 2026** at **10.00am**.

Present:-

Mr I Brown	Mr M Green (Remote)
Mr S Coghill	Mr G MacKenzie (Remote)
Mr R Cross	Mrs A MacLean
Mr K Gowans	Mrs T Robertson

Non-Member also present:

Mr J Edmonson

In attendance:-

Ms S Armstrong, Chief Officer
Mr D Mudie, Strategic Lead
Mr N Osborne, Climate Change Manager
Ms L Holroyd, Project Manager
Mr M Fraser, Finance Manager
Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager
Mrs O Bayon, Committee Officer

Also in attendance:-

Mr C MacPherson, Chief Executive, ICF Green Freeport

Mr K Gowans in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr S Kennedy and Mr R Stewart.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement

There were no Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statements.

3. Minutes of Last Meeting

The Group **NOTED** the Minutes of Meeting of the Inverness Cromarty Firth Green Freeport Monitoring Group held on 2 September 2025, which had been approved by the Economy and Infrastructure Committee at its meeting on 13 November 2025.

4. General update on progress of Inverness Cromarty Firth Green Freeport projects

A verbal update was provided by Mr C MacPherson, Chief Executive, ICF Green Freeport, which set out, at a general level, recent progress following approval of the governance arrangements required to fully constitute the Green Freeport. Members were advised that this had enabled the programme to move from a preparatory phase into active delivery, allowing previously identified projects to be progressed and reviewed.

The update highlighted continued interest in the area from both local businesses and external investors, with a number of potential developments under consideration. It was observed that engagement activity remained ongoing, although some discussions were necessarily commercially confidential at this stage.

Reference was made to positive early experience in relation to employment and skills, with evidence that local people were well placed to benefit from emerging opportunities. Members were advised that partnership working with education providers, skills agencies and employers continued, with a focus on supporting workforce transition and future demand.

Wider challenges were also acknowledged, including the long timescales associated with planning, infrastructure and energy related projects, as well as the importance of addressing housing availability to support sustainable growth. Members were advised that work was underway with partners to help mitigate these issues and support coordinated regional delivery.

During discussion, Members raised the following points:-

- the continued level of investment interest in the area was welcomed, including growth among local businesses alongside external investment;
- reference was made to employment opportunities emerging in key sectors and assurances were sought that local people were benefiting from recruitment activity. It was observed that early experience had been encouraging, with strong local interest and good quality applications;
- concern was raised regarding the pace at which some major projects were materialising, noting that long planning, consenting and infrastructure timescales remained a challenge, particularly within the energy sector;
- housing availability was highlighted as a significant constraint on future growth, Members acknowledged the need to ensure accommodation could be provided for new workers without placing pressure on existing communities;
- skills availability was discussed, with Members recognising opportunities arising from workforce transition while emphasising the importance of continued engagement with schools, training providers and partners;
- clarification was sought on how people with relevant skills could better access information on available opportunities, and it was acknowledged that

partnership initiatives were underway to improve coordination and visibility across the region; and

- Members were mindful that some matters remained commercially sensitive and expressed understanding of the need for confidentiality while discussions continued.

5. Outstanding Actions Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

A verbal update was provided by Mr C MacPherson, Chief Executive, ICF Green Freeport, on the status of outstanding actions arising from the MoU. Members were advised that the majority of actions identified through the approval process had now been completed, with a small number remaining.

It was observed that several priority actions had already been addressed, including updates required to reflect the passage of time since the original business case was prepared. Members were informed that the remaining actions were largely administrative in nature and were being progressed, with completion anticipated within the agreed timescale.

Members were advised that one outstanding area related to carbon assessment and environmental impact required more detailed technical input. It was acknowledged that this work was more complex and that external specialist support was being sought to ensure an appropriate and robust response, particularly where land ownership arrangements varied.

Overall, Members were assured that good progress continued to be made and that the remaining actions were being managed in line with the requirements set out in the Memorandum of Understanding.

The Group **NOTED** the status of the outstanding actions from the Memorandum of Understanding.

6. Skills and Investment Fund

A verbal update was provided by Mr C MacPherson, Chief Executive, ICF Green Freeport, on the establishment and early operation of the Skills and Investment Fund, which had been created to support skills development alongside the wider investment programme.

Members were informed that the fund was designed to build capacity over time and that contributions were linked to the creation of new permanent employment. It was acknowledged that, at this early stage, the fund remained in its infancy, reflecting the gradual pace at which new roles were being established.

The update highlighted the intention to use the fund to support skills development, particularly for younger people and those seeking access to training opportunities, as the programme expanded. Members were advised that income would grow as further investment and employment activity

materialised, and that there was an inherent time lag between project commencement and the availability of resources within the fund. Members were informed that progress would continue to be monitored and reported, and that the fund was expected to play a more significant role as larger employment-creating projects came forward.

The Group **NOTED** the status of the Skills and Investment Fund.

7. Update Seed Capital

A verbal update was provided by Ms L Holroyd, Project Manager, on progress with the Seed Capital programme, including recent developments relating to delivery timescales and funding allocation. Members were advised that the programme timetable had been extended, allowing additional time for project delivery and easing previous pressures caused by the gap between business case approval and completion of formal agreements.

Reference was made to continued engagement with project leads across the approved Seed Capital projects, noting that while progress remained positive, some projects were subject to phasing changes and cost pressures. Members were informed that work was ongoing to manage these pressures, including consideration of how funding might be re-profiled where necessary to ensure overall programme delivery.

Progress continued across a range of projects intended to unlock development, address infrastructure constraints and support economic growth, and that some projects involved preparatory and enabling works rather than immediate construction activity. It was also observed that additional funding streams had recently become available at short notice, with successful applications submitted for further support, subject to formal confirmation.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- clarification was sought on funding gaps associated with one of the road safety related infrastructure projects, and it was observed that further match funding would be required, with potential contributions being explored through relevant national partners;
- Members queried the interaction between strategic transport projects and wider development plans, noting that delays and uncertainty around key infrastructure could impact the timing and delivery of associated developments;
- concern was expressed about the limited delivery windows for some Seed Capital projects, and it was acknowledged that managing drawdown deadlines alongside complex projects remained challenging, despite the extension to the programme timescale; and
- Members emphasised the importance of prioritising projects that addressed safety, connectivity and housing related infrastructure and supported continued engagement with partner bodies to progress these matters.

The Group **NOTED** the status of seed capital projects.

8. Retained Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) Investment Plan

There had been circulated Report No ICF/1/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place. This consisted of a presentation provided by Mr C MacPherson, Chief Executive, ICF Green Freeport where he explained that the Retained Non-Domestic Rate Fund (rNDR) was one of the key mechanisms for economic and social development included within the Green Freeport programme. The presentation summarised the governance approach detailed in the Full Business Case and proposed the approach for prioritisation. The Board of ICF Green Freeport was responsible for shaping the strategy and prioritisation for the fund but Highland Council were a key consultee and retained responsibility for retaining and disbursing the fund.

In total, the Green Freeport had 520 hectares of defined tax sites which attracted a relief that allowed a landholder could claim five years exemption from Non-Domestic Rate (NDR) on new infrastructure. Where NDR relief was claimed, the amount was calculated and reimbursed by the Scottish Government to the Rating Authority (Highland Council) over the first 5 years for use in delivering the Green Freeport's aims. After the five years NDR holiday was over, the NDR was then collected as normal but retained by the Highland Council as part of the rNDR fund for the next 20 years.

The presentation continued with details of the potential value, investment objectives, the Governance Framework, the proposed hierarchy of spend, the Investment Cycle and its implementation.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the considerable resource impact on both the Council's Finance Service and the Highland and Western Isles Valuation Service clarification was provided. However, neither would lose financially as staff costs would be repaid as would the Green Freeport's expenses;
- the rNDR fund was not a slush fund to replace cash for existing projects/services but would be used as a strategic fund to deliver carefully considered projects and programmes in the long term. The Council's Section 95 Officer, Brian Porter, was required to sign off all spend and it had to relate to the Green Freeport's aims;
- the ICF Green Freeport was described as having one of the clearest reporting arrangements, due to there being only one local authority – Highland Council – involved;
- funding of a Skills Academy was important to ensure young people could find a well-paid job and remain in Highland. However, it was important also not to over promise on all apprenticeships being available too early;
- encouraging young people to learn driving skills as soon as possible was highlighted;
- transport in the area was a priority and, as houses were built, transport needs would change;
- one way of communicating the regeneration would be through the Community Place Plans mechanism;

- in response to a question, it was confirmed that it was the employer who decided when to trigger the five years exemption from NDR and they had a ten year window in which to do that;
- the ICF Green Freeport was a long term process but the benefits would be outstanding. There would be challenges but flexibility had been built in;
- there was close cooperation with other Freeports so that lessons could be learnt and ideas exchanged; and
- turning to investment, it was important not to raise false expectations but there was also an opportunity to do something, such as investment in property, to create a growing pot of money for the future.

At this juncture, the Group were informed of the impending retirement of Allan Maguire, Head of Development and Regeneration. His contribution to the establishment of the Green Freeport had been invaluable.

Thereafter, Group **NOTED** the executive summary of the draft Investment Plan as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

The meeting ended at 11.30 am.