Agenda Item	6
Report No	RDB-02-26

The Highland Council

Committee: Redesign Board

Date: 19 March 2026

Report Title: **Roads and Amenities Redesign Project - Budget Monitoring and Progress Update**

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

1   Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1   This report provides the Redesign Board with an update on progress of project delivery, including financial, performance, risk, and general information on the following Project:-

- Roads and Amenities Redesign Project

1.2   The content and structure of the report is intended to:-

- assist Member scrutiny and performance management;
- inform decision making and aid continuous improvement; and
- provide transparency and accessibility

2   Recommendations

2.1   Members are asked to:

1. **Consider and note** the updates on the Amenities and Roads Redesign project; and
2. **Agree** to the establishment of a Member/Officer Redesign Working Group covering Roads and Amenities.

3   Implications

3.1   **Resource** – The Amenities project will consider all the resourcing issues including workforce, plant, materials, income generation and community capacity for sustainable proposals to be developed for Members to consider. A budget of £100,000 to be met from reserves was agreed at the Council meeting on 6 March 2025 to deliver this project: Grounds Maintenance development of a future operating model – project delivery. Resources required for outcomes from the Redesign Project will be determined at a later date.

3.2   **Legal** – This report contributes to the Council's statutory duties to report performance and secure best value in terms of; Section 1(1)(a) of the Local Government Act 1992, and Section 1 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, respectively. The Council also has a duty to maintain the road network to a reasonable standard and to manage risk effectively.

3.4   **Risk** – There are no risk implications arising as a direct result of this report. Project/Programme risks are identified via the Council risk management process and monitored through the Portfolio Boards and are reported by exception only in paragraphs 5.4 and 6.4.

3.5   **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** – The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 outlines control measures that the Council must take to protect the Health and Safety of its employees and members of the public when using chemicals such as weed killer. Any changes to current practice will incorporate the appropriate control measures. Glyphosate use is licensed only until December 2026.

3.5.1   Play areas are not a statutory service; however, where they are provided, we must comply with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Occupiers Liability (Scotland) Act 1960 for employees and members of the public attending play areas. We must also comply with our duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Fairer Scotland Duty. Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children have the right to relax and play, and participate in a wide range of cultural, artistic and cultural activities.

3.6   Gaelic – There are no known Gaelic implications.

4   Impacts

4.1   In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.

4.2   Considering impacts are a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.

4.3   This is a monitoring and update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

5   Amenities Review

Milestones		Current Status
Starts Jan 26 / Completes Apr 26	Amenities - Plant & Resources - Plant and equipment utilisation review	**M10 25/26 On Target**
Starts Jan 26 / Completes Mar 27	Amenities - Asset Management - Provide asset management system for resource management and cost control	**M10 25/26 On Target**
Starts Nov 25 / Completes Mar 27	Amenities - Financial Management - Establish service delivery costs and viability of a corporate budget for routine maintenance	**M10 25/26 On Target**
Starts Jan 26 / Completes Mar 27	Amenities - Grass Cutting - Develop active route management	**M10 25/26 On Target**
Starts Apr 26 / Completes Apr 27	Amenities - Performance Management - Develop KPI's based on Output Specification and APSE reporting	**M10 25/26 On Target**
Starts Dec 25 / Completes Mar 27	Amenities - Service Delivery - Resource allocation and workforce planning based on Asset maintained to deliver Output Specification	**M10 25/26 On Target**

5.1   The project team has considered the APSE report recommendations and have developed an action plan based on the milestone projects to be achieved by March 2027.

5.2   The proposed operating model element of this project will address amenities plant and resources, provision of a suitable asset management system, establishment of service delivery costs and viability of a corporate budget, establish active route management, development of relevant key performance indicators (KPIs) and align resource allocation and workforce planning based on asset maintained to deliver to the agreed output specification.

5.3   Data gathering on plant utilisation is ongoing to compile a comprehensive plant list covering all power tools, hired and owned equipment. The review will determine the actual operational time being employed for any piece of equipment, plant, or transport. The plant and equipment utilisation study includes a commitment to cost reduction and redirecting spare capacity to develop commercial opportunities. This will lead to more efficiency and greater control of health and safety checks.

5.4   The project plan and scope has been agreed in respect of financial management has been agreed. Engagement has commenced with the Amenities team and service clients to identify and gather empirical evidence to establish service costs, identify efficiencies and put in place appropriate management oversight for monitoring and underpinning corporate budgeting for cyclical activities.

5.5 In terms of grass cutting, GPS trackers have been fitted to mowing equipment for the 2026 season. Data from trackers will inform route deployment and cross area working.

5.6 Performance Management is critical to the operation of the amenities function, in order that the benefits of the redesign process are monitored and reported on regularly. Engagement with teams is helping to identify service requirements (statutory, performance, quality, productivity and cost), assessing the current systems for data collection that are in place in place and what needs to be done to improve the Council's standing within the APSE family group reports.

5.7 **Overall Project RAG Status**

The overall RAG status of the Amenities project is Green as it is on track to deliver on time by end of March 2027. The project is currently being delivered within the allocated budget.

5.8 **Key Milestones & Requests for Change**

The project is progressing on target. There are no requests for change.

5.9 **Financial Summary**

Amenities Review:-

i) A budget of £100,000 to be met from reserves was agreed at the Council meeting on 6 March 2025 to deliver this project: Grounds Maintenance development of a future operating model – project delivery.

ii) Investment – spend on consultant for APSE is £15,000, trackers for grounds maintenance machinery £6,384, and additional project management resource

5.10 **Key Risks**

There are no significant risks at present.

5.11 **Forward Plan**

The work described in this report will continue on all projects throughout the next reporting period, albeit working more closely with the roads redesign project team.

6   Roads Redesign

MILESTONES		CURRENT STATUS
Starts Aug25 / Completes Nov25	Roads Improvement - TTRO Software: Software Development	M8 25/26 Completed
Starts Jul25 / Completes Oct25	Roads Improvement - AI Cameras: Market research	M7 25/26 Completed
Starts Nov25 / Completes Dec25	Roads Improvement - AI Cameras: Business Case Development	M9 25/26 Completed
Starts Sep25 / Completes Dec25	Roads Improvement - Route Optimisation: Market research	M10 25/26 Completed
Starts Nov25 / Completes Feb26	Roads Improvement - Job Card Digitisation: Discovery/Scoping. Internal engagement/workshops	M11 25/26 On Target
Starts Dec25 / Completes Feb26	Roads Improvement - Route Optimisation: Business Case Development	M11 25/26 On Target
Starts Feb26 / Completes ?	Roads Improvement - AI Cameras: Business Case submission to SMT Team	M11 25/26 On Target
Starts Mar26 / Completes May26	Roads Improvement - AI Cameras: Demos and Full Spec Completion	M11 25/26 On Target
Starts Feb26 / Completes ?	Roads Improvement - Route Optimisation: Business Case submission to SMT Team	M11 25/26 On Target
Starts Apr26 / Completes Jun26	Roads Improvement - Route Optimisation: Demos and Full Spec Completion	M11 25/26 On Target
Starts Jun26 / Completes Nov26	Roads Improvement - AI Cameras: Procurement	M11 25/26 On Target
Starts Jul26 / Completes Dec26	Roads Improvement - Route Optimisation: Procurement	M11 25/26 On Target

6.1   **Key Milestones and Requests for Change**

The project is progressing on target. There are no requests for change.

6.2   Data gathering on the Council's approach to managing abnormal loads is still ongoing. The team is working with colleagues in the Structures Team to ensure all structures related data is pulled through. Go-live of the new system is expected in April/May.

6.3   New Temporary Traffic Restriction Orders software is now live in 'soft launch' state and was recently demoed to the Member working group. It is open to Traffic Management Companies and internal applications, with full roll out to follow once Technicians are comfortable, and all snagging issues are dealt with. The team is reviewing and updating Operational Procedures to ensure these are up to date and accurate. The key benefit of this is that it allows a seamless process, a synchronisation of workflows and joint working across the whole area. The new website will be updated with a link to the new application form once live. At the recent demo, Members were keen to ensure that operators were made aware of the system and the fact that it was not optional to progress without appropriate consents.

6.4   New Permanent Traffic Restriction Orders software is in development. This work is on track for completion in early April. The road service is working closely with the Road Safety Team and the software developer to ensure all aspects of the current process are covered. Once operational, an interactive map of all permanent Traffic Restriction Orders is planned for further on in the development process. This will allow the public to view all new TROs with all corresponding information on a single map (project to add all historic TROs to be considered).

6.5   A Business Case for the use of Artificial Intelligence cameras has been completed and is being reviewed by officers before being presented to the Redesign Working Group.   Work is ongoing to finalise the specification to ensure progress towards procurement can be started immediately following approval of the Business Case.

6.6   A Business Case for Route Optimisation has been completed Work is ongoing to finalise the specification to ensure progress towards procurement can be started immediately following approval of the Business Case.

6.7   Two workshops regarding digitalisation of the job card process have taken place, one with Amenities (including relevant Business Support staff), and one with Roads (again including relevant Business Support staff).

        Process Maps have been developed during both workshops to understand timeline and processes involved. Engagement with the HR Project Team took place before Christmas to understand how this project will affect delivery of digitising job cards. Further engagement has also taken place with the Finance Team to attempt to fill out understanding of the current process, identify risks and ensure all potential users are included in any new solution. Additional engagement has occurred with Waste, Housing and Bereavement Services to understand how they manage their processes, and what tools they use to do so.

6.8   As indicated above, the Roads Redesign Working Group has been re-established, and a meeting was held on 23rd February. This helped to shape priorities and as a result, work is now ongoing to progress the next Roads Finance Workshop. This will allow the development of the financial strategy for future investment in roads funding (capital and revenue).

6.9   The service has reviewed its web pages for the new Council website and they are now live. Additional information will be added as required. In addition, the road asset management database has been moved to a cloud-based version in November 2025. This will enable further system developments to take place, including potential links with the CRM system (including reports of defects).

6.10   **Financial Summary**

        As the various projects are developed, any additional investments will be determined and, if required, will be reported to committee at a later date.

6.11   **Key Risks**

        There are no significant risks at present.

6.12   **Forward Plan**

        The work described in section 6.2 to 6.9 will continue on all projects throughout the next reporting period.

7.   **Conclusions**

7.1   Members are asked to note the progress being made across both areas of redesign. One element that the project teams feel would be useful is to formally combine both projects under the oversight of one Member/Officer Working Group. Members are asked to agree this approach, recognising that the workstreams are generally entirely complementary and this also relates well to the operational management changes within the Place Cluster.

Designation:	Assistant Chief Executive – Place
Date:	19 February 2026
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Background Papers:	Road Improvement Project Report – June 2025
Appendices:	None