

Agenda Item	<b>6</b>
Report No	<b>HC/05/26</b>

## The Highland Council

**Committee:** Highland Council

**Date:** 26 March 2026

**Report Title:** Pride in Place Programme

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

### 1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Pride in Place Programme is a UK Government programme aimed at building stronger communities, creating thriving places and empowering people to take back control. A number of Local Authority areas across the UK were identified to receive funds of up to £20m for a specific neighbourhood over a ten-year period, with the funds to be overseen and directed by a local Neighbourhood Board. The aim is to support, empower and deliver long term infrastructure improvements to the communities identified.
- 1.2 North, West and East Sutherland was selected by the Scotland Office and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government as the community to receive the funds within Highland.
- 1.3 This report provides Members with an update on the Pride in Place Programme and seeks agreement concerning the Council's role as Accountable Body.

### 2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:-
  - i. **Note** the update on the Pride in Place Programme and its proposed operation;
  - ii. **Note** that the Highland Council will act as the Accountable Body for the funding in relation to the Pride in Place Programme for the "North, West and East Sutherland Neighbourhood";
  - iii. **Note** the initial funding provided to the Council, as Accountable Body, to progress the establishment of the Neighbourhood Board and development of a Project Plan to support delivery of the PIPP;
  - iv. **Note** that, in the role of accountable body, the Council will lead, along with the local MP, on the recruitment of an independent Board Chair and following that, the recruitment of Board Members;
  - v. **Agree** that authority is delegated to the Assistance Chief Executive - Place, in consultation with the Convener, Leader and Leader of the Opposition of the Council, to undertake the actions required to implement and progress delivery of the Pride in Place Programme. This would include (but are not limited to):-

- a. recruitment and appointment of a Neighbourhood Board Chair
- b. recruitment and appointment of members to, and establishment of, a Neighbourhood Board (including setting the terms of reference for the Board);
- c. approval of expenditure relating to the development and implementation of the PIPP programme from the initial grant provided to the Accountable Body (£0.15m) for 2026/27; and
- vi. **Agree** that an update on the implementation of the Pride in Place Programme, will be provided to the Economy and Infrastructure Committee in August 2026, with interim updates provided to the Sutherland Area Business Meeting.

### 3 Implications

3.1 **Resource** - A total of £19.6m will be made available from the UK Government to the Council (as Accountable Body) between now and 31 March 2036, although funding post financial year 2028-29 is to be reviewed at the next Spending Review. The funding is split 63% capital (£12.43m) and 37% revenue (£7.17m).

#### Funding Profile

F/Y	Year	Capital	Revenue	Total
25/26			150,000	150,000
26/27	1	120,000	270,000	390,000
27/28	2	670,000	690,000	1,360,000
28/29	3	1,460,000	690,000	2,150,000
29/30	4	1,460,000	770,000	2,230,000
30/31	5	1,460,000	770,000	2,230,000
31/32	6	1,460,000	770,000	2,230,000
32/33	7	1,460,000	770,000	2,230,000
33/34	8	1,460,000	770,000	2,230,000
34/35	9	1,460,000	770,000	2,230,000
35/36	10	1,460,000	770,000	2,230,000
	<b>Total</b>	<b>12,470,000</b>	<b>7,190,000</b>	<b>19,660,000</b>

3.1.2 Funding is intended to be flexible. It does not have to be fully allocated or spent per financial year and can be carried forward to enable future activity. The Programme does, however, have to meet a minimum spend requirement by end of Year 4 and again at end of Year 7.

3.1.3 As the Accountable Body, the Council will be responsible for the management of these public funds and undertaking due diligence. The Chief Officer – Corporate Finance (as the Section 95 Officer) is required to submit to the UK Government an annual statement verifying expenditure.

3.1.4 The Economic Development and Regeneration Service will work closely with the Neighbourhood Board and local MP to develop and embed appropriate controls and processes for funding. The Service is experienced in managing funding programmes to third party organisations on behalf of governments, including the Inverness and Highland City Region Deal, the Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport, UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the Scottish Government’s Place Based Investment Programme.

- 3.1.5 Delivering this Programme will require Council staff resource and initial spend on activity which will support appointment of the Chair and the Board and the engagement of community groups. Such expenditure is to be funded from the £150,000 Pride in Place Programme revenue grant which has been provided by the UK Government and already received by the Council. It is recommended in this report that authority for spend of this is delegated to the Assistant Chief Executive – Place, to enable the programme to progress at pace.
- 3.2 **Legal** - As the Accountable Body for the funds at the start of the Programme, the Council is responsible for ensuring that all funds are managed in line with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. It will also be responsible for compliance with subsidy control and procurement legislation.
- 3.3 **Risk** – There is a need to progress at pace to initiate and develop the programme. This includes the recruitment of a Board Chair and Board Members. The Board needs to be in place by July 2026. It will also be important to commence work on developing and creating the Pride in Place Plan. This is required to be in place by November 2026. To mitigate this, it is proposed to delegate authority to the Assistant Chief Executive – Place, in consultation with the Convener, Leader and Leader of the Opposition, to expedite the process.
- 3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** – None arising from this report.
- 3.5 **Gaelic** – None arising from this report.

## **4 Impacts**

- 4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children’s Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.
- 4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.
- 4.3 This report provides an update on the establishment of the PIP programme and therefore an impact assessment is not required. As part of the development of the Pride in Place Plan for North, West and East Sutherland, an impact assessment will be required.

## **5 Pride in Place Programme – Background**

- 5.1 In December 2025, the UK Government announced an allocation of up to £20 million over a ten-year period to support delivery of the Pride in Place Programme (PiPP) in Highland. The investment is targeted at a pre-selected neighbourhood within the region and is intended to deliver key social infrastructure that will enhance community capacity in areas identified as having the highest levels of need. The programme is structured to be community-led, with decision-making undertaken by Neighbourhood Boards composed of local residents. These Boards will determine funding priorities and investment proposals, operating with support from the local Member of Parliament and the local authority.

- 5.2 The UK Government has determined that the Neighbourhood which is eligible for PiPP in Highland is “North, West and East Sutherland” (**Appendix 1**).
- 5.3 The UK Government used a methodology based on Scottish Community Needs Index (75%) and Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (25%) to inform this decision and to define the boundary of this area (the “Neighbourhood Boundary”). It is estimated that this area has a combined population of 7,286. There is scope to request slight alteration to this Neighbourhood Boundary if the Board considers that the addition of a key asset or street which is just outside of the Boundary is integral to strengthening the Neighbourhood. Such alteration would require the agreement of the UK Government (i.e. the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) and any proposed alteration would be included as part of the return to be submitted by the Council to the UK Government in July 2026.
- 5.4 A dedicated decision-making framework is required for the delivery of the Pride in Place Programme (PiPP), as stipulated by the UK Government. Under this framework, the Council will act as the Accountable Body for all funding awards. However, responsibility for determining the allocation of funds will rest with a newly established Neighbourhood Board, which will make the investment decisions in accordance with the approved Pride in Place Plan for the area.
- 5.5 As Accountable Body, the Council will be responsible for ensuring that public funds are distributed fairly and effectively, and that funds have been managed in line with the [Nolan Principles](#), [Equality Act 2010](#), [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) and [Managing Public Money](#) principles. The Council will also be responsible for compliance with legal responsibilities in relation to subsidy control and procurement. The Council is also expected to support the Neighbourhood Board with implementation of the Programme, and to work with the local MP in relation to PiPP.
- 5.6 The Council is expected to confirm or submit the following to the UK Government in 2026:

Action	Responsible	Deadline
Appointment of Neighbourhood Board Chair	Local Authority Local MP	Approximately May 2026
Confirmation of Neighbourhood Board Members and Neighbourhood Boundary	Board Chair, Local Authority Local MP	17 July 2026
Submission of Pride in Place Plan	Neighbourhood Board Local Authority Local MP	28 November 2026

It should be noted that the actions or decisions noted above cannot be taken unilaterally by the Council – albeit the Council has an important role to play. The recommended delegations to the Assistant Chief Executive – Place should be understood in this context.

- 5.7 The Neighbourhood Board Chair is expected to be central to the decision making of the wider Board. As such, it is recommended that recruitment of the Board Chair starts immediately to enable Board Members and the Neighbourhood Boundary to be confirmed to the UK Government by the July 2026 deadline. The draft job and person specification is attached as **Appendix 2**.

- 5.8 The Chair is to be approved and appointed by the Council and the MP. Recruitment to this post of Chair will be launched publicly through an Expression of Interest process. During preliminary discussions with the MP, it was agreed that the interview panel will consist of the MP, Council Leader, Council Convenor and a Senior Council Officer.
- 5.9 The Chair, supported by the Local Authority and MP, will lead the recruitment of Board members, ensuring an inclusive and representative selection of people from across the local community. It is therefore also intended that Expressions of Interest for the Board Member positions be published shortly, to ensure an efficient decision-making process once the Chair has been appointed. It is intended that there will be Sutherland elected Member representation on the Board. Operating parameters for the Board will also be established, including the Terms of Reference.
- 5.10 Engagement and consultation activities will be undertaken to support the community and the Board in the development of the Pride in Place Plan. These activities will utilise the National Standards for Community Engagement and will align with, and build upon, the recent work undertaken by the Council's Community Support and Engagement Team in developing the Sutherland Area Place Plan, the existing North West 2045 plan and other local place plans across the area. It is critical that the Pride in Place Plan is ambitious and delivers transformational social infrastructure that will enhance community capacity within the area.
- 5.10 An update on progress will be provided to the Economy and Infrastructure Committee in August 2026 (and subsequent meetings) in line with other Government funded regeneration projects. Interim updates will be provided to the Sutherland Area Business meetings or the Area Committee as appropriate.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

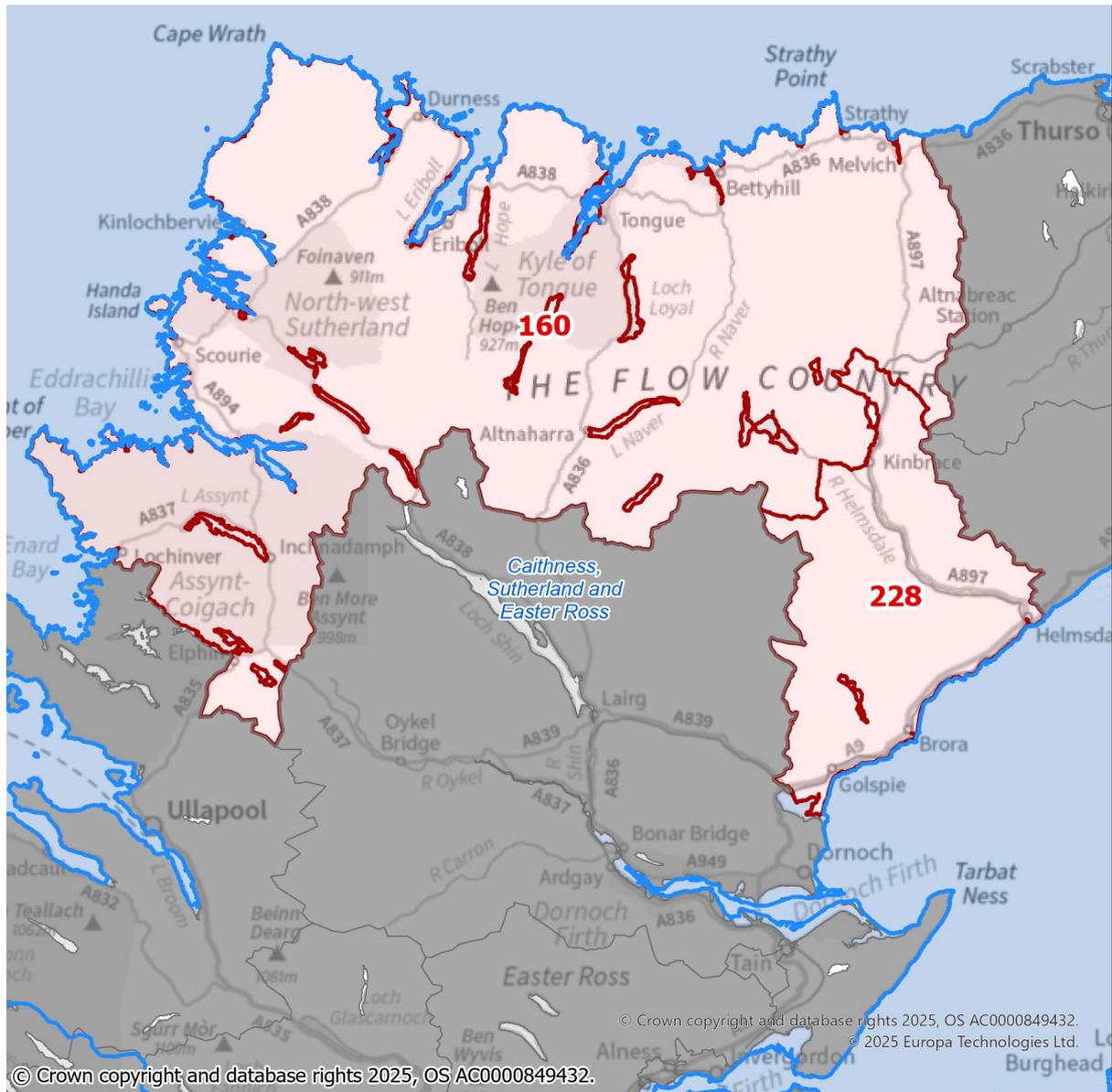
Date: 5 March 2026

Author: Alan Webster, Service Lead – Economic Development & Regeneration  
Alison Clark, Chief Officer Housing and Communities

Background Papers: None

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Map of North, West and East Sutherland PiPP boundary  
Appendix 2 – Neighbourhood Board Chair – Draft Job and Person Specification

# Appendix 1: Map of Area



**DRAFT Job and Person Specification**

**Independent Chair – Neighbourhood Board (Highlands)**

**Pride in Place Programme**

**1. Background**

The Pride in Place Programme is a new UK Government funding initiative designed to give local people greater influence over community regeneration in their area. The programme provides £20 million over the next ten years, enabling local communities to shape and deliver projects that can deliver real change in their area that outlives the programme itself.

Highland has been chosen as one of the UK areas to receive up to £20m through Pride in Place. The neighbourhood designated for this funding is north, west and east Sutherland, which includes areas within both the North West and Central Sutherland and East Sutherland and Edderton Council wards.

Highland Council and the local MP will support the process, and the guiding principle is that this long-term funding will support communities in shaping their place, and prioritising funding, based on extensive community engagement around three core goals -

- Building stronger communities
- Creating thriving places
- Empowering people to take back control

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**2. Purpose of the Role**

Highland Pride in Place is seeking a community representative in Sutherland to take on the role of Independent Chair. The Chair will lead the Neighbourhood Board to deliver lasting community led change. The Chair's role is to bring people together, help shape a shared vision for the future, and support long-term positive change in the community. They will ensure local voices are at the heart of decision making, and embed a strong, community-led ethos at every stage of the programme.

The Chair should have a strong personal connection to the area and a good sense of its strengths, challenges, and character. Previous leadership experience isn't essential — what matters most is enthusiasm, fairness, and a genuine commitment to helping the community thrive.

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### **3. The Role**

The Independent Chair will act as a trusted, impartial leader who brings together residents, voluntary and community organisations, businesses, and public sector partners to work towards a shared vision for the area.

They will:

- Take an active role in setting up the membership of the Neighbourhood Board
  - Provide clear strategic direction as the Board starts its work
  - Encourage open, inclusive collaboration across all partners
  - Ensure decision-making and governance are clear and transparent
  - Build an open and collaborative working relationship with the local MP and Highland Council
  - Represent the Neighbourhood Board in wider networks across the UK
  - Help build confidence, participation, and ownership within the community
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### **4. What the Chair Will Be Like**

The Chair will be a proactive, reliable, and approachable convener who:

- Has a strong connection to the community and wants to make a difference
- Has time to commit to, and prioritise, the role
- Is able to bring a wide range of voices together to shape a shared local vision
- Is well-respected locally, even if this is their first formal leadership role
- Encourages open, inclusive discussions
- Handles disagreements calmly and fairly
- Prioritises community engagement and reaches out to different groups
- Open to learning, feedback and development and has an interest in upskilling others
- Understands where they may need support and builds a Board with a mix of skills
- Thinks creatively about solutions and how to involve the community
- Acts as a friendly, confident public face for the Board who brings partners together across political boundaries

**The Chair should not be:**

- A gatekeeper — the Board must reflect a wide range of views
  - Someone who pushes personal interests
  - The only expert or the main decision-maker
  - Responsible for day-to-day delivery — this role is about strategy and leadership
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## **5. Key Initial Responsibilities**

During the early stages of Pride in Place, the Chair will:

### **1. Establish the Neighbourhood Board**

- Lead the process of recruiting Board members
- Work with Highland Council and the local MP on final appointments
- Help set up clear governance arrangements
- Support the development of genuine, inclusive community engagement

### **2. Lead conversations about the area's boundary and name**

- Make sure discussions reflect local identity, geography, and community voices

### **3. Lead development of the first Pride in Place Plan**

- Work with the Board to create a shared 10-year vision
- Agree priorities for investment
- Prepare the plan for Government submission (November 2026)
- Oversee review and monitoring over time

### **4. Champion strong community engagement**

- Work collaboratively with the MP's office and Highland Council
- Ensure that a wide mix of voices from across the area are heard
- Build strong, ongoing relationships with community groups and local services

### **5. Promote and champion the Pride in Place vision**

- Encourage communities to get involved
  - Represent the Board externally and support strong partnerships
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## **6. Person Specification**

The ideal candidate will show:

### **Commitment and Motivation**

- Willingness to give time consistently
- Real enthusiasm for improving their local area

### **Local Knowledge**

- Good understanding of local issues, strengths, and priorities

### **Experience**

- Involvement in community work, volunteering, or neighbourhood activities
- Experience chairing meetings or facilitating groups
- Experience of public funding requirements

## **Skills**

- Strong communication and people skills
- Confidence in leading discussions and building agreement
- Ability to work well with partners, residents, and other stakeholders
- Fair, impartial decision-making
- Comfortable working with a range of viewpoints

The Chair should also demonstrate a strong commitment to equalities and removing barriers to participation for all sections of the community.

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## **7. Time Commitment and Remuneration**

This is an **unpaid voluntary role**, but reasonable expenses will be covered.

### **Time commitment**

- Around **2–3 days per month**
  - A higher commitment is expected during the first 6 months
  - Extra time may be needed to work with the Council, the MP, and community groups as the Board gets established
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## **8. Support**

The Chair of the Neighbourhood Board will receive ongoing support from Highland Council as the Accountable Body for the funding, and also the local MP. The Chair will be supported in the process of recruitment of local stakeholders and residents to the Boards, and throughout the process of developing strategic priorities for each area. Secretariat and governance support for the Board will also be provided by Highland Council. It is anticipated a Pride in Place Project Officer will be recruited in due course.

### **Highland Council (as Accountable Body)**

- Governance and administrative support
- Secretariat support for meetings
- Help with Board recruitment
- Support in developing the area's strategic priorities
- Access to training and development
- Assistance with community engagement and communications

### **The Local MP**

- Support in setting up the Board
- Help with outreach and community engagement

- Continued partnership working

### **Pride in Place Programme**

- Peer support from other Chairs across the region
  - Guidance from UK Government
  - Expected support from a Pride in Place Project Officer (when appointed)
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## **9. What will the Pride in Place Neighbourhood Board look like?**

The Board will bring together residents, local businesses, grassroots campaigners, workplace representatives, faith, and community leaders and those with a deep connection to their area. The Highland Council and the local MP must approve the final Board selection, which will include local residents. The Neighbourhood Board must also include the relevant local MP and at least one ward councillor. They should be resident-led, to ensure that they are representative of the communities that they serve. The Boards must ensure there are more residents and people who live or work in the area on the Board than there are elected representatives.

To encourage diverse and inclusive Boards, the chair will want to consider membership from the following groups:

- Community leaders, organisers and activists, such as local charities, faith groups, community groups, neighbourhood forums, youth groups or social clubs
- Local businesses and social enterprises, such as key local employers, the local Chamber of Commerce or Business Improvement District, registered social housing providers or Cooperatives
- Cultural, arts, heritage and sporting organisations, such as local sports clubs or sporting organisations, local heritage groups or local museums and arts spaces
- Public agencies and anchor institutions, such as local schools, higher education and further education institutions, local health care providers, or relevant representatives from local authorities

This list is non-exhaustive, and membership will depend on the local context.

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## **10. Where can I find out more about the Pride in Place Programme?**

More details and background information can be found in the Pride in Place Programme prospectus - [Pride in Place Programme: prospectus - GOV.UK](#)

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## 11. How to apply for this role

- Submit an Expression of Interest form by **XXXX 2026**
- Panel shortlisting based on the person specification and EOI submission
- Interview with a small assessment panel
- Confirmation of appointment

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## 10. Further Information

For an informal discussion, or if you require any of this information in an alternative format, please contact *To be added*.