

Agenda Item	5
Report No	WRSL/09/26

The Highland Council

Committee: Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh

Date: 27 April 2026

Report Title: Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Area Place Plan Update

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report invites Members to scrutinise progress on the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Area Place Plan (WRSL APP).

The WRSL APP was adopted in January 2025 and was developed using a Place Based approach which captures the common themes and priorities across communities. It serves as a comprehensive document that not only reflects the aspirations of the local community but also aligns with existing strategic and localised plans, ensuring that WRSL thrives for vibrant communities, where people want to be.

2 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:-

- i. **Note** the progress against the WRSL APP; and
- ii. **Note**, support for and promote the plan where possible in terms of its consideration within other plans, strategies, development and funding opportunities across or impacting the WRSL area.

3 Implications

3.1 **Resource** - No additional resource is requested. Highland Council support for initiatives outlined in the Plan and working document within **Appendix 1** may have resource implications in the future for specific projects which could be subject to appropriate Committee or Service decision-making.

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

- 3.2 **Legal** – There are no legal implications.
- 3.3 **Risk** – The WRSL APP allows better coordination of future activity and investment in the area. Developing a place-based approach is encouraged through the Scottish Government’s Place Principle, the Christie Commission recommendations and is required by the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 for community planning.
- 3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** – There are no health and safety implications.
- 3.5 **Gaelic** – A focus on people and place, and considering the priorities for a local area, has potential to support a focus on Gaelic language and culture if identified by communities and partners.

4 Impacts

- 4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children’s Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.
- 4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.
- 4.3 This is an update report, and therefore no integrated impact assessment required.

5 Background

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

6 How the Plan was Prepared

- 6.1 The process of developing the WRSL APP meant understanding communities and delivering a shared vision by targeting resources, investment and action, achieved by working in collaboration, and provides a method to track and publicise the impact of both spending and project delivery. This has been led by the Wester Ross Biosphere.

6.2 To ease linkage between the WRSL APP and wider statutory and strategic documents, the emerging Priorities for WRSL are aligned to the three pillars of People, Place and Prosperity.

People: Focusses on supporting community well-being and addressing essential needs for sustainable growth and inclusion.

- Affordable and suitable housing for all
- Vocational training
- Rural connectivity
- Accessible health care
- Celebration of culture
- Childcare provision
- Intergenerational collaboration
- Digital connectivity
- Mental health support

Place: maintaining, improving, and sustainably developing shared spaces for the benefit of all.

- Infrastructure
- Safeguarding the environment
- Sustainable travel
- Looking after public spaces
- Local food
- Climate resilience
- Waste and recycling

Prosperity: reflects local opportunities in terms of finance, work, community wealth building and principles.

- Business development
- Local businesses and tourism
- Local renewable energy projects
- Training
- Diversification

7 How the plan is being used

7.1 The Area Place Plan is available on the Highland Community Planning Partnership website at [Skye, Lochalsh & W Ross - Highland Community Planning Partnership](#) and is being used as a reference and framework tool for all those with an interest in, or responsibility for providing services and looking after assets in WRSL to:-

- Understand local needs and opportunities.
- Inform decisions on service design and delivery.
- Evidence support for funding bids for projects, and Community Asset Transfer requests.
- Encourage public, private, and community collaboration.
- Make best use of available resources and forward plan for when resources are available.
- Link with local and national decision-making processes, influencing public services, budgeting, and planning policies to reflect the needs and aspirations of the WRSL community.

7.2 In terms of delivery of the WRSL APP, since the Plan was adopted last January, desk-based work has been carried out to:-

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

This review highlighted the need for a coordinated approach to engagement, better sharing of updates on ongoing projects, and improved access to support and funding opportunities for community groups. To address this, the Skye, Lochalsh and Wester Ross Community Partnership have the WRSL Area Place Plan update as a regular item at Partnership meetings and they are looking to partners to promote the Plan at any engagement events being undertaken in the WRSL Area. The first of these opportunities will be at the Community Partnership event being held at Kishorn Port on 30 April 2026.

7.3 Next Steps

Ongoing engagement with Council services and partners will continue to identify current and planned workstreams that are in alignment with the Place Plan Priorities (e.g. Highland Investment Plan, Service Plans). To support this a working document of projects, actions and additional information for Council Services and Community Planning partners has been established and the first draft is attached within **Appendix 1**.

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

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

Date: 1 April 2026

Author: William MacKinnon, Community Development Manager

Background Papers: WRSL Area Place Plan - [WRSL Area Place Plan](#)

Appendices: Appendix 1 – WRSL APP Working Document

WESTER ROSS, STRATHPEFFER AND LOCHALSH AREA PLACE PLAN
(WRSL APP)

WORKING DOCUMENT

NAME OF COUNCIL SERVICE/PARTNER CONTRIBUTING: The Highland Council – Community Support & Engagement – Social Value Charter & Community Benefit, Employability/Business Gateway, Tourism, Economic Development, Gaelic Service, Youth Work & Adult Learning, Integrated Children Services, Transport-Active Travel, Waste Service, Education, Planning Development, Roads, Housing Development: **Community Partner** - Albyn Housing Society, Community Housing Trust, Lochalsh & Skye Housing Association, Citizens Advice Bureau, Highlands & Islands Enterprise, University of the Highlands & Islands - Gairloch, Police Scotland,

PROJECTS/WORKSTREAMS TO DELIVER ON/SUPPORT THE WRSL APP

1. People

- **Build Suitable & Affordable Housing: Essential for counteracting depopulation and supporting local employment, with an emphasis on single-family homes and housing for young people.**

THC Housing Service Wester Ross

Working with the Communities Housing Trust to own and facilitate the projects in Strathcarron (6 homes) and Lochcarron (14 homes and an additional 4 plots to be built out as Key worker accommodation)

Partnering with Highland Housing Alliance and Compass Building Ltd to deliver up to 95 homes (subject to planning). The first phase will deliver 20 affordable homes for the Council with first completions forecast for late 2027/28.

Continue to identify individual properties for purchase on the open market.

THC - Community Support & Engagement – Social Value Charter & Community Benefit

- The Highland Social Value Charter 9 Point Plan sets out our socio-economic expectations from investments across the Highlands. Point 3 of the Charter requires businesses developing Renewable Energy projects across Highland to commit to supporting housing across the region. Depending on the size and scale of development our ask is that legacy housing is provided or that financial contributions are made to support wider housing developments. To support this activity the Council has committed to provide financial models for investors to enable investment in housing. This will include investment in Council/ housing association/community models.

Albyn Housing Society

- Refurbishment of former nurses' accommodation in Ullapool to create 4 affordable flats – work due to start on site in Jan / Feb 2026
- Refurbishment of upper floor of former Taigh Mohr nursing home in Ullapool to form 7 affordable flats – planning application submitted

- Working with Applecross Community Company on their community led affordable housing project – Albyn will potentially purchase 2 properties in each phase (4 total) for affordable key worker housing
- Albyn owns a small area of land in Torridon and is facilitating development of the land, led by Communities Housing Trust. Albyn will either sell the land for community led development or take a role as partner in the development. Communities Housing Trust have applied for planning for the site.
- Albyn is currently drafting a Development Strategy to support the delivery of 600 homes over five years. The Strategy will consider issues such as Albyn’s approach to rural housing and will be published Summer 2026

Community Housing Trust

- Loch Torridon – 8 units, planning underway
- Strath Carron – 6 affordable units and 6 private plots, planning underway
- Loch Carron – 14 units under development by THC with CHT as development agent potential start in spring 2026
- Rattagan/Saraig – 6 units and woodland crofts
- Poolewe – development stage with the possibility of 4-5 units as a first phase
- Kilbeg – 1 x 3b6p property and 1 plot for sale
- Shildaig – 1 x 2b4p house for sale

Lochalsh & Skye Housing Association

- April 2025 Completion of 4 Affordable Housing Units Glenelg, Feasibility work for potential new affordable housing site Glenelg Village
- Potential Collaboration with KLCT and CHT for affordable housing development Ratagan.

Highlands & Islands Enterprise

- HIE are providing funding to Applecross Community Company to support the design stage (up to RIBA 4) of their Sustainable Living project – providing up to 18 homes and 6 commercial units.
- HIE are supporting a further five community development trusts with ambitions to deliver community-led housing.
- HIE are developing a close working relationship with SSEN and their contractors to influence the delivery of housing as a legacy of the Skye Reinforcement line project.
- HIE are working with Highland Council to realise the benefits from the opportunities at Kishorn Port. These include the development of housing to attract and retain the workforce.

- **Offer More Vocational Training: Focus on sectors like renewable energy and tourism.**

THC - Employability/Business Gateway

- Business Gateway Highland offers support to businesses across all sectors, including grant support for start-ups. We provide one to one advice from local business advisers, along with a range of practical tools such as cashflow templates and business plan guides to help businesses grow. We also run a wide programme of webinars each month to upskill business owners, covering a variety of topics from Digital Skills, HR, social media, and Market Research.

- Employability services across Highland are delivered by a range of partners under the banner of Work. Life. Highland (www.worklifehighland.co.uk). The service is open to people of post school age through to retirement, with the aim of helping unemployed people or working parents on Universal Credit increase their income via employment. Supporting people to undertake training that will achieve this aim is a key priority of the service.

THC - Community Support & Engagement – Social Value Charter & Community Benefit

- The Highland Social Value Charter 9 Point Plan sets out our socio-economic expectations from investments across the Highlands. Point 6 focuses on skills, training and local supply chain with signatory companies committing to fair work practices/Highland Employer Charter, supplier development and support, upskilling, and apprenticeships.
- The first signatory to the Charter, SSEN has committed to the following –
- SSEN Transmission will, directly and through contractors:
 - Create and support an anticipated 2,200 jobs across the Highland region to support the delivery of the Pathway to 2030 projects.
 - With SSEN Transmission’s workforce projected to grow to over 4,000 by the end of the decade from c.2,500 today, 60% of the expected 1,500 new roles will be advertised with Inverness as an optional work location
 - This includes at least 200 people that SSEN Transmission expects to recruit directly in the Highland region, in addition to the c.200 colleagues already recruited in Highland in the past two years.
 - Support local skills and training initiatives through annual recruitment programmes, including apprenticeships, graduates, earn as you learn, local skills programmes and as a core theme through its Regional Community Benefit Fund.
 - Commit every year to having 5% of its workforce in earn as you learn roles which means SSEN Transmission will have a minimum of 150 trainees in earn as you learn roles every year across the business.
 - Support skills development through STEM events and programmes in Highland schools.
 - Support Discovery Days and Discovery Work Placements for local students.
 - Continue to be a Living Wage, Living Hours and Fair Tax employer and promote Fair Work through procurement and supply chain contracts.
 - Adopt Highland’s Employer Charter and promote principal contractors to adopt the charter.
 - Remain committed to working in partnership with the public and private sector to support high quality jobs and skills in the local area.
- The SVC team is proactively engaging with developers across all renewable technologies to support an expansion to vocational activities.
- The Council’s Community Benefit Policy linked to the Council’s procurement activity offers an opportunity to seek support linked to vocational activity across a wide range of suppliers and contractors. Community Benefit clauses within tenders will place a commitment from individual businesses to support education, employability and skills activity.

Lochalsh & Skye Housing Association

- While not specific to these sectors, LSHA is committed to providing employment opportunities and has for example, participated in promoting housing as a career with young people at Plockton High School – through workshops and careers events. We will continue to do this. We have also participated in the Highland initiatives to support young people into the workforce through paid placements and work experience.

Highlands & Islands Enterprise

- HIE can provide training support on a discretionary basis.
- We are working with SSEN and their contractors on Skye to provide career opportunities to local people.

Citizen Advice Bureau

- CAB continues to play a part in need for diverse job opportunities. Education and Skills: Not just for young people. Our Adviser Training Programme has been credit rated as a SCQF level 6 qualification with a total of 10 credit points. Currently have 16 Volunteers, various roles.

THC – Youth Work & Adult Learning

- THC Community Learning team of 9 Adult Learning and Youth workers are able to offer SQA qualifications in the community including employability, volunteering, core skills, ESOL and more – these can support people to remove barriers to employment.

- **Electric Minibus Service: Improve connectivity for rural areas, particularly for those without private vehicles.**

Transport

Delivering a resilient and accessible charging network – particularly in rural and remote areas like Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh (WRSL) – requires coordinated action across other Council services, external partners, and utility providers. This foundation is essential for the success of the transport-related aims of the WRSL Area Place Plan.

Our contribution relates primarily to identifying future transport needs and ensuring that the charging network is developed in a way that supports public, community and shared transport operations. We will continue to engage with relevant teams as part of the Local Transport Strategy (P4.2 and P4.4) to ensure transport considerations are reflected, but responsibility for planning, funding and delivering EV charging infrastructure sits with other services.

Within the WRSL area, there is currently no dedicated electric minibus provision, largely due to rural operating distances, charging constraints and the need for vehicles that can service long routes without interruption. However, as part of fleet rationalisation and wider decarbonisation planning, opportunities for future deployment of electric minibuses will continue to be explored where the operational profile allows.

The Council recognises that rural mobility relies on public, community and shared transport options. In line with LTS P4.8, future development of electric or low-emission community

transport vehicles will be considered as part of improving connectivity for residents without access to private vehicles and supporting access to services in larger settlements.

It is noted that Wester Ross has very active and dedicated Community Transport organisations, who are vital in providing connectivity for rural and remote areas, particularly where there are limited mainstream transport options. South West Ross Community Car Scheme, Gairloch Community Car Scheme, Applecross Community Company and Garve & District Development Company all provide excellent support to their communities from within the community itself. They are empowered through Highland Council grant funding and ongoing support. They will be encouraged to explore funding opportunities for electric vehicles and associated infrastructure, including future rounds of the Plugged-In Communities grant funding.

- **Enhance Healthcare Access: Including NHS dental services and mobile healthcare to reach remote populations.**

Lochalsh & Skye Housing Association

- LSHA may be able to consider arrangements to lease properties if appropriate, to key workers through our third-party leasing policy.

- **Gaelic Language Promotion: Expand Gaelic Medium Education (GME) and celebrate culture.**

THC – Gaelic Service

- The Highland Council Gaelic Language Plan (GLP) supports the WRSL Area Place Plan by strengthening community wellbeing (People), enhancing Gaelic cultural identity and visibility across towns and villages (Place) and contributing to economic growth through Gaelic skills development, tourism and creative partnerships (Prosperity). Through targeted learning opportunities, increased access to Gaelic education and community activities and collaboration with cultural and economic partners, the GLP enables Gaelic to remain as a community asset that benefits residents, visitors and local organisations.
- Expands access to Gaelic learning across all ages (0-3, early years, schools, family learning, adult learning).
- Supports Gaelic Education and Gaelic Early Years provision, ensuring children and young people in WRSL can access Gaelic learning.
- Develops family learning initiatives which encourage focus on using Gaelic in the home with young children, confidence-building sessions and support for parents engaging with GME.
- Increases youth opportunities through the medium of Gaelic towards building community networks, including partnerships with High Life Highland, Fèisean na Gaideal (Feis an Earrach) , An Comunn Gaidhealach, (Local Mod in the Lochalsh Area, Local Mod in Skye, Dingwall Mod) Comunn na Gaidhlig (Cuach na Cloinne, National Primary School' Football Competition for GME Pupils) , Iomain Cholm Cille, (National Shinty Competition for GME pupils schools in the area participate), Tobar na Dualchas (Outreach Projects with Senior Gaelic Pupils in High Schools – Plockton and other Secondary Schools in the WRSL area also take part), FA ALBA, FILMG and creative organisations that deliver activities in WRSL.

- Provides bilingual communication and engagement, improving visibility of Gaelic, accessibility and inclusion for Gaelic-speaking communities.
- A memorandum of Understanding with Sabhal Mor Ostaig which includes direct education partnership working including Oideas podcasting, professional learning collaboration or stakeholder engagement and focused work on encouraging BED and PGCE students to choose Highland for their probation year in teaching, the UHI Bursary Scheme and the National Gaelic Family Learning Week.
- Impact: Improved wellbeing, confidence and access to culturally relevant programmes for residents.
- The Highland Council's Gaelic Translation Service administers projects which broadly relate to educational and corporate materials, and road, street and building signage. Recent projects specifically for the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh (WRSL) Area include bilingual job adverts for Gaelic-essential or Gaelic-desirable posts in schools in Ullapool, Gairloch, Applecross, Lochcarron, and Plockton. Full translations of the Lochcarron Nursery Handbook and Lochcarron Primary School Handbook were provided. Assistance was also given to Community Learning and Development officers for events in the WRSL Area, such as Gaelic sport in Gairloch and Gaelic shinty competitions in Strathpeffer.
- Bilingual headings are routinely provided for the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Committee. Bilingual press releases refer to pupils from schools in the WRSL Area, along with schools from other areas, having attended cultural and sporting events such as Fèisgoil, Cupa Iomain na h-Òige shinty competitions, and the Siuthad! 2026 Gaelic careers event at Eden Court.
- Recent road and street signage in the area include signs for Ullapool, Braes of Ullapool, the Achagarry development in Ullapool, Shorefield in Poolewe, Kyle of Lochalsh, Glaick, and Balmacara Square. Building signage was administered for Poolewe Swimming Pool, Strathconnon Primary School, and Plockton Nursery.
- A series of bilingual interpretation panels were installed in Gairloch to celebrate the natural and cultural heritage of the area. In addition to information about local landmarks, stories and songs, there is a panel dedicated to the life and work of the eighteenth-century Gaelic bard William Ross, known as the Bard of Gairloch. A panel also commemorates the Gaelic folklore collector John Mackenzie who was born at Mellon Charles in the early nineteenth-century and was the author of *Sàr-Obair nam Bàrd Gaelach: The Beauties of Gaelic Poetry and Lives of the Highland Bards*, the hugely popular book in which Ross's poetry was first published.
- The vast volume of translation and interpretation which was provided for the Inverness Castle Experience project conveys the Spirit of the Highlands and allows visitors to experience a modern, immersive journey into the stories of the landscape, people, and heritage of the whole Highland area. There is a substantial amount of physical and digital material which encourages visitors to explore the WRSL Area. This includes references to historical information and artefacts to be found at Ullapool Museum, Gairloch Museum, Applecross Heritage Centre, the Arctic Convoy Museum in Aultbea, the Highland Museum of Childhood in Strathpeffer, Kyle Station Museum, and the Skye and Lochalsh Archive Centre.

Highlands & Islands Enterprise

- HIE are currently supporting Sabhal Mor Ostaig on two separate projects. One looking at remedial works to the Fas building and the second supporting development of a business case for a National Gaelic Library to be based within the campus.

Police Scotland

- There is the Police Scotland Gaelic language plan.

- **Improve Childcare Access: Expand early years childcare services, as well as after-school and holiday programs.**

THC – Integrated Children Services

Early Intervention & Whole-Family Support

- Strengthen early-intervention and whole-family support through place-based pathways, aligning with evidence from the Whole Family Wellbeing Programme (WFWP). This includes:
- Expanding local early-intervention programmes, parenting support and family-resilience work, particularly for vulnerable and remote-area families.
- Developing locality “Family Link Worker” capacity—building on successful models in the Lochbroom/Ullapool Stepping Stones approach—to identify needs early and prevent escalation.
- Increasing holistic support for families of children with additional needs through enhanced access to specialist and flexible local programmes (e.g., Thriving Families, NAS autism supports, rural creative therapies).

Support for Vulnerable Groups

- Strengthen targeted support for children and young people who are care-experienced, neurodivergent or young carers by:
- Increasing access to community-based ASN/neurodiversity programmes and inclusive local respite and activity options.
- Expanding creative, nature-based and peer-support opportunities for care-experienced children in remote rural areas.
- Reducing reliance on placements outwith home communities through more localised provision for complex-needs support.

Recruitment, Workforce Stability & Local Access to Services

- Improve service stability and equitable access across dispersed communities by:
- Supporting “grow-your-own” career pathways into early years, social care and social work (apprenticeships, distance learning, local volunteering routes).
- Recognising affordable housing as a key factor in staff recruitment and retention across children’s services.
- Expanding blended models of service delivery (face-to-face, outreach and virtual) to reduce travel barriers.
- Exploring shared or community-based transport solutions for families to improve attendance at health, childcare and support services.

Childcare & Early Years Infrastructure

- Address key gaps in early years provision by:
- Exploring flexible childcare pilots based on successful WFWP approaches (e.g., Caithness ad-hoc childcare model).
- Developing Family Hub models integrating drop-in support, perinatal wellbeing programmes and early learning/play activities.
- Assessing feasibility of expanding early learning and childcare provision in rural communities, drawing on insights from the Ardnamurchan pilot.

Lochalsh & Skye Housing Association

- LSHA may be able to consider arrangements to lease properties if appropriate, to key workers through our third-party leasing policy.

Highlands & Islands Enterprise

- HIE are working with CALA, childcare providers and communities on Skye to take forward a pilot project which would trial different approaches to childcare provision in rural areas. The project will apply for funding (SSE, CRF, HIE) and look to start in early 2026.

- **Youth Apprenticeship Program: Establish apprenticeships with local businesses to retain young people.**

THC - Employability/Business Gateway

- Supporting eligible young people to progress into work is one of the key priorities of the employability service. The service works with employers to match them with suitable clients, including potentially identifying young people who could pursue an apprenticeship. Young people and employers interested in finding out more should get in touch via the Work. Life. Highland website www.worklifehighland.co.uk

THC - Community Support & Engagement – Social Value Charter & Community Benefit

- As per the information provided under the priority to Offer More Vocational Training: Focus on sectors like renewable energy and tourism.

THC – Youth Work & Adult Learning

- The community learning offer can support youth apprentices in addition to their employer to improve outcomes for them on their apprenticeships by supporting core skills learning etc where required.

Lochalsh & Skye Housing Association

- LSHA may be able to consider arrangements to lease properties if appropriate, to key workers through our third-party leasing policy.

- **Digital Access for All: Improve broadband infrastructure and digital skills training.**

Highlands & Islands Enterprise

- HIE is a consultee of Scottish Government who are delivering both R100 and Project Gigabit in Scotland.

THC - Employability/Business Gateway

- Business Gateway Highland offers one to one digital support. We also run a wide range of webinar programmes on digital Skills.
- The employability service is open to people of post school age through to retirement, with the aim of helping unemployed people or working parents on Universal Credit increase their income via employment. If this is potentially achieved boosting digital skills, then people are encouraged to get in touch via the Work. Life. Highland website www.worklifehighland.co.uk

THC – Youth Work & Adult Learning

- Community Learning has a proven track record of delivering digital skills training in many communities, often on an intergenerational basis with social cohesion and wellbeing outcomes alongside the skills development.

- **Intergenerational Skill Sharing: Create opportunities for older generations to teach traditional skills to and mentor youth.**

THC - Community Support & Engagement – Social Value Charter & Community Benefit

- As per the information provided under the priority to Offer More Vocational Training and Establish apprenticeships to retain young people.

Highlands & Islands Enterprise

- HIE's support to communities includes governance and capacity building. This often involves boards of directors of mixed ages, sharing knowledge.

THC – Youth Work & Adult Learning

- As per the priority for Digital Access for All – It is a two way exchange of skills – young people have much to teach too and not just digital skills.

- **Improved Mental Health Support: In conjunction with community-led initiatives.**

THC – Integrated Children Services

Child and Youth Mental Health

- Improve emotional wellbeing and mental-health support for children and young people by:
- Expanding digital consultations, outreach provision and partnership programmes with community organisations.
- Creating a mental-health and wellbeing pathway for children and young people, incorporating evidence-based approaches such as nature-based therapeutic groups, creative therapies, parent wellbeing sessions and early school-based interventions.
- Supporting youth-led anti-stigma initiatives and embedding early mental-health support at key transition stages.

THC – Youth Work & Adult Learning

- Community Learning contributes by reducing isolation/increasing connections and confidence across a lifelong and life- wide context through core activities.

Lochalsh & Skye Housing Association

- We have a good partnership with Am Fasgah and other local organisations that support wellbeing. We have staff trained in mental health first aid, delivered by Samaritans Scotland.

Highlands & Islands Enterprise

- HIE supports organisations in WRSL offering mental health services.

Police Scotland

- working alongside NHS, to promote Mental Health triage service. This lessens the burden on local hospitals and offers individuals in MH crisis, a quick access to assessment by trained health care professionals.

2. Place

- **Infrastructure Maintenance and Services: Improve public toilets, parking, and tourism education.**

Highlands & Islands Enterprise

- HIE supports several businesses and community-led organisations that own and manage, or have the ambition to provide, visitor infrastructure.

- **Protect Natural Heritage: Reinstate the Access Ranger service to protect green spaces, forests, and coastlines.**

- **Greener Travel Options: Maintain and expand foot and cycle paths to connect communities.**

Transport/Active Travel

- Working to deliver on key Active Travel workstreams as identified in the [Highland Local Transport Strategy 2025-2035](#), including:
 - Integration of the public transport network within the transport system, including between different public transport modes as well as with active travel and private car/vehicles.
 - Invest in active travel infrastructure which is inclusive for all.
 - Invest in behaviour change to encourage mode shift to active travel for all or part of a journey.
 - Active travel will support local living where people can meet the majority of their daily needs within a reasonable distance of their home, preferably by walking, wheeling or cycling.
- Work with elected Members, Community Councils, other community bodies (e.g. Community Development Trusts), public sector partners (e.g. HITRANS), third-sector partners (e.g. Highlands & Islands Climate Hub) to identify, scope and deliver Active Travel opportunities across the community.

Lochalsh & Skye Housing Association

- We have a cycle to work scheme that we have promoted to staff.

- **Public Space Enhancement: Renovate and improve community spaces like parks and village centres.**

THC - Amenity Services

- We are upgrading the following play parks within the ward.
 - Applecross Community Hall (full refurbishment)
 - Balmacara, Finlayson Road (full refurbishment)

Contin, Contin Playing Field, Munro Park, (full refurbishment, and relocation of the play park from Tor View, Contin)

THC – Integrated Children Services

Child-Friendly, Trauma-Informed Community Spaces

- Enhance community environments that support wellbeing, play, learning and intergenerational connection by:
- Developing inclusive play areas, youth-friendly outdoor spaces and accessible community buildings.
- Embedding co-design with children and young people to ensure local spaces reflect their needs and priorities.

Safe Routes, Connectivity & Transport Access

- Improve access to services and independence for young people through:
- Prioritising safe walking, cycling and transport routes to schools, youth facilities and community services.
- Incorporating community-transport partnerships where conventional provision is limited.

Integrated, Multi-Use Facilities

- Promote coordinated, place-based service delivery by:
- Developing multi-use community hubs combining learning, childcare, youth work, health and family support.
- Supporting planning that reflects how children and young people use community spaces throughout the week.
- Strengthening local delivery in remote areas to reduce the need for long-distance travel.

Nature-Based and Outdoor Wellbeing Opportunities

- Embed nature-based wellbeing in ICS planning by:
- Drawing on strong WFWP evidence that outdoor therapeutic activities reduce isolation, improve resilience and support emotional wellbeing.
- Leveraging local assets such as woodland, coastline and community gardens for family and youth wellbeing programmes.

Lochalsh & Skye Housing Association

- We will be considering how LSHA can contribute to this through master planning and new development design.

Highlands & Islands Enterprise

- HIE supported community clients in WRSL have undertaken civic improvement projects most notably in Applecross and Kyle of Lochalsh.

- **Affordable and Sustainable Housing: Ensure new housing is warm, efficient, and sustainable.**

Community Housing Trust

- All houses developed by CHT will meet building standards and housing for varying needs part 1.

Lochalsh & Skye Housing Association

- All new development housing is built to current building standards through the more homes program to sustainability standards and EPC B.

Highlands & Islands Enterprise

- HIE-supported community organisations have delivered energy efficiency projects with community-owned houses.

- **Local Food Networks: Support community allotments and farmers' markets.**

- **Electric Bus Networks: Develop electric bus routes to reduce car reliance and lower emissions.**

Transport/Active Travel

As above, delivery of a resilient and accessible charging network – particularly in rural and remote areas like WRS� – is foundational for the long-term viability of low-emission bus networks. Responsibility for providing this infrastructure lies with other Council services, external partners and utility providers, but Transport will continue to ensure that the requirements of public, community and shared transport are embedded in wider strategic planning (LTS P4.2 and P4.4).

There are currently no electric bus routes operating in the WRS� area due to challenges associated with range, rural routing patterns, and charging capacity. However, we will continue to work with bus operators as part of wider fleet decarbonisation planning to identify future opportunities when supportive infrastructure becomes more widely available. Exploration of funding opportunities for acquisition of electric buses, like ScotZEB, could be options for operators like Westerbus, Shiel Buses, Lochcarron Garage and others who operate in the area.

In line with LTS P4.8, greener travel options for rural areas are closely linked to improving access to transport hubs and ensuring that multimodal travel—public, community and shared transport combined with walking, wheeling and cycling—is supported. Future opportunities for low-emission vehicles within the sector will continue to be encouraged through available national and regional funding streams (like ScotZEB, noted above).

- **Cultural Heritage: Develop heritage trails to highlight local history and culture.**

THC – Gaelic Service

- Enhances the visibility and use of Gaelic in public spaces through bilingual signage, interpretation panels and other projects. Much of this work is conducted in liaison with Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba.
- Skye Radio broadcasts Gaelic programmes and promotes Gaelic and cultural activities.
- Promotes Gaelic as part of the distinctive identity of the Highlands, contributing to place-based planning and community cohesion.
- Supports cultural events, festivals, workshops, ceilidhs and creative activities that reinforce local identity and intergenerational connections.
- Strengthens community capacity by working with local groups, arts organisations and heritage bodies including Skye and Lochalsh Museum Services and independent museums including Gairloch Museum to deliver Gaelic programming.
- Impact: Stronger sense of place, cultural vibrancy and pride in local heritage.

- **Climate Resilience Projects: Protect vulnerable areas from flooding and coastal erosion.**

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- **Waste and Recycling: Expand waste management and recycling facilities.**

THC – Waste Service

- The Council has now completed a waste service change across the Highlands. The revised service, for rural areas, provides recycling bins for paper and card; and plastic and metal containers. This ensures that householders can maximise the amount of waste they can recycle collected at the kerbside.

Lochalsh & Skye Housing Association

- LSHA is developing a sustainability strategy which will have commitments to corporate estate management and operations aiming to create minimum waste. We have also offered excess materials or equipment to local community projects – such as storage containers (now with Kyleakin football club) and wood cut offs being used in Viewfield Garden Collective (Portree) for allotment bedding.

3. Prosperity

- **Nurture New Local Enterprises: Through shared workspaces and business hubs.**

THC - Employability/Business Gateway

- Not specifically an employability function but more generally, the service can support people to become self-employed where this is the best option to increase their income via employment, often working closely with the Business Gateway team.

Highlands & Islands Enterprise

- HIE is supporting a number of community organisations that are developing workspaces in some of our more rural communities.

- **Develop Renewable Energy Projects: Expand community-owned wind and hydroelectric energy projects.**

THC - Community Support & Engagement – Social Value Charter & Community Benefit

- The Highland Social Value Charter 9 Point Plan sets out our socio-economic expectations from investments across the Highlands. Point 5 focuses on “Shared Investment into Renewables” with a requirement for investors to:
- Provide the opportunity to participate in an integrated shared ownership model. This approach offers the opportunity to build a truly circular energy system by integrating generation, distribution and supply. The shared ownership model will enhance community involvement and investment while promoting equitable distribution of benefits.
- Whilst we will: Play a crucial role in setting targets for community and locally owned energy, facilitate access to necessary resources and leverage government support

and shape guidance of a shared ownership model to encompass offshore renewables.

- Establish collaborative frameworks to ensure renewable energy projects deliver widespread economic and social benefits, driving sustainable development across the Highlands.
- Consider appropriate investment in partnership with communities and developers subject to full business cases and financial and legal due diligence.
- The first signatory to the Charter, SSEN, has committed to the following – Support opportunities for community and shared ownership renewable schemes by providing the essential transmission infrastructure to enable renewable energy generation to be connected to the grid.

Lochalsh & Skye Housing Association

- As part of our asset management strategy, we are looking to ensure existing and new homes can be affordable to run, reduce fuel poverty and make use of renewables like solar and battery storage.

Highlands & Islands Enterprise

- Community-owned wind and hydro developments are becoming more challenging given the reduction in government financial support. HIE is working with partners to support community ambitions to take an equity stake in larger, commercial projects whilst also supporting the development of solar PV installations to reduce operating costs and/or generate revenue.

- **Year-Round Tourism: Promote slow and responsible tourism, improve visitor infrastructure.**

THC – Tourism

- While several major RTIF projects were delivered prior to the WRSL APP being approved (such as improved passing places and interpretation at Bealach na Ba and new toilets at Gairloch beach car park) no new RTIF projects have been delivered since. This was partly due to RTIF not be reinstated in 2024/25 by the Scottish Government. The fund did return in 2025/26 and has recently been confirmed for 2026/27. THC plans to begin a full review of the Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Plan (2022), which underpins applications to RTIF, in 2026. This will give an opportunity to flag up any new priority projects and expected to align better with other area priorities, such as those identified in the WRSL APP.

THC – Gaelic Service

- Builds pathways to employment in sectors where Gaelic is an asset.
- Works with partners such as Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, HLH, MG ALBA and the tourism sector to support skills development, placements, workshops and cultural programming.
- Regular networking meets with HIE to foster collaboration and partnership-working.
- Enhances the visitor and tourism economy by supporting Gaelic businesses.
- A Gaelic and the Economy conference was hosted by Highland Council in May 2025 with attendees present from across the country, including the Wester Ross, Skye and Lochalsh area. Gaelic Committee - 4 June 2025

- Encourages community groups, charities and social enterprises to integrate Gaelic into their work, unlocking access to additional funding streams linked to culture and heritage.
- Impact: Strengthened local economy via skills growth and enhanced visitor experiences.

Highlands & Islands Enterprise

- HIE supported clients are involved in a diverse range of tourism projects from hospitality to visitor infrastructure. Examples include accommodation improvements, staff accommodation, campervan aires, public toilets and car parks.

- **Increase Access to Vocational Training: Develop skills in land management, tourism, and renewable energy.**

THC - Employability/Business Gateway

- Business Gateway Highland offers support locally to businesses across all sectors. We also run a wide programme of webinars each month to upskill business owners.
- Employability services across Highland are delivered by a range of partners under the banner of Work. Life. Highland (www.worklifehighland.co.uk). The service is open to people of post school age through to retirement, with the aim of helping unemployed people or working parents on Universal Credit increase their income via employment. Supporting people to undertake training that will achieve this aim is a key priority of the service.

THC - Community Support & Engagement – Social Value Charter & Community Benefit

- The Highland Social Value Charter 9 Point Plan sets out our socio-economic expectations from investments across the Highlands. Point 2 “Strategic Fund” seeks to:
 - Create a Strategic Plan which will set out the investment priorities of the Community Planning Partnership around: Housing
 - Connecting People and Places
 - Employment and Employability
 - Addressing inequality
- Point 6 “Skills & Training – Workforce for the future” seeks to:
 - Create and support an Employer Charter recognition scheme which will include Fair Work commitments and the Living Wage
 - Whilst requiring investors to:
 - Adopt Highland’s Employer Charter, which will include commitments to Fair Work and the Living Wage
 - Create or contribute to an Apprenticeship programme
 - Consider supporting initiatives such as the Science Skills Academy, to ensure sustainable private sector led engagement to future generations in Highland.
- Point 6 “Fast-Track for Grid Connections” seeks to
 - Promote local job creation and community investment by supporting innovative projects and fostering links between education and industry to deliver a sustainable highland workforce for the future. Through these actions, we aim to drive long-term economic growth, energy security, and environmental sustainability in the region.

- Point 9 “Maximising socio-economic prosperity through the planning system” requires investors to set out how they intend to maximise the socio-economic benefits of their development proposals taking into account the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan, the key investment priorities of the Community Planning Partnerships and the Council’s Community Wealth Building Strategy and the National Planning Framework 4, particularly in relation to biodiversity and green skills.
- The first signatory to the Charter, SSEN, has committed to the following – SSEN Transmission will, directly and through contractors:
 - Support local skills and training initiatives through annual recruitment programmes, including apprenticeships, graduates, earn as you learn, local skills programmes and as a core theme through its Regional Community Benefit Fund.
 - Commit every year to having 5% of its workforce in earn as you learn roles which means SSEN Transmission will have a minimum of 150 trainees in earn as you learn roles every year across the business.
 - Support skills development through STEM events and programmes in Highland schools.
 - Support Discovery Days and Discovery Work Placements for local students.
- The Council’s Community Benefit Policy linked to the Council’s procurement activity offers an opportunity to seek support across a wide range of suppliers and contractors in relation to apprenticeship opportunities. Community Benefit clauses within tenders will place a commitment from individual businesses to support education, employability and skills activity. In partnership with stakeholders, we aim to explore shared apprenticeship schemes as well as a commitment from Tier 1 contractors and their local supply chains to actively engage in Skills Boards / Academies (terminology still to be clarified).

Highlands & Islands Enterprise

- HIE is working with several larger businesses in the renewable energy sector on local supply chain development and employment and training opportunities.

University of the Highlands & Islands – Gairloch

- Can consider delivering the following: Vocational Training: Developing skills in land management and renewable energy.

- **Improve Digital Infrastructure: Support remote work and local businesses.**

THC - Employability/Business Gateway

- Business Gateway Highland offers support to businesses across all sectors, including one to one digital support for SMEs and sole traders to work from home. We also deliver monthly Digital Skills webinars.
- The employability service is open to people of post school age through to retirement, with the aim of helping unemployed people or working parents on Universal Credit increase their income via employment. Where this is potentially achieved through boosting digital skills, then people are encouraged to get in touch via the Work. Life. Highland website www.worklifehighland.co.uk

Lochalsh & Skye Housing Association

- We offer hybrid and flexible working arrangements and support staff to work remotely with technology and equipment.

Highlands & Islands Enterprise

- HIE is a consultee to Scottish Government and seeks to influence the roll out of the R100 and PGiS projects.

- **Create Artisanal Products: Support local artisans and regenerative tourism through festivals and markets.**

- **Promote Local Food Networks: Regular farmers' markets and support sustainable fishing and crofting.**

Highlands & Islands Enterprise

- HIE supports the creation of new crofts.

- **Offer Micro-Loans for Local Entrepreneurs: Financial support for small, sustainable businesses.**

Employability/Business Gateway

- Business Gateway Highland offers finance options to businesses across all sectors, including grant support for start-ups. We provide one to one advice from local business advisers, along with a range of practical tools such as cashflow templates and business plan guides to help businesses grow and lever funding. We would also look at available lenders for the client, including the Highland Council's own loan fund for business, Highland Opportunity Investments Ltd.
- The employability service is open to people of post school age through to retirement, with the aim of helping unemployed people or working parents on Universal Credit increase their income via employment. The service has and can support people to become self-employed where this is the best option to increase their income via employment, often working closely with the Business Gateway team.

Highlands & Islands Enterprise

- HIE has a portfolio of support for businesses and works with partners such as Business Gateway to provide appropriate support to all sizes of entity.

- **Establish Community-Run Tourism Facilities: Retain tourism income locally.**

Highlands & Islands Enterprise

- HIE has and is supporting several community-led tourism developments, including at Applecross and Kyle.

- **Develop Skills in Green Industries: Training in renewable energy and sustainable practices.**

THC - Community Support & Engagement – Social Value Charter & Community Benefit

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Highlands & Islands Enterprise

- HIE provides support and advice to clients seeking to baseline their carbon emissions and to develop plans to achieve net zero.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

CAB - Skye & Lochalsh Citizens Advice Bureau delivers NPF4 Alignment – Theme: health and Wellbeing; Liveable Places/Outcome: Resilient communities (3) and Health and wellbeing (5) attached is the Skye & Lochalsh CAB Poverty summary report 2025 which gives more data.



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202025.docx

THC-Planning Development – Link to the Local Development Plan and Local Place Plans - [West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan - Highland Council](#)

THC- Roads – The Area Roads Capital Programme 2026-27 was agreed at the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Area Committee on the 19th January 2026.



Item_4_Area_Roads_
Capital_Programme_2

THC – Economic Development- the Excel spreadsheet below details Community Regeneration Fund awards that have helped support the WRSL Area Place Plan –



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THC – Integrated Children Services

Developing the Future Workforce

Create pathways that support young people into future local employment by:

- Establishing structured routes into health, social care, early learning, teaching, creative industries and rural skills—drawing on WFWP youth leadership and vocational projects.
- Expanding work experience, volunteering, apprenticeships and skills programmes in partnership with secondary schools.
- Supporting mentoring and leadership development for young people to build local capacity and improve retention.

Childcare as Economic Infrastructure

Recognise childcare as essential to economic participation and community resilience by:

- Supporting the development of local, flexible childcare models, including community-owned or hybrid approaches.
- Strengthening early learning and childcare availability to enable parental employment and support staff retention in children’s services.

Reducing Child Poverty & Supporting Vulnerable Families

Integrate economic support pathways within ICS family work by:

- Targeting priority family types identified through WFWP evidence.
- Embedding income-maximisation support, cost-of-the-school-day interventions, and food-insecurity pathways.
- Strengthening links between family hubs, employability services and local welfare/financial advice.

Inclusive Local Economic Participation

Enhance opportunities for families and young people to participate in local economic activity by: Promoting digital inclusion—improving access to online support, digital learning and telehealth, and providing digital-skills training that enables remote employment opportunities.