

The Highland Council

Agenda Item	5i
Report No	CCC/05/26

Committee: Climate Change

Date: 20 May 2026

Report Title: Net Zero Programme Update

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Net Zero Programme, setting out current programme progress in the context of the strategic direction approved by Council in March 2026 and outlining next steps, with more detailed proposals to be brought to Council.

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:-

- i. **Scrutinise** and **note** progress of the Net Zero Programme as outlined in the report and Appendix 1; and
- ii. **Note** that, following Council approval of the Climate Change, Energy and Community Resilience Strategic Paper, proposals relating to governance, performance reporting and long-term programme delivery will be brought to Council for consideration.

3 Implications

3.1 **Resource** – The Climate Change, Energy and Community Resilience Strategic Paper highlighted the need to strengthen long-term organisational capacity, coordination and programme governance. Resource implications (staffing and funding) will continue to be managed under existing arrangements, while proposals to address longer-term capacity and resourcing requirements are developed for consideration by Council.

- 3.2 **Legal** - The Council has several requirements in respect of reporting against its climate change obligations, in addition to being required to directly support Scotland's target to end its contribution to climate change no later than 2045.
- 3.3 **Risk** - Failure to proactively address the climate and ecological emergency across all service delivery areas carries significant reputational, operational and financial risk. These risks were highlighted in the Climate Change, Energy and Community Resilience Strategic Paper and are underpinned by the evidence set out in the Highland Climate Change Risk and Opportunity Assessment (HCCROA).
- 3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** - There are no implications arising from this report. Through cross-service engagement undertaken during Quarter 4 as part of the HCCROA, a range of current and emerging health-related risks associated with climate impacts have been identified. This engagement and evidence will inform the development of the Council's Corporate Climate Risk and Opportunity Assessment and the subsequent Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan.
- 3.5 **Gaelic** – There are no implications 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 is a monitoring and update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

5 Net Zero Delivery - Net Zero Programme

5.1 Overall RAG Status

Project: Net Zero Programme

R ●
A ●
G ●
C ●

While progress continues across several workstreams, the overall status of the Net Zero Programme is currently assessed as **Amber**, due to slippage in the following key milestone: **Agreement and introduction of core KPIs to be reported at both a Corporate and Service Level**

5.2 Key Milestones & Requests for Change

Milestones currently set up in PRMS to monitor progress of the programme are as follows:-

Timeline	Milestone	Current Status	Comments
Completes March 2027	Develop proposed projects for inclusion in Net Zero Programme	On Target	<p>During financial year 25/26, the Climate Change Committee agreed to recommend 18 projects for inclusion in the Council's Net Zero Programme.</p> <p>In parallel, during Quarter 4, work was undertaken to develop the Climate Change, Energy and Community Resilience Strategic Paper.</p> <p>Approved by Council in March 2026, the paper established a clear strategic approach to the Council's climate change, energy and community resilience activity. This will inform the ongoing development and prioritisation of projects within the Net Zero Programme going forward.</p>
Completes September 2025	Shared Procurement Service to evaluate and propose alternative carbon budgeting tools	Completed	
Completes June 2026	Service carbon budgets/emissions targets approved	On Target	Further detail outlined in the Net Zero Thematic Group Update – Procurement and Community Wealth Building.
Completes November 2025	Net Zero embedded in Capital Programme	Completed	

<p>Completes October 2025</p>	<p>Agreement and introduction of core KPIs to be reported at both a Corporate and Service Level</p>	<p>Some slippage</p>	<p>As previously reported, progression of this milestone is dependent on the review of the Net Zero Programme's Terms of Reference and governance structure. A key focus of the Climate Change, Energy and Community Resilience Strategic Paper agreed by Council in March is to strengthen coordination across Council services and to develop proposals for a sustainable, long term delivery model to support the Council's climate change, energy and resilience programme.</p> <p>This recognises that effective delivery will require sustained organisational capacity and programme coordination aligned with long term programme delivery rather than short term project funding cycles. Proposals, including an updated governance model for the Net Zero Programme, will be brought to Council.</p>
<p>Completes August 2025</p>	<p>Approval of an Adaptation Strategy for the Council</p>	<p>Completed</p>	<p>Climate Change Adaptation Strategy approved by Council on 18 September 2025.</p>

Revised milestones and measures of success for the Net Zero Programme will be developed, alongside the governance review, in line with the direction set out in the Strategic Paper.

5.3 Measures of Success

Net Zero Programme: Grant funding secured [reporting starts tbc]	
Net Zero Prog.: % Carbon emissions reduction [reporting starts 23/24]	9.5 %
Net Zero Prog.: The number of projects proposed to the Climate Change Committee [annual]	18
Net Zero Prog.: % of Business Continuity Plans aligned with Council's Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan [reporting starts 2025/26]	
Net Zero Prog.: % of capital projects that have defined level of carbon impact prior to approval of capital spend [reporting starts 2025/26]	
Net Zero Prog.: Highland Council Carbon Budget [reporting starts 24/25] - Tonnes of CO2 equivalent (tCO2e)	34,893
Net Zero Prog.: Service-level Carbon Budget Targets - Corporate [reporting starts 2025/26]	
Net Zero Prog.: Service-level Carbon Budget Targets - People [reporting starts 2025/26]	
Net Zero Prog.: Service-level Carbon Budget Targets - Place [reporting starts 25/26]	

5.4 Financial Summary

i) **Savings**

£	Efficiency Savings: Efficiencies within fleet and cross service savings across Car Club, Grey Fleet and private hire - FY 25-28	£ 150,000
£	Efficiency Savings: Staff travel utilisation, grey fleet and car club - FY 25-28	£ 100,000

ii) **Investment** - The Net Zero Programme has approved investment of £630,000 to cover months 1-36 of the Delivery Plan.

The table below shows spend against this investment for 2025/26:-

Net Zero Programme: Investment	M12 25/26	
	Current Forecast	Actual to Date
	£272,868	£237,754

The actual to date figure above relates to staff costs for April-March 2026.

iii) Mitigations are currently not required for the Programme.

5.5 Key Risks

The key risks for the programme currently being managed and monitored via PRMS are as follows:-

KEY RISKS ASSESSED / RESPONSE	CURRENT RISK RATING	RESPONSE
Net Zero: Failure to align our budget expenditure	16	Treat
Net Zero: Emissions Targets Not Met	9	Tolerate
Net Zero: Service Engagement with Net Zero Agenda	9	Tolerate

There are no identified changes to the key risks identified for the Programme. The impact and likelihood score of the above key risks were reviewed at the end of Q4, and no changes are required to the scoring.

Treatment Actions for the highest rated risk 'Failure to align our budget expenditure' are:-

Risk Actions	Status
Carbon Budgeting	On Target (M12 25/26)
Establish Performance Reviews	On Target (M12 25/26)
Integrate Net Zero into financial decision-making frameworks	On Target (M12 25/26)
Service Net Zero Programme Reporting	On Target (M12 25/26)

6 **Net Zero Programme – Quarterly Projects Updates**

6.1 **Appendix 1** outlines progress of the projects approved to date.

7 **Climate Change, Energy and Community Resilience Strategic Paper**

7.1 During Quarter 4, focus was placed on developing the Climate Change, Energy and Community Resilience Strategic Paper, including the development of the strategic approach subsequently approved by Council and the supporting evidence base. This work drew on delivery experience and emerging challenges identified through the Net Zero Programme and related activity.

7.2 No project templates are presented this quarter. This reflects a focus on progressing strategic programme work and aligning the Net Zero Programme with the strategic direction agreed by Council, ahead of detailed proposals being brought forward to Council, including:-

- Proposed updates to the governance arrangements and Terms of Reference for the Net Zero Programme to support a coordinated, programme-led delivery model;

- Proposed performance and reporting arrangements, including Corporate and Service-level KPIs aligned with long-term outcomes; and
- An outline of how coordinated investment pipelines across climate mitigation, adaptation and energy infrastructure will be developed and managed.

8 Other Workstreams and Strategic Alignment

- 8.1 In addition to the activity set out above, Members are asked to note the range of related work progressing through Thematic Groups, and the increasing alignment between these areas of activity in support of a more coordinated, programme-led approach to climate mitigation, adaptation and resilience.
- 8.2 An update from the Procurement and Community Wealth Building Thematic Group is included on this agenda as Item 5(ii). This report focuses on strengthening the Council's carbon reporting, management and decision-support capability, particularly in relation to Scope 3 emissions associated with procurement and supply chains. Improved carbon data and reporting will support more evidence-based decision-making, enable more effective engagement with suppliers, and strengthen linkage between procurement activity, emissions reduction and Community Wealth Building outcomes.
- 8.3 An update from the Capital Programme and Net Zero Funding Strategy Thematic Group is included as Item 5 (iii). This report highlights progress in embedding net zero considerations within the capital programme, including the introduction of whole-life carbon assessment, improved cross-service coordination, and the development of a more structured net zero funding pipeline. The work of this group relies on improved data, governance and prioritisation to support a programme-led approach to investment and to maximise external funding opportunities.
- 8.4 Alongside these thematic updates, the Highland Climate Change Risk and Opportunity Assessment reflects a significant programme of cross-service engagement undertaken since January 2026. This engagement has supported services to consider how climate-related risks and opportunities translate into impacts on Council service delivery, assets, infrastructure and financial exposure.

The findings from this engagement will inform the development of the Council's Corporate Climate Change Risk and Opportunity Assessment and subsequently the Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan. Together, these will provide a robust, evidence-based foundation to inform future service planning, capital investment and funding prioritisation, including the identification and sequencing of projects within the Council's net zero and climate adaptation pipelines.

Designation:	Assistant Chief Executive - Place
Date:	20 April 2026
Author:	Fiona Daschofsky, Programme Manager
Background Papers:	None
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Net Zero Programme Project Updates

Built Estate & Energy						
Project	Activity	Project Elements	Measures of Success	Milestones	Update - January 2026	Update - May 2026
Net Zero Transition Surveys	Undertake surveys of 300 non-domestic Council properties to evaluate and identify measures required to transition to Net Zero carbon emissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out physical surveys and associated analysis to prepare site-specific reports detailing measures required to transition to Net Zero Compile database of costed opportunities Identify, and where deemed cost-effective, to progress implementation of cost reduction opportunities and projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Year 1 – 35% of properties surveyed Year 2 – 65% of properties surveyed Year 1 – £0.20m of opportunities implemented Year 2 – £0.45m of opportunities implemented Year 3 – £0.45m of opportunities implemented 	<p>M1 - Plan agreed - Apr 24 - Aug 24</p> <p>M2 - 1st Tranche properties surveyed - Apr 24 - Mar 25</p> <p>M3 - 2nd Tranche properties surveyed - Apr 25 - Mar 26</p>	203 surveys undertaken, 180 reports/NZ analysis completed. Engagement ongoing with respect to implementation of associated projects. Savings of approximately £155k and 167 tonnes of carbon have been achieved.	203 Energy & Net Zero surveys undertaken, 195 reports/NZ analysis completed. Engagement ongoing with respect to implementation of associated projects. Plans and timescales for progression of opportunities into implemented projects remain undefined. Direct annual savings of approx £179k and 181 tonnes of carbon have been achieved, primarily through heating system setpoint review and behaviour change measures, as well as THC's capital lighting upgrade programme.
Solar PV Council Estate	Optimisation and expansion of solar PV across the Council's non-domestic, non-commercial estate to supply green energy by direct wire; delivering a financial and carbon saving and protecting against future carbon tax liability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and rank Council-owned/occupied sites Undertake any remedial works required Design and install Maintenance regimes, compliance and certification built into management of the sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% existing sites operational and generating energy Income: £1.3m by year 3 rising to £2m p/a Increase in installed generation capacity Reduced electricity costs for service users Reduction in Council CO2 emissions 	<p>M1 - 04/24: >50% of total generation re-activated</p> <p>M2 - 04/24: Financial model signed off</p> <p>M3 - 05/24: 2024/26 Project and Programme in place</p> <p>M4 - 03/25: 60% of 1MW of new installation completed</p> <p>M5 - 09/25: 1MW of additional new installation completed</p> <p>M6 - 03/26: 1MW additional generation p/a up to 5 years</p>	Contractors have been appointed to install PV systems at the Rugby Club and Botanic Gardens in Jan 26. Tenders are currently out for multiple sites for systems to be installed in February and further tenders are imminent for installations in March. Discussions ongoing with respect to definition and initialisation of maintenance contract.	25/26 revenue for 25/26 is £344k. Feed in tariff income received during 25/26, which includes retrospective payments relating to previous years, has totalled £173k. Completed systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deshar PS Big harbour A further 12 installations have been awarded to contractors for progression within 2025/26. The original system installed at Grantown Grammar School has been replaced and expanded with a new system as part of the roof replacement works. Work is practically complete to bring the ground mounted system at Alness Academy into operation. Projects identified and proposed to be progressed within financial year 26-27 have a combined capacity of 1MW.
Conversion of Fossil Fuel Systems	Undertake detailed heating system options appraisals for properties with aged and poor condition fossil-fuel based heating systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out options appraisals to determine how the heating systems can be converted to non-fossil fuel alternatives that support the transition to Net Zero carbon emissions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake 6 options appraisals on heating systems which have less than 5 years' life expectancy Define and consult upon report format and content to ensure fitness for purpose Complete by end of December 2025 	<p>M1 - 08/24 - Agree selected properties</p> <p>M2 - 12/24 - Complete options appraisals and associated reports for internal issue for review</p> <p>M3 - 02/25 – Incorporation into planned maintenance works for approved projects</p>	Work undertaken upon specific request by Property.	Work undertaken upon specific request by Property. Projects/sites include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kilchoan PS Dornoch PS Cauldeen PS HQ
Net Zero Design Standards	Determine and agree net zero design standards applicable for non-domestic new builds and refurbishments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review current guidance and legislation to determine the appropriate design standard for all categories Update and publish technical specifications and associated guidance documentation Information and knowledge through workshops for dissemination to relevant parties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Production of technical standards and guidance Production of compliant life cycle analysis reports for new buildings Post occupancy evaluation demonstration of meeting operational energy targets Compliant building carbon strategy documentation 	<p>M1 - 08/24: Solar PV technical specification adopted for all new domestic and non-domestic applications</p> <p>M2 - 01/25: Interim technical specification and guidance</p> <p>M3 - 01/26: Update of interim technical specification and guidance</p> <p>M4 - 08/26: Finalised technical specification and guidance published</p>	Work continuing in the development of a Highland Council Net Zero Design Standard. For the Highland Investment Plan it has been determined that the 7 HUB construction projects will be Passivhaus certified and that they will also attain the Scottish Public Sector Net Zero Standard.	Work continuing in the development of a Highland Council Net Zero Design Standard with the intention to bring to Committee during summer 2026. For the Highland Investment Plan it has been agreed that the 7 HUB construction projects will attain the Sector Net Zero Standard. Additionally there is an ongoing workstream to evaluate the merits of Passivhaus certification.

Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP)	Embed Net Zero and climate resilience principles across the three core components of the Council's Strategic Asset Management Plan (currently in development): •Asset Management Policy •Asset Management Strategy •Asset Management Working Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the Strategic Asset Management Plan fully aligns with the Council's Net Zero Strategy. • Integrate carbon reduction and climate adaptation measures into a whole lifecycle approach to asset management, ensuring that sustainability, operational efficiency, and climate resilience are considered at every stage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SAMP acknowledges and supports the Council's Route Map to Net Zero and associated targets. • Net Zero considerations are integrated as part of asset management processes and evaluations. • Public and private sector investment is leveraged with respect to Net Zero alignment and compliance. 	<p>05/25: First draft developed, led by members of the Built Estate & Energy Thematic Group.</p> <p>06/25: Review of SAMP by CCET.</p> <p>08/25: Strategic Asset Management Plan brought to Reconfiguring Our Asset Base (ROAB) Portfolio Board (07/08) and Redesign Board (28/08).</p> <p>09/25: Approval of SAMP by Members (HC meeting 18/09).</p> <p>10/25: Implementation of SAMP and supporting comms to all relevant stakeholders to ensure strategy is embedded.</p> <p>10/26: Annual review of Asset Management Strategy.</p> <p>Ongoing: Continuous management, monitoring, and updating of the Asset Management Action Plan.</p>	SAMP was deferred from November H&P Committee, currently awaiting confirmation as to when it will be taken to Committee, expected to be early 2026.	Strategic Asset Management Plan was approved at Housing and Property Committee. The Action Plan will now be delivered including actions to promote the SAMP principles. A Strategic assessment tool based on the SAMP principles is now being used as part of all asset reviews and options appraisals ensuring multiple climate, net zero and environmental considerations are a key part of each review.
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Planning, Land Use & Environment

Project	Activity	Project Elements	Measures of Success	Milestones	Update - January 2026	Update - May 2026
Address Ecological Emergency	Implement priority actions identified in the Council's Ecology Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map and quantify greening opportunities across Council Estate • Utilise biodiversity in green space to reduce grass cutting across Council Estate • Develop and deliver a suite of greening projects across Council Estate • Secure external funding to support Council and community greening projects (Nature Restoration Fund) • Strategies and policies developed aligned to the Ecology Strategy • Secure funding and further develop management plan for World Heritage Site (WHS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 Council estate Greening projects delivered annually • Pipeline of projects identified, and delivered for biodiversity • Management plan for WHS finalised across the estate • Ash dieback mapped and managed across the estate • Identify number of policies to be aligned to the Ecology Strategy • Major planning apps assessed in line with NPF4 biodiversity policies • Funding secured for WHS (£600k) • Recruitment of planning ecologists 	<p>M1 - Q2 24/25: Nature Restoration Fund Community grant scheme launched</p> <p>M2 - Q3 24/25: Complete recruitment of Planning Ecologist</p> <p>M3 - Q4 24/25: Review and agree approach to Ash dieback</p> <p>M4 - Q4 24/25: First tranche WHS funding secured</p> <p>M5 - Q1 25/26: WHS staff recruited</p> <p>M6 - Q1 25/26: Opportunity map completed</p> <p>M7 - Q3 25/26: Adoption of Forestry and Woodland Strategy</p>	<p>M1/M2 - Complete</p> <p>M3 - Senior Arboricultural Officer now sits within Amenities Services and is leading on Ash Dieback Plan.</p> <p>M4/5 - Complete. Work underway to update WHS Management Plan. Update paper to be presented at February Economy & Infrastructure Committee.</p> <p>M6 - Nature Conservation Officer (joint post with Amenities Services) started 9 Dec, focus to develop Greenspace Strategy for Council sites Q3 26/27 which will feed into projects and opportunities for biodiversity improvements.</p> <p>M7 - Scope has been agreed and consultant to be engaged Q1 26/27.</p>	<p>M1/M2 - Complete</p> <p>M3 - Senior Arboricultural Officer now sits within Amenities Services and is leading on Ash Dieback Plan.</p> <p>M4/5 - Complete. Work underway to update WHS Management Plan.</p> <p>M6 - Greenspace Biodiversity Management Strategy to be submitted to C&P Committee on 13 August 2026</p> <p>M7 - HFWS tender advertised on PCS. Consultant expected to be engaged by May 2026</p>
Nature Networks	Create Nature Networks by identifying and mapping Nature Networks in Highland and strengthening connections between them to support improved ecological connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and map potential high level Nature Networks across Highland. • Carry out workshops with partners and stakeholders to refine existing and potential new local Nature Networks • Identify, with partners and stakeholders, and map the first phase of Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCSS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature Networks identified and mapped as part of the Local Development Plan. • Identify 10 opportunities to strengthen or create new Nature Networks. • Establish panel to identify and designate LNCSS. • Through the planning process Nature Networks provide opportunities for developers to focus and deliver biodiversity enhancement obligations. 	<p>M1 - 11/24: Establish baseline GIS dataset to include statutory and non-statutory designations, HABMap and key geographical map data</p> <p>M2 - 11/24: Start mapping potential existing Nature Networks (focusing on Inner Moray Firth area)</p> <p>M3 - 12/24: Carry out first workshops (focusing on Inner Moray Firth area) with stakeholders to refine map-based Nature Networks</p> <p>M4 - 04/25: Identify LNCSS (ongoing) and start the designation process (April 2025)</p> <p>M5 - 08/26: Completion of Highland Nature Networks</p>	<p>M1 - Complete</p> <p>M2 - IMF, Caithness and Sutherland, West Highlands and Islands NN complete for 30X30 connections. Non 30X30 sites will be ongoing task.</p> <p>M3 - Complete</p> <p>M4 - 1st tranche of LNCSS sites to align with LDP timetable</p> <p>M5 - Tied to M2. Ongoing process.</p>	<p>M1 - complete</p> <p>M2 - NN 30x30 connections mapped. Mapping of non-30x30 connections ongoing.</p> <p>M3 - complete</p> <p>M4 - LNCSS site identification ongoing. Methodology for consultation/designation being developed</p> <p>M5 - Tied to M2. Ongoing process.</p> <p>NB: Milestones need to updated</p>

Kingussie Flood Protection	<p>The Gynack Burn, which flows through Kingussie, overtops during high rainfall events, resulting in flood damage to roads, railway, parks and buildings within the village. Previous modelling work by the Council has established the main cause of the problem being reduced capacity under road and rail bridges due to build-up of sediment and gravel beneath the bridges. Flooding leads to costly and energy intensive clear up operations as well as increased watercourse maintenance works to remove the large build-up of sediment that has raised the bed of the channel. The works proposed involve the stabilisation of the banks of the Gynack Burn further upstream where erosion is prevalent, the methods proposed are green bank protection providing a natural response, reducing sediment load in the watercourse.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of environmental constraints • Design of natural bank protection works • Establishment of joint working with Network Rail • Collaboration with Estate • Procurement of Contractor to undertake works. • Construction Works • Monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stabilisation of previously erodible banks • Reduction in sediment transportation in watercourse and subsequent deposition below road/rail bridges. • Reduction in future watercourse maintenance works (dredging) • THC/Network Rail collaboration to deliver project. • Progression to next section of erodible banks. 	<p>M1 - 02/24: Fluvial Audit (complete) M2 - 04/24: Bank stabilisation design (complete) M3 - 09/24: Return of Tenders for works M4 - 10/24: Award construction works M5 - 12/24: Complete works on site</p>		
Coastal Change Adaptation Plan (CCAP)	<p>Within The Highland Council area, the coastal zone is home to much of the population, and contains significant infrastructure such as roads, railway lines, bridges, harbours etc. These coastal areas help to drive the economy within the Council area and as such a more adaptive approach is required to ensure our communities and infrastructure remain resilient in the future. The CCAP will provide an overview of the risks across The Highland Council coastal area, identifying locations and infrastructure that are least resilient to climate change and rising sea levels, providing a framework and flexible approach to address these risks over time.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a CCAP • Case Studies – focus on Relic Defences at 2 locations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a plan to address the highest risk areas of coastal flooding. • Improve community understanding of coastal flooding and erosion risks. 	<p>M1 - 10/24: Finalisation of Regional level Coastal Change Adaptation Plan M2 - 04/25: Case Study Report</p>	<p>Local CCAP for Avoch - Study awarded to consultant and project underway. Golspie pier groyne study ongoing. Partnership working with local community. Design estimated to be complete July 2026. Nairn - Relic defences study completed. Further case study funding bid successful to undertake assessment of potential beach recharge. Project awarded and about to commence.</p>	<p>Local CCAP for Avoch - Project ongoing, with first stage due to be complete April 2026. Golspie pier groyne study ongoing. Partnership working with local community. Design estimated to be complete July 2026. Nairn - Assessment of potential beach recharge. Project ongoing.</p>

Highland Local Development Plan (HLDP) – Evidence Report	The Development Plans Team is progressing the HLDP, in close collaboration with statutory key agencies, wider Council services, the development industry, and local communities. The first mandatory milestone is the submission of the HLDP Evidence Report. This project template slide focuses on the development of Chapter 4: Climate Change and Energy.	A comprehensive review has been undertaken by the Climate Change & Energy Team to inform the development of Chapter 4: Climate Change and Energy of the HLDP. This Chapter summarises key evidence and insights relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Context• Climate Emissions and Impacts• Climate Mitigation and Adaptation• Energy• Heat and Cooling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All five areas are comprehensively covered.• Evidence sources are up-to-date, and aligned with national policy and the Council’s Net Zero Strategy.• Peer review confirms the robustness of the evidence base.• Climate Change & Energy Team engagement completed within agreed timeframe.	07/25: Engagement with relevant CCET members. 08/25: Completion of evidence review across all five areas. 08/25: Revisions to Chapter 4 based on feedback from CCET. 09/25: Feedback from Key Agencies on draft Chapter 4. 10/25: Finalisation of Chapter 4 content, with statements of agreement from Key Agencies and integration into HLDP Evidence Report. 11/25 Report to E&I Committee on HLDP Evidence Report update.	07/25: Engagement with relevant CCET members. 08/25: Completion of evidence review across all five areas. 08/25: Revisions to Chapter 4 based on feedback from CCET. 09/25: Feedback from Key Agencies on draft Chapter 4. 10/25: Finalisation of Chapter 4 content, with statements of agreement from Key Agencies and integration into HLDP Evidence Report. 11/25 Report to E&I Committee on HLDP Evidence Report update. 12/25 Chapter 4 updated to reflect finalised response to Key Agency comments and re-circulated to consultees for statements of agreement.	04/26: Updated Chapter 4 with latest publications from NESO and SSE and Highland Climate Change Risk and Opportunity Assessment. Updated Statements of Agreement for these Chapter 4 stakeholders where relevant.
Nature Restoration Fund	Highland Council has been allocated funding of £600K for 2025/26 through the Nature Restoration Fund. This is a capital and revenue fund designed to help support projects that will deliver nature restoration, safeguard wildlife, and tackle the causes of biodiversity loss due to climate change. This funding will enable the delivery of targeted projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Funding of £300K will be made available for community groups and organisations.•Funding of £300K will be directed to internal Council-led projects. Projects currently under consideration include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Woodland Management Plans for key Council woodlands•Initial works to support the establishment of a new Local Nature Reserve at Ardersier Common•Work with Amenities to deliver a range of grassland/biodiversity projects Urban tree planting to restock areas where mature trees have been lost through age or disease•Support delivery of Nature Networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Number of community applications received•Number of successful applications and the associated outputs identified to deliver•Number of Council projects delivered•Area of improved habitats created/restored/safeguarded	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•August 2025: Launch of NRF Community Grant Programme•October 2025: Recruitment of officer to manage grant programme•March 2026: Commitment of Funds by March 2026•April 2026: Annual report to Scottish Government	M1 - Complete M2 - Complete. Shared post funded by NRF and Waste, based in Community Regeneration team, supported by Environment team. M3 - Ongoing, to date 14 applications received over two funding rounds. 12 approved projects with a total value of £124,031.90 and an average grant award of £10,335.99. The next round is closing on 23rd January with potential for a 4th round if funds are still available. M4 - Due April 2026 Council projects underway/under consideration - Ezytreev (arboricultural management software): Complete - 6 x Woodland Management Plans for Council woodlands: Underway - Hydrological survey of Muir of Ord pond: Underway - Ardersier Common Local Nature Reserve: Underway - Amenity Services projects - applications pending - Inverness gull survey to inform Gull Management Strategy: Pending - Biological Recording Centre business plan for income generation: Pending	M1 - Complete M2 - Complete M3 - Ongoing. To date 30 applications received over 3 funding rounds with a value of £318,273. M4 - Due Q1 26/27 Council projects underway/under consideration - Ezytreev (arboricultural management software): Complete - 6 x Woodland Management Plans for Council woodlands: Underway - Tree survey for Culloden Avenue: Completed - Tree planting in Dingwall: Scheduled for October - Hydrological survey of Muir of Ord pond: Underway - Ardersier Common Local Nature Reserve: Underway - Amenity Services cut and lift equipment - Biological Recording Centre business plan for income generation: Pending
Social Housing & HRA						
Project	Activity	Project Elements	Measures of Success	Milestones	Update - January 2026	Update - May 2026

Housing Strategy/ Policy	<p>Enhance the Council's approach to achieving the Local Housing Strategy 2023-28 Outcome 4, "Partnership and innovation builds capacity in Highland so that housing condition and energy efficiency improve and all homes to move towards net zero."</p> <p>This will be achieved through reviewing existing housing stock with a focus on energy efficiency status, adopting whole house retrofit approach to support the reduction of fuel poverty and improving the efficiency of Council properties in line with Net Zero Standards.</p> <p>Review of HRA Capital Plan to remove barriers in achieving targets while incorporating the requirement to secure external funding to support delivery.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review stock information to derive a clear understanding of current energy efficiency status and the works required to achieve proposed Social Housing Net Zero Standard (SHNZS). Review HRA budget allocations Revise area-based funding allocation to ensure that properties of the greatest need (energy inefficient, off-gas, rural properties in Council tax bands E-G) are prioritised for energy efficiency works. Undertake feasibility studies for energy efficiency projects including costings. Review current process for tenant opt-out. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approach established for achieving proposed SHNZS and alleviating fuel poverty in the Highlands. Establish accurate costing against housing stock types. 5 whole house retrofit feasibilities completed per annum. Increased HRA capital budget allocation to energy efficiency works. Pipeline of shovel-ready energy efficiency projects. Tracking the reduction in carbon emissions (aligned with Highland Council carbon emission targets). 	<p>M1 - 11/25: Report to Housing and Property Committee outlining analysis of stock, understanding of current energy efficiency and requesting approval to change current HRA funding structure.</p> <p>M2 - 11/25: Review of Policy approach/Amendment Review progress of Local Housing Strategy.</p> <p>M3 - Ongoing: Identification of priority projects.</p>	<p>A third member workshop took place in December and this presented an update on the rent strategy. It also detailed the proposed principles of the next 5-year HRA capital programme 2027-2032. This will focus on sustained investment in the energy efficiency of housing stock and a targeted approach to works to ensure that external funding is maximised and that the houses which most need insulation, heating and fabric works are prioritised across Highland communities.</p>	<p>The Housing Revenue Account budget for 2026/27 was approved at January Housing & Property Committee. This included a 8% uplift in the approved 2026/27 HRA Capital Programme to provide an additional £1.692m of funding for priority energy and external fabric investment. A new HRA Capital Plan 2027-2032 is being submitted to May Housing & Property Committee. This will focus on sustained investment in the energy efficiency of housing stock and a targeted approach to works to ensure that external funding is maximised and that the houses which most need insulation, heating and fabric works are prioritised across Highland communities.</p>
Energy Efficient Homes - Caol	<p>Utilise grant funding to support the delivery of a retrofit project to 32 properties located in Caol. Properties are all Swedish Timber construction, off gas and existing roof contains asbestos. Scope of works includes; external wall insulation, removal of asbestos roof, new roof with in-roof solar, insulation lofts (where required) and installing air source heat pumps (some properties already have a heat pump). Project to achieve a minimum of 50% external funding on eligible works.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Align delivery of retrofit works to social & private properties in Caol. Maximise and manage external funding, including ECO4 and Scottish Government EES:ABS enabling funds. Improve condition of housing stock and reduce fuel poverty. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 90% of allocated properties improved 50% (min) of external funding leveraged 100% of properties EPC C or above Meeting standards, including EESSH2 Delivery of place-based project including socially and privately owned properties. 	<p>M1 - 07/24: Completion of 2 pilot properties</p> <p>M2 - 08/24: Building Warrants approved</p> <p>M3 - 06/25: Project completion</p> <p>M4 - 09/25: Project close report, including monitoring and evaluation</p>	<p>79 houses completed and signed off. Now in defects period with main contractor.</p>	<p>This project is in defects period</p>
Energy Efficient Homes – Balintore (mixed tenure)	<p>Utilise SHNZF, ECO4 and EES:ABS funding to support the delivery of a mixed-tenure retrofit project to properties located in Balintore. Properties are all Norwegian Timber construction and off gas. Scope of works includes; external wall insulation, new windows & doors, new roof with in-roof solar, insulation lofts (where required) and installing air source heat pumps (some properties already have a heat pump). Project to achieve a minimum of 50% external funding on eligible works.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Align delivery of retrofit works to social & private properties in Balintore. Secure external Social Housing Net Zero Funding (SHNZF) and ECO4 funding. Improve condition of housing stock and reduce fuel poverty. Support regeneration of the area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 80% of allocated properties improved 50% (min) of external funding leveraged 100% of properties EPC C or above Meeting standards, including EESSH2 Delivery of place-based project including socially and privately owned properties. 	<p>M1 - 07/24: Submit revised project plan to SG</p> <p>M2 - 08/24: Procurement complete</p> <p>M3 - 09/24: Building warrants approved</p> <p>M4 - 10/24: Installations commence</p> <p>M5 - 06/25: Project completion</p> <p>M6 - 09/25: Project close report, including monitoring and evaluation</p>	<p>65 properties completed and signed off. Now in defects period with main contractor.</p>	<p>This project is in defects period</p>

<p>Energy Efficient Homes – Full Retrofit Balintore (Highland Council)</p>	<p>Prioritise economies of scale and full house retrofit approach while delivering Energy Efficiency measures as part of Capital Investment in Highland Council properties. Utilise available capacity to deliver 2 simultaneous projects to one area, 2 project management teams – 2 contractors, same energy efficiency measures. 59.55% properties in area included. Introduce ECO4 funding to our current capital works delivery programme to enhance project's scope. Properties are all Timber construction and off gas. Scope of works includes; external wall insulation, new windows & doors, new roof with in-roof solar, insulation lofts (where required) and installing air source heat pumps.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steer capital investment towards a retrofit approach. Explore externally funded opportunities and mix tenure project delivery. Improve condition of housing stock and reduce fuel poverty. Support regeneration of the area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% of properties EPC C or above Meeting standards, including EESSH2 and future compliance 80% of allocated properties improved 50% (min) of external funding leveraged 	<p>M1 - 01/24: Initial tenant engagement and opt-in exercise M2 - 07/24: Two projects initiated – 2 contractors appointed M3 - 08/24: Second tenant engagement – Housing needs M4 - 09/24: Technical specifications agreed M5 - 10/24: Installations commence M6 - TBC: Project completion M7 - TBC: Project close report, including lessons learnt</p>	<p>M1 - Completed M2 - Completed M3 - Completed M4 - Completed M5 - Completed M6 - Awaiting installation certificates and EPCs before issue of Practical Completion.</p>	<p>M1 - Completed M2 - Completed M3 - Completed M4 - Completed M5 - Completed M6 - Awaiting installation certificates and EPCs before issue of Practical Completion - which will be backdated.</p>
<p>GBIS - CWI for Social Properties</p>	<p>Utilise Great British Insulation Scheme (GBIS) to deliver cavity wall insulation (CWI) to Council-owned houses. Eligible properties will be insulated and ventilation upgraded (where required) as part of this project. Align delivery of HRA and private properties to create economies of scale and maximise external funding.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine eligible properties Maximise and manage external funding Improve the energy efficiency of properties Undertake external drill tests to confirm property suitability Review opportunities to scale up the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100 properties to receive CWI 97% external funding leveraged Delivery of place-based project including socially and privately owned properties EPC improvements, including increase in SAP rating and reduction in carbon emissions 	<p>M1 - 09/24: Project approval M2 - 03/25: Project completion M3 - 05/25: Project close report, including evaluation M4 - Ongoing: Identification of priority areas</p>	<p>Project superseded to the D-C Highlands Project (ECO).</p>	<p>Project closed - has been superseded by the D-C Highland Project.</p>
<p>D-C Highlands - Council Properties (ECO funded)</p>	<p>Utilise the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) funding to deliver insulation measures, including cavity wall insulation extraction and fill, room-in-roof insulation, loft insulation, internal wall insulation, and cavity internal wall insulation but excluding external wall insulation (EWI) at this stage. Additionally, install Solar Photovoltaic (Solar PV) panels and Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHP) in Council-owned properties. Where insulation is installed, ventilation will be upgraded as required. Measures will be installed based on the properties' eligibility and suitability as outlined by the funding criteria. Align the delivery of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and private properties to create economies of scale and maximise external funding.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine eligible properties Maximise and manage external funding Improve the energy efficiency of Council properties Undertake external drill tests to confirm property where required suitability Review opportunities for fully and partially funded projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of dwellings with a SAP rating of C or above after energy efficiency works Leverage over £6m of external funding Delivery of place-based project including socially and privately owned properties % tenant opt-in for energy efficiency works 	<p>M1 - 01/25: Project approval M2 - 12/25: Project completion M3 - 05/26: Project close report, including evaluation M4 - Ongoing: Identification of priority areas</p>	<p>Progress to date: - 65 surveys carried out (on hold) - 418 properties complete - 2 Partial installs Measures installed (complete): - 126 Cavity wall insulation - extract & refill - 13 Cavity wall insulation - virgin fills - 416 Solar PV - 143 Air source heat pumps - 7 Room in roof insulation - 42 Loft insulation Total of 747 measures</p>	<p>Currently reviewing options to restart project. Following UK Governments decision to not renew ECO schemes there has been uncertainty and new restrictions on this funding mechanism which are currently under review.</p>

Educational Resources	Development of educational resources to support behaviour change and raise awareness of energy efficiency measures. Energy efficiency improvements can result in lower energy costs for tenants which in turn can reduce fuel poverty. This initiative aims to reduce the number of tenant opt-outs per project, particularly in relation to air source heat pumps. Tenant opt-out rates can impact the Council's ability to leverage external funding for energy efficiency programmes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of new website. Creation of series of engaging videos showcasing the energy efficiency measures delivered as part of the various projects. Produce FAQ documents. Resources will be developed in conjunction with tenant feedback. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % reduction of tenant opt-outs for energy efficiency works. 	<p>M1 09/25: Creation of resources.</p> <p>M2 09/25: Approval of resources.</p> <p>M3 10/25: Roll-out of resources.</p> <p>M4 Ongoing: Review to identify any additional requirements incorporating feedback from users.</p>	<p>M1- Review of existing documentation is ongoing.</p> <p>M2- Information is being tailored for Council Tenants.</p> <p>M3 - awaiting launch of new Council website.</p> <p>M4 - monitoring is in place to ensure continued progress.</p>	Materials have been reviewed by Housing, and feedback has been provided. Word documents will be updated to reflect feedback and further discussion to confirm what edits can be made to videos to ensure the messaging aligns with the Council's current delivery model.
Integration of ECO funding	Integration of Energy Company Obligation (ECO) funding to support the delivery of works under the current Heating Framework to maximise Council HRA budget and increase delivery. Work with contractors on the Heating Framework to identify opportunities for ECO funding and support to access funds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine eligible properties Maximise and manage external funding alongside HRA budget Improve the energy efficiency of Council properties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of dwellings with a SAP rating of C or above after energy efficiency works Leverage over £1m of external funding % tenant opt-in for energy efficiency works Positive feedback from tenants 	<p>M1 ongoing: Discussions with contractors to secure external funding.</p> <p>M2 ongoing: Identification of eligible properties.</p> <p>M3 Q3 25/26: Project approval.</p> <p>M4 Q3 25/26: Project Delivery.</p>	Chancellor Rachel Reeves delivered the UK Gov's budget (26-Nov-25) which announced the ECO scheme would not be renewed. The UKG is expected to publish their Warm Homes Plan in Dec-25, which should set out if there will be a direct replacement for ECO or similar scheme.	This project is to be closed following UK Governments decision to not renew ECO schemes. The Council is currently reviewing alternative external funding opportunities.
Waste						
Project	Activity	Project Elements	Measures of Success	Milestones	Update - January 2026	Update - May 2026
Recycling Infrastructure Improvements across the Estate	Introduce twin-stream recycling systems across the Council Estate to accelerate progress towards meeting targets. Reducing non-recycling waste and increasing the quality and quantity of recycling will reduce carbon emissions associated with residual waste treatment, additionally, costs associated with waste disposal and processing recycling will reduce. These changes will also be accompanied by the expansion of food waste collection in specific geographical areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benchmarking recycling rates in schools to gauge progress. Improve recycling infrastructure across the Council estate through the roll out of twin-stream recycling systems. Expand the food waste collections in schools and other Council premises in specific geographical areas. Targeted communications campaign to support the roll out of new recycling systems. Development of Waste E-learning module as part of Mandatory Net Zero training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 15% reduction of total waste by 2025 Reduce food waste by 33% by 2025 Recycle 70% of remaining waste by 2025 Send no more than 5% of remaining waste to landfill by 2030 Cost savings benefits (£0.365m 24/25 and £1.695m 25/26 – total external and internal waste) associated with waste disposal. Net reduction in carbon emissions 	<p>Recycling infrastructure improvements initiated aligned to the following phased service change timeline:</p> <p>M1 - 05/24: Ross & Cromarty</p> <p>M2 - 07/24: Nairn and Inverness</p> <p>M3 - 09/24: Badenoch & Strathspey</p> <p>M4 - 10/24: Sutherland</p> <p>M5 - 11/24: Caithness</p> <p>M6 - 03/25: Skye & Lochalsh</p> <p>M7 - 09/25: Lochaber</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting held with Depute Headteacher at Inverness Royal Academy to review waste audit results and agree next steps for increasing recycling. Waste audit undertaken at Auldearn Primary School. Meeting scheduled w/c 12 January 2026 between CCET, Waste, and Catering, Cleaning & Facilities Management teams to discuss HQ audit. 	Recycling workshops delivered to pupils at Inverness Royal Academy in March 26, as part of the trial of new recycling infrastructure. Meeting with CCFM to discuss operational arrangements across a number of premises with regards to waste and recycling is scheduled for w/c 27th April 2026. Waste audit undertaken in South Lodge Primary school. Funding for the recycling infrastructure for all council premises still to be identified. Kingussie High School follow up waste audit to be programmed before June 26.

Re-Use Portal	Develop and pilot an in-house portal to redistribute resources within the organisation such as furniture, fixtures, fittings, school materials and office consumables. Additionally, identify companies that would purchase used furniture, and/or organisations/charities that would take assets no longer required by the Council to avoid items being sent for disposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of platform that allows activities to be user-led or automated to minimise the resources required to run the platform • Development of guidance including items that can be redistributed via the portal (e.g. ICT equipment must be returned directly to ICT) • Identification of companies and/or organisations/charities that would buy or reuse assets no longer required by the Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced procurement spend • Reduced waste disposal costs • Minimisation of waste • Reduced associated carbon emissions • Cost avoidance – subscription fees of using an external provider in respect of the portal 	<p>M1 - 01/25: Develop and test portal</p> <p>M2 - 02/25: Draft guidance to address potential issues such as electric items with no current PAT test; suitably trained officers for heavy lifting; expected minimum condition of furniture etc.</p> <p>M3 - 02/25: Launch and promotion of portal</p> <p>M4 - 08/25: Evaluate pilot</p>	Waste & CCET to meet with New Start Highland.	No substantive progress has been made during this period. Initial discussions with Net Start Highland remain pending.
Reusable Lunch Packaging Pilot	Pilot reusable lunch packaging in Kingussie High School with the aim of reducing the amount of single-use canteen containers disposed of. This activity is part of a wider project to benchmark waste and recycling rates in schools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct waste audit to identify baseline waste composition and associated carbon and cost. • Identify and implement recycling infrastructure requirements in KHS. • Communication and engagement activities to support the roll out of new infrastructure and reusable pilot. • Roll-out reusable lunch packaging to Kingussie High School. • Promote, support and integrate waste hierarchy principles into the Sustainable Learning Settings' 4 C's (Curriculum, Campus, Culture and Community) through engagement, learning and incentives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced procurement spend • Reduction in waste, associated disposal costs and carbon emissions 	<p>M1 - 03/25: Waste audit undertaken at Kingussie High School</p> <p>M2 - 03/25: Cross-service meeting held with representatives from KHS, Facilities Management, Catering, Waste and CCET</p> <p>M3 - 09/25: Programme of Communication and Engagement activities to support the roll out of recycling infrastructure and reusable pilot</p> <p>M4 - 09/25: Roll out of recycling Infrastructure at KHS</p> <p>M5 - 09/25: Roll out reusable Lunch packaging at KHS</p> <p>M6 - 04/26: Evaluate pilot and consider further roll-out</p>	Pilot ongoing.	The trial at Kingussie High has been going for six months and engagement has been good. The school are keen to continue with the reusable containers after the end of the trial and they have incorporated this into their daily operations. A lot of meals have been served on traditional crockery as well as the reusable container, as education have requested pupils to now eat in the dining hall rather than throughout the school. Since the start of the trial we have seen a massive reduction in disposables purchased which is a great outcome for sustainability. We are currently looking to roll the process out to two newly opening secondary schools within the Highland Council Area.
Members' Catering	At the January Climate Change Committee, Members requested a project template be developed and brought to the May Committee regarding Members' catering and the potential to reduce food waste. Avoidable food waste costs Scotland £1.1billion a year. A third of all food produced globally is thrown away, while food production and consumption account for around a third of global greenhouse gas emissions. When we waste food, we also waste all the energy and resources that went into producing, processing, transporting, and cooking it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review current process for ordering catering • Assess feasibility to introduce process to determine understanding of in-person Member attendance (will require Member engagement) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced food waste • Reduced costs 	<p>M1 - 05/25: Review current process</p> <p>M2 - 08/25: Provide recommendations to Members Group</p>	Paper to be presented to the Council's Corporate Management Team and the Senior Leadership Group.	Initial data collection has commenced to support monitoring of Members' catering food waste.

Highland Reuse & Repair Fund	Funding of £500k has been allocated through the Council's Revenue Budget (2025/26 – 2027/28) to create a fund that supports community-led projects that reduce waste, promote reuse and repair, and help build a circular economy in the Highland region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate £500k through the delivery of two funding rounds with grants ranging from £2k-£50k for capital and revenue costs. • Support community-led projects that reduce waste, promote reuse and repair, and advance a circular economy across the Highland region. • Assess applications for technical eligibility, waste reduction impact, socioeconomic benefits, and alignment with sustainability objectives. • Monitor funded projects and collect and analyse data on waste diversion, skills development, and infrastructure outcomes to inform future circular economy initiatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of projects and funding allocated per round • Estimated waste diverted from landfill contributing to emissions reduction • Number of workshops delivered and participant engagement • Establishment or expansion of repair cafes, tool libraries, reuse hubs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • November 2025: Launch of fund • February 2026: Commitment of Round 1 applications by February 2026 • May 2026: Deadline for Round 2 applications • Ongoing: Support and monitoring of funded projects • August 2027: Evaluation and reporting on waste reduction, skills development and circular economy outcomes 		<p>Round 1 awarded £272,366 to 12 community-led projects across Highland, supporting reuse centres, repair cafes, upcycling workshops and skills-based initiatives that reduce waste and strengthen the local circular economy.</p> <p>Round 2 of the Fund opened on 2 April and closes on 22 May.</p>
Waste Strategy 2026-2031	Development of a Waste Strategy for the five-year period April 2026 to March 2031, to maximise reuse and recycling, with a focus on reducing and decarbonising non-recycling waste.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Waste Strategy for April 2026-March 2031, setting out objectives, actions, and performance measures. • Policy readiness assessment to ensure compliance with future national waste policies, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circular Economy Strategy and targets • Packaging Extended Producer Responsibility • Deposit Return Scheme • Household Recycling Code of Practice • Digital Waste Tracking; and • Emissions Trading Scheme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear and approved roadmap for compliance with upcoming national waste policies • Defined and measurable targets for increasing reuse and recycling rates across the Highland region • Quantifiable and reportable reduction in emissions from non-recycling waste streams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 04/26: Stakeholder engagement with internal services, communities, and industry partners to align strategy with local needs and national requirements 05/26: Approval process through Communities & Place Committee 05/26: Commence implementation of approved strategy actions Annual: Annual review to track progress against reuse, recycling, and carbon reduction targets 		<p>The Development of the Waste Strategy has been deferred due to ongoing proposed regulatory and statutory changes under consultation.</p> <p>A paper will be presented to the Communities and Place Committee during May 2026 setting out the approach to updating the Waste Strategy.</p>

Sustainable Travel						
Project	Activity	Project Elements	Measures of Success	Milestones	Update - January 2026	Update - May 2026
Sustainable Travel Through Operational Efficiencies	The Council currently utilises a range of vehicles for business travel including white fleet (vehicles under 3.5T), grey fleet (employee owned vehicle use for work purposes), car club and car hire. This project aims to conduct a comprehensive review of these travel methods with the aim of optimising costs, reducing carbon emissions and improving efficiency while ensuring compliance with relevant policies and regulations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collection: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather data on white fleet, grey fleet, car club and casual car hire. Review relevant policies, contracts and existing reporting mechanisms Analysis and reporting Develop comprehensive reporting detailing findings and recommendations for potential cost savings and emission reductions Dashboard design Create a user-friendly dashboard that integrates relevant data and established key performance indicators for efficient business travel Implementation and training Pilot dashboard with key services and gather feedback Monitoring and continuous improvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved vehicle utilisation in alignment with prescribed travel hierarchy Utilise data to inform demonstratable reductions in travel costs across all Services Utilise data to inform demonstratable reductions in emissions across all Services Improved fleet utilisation through the reduction in use of more expensive travel options Adoption of use of dashboards across Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> M1 - (Date TBC): Data collection M2 - (Date TBC): Delivery of analysis report M3 - (Date TBC): Dashboard prototype developed M4 - (Date TBC): Pilot testing of dashboard completed M5 - (Date TBC): Dashboard rollout M6 - (Date TBC): Training/comms around use of dashboards M7 - (Date TBC): Implementation review 	<p>Cars utilisation review complete, vans underway. Procurement embargo still ongoing.</p> <p>A dashboard has been created showing utilisation of Diriebught vehicles. A similar exercise is now underway for Carr's Corner. One of the main findings is an evidence-based approach to support the reduction of vehicles which can be achieved by fleet sharing.</p> <p>A review of hired fleet has also commenced.</p>	<p>Process of "right sizing" the fleet is underway. Reduction of 2 RCV's agreed for 26/27 and will take place shortly. Review of dedicated winter maintenance fleet has resulted in move to contract hire of these. Newer vehicles will have positive benefits. Hired Fleet review ongoing with new approval process in place.</p>
Active Travel	Developing infrastructure to enable and encourage staff to choose active travel is a key area of focus highlighted in the Council's Net Zero Strategy. An employee travel survey will be conducted in Autumn 2024 to provide an updated evidence base to help identify actions to support a shift in travel choices for employee travel for commuting and work-related purposes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop, implement and analyse an employee travel survey Refresh the existing Travel Plan for the Council HQ building in Inverness, considering both health and wellbeing, equalities and sustainability requirements Design and facilitate focus groups with staff to help encourage greater engagement with the Highland Council Travel Plan Provide a summary presentation/briefing of survey findings and subsequent actions/approaches as appropriate Work with key stakeholders such as HITRANS to maximise impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in active travel Removal of barriers to staff using active travel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> M1 - 09/24: Creation of an online employee travel survey M2 - 10/24: Focus Group sessions held M3 - 12/24: Production of a summary presentation/ briefing with findings and subsequent actions M4 - 01/25: Refreshed Highland Council Travel Plan M5 - 01/25 and ongoing: Delivery of actions 	<p>Survey to be presented to Extended Corporate Management Team on 26 January 2026.</p>	<p>High-level findings from the recent staff survey, open 11 February to 6 March, presented to Corporate Management Team on 20 April 2026.</p> <p>The staff survey responses cut across several Delivery Plan workstreams, including Future Operating Model, Reconfiguring Our Asset Base, Net Zero, Flexible and Hybrid Working, and Travel.</p> <p>Further analysis and collective consideration of the dataset will be important to support a shared understanding across services, ensure coherence between related policies and initiatives, and avoid fragmented responses.</p>
EV Policy	Development of policy around the efficient use of council-operated electric vehicles (EVs) charging infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of policy Development and delivery of communications and training to support the policy implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased network availability Enhanced staff awareness and behavioural change Mitigated reputational risk for the Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> M1 - 04/25: Policy Drafted M2 - 05/25: Present draft policy to Communities & Place Committee for approval M3 - 06/25: Roll out of communications and training 	<p>Ongoing in partnership with EZO.</p>	<p>This work has been delayed due to migration of the existing EV network onto the EZO platform. Will resume once the migrated network is in a steady state H2 2026.</p>
Elected Member Travel	Develop reporting to provide meaningful and understandable information regarding Member Travel, including associated costs and carbon emissions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of current Member Travel including mode e.g. car club, lift share, own vehicle (grey fleet) Create a user-friendly dashboard that integrates relevant data Implementation and training in respect of dashboard Identify champion to encourage other Members to carpool, use car club or alternatives to travel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adoption of dashboard Reduction in mileage, leading to decreased carbon emissions and costs Improved utilisation of Council vehicles e.g. car club instead of Grey Fleet Increased levels of lift share, carpooling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> M1 - 03/25: Data collection M2 - 05/25: Delivery of analysis report to Climate Change Committee M3 - 05/25: Identification of champion M4 - 05/25: Development and testing of dashboard M5 - 06/25: Training/comms around use of dashboard 	<p>Ongoing.</p>	<p>Ongoing - member workshop to be programmed in Q1/ early Q2 in financial year 26/27</p>

Light Fleet - Optimal Utilisation	Review utilisation levels and actual business requirements for the Council's light fleet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a vehicle report template to highlight and report key metrics Analysis of fleet data and individual vehicle reports to adopt a data driven approach for determining the optimal fleet size Identify underutilised vehicles and opportunities to downsize the fleet or vehicle size, and determine where vehicles could be shared to ensure full utilisation Strengthen guidance around misuse of vehicles to develop awareness across all members of staff as to the appropriate use of vehicles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved fleet utilisation Transition of high grey fleet usage/mileage to fleet vehicles Reduction in the use of more expensive travel options, such as casual car hire Additional financial savings, including reduced maintenance and insurance costs 	<p>M1 - 03/25: Data modelling completed</p> <p>M2 - 04/25: Completion of high-level Light Fleet Utilisation reporting</p> <p>M3 - 05/25: Individual vehicle reporting template finalised</p> <p>M4 - Ongoing: Monitoring and engagement with Services</p>	<p>Cars utilisation review complete, vans underway. Procurement embargo still ongoing.</p> <p>A dashboard has been created showing utilisation of Diriebught vehicles. A similar exercise is now underway for Carr's Corner. One of the main findings is an evidence-based approach to support the reduction of vehicles which can be achieved by fleet sharing.</p> <p>A review of hired fleet has also commenced.</p>	<p>Process of "right sizing" the fleet is underway. Reduction of 2 RCV's agreed for 26/27 and will take place shortly. Review of dedicated winter maintenance fleet has resulted in move to contract hire of these. Newer vehicles will have positive benefits. Hired Fleet review ongoing with new approval process in place.</p>
Light Fleet - Process	Comprehensive review of process to acquire a new fleet vehicle or replace an existing vehicle. Staff will be signposted to alternative options such as Car Club where mileage does not justify allocation of a fleet vehicle. In cases where a vehicle is approved, a ULEV will be provided as standard wherever possible. The process will also consider the opportunity to 'pool' vehicles to ensure the correct size and type of vehicle is utilised. This would negate the need to lease larger vehicles required infrequently (e.g. where a smaller vehicle is sufficient most of the time).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review whole end to end process for light fleet Develop new process and form for instigating a request for new or replacement light fleet vehicles Develop decision making process / hierarchy to outline where a dedicated light fleet vehicle may not be the most appropriate option 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data driven decision making Robust approval process Increased scrutiny Cost and carbon savings 	<p>M1 - 04/25: Identify Key Performance Indicators</p> <p>M2 - 04/25: Review and revise current processes and policies</p> <p>M3 - 05/25: Light Fleet Request platform developed, tested and launched</p> <p>M4 - Ongoing: Monitoring</p>	Ongoing.	Ongoing - process will be utilisation driven as part of fleet reduction project. Continually reviewing fuel types of vehicles required. HVO trial underway.
E-Bike Scheme	As part of the Council's approach to fleet decarbonisation, the Council has participated in an E-cargo bike pilot scheme for business travel. The pilot has highlighted challenges around the storage of bikes; charging/storage of batteries; and staff being unable to use the bikes for commuting purposes due to insurance exclusions. Initial feedback has suggested e-bikes would be preferable for several teams that have participated in the pilot. Further work is required to determine the future delivery model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation of E-cargo bike pilot Assess leasing options to include the provision of e-bikes/e cargo bikes, servicing, maintenance and insurance Undertake comparison of resources (staffing and costs) to deliver in-house vs leasing Work with key stakeholders such as HITRANS to determine future delivery model, including the feasibility of a shared scheme with partner organisations/open access to the public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expansion of accessible e-bike scheme Alleviation of current challenges regarding maintenance and insurance Increased uptake of low-emission business travel Reduction in fleet usage and associated emissions and costs 	<p>M1 - 01/25: Evaluation of pilot M2 - 02/25 Identify journeys currently undertaken using fleet vehicles, where use of an e-bike may be more appropriate</p> <p>M3 - 03/25 Comparison of costings</p> <p>M4 - 08/25 Determine future delivery model following discussions with partner organisations</p>	Offer letter received from HITRANS, December 2025.	Further work is required to determine an appropriate future e-bike delivery model within the Council's fleet.
Transitioning the Light Fleet	Within our light commercial fleet (vehicles under 3.5T), Highland Council has introduced 93 low emissions vehicles, representing 13% of the light fleet total (715 vehicles). The 93 low emission vehicles can be broken down to 30 electric and 63 petrol hybrid. The Fleet Service will continue to implement a prioritised fleet replacement programme to transition the light fleet to Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEV).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replacement of 41 diesel small light commercial vans with 41 plug-in hybrid small vans Development and roll-out of staff training/induction process around the use of ULEVs and charging infrastructure Policy around the efficient use of council-operated EVs charging infrastructure (this project element was brought to the Climate Change Committee in January but is highlighted as an essential component in transitioning the light fleet) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in number/percentage of ULEV vehicles in the Council's fleet Reduced carbon emissions and running costs 	<p>07/25: Policy on EV infrastructure use</p> <p>09/25: Training on use of ULEVs and Charging Infrastructure</p> <p>11/25: Replacement of 41 vans</p>	Transitioning to hybrid vans has now commenced with first consignment now received, awaiting to be deployed.	Hybrid vans in place. However, government grant removed for Plug in hybrid vans. New or replacement fleet to be assessed if ULEV can be utilised. Fleet replacement strategy to be developed once fleet is right size.

Local Transport Strategy 2025-2035 Delivery Plan	The Highland Local Transport Strategy (LTS) 2025 to 2035 sets out the future policy direction and focus for how the transport system in Highland will be maintained, managed and improved, and responds to national Net Zero commitments over the next 10 years. Following the Council's adoption of the LTS in February 2025, a detailed Delivery Plan will be developed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of Steering Group, comprising senior representatives from across the Council and other relevant organisations, to provide strategic oversight and support the delivery of the LTS. Develop a detailed set of actions to progress the LTS policies to achieve the overarching vision and objectives for the transport network in Highland as laid out in the LTS. Review of existing plans and strategies including the Council's Net Zero Strategy. Collaboration with Council teams to gather insights from existing work plans, including the in-house bus service and other initiatives. Identification of roles and responsibilities for each action to embed accountability and facilitate effective delivery. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery Plan includes a prioritised list of actions aligned with LTS objectives. 100% of actions assigned to relevant team/organisations. Monitoring framework established with KPIs and reporting schedule (annual report template). Delivery Plan approved within target timeframe. 	<p>Q2: LTS Steering Group established and Terms of Reference finalised.</p> <p>Q3: Actions identification – preparation of database.</p> <p>Q3/4: Production of Delivery Plan and Monitoring Proposals.</p> <p>Q4: Delivery Plan presented to the Economy & Infrastructure Committee.</p>	Delivery Plan will be brought to Economy & Infrastructure Committee in February 2026 for approval.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Q2: LTS Steering Group established and Terms of Reference finalised: in place Feb 2026. Q3: Actions identification - preparation of database: in place Feb 2026 for committee report. Q3/4: <i>Production of Delivery Plan and Monitoring Proposals</i>: in place Feb 2026 for committee report. Q4: <i>Delivery Plan presented to the E&I Committee</i>: In place Feb 2026 and passed by Committee along with the annual Progress Template which includes the M&E of Priority Actions. Governance: Steering Group of COs established and meeting quarterly. Working Group of Officers delivering on Priority Actions across different workstreams established and meeting monthly, reporting to the SG.
E-bike Charging Infrastructure	A key barrier to the effective use and wider adoption of e-cargo and e-bikes has been the charging and storage of batteries. Funding has been secured to install safe, secure, and accessible external charging infrastructure at Highland Council HQ. This will enable reliable charging, support the expansion of the e-bike fleet and promote sustainable business travel across Council services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Charging infrastructure site identification and assessment Procurement of appropriate infrastructure Installation of charging infrastructure Development of operational framework, including usage guidelines, safety protocols, and maintenance schedule Communication and engagement activities to promote e-bike travel and raise awareness of infrastructure developments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased uptake of e-bike and e-cargo bike use Reduction in business miles travelled by diesel and petrol vehicles Enhanced safety and security of charging infrastructure Fleet vehicles offset through increased use of sustainable travel options Health and wellbeing benefits reported by staff using active travel modes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Q3 2025/26: Infrastructure site identified and approved Q3 2025/26: Procurement process completed and installation initiated Q4 2025/26: Charging infrastructure installed and operational Q4 2025/26: Communication and engagement activities delivered to promote uptake and raise awareness 	Offer letter received from HITRANS, December 2025.	Electrical works and installation of lockers completed March 2026.
HVO Trial	Trial to assess feasibility and performance of hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) as a low-carbon fuel alternative.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement HVO fuel in two Council vehicles - a public bus and a refuse collection vehicle. Assess feasibility and performance including technical compatibility, operational reliability, and stakeholder engagement. Collect and analyse data on emissions reduction, fuel efficiency, maintenance requirements, and cost implications compared to diesel baseline. Evaluate trial results to inform recommendations for scalability and wider fleet adoption. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carbon Reduction: % decrease in emissions compared to diesel baseline Operational Reliability: No significant downtime or technical issues Cost Impact: Comparative analysis of fuel and maintenance costs Scalability Assessment: Recommendations for wider fleet adoption 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quarterly Ongoing - Assessment of operational functionality, as well as analysis of emissions and expenditure. Quarterly Ongoing - Assessment of wider fleet adoption / closure of trial based on benefit realisation. 		Update to be presented to the Climate Change Committee in May.
Net Zero Delivery						
Project	Activity	Project Elements	Measures of Success	Milestones	Update - January 2026	Update - May 2026

Capital Projects - Net Zero	<p>The Highland Council is committed to achieving Net Zero carbon emissions, in line with national targets. Capital projects represent the Council's largest source of carbon emissions, making it crucial to adopt a rigorous approach to reducing these emissions.</p> <p>An assessment process for capital projects will be developed to ensure statutory climate and ecological targets are met.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working group established. Develop clear guidance for incorporating Net Zero into Capital Project planning and design. Develop pilot projects to validate and refine the approach. Establish a framework to track and report on metrics and weighting as outlined in Capital Programme Bid Evaluation and Prioritisation Matrix approved by Council on 14/03/24. Revise policy documents reflecting the integration of Net Zero considerations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish business case model to ensure consistency of assessment of projects Approval of guidelines and implementation of process Successful delivery of two pilot projects that demonstrate whole life cost approach Approval of standardised business case documentation and reporting frameworks for all new Capital Projects 100% compliance with new guidelines adopted after policy change 	<p>M1 - 08/24: Project initiation M2 - 11/24: Development of clear guidance M3 - 11/24: Develop pilot projects M4 - 01/25: Implementation of framework M5 - 03/25: Policy updated and approved by Council</p>	<p>The analysis of the Life Cycle Assessment platforms is currently constrained due to limited availability of key data and information relating to the three projects selected for inclusion in the trial. This gap is affecting the robustness and accuracy of the outputs, which in turn impacts the Climate Change & Energy Team's ability to provide comprehensive insights at this stage regarding the functionality of the platforms.</p>	<p>A separate agenda item from the Capital Programme & Net Zero Funding Strategy thematic group provides an update on progress.</p>
Inverness Castle – Sustainable Operations	<p>The Inverness Castle Experience (ICE), set to open in 2025, aims to become a premier visitor attraction. There is an expectation ICE will look to attain gold standard in the Green Tourism Award, as an exemplar to tourist attractions throughout the Highlands.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baseline assessment – review current/proposed sustainability practices. Identify and address key operational, environmental and engagement factors across core sustainability themes, including: Energy & Carbon; Water Use; Waste Management; Sustainable Procurement; Biodiversity & Nature; Community & Destination Engagement; Transport & Travel; and Communication & Marketing. Implement sustainable technologies and policies. Apply for certification. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental, Social and Governance solutions embedded in operations and practices. Implementation of measures to reduce carbon footprint. Achievement of sustainability certification. Enhanced reputation – competitive advantage. 	<p>M1 - 03/25: Identify cross-service representatives for working group. M2 - 04/25: Inception meeting of working group. M3 - 04/25: Assess current & proposed sustainability measures. M4 - 05/25: Set goals – identify key focus areas. M5 - 07/25: Engagement. M6 - 07/25: Develop training and educational resources. M7 - 10/25: Implement sustainable policies & technologies. M8 - 01/26: Apply for certification, working with assessors. Ongoing: Continuous monitoring and improvement.</p>	<p>The recent opening of Inverness Castle creates an opportunity to advance several key criteria, particularly those focused on demonstrating sustainable operations as part of achieving the Green Tourism Gold Award.</p>	<p>Progress continues, building on earlier groundwork; however, competing operational pressures within High Life Highland have impacted the pace of delivery.</p>
Highland Climate Change Risk & Opportunity Assessment	<p>Highland Adapts is leading on the first regional Climate Change Risk & Opportunity Assessment to identify and prioritise climate-related risks across Highland. A regional scoring workshop will be held in December. To ensure the Council's input is reflected, an internal workshop will be held shortly after to review and refine scoring. This approach supports alignment with the Council's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and will directly inform the development of the Council's Climate Change Corporate Risk & Opportunity Assessment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance at regional workshop by the Net Zero Programme Manager and Climate Change Coordinator (Adaptation). Internal workshop held following the regional session. Engagement with key Council services including Resilience, Flood Prevention, Planning, Infrastructure, Environment, Economy, Housing, Energy, Transport, and Tourism. Review and sense-check of scores from regional workshop to ensure Council priorities are accurately reflected. Outputs to inform development of the Council's Corporate Risk & Opportunity Assessment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal workshop held with broad cross-service participation Strengthened regional priorities through Council contribution Reduced duplication between regional and internal assessments Council's Corporate Risk & Opportunity Assessment and Adaptation Action Plan informed by regional assessment 	<p>Q3 2025/25: Regional workshop held - 11 December 2025. Q3 2025/25: Internal workshop – planning, delivery, and outputs shared Q3 2025/25: Synthesis of workshop outputs for internal alignment Q4 2025/25: Production of the Council's Corporate Climate Risk & Opportunity Assessment Q4 2025/25: Publication of Highland Climate Change Risk & Opportunity Assessment</p>	<p>Members of the CCET attended the Highland Adapts Regional workshop on 11 December. Internal sessions to be held early Q4 to progress Corporate Risk & Opportunity Assessment and Action Plan development.</p>	<p>Update provided as a separate agenda item on the Highland Climate Change Risk & Opportunity Assessment.</p>

Integrating Net Zero into HIP Projects	Embed Net Zero and sustainability principles into Community Points of Delivery (PODs) projects, ensuring climate and resilience outcomes are integrated from the outset.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCET and Net Zero Strategy Group to define all sustainability and Net Zero components for Community PODS. • Corporate approach to be agreed for embedding climate and resilience principles consistently across the full lifecycle of projects, ensuring these requirements are applied from early feasibility through design, procurement, construction, and operational phases. • Governance model and Community PODs team structure to reflect required input from CCET and Net Zero Strategy Group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability components (Whole Life Carbon, Energy, Adaptation, Circularity, Water, Biodiversity, Travel) integrated into PODs design, delivery, and operation • Carbon Gateway Reviews completed at all key stages; Whole Life Carbon targets achieved • Key performance outcomes delivered (energy efficiency, renewables, biodiversity) • PODs operational as resilience hubs 	<p>Dec 2025: Initial meeting held with Property, CCET representatives and hub North Scotland</p> <p>Dec 2025: Confirm governance model and PODs team structure to ensure appropriate input from CCET and Net Zero Strategy Group</p> <p>Jan 2026: Define and agree all sustainability and Net Zero components for Community PODs</p> <p>March 2026: Paper to be presented to Members outlining corporate approach for embedding climate and resilience principles</p>		
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