

Agenda Item	10.
Report No	EDU/17/26

# The Highland Council

**Committee:** Education

**Date:** 3 June 2026

**Report Title:** Delivery Plan Monitoring & Progress Update – My Highland Future Q4 25/26

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

## 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 The Delivery Plan 2024-27 consists of 57 projects/programmes, managed through 6 Portfolio Boards. Each project is reported to a relevant committee for consideration and scrutiny in terms of the Portfolio Reporting Cycle agreed at Council on 15 May 2025. Exceptions to this general rule may apply when for example circumstances merit a standalone project/programme report to either committee or council. If exceptions apply this report will signpost to where the relevant reporting can be found.

1.2 This report provides financial, performance, risk and general information on the following Delivery Plan projects/Programme:

- School Curriculum & Business Links
- Digital School
- Foundation and Modern Apprenticeships
- Entrepreneur Development
- School-Based Interventions
- CLD & Employability Support
- Accelerated Degree Pathways

1.3 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 the Delivery Project updates provided in this report;
- ii. Note the extensive activity and progress to date across all workstreams and headings

### **3. Implications**

#### **3.1 Resource**

There are no resource implications arising as a direct result of this report. Any resource implications (if any) for delivery plan projects or programmes will be detailed in the Financials sections of each of the project updates provided below.

#### **3.2 Legal**

This report contributes to the Council's statutory duties to report performance and secure best value in terms of Section 1(1)(a) of the Local Government Act 1992, and Section 1 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, respectively.

#### **3.3 Risk**

There are no risk implications arising as a direct result of this report. Project/Programme risks are identified via the Council risk management process and monitored through the Portfolio Boards and are reported by exception only in the relevant sections on Risk below for each project and at Section 12 for overall Portfolio Risks.

#### **3.4 Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)**

There are no implications arising as a direct result of this report.

#### **3.5 Gaelic**

There are no implications arising as a direct result of 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 an update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

### **5. School Curriculum & Business Links**

#### **5.1 Overall RAG**

**Project: School & Business Links**

R ●  
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5.1.2 This project consists of three work packages:

1. Develop and deliver an extensive campaign to allow schools and communities to better understand the scale of local opportunity
2. Experiential Career Learning – curriculum review and support
3. Social Value - review of community benefits process to enhance and expand experiential career learning

5.1.3 **Employer Engagement** - A Call to Action event, held in Strathpeffer in November 2025, brought together industry and education leaders as Phase One of a broader regional campaign to support the Workforce North agenda. The event aimed to raise awareness of the scale and nature of local workforce opportunity and challenge, while providing structured space for initial collaboration, challenge and feedback. This early engagement helped to surface shared priorities, test assumptions and inform the actions required to better align education, skills and industry needs across the region.

Follow-up sector skills events, notably within the Care and Hospitality sectors, have demonstrated how this strategic conversation can be translated into practical, sector-led activity. These sessions enabled employers to work collaboratively with education and skills partners to identify priority actions, test engagement models and build confidence to take a more proactive role in shaping future workforce supply.

The combined activity confirms that improving outcomes for young people requires

- **earlier career learning**
- **clearer pathways**
- **sustained employer engagement**
- **better coordination across the system.**

It also highlighted the importance of **Sector Skills Boards** as the appropriate mechanism to take this work forward in a structured, accountable way, ensuring alignment between industry need, education delivery and regional workforce strategy.

Phase two of the promotional campaign involved Secondary subject teaching staff during the February 2026 inset day. Subject staff set aside time to present the My Highland Future agenda and opportunities and consider strengths and challenges in expanding industry relevance in their subject delivery.

5.1.4 **Curriculum Review & Support – Industry Relevance, Self Evaluation and Effective Use of Data** - As part of the developing remit of the STEM 3–18 Improvement Officer role, work is being undertaken to strengthen the industry relevance of STEM learning by establishing clearer and more consistent links between the curriculum, employers and future workforce needs. A key focus is the development of curriculum inserts that explicitly highlight career pathways and alternative routes into STEM-related careers.

Curriculum development is being supported through collaborative working with teachers, NHS colleagues and Developing the Young Workforce partners, ensuring learning experiences within Skills for Work courses such as Health Sector and

Laboratory Science and the NPA in Science and Health embed sector-specific skills, employer insight and real-world contexts. In parallel, a pilot approach is being developed to establish sustainable school–STEM employer partnerships with SSE Distribution and Transmission and associated contractors, with a focus on early career awareness and industry relevance. Work is also underway to strengthen alignment with STEM providers across Highland, encouraging programmes and offers to align with the My Highland Future framework and support a more joined-up, partnership-based approach to raising the profile of STEM career pathways and progression routes.

Since August 2025, a comprehensive programme of self-evaluation and data-led analysis has been undertaken, focused on the core fundamentals that underpin the curriculum rationale and support delivery of the *My Highland Future* ambitions.

Extensive data gathering and mapping is underway, including school surveys completed by senior leaders, curriculum staff and support staff. This evidence base is being used to build a clear picture of current practice, strengths and gaps across career learning, pathways and employer engagement.

Work is ongoing to identify the most effective approach to engaging young people directly, ensuring that learner voice informs the next stages of planning. In this regard, Highland Council and partners are working closely with the Youth Convenor, strengthening young people's influence on strategic decision-making.

Initial analysis of school staff survey feedback is actively shaping the identification of priority actions across each workstream area. This intelligence is now being translated into the recently developed My Highland Future data dashboards, which collate and present multiple datasets in ways that strengthen planning and collaboration with schools and partners. These dashboards are now available to all schools and external partners via an Extranet site, providing a shared evidence base to support delivery of the My Highland Future ambitions.

Current dashboards include:

- A **Work Experience Geographical Mapping Tool**, enabling visibility of work placements across Highland by location, sector and region. This supports effective planning to address geographic and sectoral gaps and provides an overview of work-related learning provision across the region.
- A **Career Learning and Pupil Aspiration Dashboard**, providing schools and delivery partners with pupil aspiration data mapped by sector and stage. When combined with the DYW Events Planning Tool (Target Operating Model), schools and partners can see how engagement activity aligns with pupil aspirations across age groups. This dataset is also available to partners to support external strategy planning, including UHI curriculum development and engagement planning.

5.1.5 In addition, a **new work experience platform - WorkIT** has been launched with schools to deliver a more streamlined and consistent approach to work-related learning. The complementary data dashboard brings together information on work placement availability, pupil aspirations and planned engagement activity, enabling improved strategic oversight, identification of gaps, and more effective, data-informed planning at school, sector and regional levels.

5.1.6 **Social Value** - Education Services are working closely with the Community Benefits Team and Hub North to deliver strategic improvement activity aligned to the Highland Investment Plan. This collaboration goes beyond the planning of contract-linked community benefits and employer input, providing a platform for more strategic engagement with Tier 1 employers and their supply chains. Through this approach, working groups are being set up to focus on strengthening early pipeline activity, improving coordination of skills pathways, and encouraging longer-term workforce investment to support future regional demand

5.2 Key Milestones & Requests for Change

MILESTONES		CURRENT STATUS
<i>Starts Jul25 / Completes Oct25</i>	School & Business Links: WP2a Curriculum map, self evaluation planning & data mapping	M7 25/26 Completed
<i>Starts Jul25 / Completes Oct25</i>	School & Business Links: WP2b Issue school curriculum surveys for different sets of stakeholders	M7 25/26 Completed
<i>Starts Sep25 / Completes Nov25</i>	School & Business Links: WP2c Improved Work Related Learning and skills platforms	M8 25/26 Completed
<i>Starts Jul25 / Completes Dec25</i>	School & Business Links: WP1a Workforce North – Strategic approach for setting a regional vision for young people	M8 25/26 Completed
<i>Starts Aug25 / Completes Dec25</i>	School & Business Links: WP2f Pupil Aspirations	M8 25/26 Completed
<i>Starts Jul25 / Completes Dec25</i>	School & Business Links: WP3b Workforce North – Create online portal [WBL]	M12 25/26 Some Slippage
<i>Starts Sep25 / Completes Apr26</i>	School & Business Links: WP3c Devise a menu of options to be included in tender thresholds linked to community benefits	M12 25/26 On Target
<i>Starts Jan26 / Completes Jun26</i>	School & Business Links: WP2g Devise and roll out data dashboard for input and access for stakeholders to show all ECL activity	M12 25/26 On Target
<i>Starts Jan26 / Completes Jun26</i>	School & Business Links: WP2h Ensuring senior phase access to careers coaching and mentoring	M12 25/26 On Target
<i>Starts Dec25 / Completes Sep26</i>	School & Business Links: WP1b Workforce North – Develop and deliver a campaign of promotional packages	M12 25/26 On Target
<i>Starts Oct25 / Completes Sep26</i>	School & Business Links: WP2e Plan growth and embed experiential career learning (ECL) activity in school	M12 25/26 On Target
<i>Starts May25 / Completes Dec26</i>	School & Business Links: WP2d Monitoring work experience data, target support in key sectors & geography	M12 25/26 On Target
<i>Starts Mar27 / Completes Mar27</i>	School & Business Links: Project Closure and transfer to BAU	

5.3 Financial Summary

There are no Delivery Plan financial elements directly associated with this project.

5.4 Key Risks

There are no identified risks attached to this project.

## 5.5 Forward Plan

- Recruit Pathways Coordinator – Experiential Career Learning - underway
- Work with partners to continue roll out of promotional campaign.
- Formulate resources and frameworks to support strategic employer partnerships in key sector areas with pilot schools
- Roll out training on data dashboards and effective use of data to support pathways planning and destination support
- Develop and support strategic school/ employer STEM partnership to enhance in school curriculum delivery and industry relevance
- Support sector skills boards develop actions linked to schools and career learning experiences.

## 6. **Digital School**

### 6.1 Overall RAG



In the Digital School, senior phase learners select online courses as part of their school options. The digital school model has the potential to expand access to senior-phase qualifications for learners in rural, remote, or where this is a staff shortage, providing specialist teaching and a coherent learner experience regardless of geographic location.

6.1.2 The Digital School follows common block times so that the timetables can be aligned across our 29 Secondary Schools. Currently 21 of our secondary schools have pupils accessing one or more course through Digital School. These schools are:

- Alness Academy
- Ardnamurchan High School
- Dornoch Academy
- Fortrose Academy
- Gairloch High School
- Golspie High School
- Glen Urquhart High School
- Grantown Grammar School
- Invergordon Academy
- Kilchuimen Academy
- Kingussie High School
- Kinlochleven High School
- Lochaber High School
- Millburn Academy
- Nairn Academy
- Plockton High School
- Portree High School
- Tain Royal Academy
- Thurso High School

- Ullapool High School
- Wick High School

6.1.3 The courses currently offered by the Digital School in 2025-26 are shown in the table below:

Course	Uptake
Advanced Higher Mathematics	31
Advanced Higher Chemistry	20
Advanced Higher Physics	16
Higher Media	10
National 5 Media	9
Advanced Higher Spanish	1
Higher Spanish	2
National 5 Spanish	9
National 5 Media	10

Nearly all courses are entirely online with pupils joining lessons using Google Classroom. For the subjects where there are practical components, staff in the pupil's base school support the delivery of the practical components.

For the Digital School, the online learning offer involves live lessons delivered to pupils using the Google Classroom Platform. In addition, learners have opportunities for independent learning experiences through digital resources, structured weekly activities, and opportunities for collaboration using digital tools.

Guidance has been developed for staff working in the Digital School. This outlines the operational management of online learning and also the pedagogical and quality assurance framework for delivering courses within a fully digital learning environment. This document is intended to support those running the digital offerings to ensure consistency, equity, and high standards across all subjects. It ensures that our approach to routine online learning is both pedagogically sound and aligned with current local and national standards.


## 6.2 Key Milestones & Requests for Change

<b>MILESTONES</b>		<b>CURRENT STATUS</b>
<i>Completed Feb24</i>	Digital School: Online teachers and courses identified for small schools	<b>M11 23/24 Completed</b>
<i>Starts April 24; Completes June 24</i>	Digital School: Online courses launched for 24/25	<b>M3 24/25 Completed</b>
<i>Starts Aug24 / Completes Mar25</i>	Digital Schools: Comms plan	<b>M12 24/25 Completed</b>
<i>Starts May25 / Completes Sept25</i>	Digital Schools: All secondary offering digital courses 25/26	<b>M6 25/26 Completed</b>
<i>Starts Sep25 / Completes Feb26</i>	Digital Schools: Develop digital school position statement for Highland - Board Approval	<b>M11 25/26 Completed</b>
<i>Starts Mar26 / Completes May26</i>	Digital Schools: Finalise Digital School Position Statement for Highland	<b>M12 25/26 On Target</b>
<i>Starts Jun26 / Completes Jun26</i>	Digital School: Project Closure and transfer to BAU	

Guidelines on the delivery of online learning have been produced to outline the Local Authorities expectations on digital online learning for senior phase courses.


## 6.3 Financial Summary

### i) Savings

	Efficiency Savings: DSM adjustments and digital learning - FY 24-27	<b>£ 1,300,000</b>
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DSM efficiency savings are reported within the My Highland Future Portfolio. These savings were agreed in the 2024-25 Council budget settlement and are on track to be delivered.

### ii) Investment

	Digital School: Investment	<b>£ 68,767</b>
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An investment earmarked reserve of £330,000 was established to directly support delivery of the Digital School Project. This funding is being used to support management of the digital school and provide resources for delivery of online learning opportunities. Moving to a Business as Usual position will mean identifying ongoing recurring funding for the continuation of digital learning for students and this will come forward as part of the annual budget process.

### iii) Mitigations

Investment spend may slip due to current national level union negotiations impacting teaching staff linked to online delivery. This will be considered within on-going risk assessment of this project's delivery.

## 6.4 Key Risks

KEY RISKS ASSESSED / RESPONSE	CURRENT RISK RATING	RESPONSE
Digital School: Failure to successfully grow Digital School concept in Highland	2	Tolerate

The online learning delivery will remain as a curriculum offering for all senior phase learners. In due course, further courses will be added once national agreement is reached on teachers' conditions for online learning.

## 6.5 Forward Plan

- The Digital School will now be delivered as part of the School Curriculum and Business Links workstream.

## 7. Foundation & Modern Apprenticeships

### 7.1 Overall RAG



#### 7.1.2 Foundation Apprenticeship (FA) delivery in Highland schools continues to show strong growth, underpinned by a rising trend in enrolments since 2022.

The total number of Foundation Apprenticeships has grown from 288 in 2020/21 to 661 in 2025/26. 6% of the Senior Phase cohort in Highland were enrolled in FA programmes in 2022 — double the national average at that time. This upward trajectory has continued, with current figures indicating around 10% of the Senior Phase cohort are now participating in 10 out of the 15 available FA frameworks across SCQF levels 4, 5, and 6.

#### 7.1.3 Training provision is delivered through a diverse range of partners, including UHI and five private training providers. This multi-provider model enables flexible delivery approaches tailored to local contexts, supporting wider access and promoting equity across the region.

This session, school leadership survey returns have been analysed to better understand curriculum provision aligned to My Highland Future (MHF) aims and to identify gaps in access to Foundation Apprenticeships. This analysis is informing ongoing planning for potential expansion and partnership delivery, including consideration of in-school delivery models.

Currently, in-school delivery operates in three schools delivering Construction Foundation Apprenticeships at Levels 4 and 5. This model is dependent on employer support, and can include the donation of materials, contribution to delivery, and/or the refurbishment of learning spaces to deliver particular units (eg. brick laying). Exploration of expanding this model has informed recent school-level Foundation Apprenticeship meetings where a needs analysis has taken place, this can then be progressed with employers and training providers as part of planning for 2028–29

7.1.4 Improvement activity has also included the establishment of a Highland FA Steering Group, which brings together Highland Council Education and Workforce North partners. The Steering Group provides strategic leadership, coordinated development and implementation of Foundation Apprenticeships at all levels. It supports schools through the delivery journey, promoting wider understanding and parity of esteem across learning pathways, and will report formally to the Highland & Islands Regional Economic Partnership.

7.1.5 **Modern Apprenticeship (MA)** data for The Highland Council remains strong with 138 placements in 2025-2026. MA numbers over a number of years has been baselined and it show a gradual increase in numbers with additional SDS funded credits. This increase reflects growing SDS confidence in recruitment and completion rates within Council-led MA delivery. Strategic planning is underway between Education and Learning & Development services to streamline pathways from school into Council MA opportunities. This involves mapping MA frameworks to our workforce vacancies and skills gaps and providing clear routes and ECL opportunities in relation to these to young people through and beyond school.

7.1.6 **The Paid Summer Placement** pilot was developed in 2025, during which the Council supported 7 placements, enabling senior phase learners to experience working within the Council. This year the program has expanded and Highland Council services have funded 34 placements for 2026, with an additional 10 provided by NHS Highland and a further 36 from partners in the private and third sectors.

A new enhancement for 2026 is the option for all participants to complete accredited Work Placement modules at SCQF Levels 4 to 6.

## 7.2 Key Milestones & Requests for Change

<b>MILESTONES</b>		<b>CURRENT STATUS</b>
<i>Starts Aug25 / Completes Nov25</i>	Foundation & Modern Apprenticeships: WP1a: Baseline and benchmark apprenticeship data	<b>M8 25/26 Completed</b>
<i>Starts Sep25 / Completes Mar26</i>	Foundation Apprenticeships: WP2: Workforce North - Promotion of work-based learning pathways and their benefits	<b>M12 25/26 On Target</b>
<i>Starts Sep25 / Completes Jun26</i>	Foundation Apprenticeships: WP1d: Highland school pupils all have the chance to experience a vocational qualification as part of their senior phase	<b>M12 25/26 On Target</b>
<i>Starts Sep25 / Completes Jun26</i>	Modern Apprenticeships: WP1e: Develop and launch a shared apprenticeship scheme	<b>M12 25/26 Some Slippage</b>
<i>Starts Jan26 / Completes Jun26</i>	Modern Apprenticeships: WP3: Workforce North - Contribute to developing a system to support unsuccessful WBL applicants	<b>M12 25/26 On Target</b>
<i>Starts Aug25 / Completes Sep28</i>	Foundation Apprenticeships: WP1c: Workforce North - THC will continue to expand apprenticeship provision in sectors of labour market need - in schools	<b>M12 25/26 On Target</b>
<i>Starts Aug25 / Completes Sep28</i>	Modern Apprenticeships: WP1c: Workforce North - THC will continue to expand apprenticeship provision in sectors of labour market need - in Highland Council	<b>M12 25/26 On Target</b>
<i>Starts Aug25 / Completes Sep28</i>	Modern Apprenticeships: WP1b: Workforce North - Contribute to expanding Modern Apprenticeship programmes	<b>M12 25/26 On Target</b>
<i>Starts Mar27 / Completes Mar27</i>	Foundation & Modern Apprenticeships: Project Closure and transfer to BAU	

## 7.3 Financial Summary

There are no Delivery Plan financial elements directly associated with this project.

## 7.4 Key Risks

<b>KEY RISKS ASSESSED / RESPONSE</b>	<b>CURRENT RISK RATING</b>	<b>RESPONSE</b>
Foundation & Modern Apprenticeships: Failure to Increase Access Foundation Apprenticeship	<b>12</b>	<b>Tolerate</b>

## 7.5 Forward Plan

Supporting Apprenticeship expansion and delivery is being built into social value and community benefit contributions linked to contracts. This activity includes materials and /or time to support Foundation Apprenticeship delivery and expansion. The FA Steering group will now frame and action plan of activity to deliver on recent needs analysis and explore potential funding opportunities to support expansion linked to workforce, locality and curriculum needs.

We are currently awaiting the new MA contract from Skills Development Scotland. It is hoped that further credits will be awarded to the Local Authority to expand our MA offering. There is also an intention to look at alternative ways of funded MAs within the Local Authority.

## 8. Entrepreneur Development

### 8.1 Overall RAG



8.1.2 The review of existing entrepreneur development offers across Highland has now been completed. The review considered provision for all ages and stages, including activity within secondary schools, post-school pathways, and adult entrepreneur support. The review identified a number of gaps and opportunities, which have directly informed the establishment of the following workstreams.

#### Key Workstreams and Activity

##### 1. **Entrepreneur Development Offers and Resources within Secondary Schools**

- This workstream aims to improve early exposure to entrepreneurship and ensure staff and learners can easily access relevant resources. Gaps in consistency and visibility of entrepreneur development activity across secondary schools were identified.

- In response, an entrepreneur toolkit has been developed and made available via the Schools SharePoint.
- The toolkit has been promoted at one of the termly Depute Head Teacher (DHT) meetings, increasing awareness and encouraging uptake across schools.

##### 2. **Signposting and Promotion of Entrepreneurial Support**

Work is underway to improve signposting and promotion of entrepreneurial support available across Highland. This includes

- ensuring would-be entrepreneurs can more easily access the most appropriate and high-quality resources for their stage of development.
- Specific focus is being given to transition points, particularly:
  - Guidance for young people moving from school-based activity into post-school and professional enterprise services
  - Clear pathways between education and external support organisations

##### 3. **Entrepreneurial Skills Growth**

Ongoing work is taking place to identify and confirm organisations that can support:

- Development of business ideas and products
- Growth of entrepreneurial and meta-skills (such as problem-solving, creativity, communication, and resilience)

This work will inform future programme development and partnership activity.

Business start-up skills support will be delivered by Business Gateway, with access available to entrepreneurs through the organisation's online contact and enquiry process.

## 8.2 Key Milestones & Requests for Change

<b>MILESTONES</b>		<b>CURRENT STATUS</b>
<i>Starts Jul25 / Completes Sep25</i>	Entrepreneur Development: WP1: Review existing entrepreneur skills development activity, identify gaps & connections	<b>M7 25/26 Completed</b>
<i>Starts Dec25 / Completes Feb26</i>	Entrepreneur Development: WP3: Plan promotion of programmes of activity	<b>M12 25/26 Some Slippage</b>
<i>Starts Oct25 / Completes Jun26</i>	Entrepreneur Development: WP2a: Develop programmes to support Entrepreneur & business start-up skills growth for Young people	<b>M12 25/26 On Target</b>
<i>Starts Oct25 / Completes Jun26</i>	Entrepreneur Development: WP2b: Develop programmes to support Entrepreneur & business start-up skills growth for Post-school/adults	<b>M12 25/26 On Target</b>
<i>Starts Mar27 / Completes Mar27</i>	Entrepreneur Development: Project Closure and transfer to BAU	

## 8.3 Financial Summary

There are no Delivery Plan financial elements directly associated with this project. The staff delivering this project are budgeted through the investment allocated to the portfolio for Future Highland Workforce.

## 8.4 Key Risks

There are no identified risks attached to this workstream.

## 8.5 Forward Plan

- Continued development and refinement of the identified workstreams
- Further strengthening of pathways between schools, post-school provision, and professional enterprise support
- Planned promotion of entrepreneurial support will commence in August 2026, aligning with the academic year to maximise reach and engagement

## 9. **School-Based Interventions**

### 9.1 Overall RAG



- 9.1.2 This project provides additional, targeted support for a cohort of S2/3 pupils with attendance and engagement barriers. Funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, this pilot initiative builds on successful practice identified by Education Scotland in Wick High School, where youth support interventions led to increased participation.

The pilot, running in three of the most deprived areas of Highland, employs six Youth Support Officers (YSOs) to work with young people experiencing 50–70% attendance, using informal education, youth work principles, and community partnerships to re-engage learners and support wellbeing. Key foundations of the project have been established. Target pupils have been identified using attendance and contextual information. The youth team has completed project planning, and training has been delivered to youth workers on the Youth Work Skills Framework and activity resources. Strategic meetings have taken place to align roles, timelines, and data-sharing protocols, ensuring a shared understanding of the barriers affecting attendance.

Since recruitment, 3 YSOs have moved on to other employment opportunities, as the UKSP project funding was due to end March 2026. The funding has now been extended to September 2026, allowing the project to continue. To bridge the staffing gap, where possible, existing staff hours have been increased and discussions are taking place with Third Sector providers.

The project is in phase 2, engaging with the young people. Individual learning plans have been developed, and delivery of tailored support sessions is underway. YSO relationships with the young people are growing well, and the YSO's are tracking progress using the Youth Work Framework and evaluating impact to inform future strategic planning. Positive results are starting to be evidenced through some young people starting to engage the YSO's sessions held in a class setting within the school premises.

## 9.2 Key Milestones & Requests for Change

MILESTONES		CURRENT STATUS
<i>Starts Jun25 / Completes Jul25</i>	School Based Interventions: WP3a Draft detailed project plan and budget plan	<b>M5 25/26 Completed</b>
<i>Starts Aug25 / Completes Oct25</i>	School Based Interventions: WP3b Recruit youth work officers	<b>M6 25/26 Completed</b>
<i>Starts Oct25 / Completes Dec25</i>	School Based Interventions: WP3c Phase 2 - Integrating support – school staff training	<b>M8 25/26 Completed</b>
<i>Starts Oct25 / Completes Mar26</i>	School Based Interventions: WP1a Gather and analyse post school service data	<b>M12 25/26 Some Slippage</b>
<i>Starts Jan26 / Completes Mar26</i>	School Based Interventions: WP3d Evaluation and next steps	<b>M12 25/26 Some Slippage</b>
<i>Starts Jan26 / Completes Jun26</i>	School Based Interventions: WP2a Map out intervention approaches and programmes	<b>M12 25/26 Some Slippage</b>
<i>Starts Jan26 / Completes Aug26</i>	School Based Interventions: WP1b Plan pilot approaches to create closer links & streamline client process	<b>M12 25/26 On Target</b>
<i>Starts Jun26 / Completes Oct26</i>	School Based Interventions: WP2b Provide a platform to share interventions	
<i>Starts Aug26 / Completes Jun27</i>	School Based Interventions: WP1c Provide early intervention support in schools	
<i>Starts Jun27 / Completes Jun27</i>	School Based Interventions: Project Closure and transfer to BAU	

### 9.3 Financial Summary

There are no Delivery Plan financial elements directly associated with this project.

### 9.4 Key Risks

A key risk for this project is the loss of staff having an impact on capacity to deliver the project, and impact on the 1-2-1 relationship built to support young people in this cohort of learners.

Staff costs for this project link to staff recruited on short-term contracts aligned to UKSPF timelines. This has resulted in staff looking for other work as the UKSPF approached the end of the funding period. Although the UKSPF funding period was extended, over half the staff recruited had already found other employment opportunities.

As the timeline is now shorter for recruitment, mitigation is being found where possible by increasing hours of existing staff and connecting with Third Sector providers to support continued delivery.

### 9.5 Forward Plan

- During Q4 the team have engaged with Third Sector providers to consider other interventions available to test with this cohort. This will also inform future support methods for young people to re-engage with school. The team will also continue to find methods to mitigate the loss of staff, continuing relationships with the young people where their allocated YSO has moved to other employment. A formal evaluation will be conducted to assess impact, combining qualitative feedback and quantitative measures. The findings will be reported on towards the end of the school session and will guide future strategic planning in consideration of the role and scope of youthwork within schools.
- Recruitment to an Enhanced Pathways and Transitions Coordinator into the education service is underway. This will provide additional capacity for cross service working to support transitions and pathways planning for young people with a particular focus on those with additional support needs.
- A collaborative Workforce Response Pilot will be implemented from early S4 (2026/27) across six secondary schools in Highland, designed to strengthen pathways support for S4 leavers and provide early identification and support for young people at risk of non-positive destinations. Through a collaborative approach involving school-based operational delivery partners—including careers advisers, DYW coordinators, and Highland Council youth and employability teams—the pilot will establish a consistent process for mapping learner aspirations and anticipated school-leaving points. This will be supported by structured labour market insights, employer engagement, and meaningful career conversations to ensure that aspirations are both informed and realistic.

- Participating learners will complete baseline and end-of-year work readiness assessments and develop a personal work-ready profile tracking meta-skills, achievements, and preparedness for employment or apprenticeship pathways.

Enhanced, YDO led support will be provided where required, alongside access to employer encounters, industry mentors, and guidance on alternative qualification routes. The pilot aims to improve work readiness, increase apprenticeship uptake, strengthen employer–school links, and establish a consistent, scalable model to support positive post-school destinations across the region.

## 10. CLD & Employability Support

### 10.1 Overall RAG



- 10.1.1 This workstream is bringing CLD and Employability service provision into closer alignment by complementing shared practice to provide a simple, connected journey for service users in Highland – whatever their age or stage in life. The overall aim is to bring the teams and their service delivery closer together. The project is working on key areas - People, Process, Policy, Performance and Platform (digital).

Initial 2024/25 school-leaver data identified 168 young people recorded as being in a negative destination at the point of the October 2025 status snapshot. Subsequent tracking and follow-up activity has demonstrated positive progress, with 63 young people now recorded as being in a positive destination, reflecting the impact of targeted, coordinated support delivered by Skills Development Scotland (SDS), Local Authority services and external partners.

Longer-term trends remain positive. The 2023/24 6-month follow-up figure of 94% is consistent with the 2022/23 position, indicating stability in sustained positive destinations.

For the remaining group of young people currently still in a negative destination, active work continues through collaborative case management and support planning involving SDS, Employability and Youth Support services. Initial activity has involved reviewing existing data held within Employability and Community Learning and Development teams to confirm status, followed by coordinated outreach to encourage engagement with available support. Partners have met to review this cohort, with SDS advising that contact is required with 27 leavers to establish their current status and, where necessary, offer support. The potential contribution of Third Sector partners has also been discussed, with agreement that this will be explored further to ensure appropriate consideration of GDPR requirements.

This follow-up position reinforces the importance of:

- Viewing initial destination data as a snapshot in time rather than a fixed outcome
- Maintaining strong multi-agency collaboration beyond the point of leaving school

- Using timely data to target intervention and monitor progress for vulnerable cohorts

10.1.2 As part of early identification, the Employability team have reviewed approaches to 16+ school meetings and early intervention support. This activity will build in relationship building with young people to support transition planning post school either into the service for continued support or into employment / further study.

At present the Youth Work team's planning and delivery has been reviewed and refreshed, taking into consideration how the team interact with school colleagues. Improved working relationships have also been developed with Third Sector organisations with an aim to better align service delivery across the Local Authority.

The Council's Employability Team, working with the Highland Employability Partnership (HEP), awarded the Competitive Challenge Fund to the 'All in Highland' Consortium which went live in January. The team also completed a review to publish a refreshed Provider's Framework during Q4.

The overall outcome of this workstream is to improve visibility of the service and ensure easy to navigate service offerings. The teams have started to share practice and target priority areas to test changes where there are opportunities for joined up delivery. This work is linked to an approved efficiency target for 2026/27, and redesign of the collective CLD and Employment services – which is widening consultation to inform the redesign process.

## 10.2 Key Milestones & Requests for Change

**MILESTONES****CURRENT STATUS**

<i>Starts Jan25 / Completes Sep25</i>	Tailored Employment Support: Design refreshed model	<b>M6 25/26 Completed</b>
<i>Starts Jun25 / Completes Sep25</i>	Tailored Employment Support: Full launch/ roll-out of model	<b>M6 25/26 Completed</b>
<i>Starts Sep25 / Completes Jun26</i>	CLD & Emp. Supp.: WP2b: Workforce North partnership H2.18 - Review existing pre-employment schemes and programmes of support	<b>M11 25/26 Completed</b>
<i>Starts Dec25 / Completes Mar26</i>	Tailored Employment Support: Review programme/ products 2025	<b>M12 25/26 Completed</b>
<i>Starts Sep25 / Completes Apr26</i>	CLD & Emp. Supp.: WP2a Workforce North H2.19 - Implement process to ensure continued expansion of schemes, focusing on all individuals	<b>M12 25/26 On Target</b>
<i>Starts Sep25 / Completes Apr26</i>	CLD & Emp. Supp.: WP2c Workforce North H2.20 - Implement process for the continuous review of schemes impact	<b>M12 25/26 On Target</b>
<i>Starts Aug25 / Completes Jun26</i>	CLD & Emp. Supp.: WP3a Develop strategic and operational plan supporting CLD/E-service delivery	<b>M12 25/26 On Target</b>
<i>Starts Sep25 / Completes Jun26</i>	CLD & Emp. Supp.: WP3b Develop client referral system connecting client movement between service teams	<b>M12 25/26 On Target</b>
<i>Starts Sep25 / Completes Jun26</i>	CLD & Emp. Supp.: WP3c Identify areas where CLD and Employability can connect and improve client journey	<b>M12 25/26 On Target</b>
<i>Starts Dec26 / Completes Dec26</i>	Tailored Employment Support: Review programme/ products 2026	
<i>Starts Mar27 / Completes Mar27</i>	CLD & Emp. Supp.: Project Closure and transfer to BAU	

**10.3 Financial Summary**

There are no Delivery Plan financial elements directly associated with this project for Q4 2025/26. The staff delivering this project are resourced through core service budgets.

**10.4 Key Risks**

In essence this workstream is a change programme aimed at integrating service areas. With that comes challenges managing the potential impact of any changes for the stakeholders involved - service users, staff and partners. An element of change and improvement will come through a service redesign linked to an approved efficiency saving for 2026/27.

**10.5 Forward Plan**

Key activities in the next reporting period include:

- Continue to review and grow pre-employment schemes to meet the needs of those with barriers to employment, aligning to the roadmap developed by the Workforce North partnership and delivery of the Highland Employability Partnership Strategic Plan, building on:
  - Work experience linked to guaranteed interviews, if possible
  - Supporting those not in employment or training to have access to employability programmes in Highland
- Continue to develop systems to support closer working connection between Employability and Community Learning and Development (CLD) teams to support aligned service delivery through reviewed strategic and operational plans and identifying areas of connection that could improve a client's journey to engage with these teams for support. This work will align to the approved budget saving and redesign of the service.

## 11. Accelerated Degree Pathways

### 11.1 Overall RAG



- 11.1.2 Within the Accelerated Degree Pathways workstream, the year has seen significant success in both participation and progression. 20 young people completed an HNC course at UHI Inverness while remaining enrolled in school for S6, and half of this cohort progressed directly into further HNC or Year 2 degree pathways at UHI in the following session, with the remainder moving into related employment or study out with Highland.

Momentum has grown quickly, with enrolments increasing notably for the 2025/26 session: 43 young people enrolled, 37 were accepted, and 29 S6 pupils are already studying across 10 HNC courses at UHI Inverness.

A strategic meeting between Highland Council and UHI Inverness has also helped establish a joint approach to promoting accelerated pathways consistently across all Highland schools. In parallel, work with the National Insight team is focusing on ensuring HNC and degree-level modules achieved in S6 can be recognised meaningfully within school attainment profiles, supporting parity and visibility of these achievements.

## 11.2 Key Milestones & Requests for Change

<b>MILESTONES</b>		<b>CURRENT STATUS</b>
<i>Starts Sep25 / Completes Nov25</i>	Acc. Degree Pathways: Map and analyse current S6 provision	<b>M8 25/26 Completed</b>
<i>Starts Sep25 / Completes Sep26</i>	Acc. Degree Pathways: Workforce North - Developing pathways for young people incorporating HNC provision in S6	<b>M12 25/26 On Target</b>
<i>Starts Mar27 / Completes Mar27</i>	Acc. Degree Pathways: Project Closure and transfer to BAU	

## 11.3 Financial Summary

There are no Delivery Plan financial elements directly associated with this project.

## 11.4 Key Risks

There are no identified risks attached to this workstream.

## 11.5 Forward Plan

This offer is now embedded into the Senior Phase college partnership and will become business as usual. As part of this there will be ongoing activity to continue to promote, expand and align courses to undergraduate and graduate apprenticeship progression routes within UHI to help retain young people to study in the Highlands.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - People

Date: 20 May 2026

Authors: Fiona Grant, Chief Officer Education (Secondary)  
Beth Brown, Quality Improvement Manager – Skills & Pathways  
Anna Templeton, Pathways and Life Long Learning Manager  
Brian Scobie, Portfolio Manager

Background Papers: N/A

Appendices: Appendix 1 – My Highland Future - Plan on a Page

# My Highland Future: A Skills Programme for the Highlands (Plan on a Page)

The draft model below seeks to distil the feedback from a broad range of stakeholders at the recent Workforce North Summit as it relates specifically to the Highland Council Region. The broad agreement on these elements constitutes a call to action. Pledges will be sought from various private and public sector organisations to build the programme. As with all other elements of this plan, Highland Council and partners warmly welcome feedback on the draft below.

Why	How	What						
<b>Vision for Delivering Our Future Workforce</b>	<b>Key Systems We Will Deploy to Do So</b>	<b>Outputs We Will Achieve Together</b>						
<p><b>The vision for the future is expressed in a number of key entitlements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All children and families learn about the benefits of the green energy revolution in the Highlands and how it is at the heart of the UK's future security</li> <li>All children and families learn about this in relation to the world of 2050 that they will live through</li> <li>All children experience work related learning about career options in Highland</li> <li>All families have access to information and activities to help inform them</li> <li>Adults who require it, have opportunities to reskill themselves to seize opportunities</li> <li>Highland can demonstrate a full employment model.</li> </ul>	<p>There is a core lifelong offering to engage the 31,000 children in schools and their parents in understanding the vision for the future green economy of the Highlands, which relates to the Regional Workforce and DYW Plan, focusing on construction, engineering, tourism and care:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Universal Programme What everyone can experience</th> <th>Targeted Programme Additional support for individuals and groups</th> <th>Intensive Programme Those most at risk or on elite pathways</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A major campaign to raise public awareness of the future workforce opportunities in the area and to galvanise talent attraction</li> <li>Learner-centred 3-18 Programmes address future careers &amp; 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Development</li> </ul>	<p>We will enable change by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deploying partnership resources in a shared apprenticeship</li> <li>Gaining pledges from Highland employers to support &amp; co-invest in agreed programmes and put these on our strategic map of supply side solutions</li> <li>Demonstrate the performance of our programme and build the confidence of future investors to relocate</li> <li>Align all sources of funding to the plan</li> <li>Building a partnership team which can demonstrate its impact (business growth, GVA, job creation)</li> <li>Increasing the numbers of business mentors, STEM ambassadors and work experience programmes across Highland</li> <li>Ensuring housing supply is available to accommodate the workforce required</li> </ul>
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<b>The Values Shaping our Partnership</b>	<b>Our Processes and Resources to Support Development</b>	<b>Outcomes We Will Deliver Through</b>						
<p><b>Key values shape our programme:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We are global in outlook and local in action – and are focused on creating a positive personal, family and economic future for people</li> <li>We are scientific and data intelligent in approach We are focused on ensuring Highland communities thrive</li> <li>We promote diverse communities, and we are inclusive – especially as we welcome a future workforce</li> <li>We promote green energy as part of a sustainable future – and look across disciplines to do so</li> <li>We provide hope for the future, where there is doubt about sustainability.</li> </ul>	<p>There is a single team approach across all agencies to delivering the future workforce that the region needs. All partners support and align to these processes to secure our objectives.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Strategic Mapping / Data Management Ensuring we are scientific in approach</th> <th>Partnership Coordination</th> <th>Alignment of Resource</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is regional mapping of business workforce employment demand by area, sector and company type</li> <li>There is regional mapping of supply side solutions by both public and private sector partners</li> <li>There is systematic gathering of data to facilitate planning and coordination – based on labour market insights and regional skills assessments</li> <li>The workforce demand is mapped to the related challenge of providing an appropriate future housing supply to create the conditions for success.</li> </ul> </td> <td> <p>There is a single team approach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Across the partnership there is a single team concept (based on the rugby team structure) for matching supply to demand</li> <li>There is a central, coordinating team, anchored by Highland Council, but incorporating key partners to enable planning – relating to the DYW boards</li> <li>Existing, and where required new, sector skills boards enable more effective pathways for specific industry areas</li> <li>Secure industry pledges for aspects of the 'My Highland Future' programme' – to map industry contributions, based on what employers prioritise to solve their recruitment issues</li> <li>A shared apprenticeship programme to align of potential employees for future opportunities to enable 'over-supply' 'over-training'.</li> </ul> </td> <td> <p>All partnership resources are transparently shown</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All partnership resource will align to the broad 'My Highland Future' skills plan</li> <li>We align the Green Freeport NICs to the Powerhouse Plan, which is embedded in this 'My Highland Future Plan' approach</li> <li>There is local coordination of programmes</li> <li>There is a live data base of offerings</li> <li>Map delivery vehicles for skills (state, 3<sup>rd</sup> &amp; 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