

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Educational Trust Fund Sub-Committee** held remotely, via Microsoft Teams, on Monday 16 March 2026 at 10.00 am.

Present:

Mrs M Cockburn

Ms L Dundas

Mr J Finlayson

Mr R Gale (Vice Chair)

Ms M Hutchison

Mr D Millar (Chair)

Ms C Ramsay

In attendance:

Ms C Macklin, Head of Education

Mr D Martin, Strategic Lead (Operations)

Ms M Murray, Principal Committee Officer

Ms R Ross, Committee Officer

Business

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr J McGillivray and Mr R Cross.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statements

There were no Declarations of Interest.

The Sub-Committee **NOTED** the following Transparency Statements:-

Item 9: Ms L Dundas

Item 11: Ms L Dundas

Item 12: Ms L Dundas

3. Minutes of Meeting held on 8 September 2025

The Minutes of the Educational Trust Fund Sub-Committee held on 8 September 2025 were **APPROVED**.

4. Annual Audit Report

There had been circulated Report No ETF/1/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

The Sub-Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the Annual Audit Plan for the Highland Council (Section 106) Charitable Trust Funds for 2025/26 as set out in Appendix 1 of the report;
- ii. the planned audit timelines and reporting arrangements, including the target date of 30 September 2026 for completion of the audit;
- iii. the audit fee of £3,000 for 2025/26, set in line with Audit Scotland's fee setting arrangements;

- iv. the key performance and financial outcomes from the Highland Council Charitable Trust Funds 2024/25 Annual Report;
- v. that the 2024/25 Annual Report and Financial Statements had been approved by the Audit Committee in November 2025; and
- vi. that Members' personal details were supplied to The Office of The Scottish Charity Regulator as required by Section 66A of the Charities (Regulation and Administration) (Scotland) Act 2023.

5. Exclusion of the Public

The Sub-Committee **RESOLVED** that, under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public should be excluded from the meeting for the following items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 4 and 6 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

6. Good News

There had been circulated details of good news stories relating to recipients of Educational Trust Fund awards.

The grant recipients were congratulated on their success, and their contribution as ambassadors for the Highlands was recognised.

The Committee otherwise **NOTED** the good news stories.

7. Caithness Educational Trust

There had been circulated Report No ETF/2/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive - People.

The Strategic Lead (Operations) reminded Members that the Trust's income came solely from interest on the capital funds. As a result, once the mandatory commitments of £12,860 had been met, there would be insufficient funds to make any discretionary awards in 2025/26.

During discussion, it was queried whether unsuccessful applicants were given advice on other potential sources of funding, and it was suggested that Local Members might be able to assist by way of Ward Discretionary Funds.

The Sub-Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the financial position of the trust funds as set out in sections 3.1 (Resource) and 3.3 (Risk) of the report;
- ii. **NOTED** that, due to insufficient free income after mandatory commitments, no discretionary applications could be supported in 2025/26; and
- iii. **DECLINED** the applications set out in section 6 of the report due to restricted funds.

8. Gairloch and Plockton Educational Trust

There had been circulated Report No ETF/3/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

The Sub-Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the financial position of the trust funds as set out in sections 3.1 (Resource) and 3.3 (Risk) of the report; and
- ii. **APPROVED** the applications and recommended awards as set out in section 6 of the report.

9. Duncraig Educational Trust

Transparency Statement: Ms L Dundas declared a connection to this item on the basis that a close family member was employed by High Life Highland as a Music Tutor. However, having applied the objective test, she did not consider that she had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No ETF/4/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

The Strategic Lead (Operations) explained that, in terms of the Trust Scheme and charity law, Trustees were required to use as much of the available free income as possible. As the Trust had been undersubscribed, a proportionate uplift had therefore been suggested in respect of each application for Members' consideration.

During discussion, support was expressed for uplifting the various awards. The importance of equity of support for young musicians was emphasised, and it was suggested that Leisure Centres needed to be encouraged to be proactive in seeking additional funding.

The Sub-Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the financial position of the trust funds as set out in sections 3.1 (Resource) and 3.3 (Risk) of the report; and
- ii. **AGREED** to determine the applications set out in section 5 of the report as follows:

	Application Ref No.	Decision
6.1	ETF/G/331/26	APPROVED an award of £4,300.
6.2	ETF/G/342/26	APPROVED an award of £2,800.
6.3	ETF/G/252/26	APPROVED an award of £2,800.
6.4	ETF/G/262/26	APPROVED an award of £2,800.
6.5	ETF/G/274/26	APPROVED an award of £430.
6.6	ETF/G/276/26	APPROVED an award of £720.
6.7	ETF/G/322/26	APPROVED an award of £3,000.
6.8	ETF/G/260304/26	APPROVED an award of £10,000.
6.9	ETF/G/2026-1/26	APPROVED an award of £7,000.

10. Inverness-shire Educational Trust

There had been circulated Report No ETF/5/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

Following discussion, the Sub-Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the financial position of the trust funds as set out in sections 3.1 (Resource) and 3.3 (Risk) of the report;
- ii. **NOTED** the applications exceeded the value of available funds in the Inverness-shire Educational Trust; and
- iii. **AGREED** the recommendations set out in section 6 of the report, with the exception of the undernoted applications which were determined as follows:-

	Application Ref No.	Decision
6.16	ETF/G/307/26	APPROVED an award of £1000.
6.18	ETF/G/333/26	APPROVED an award of £800.

11. Ross and Cromarty Educational Trust

Transparency Statement: Ms L Dundas declared a connection to this item on the basis that a close family member was employed by High Life Highland as a Music Tutor. However, having applied the objective test, she did not consider that she had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No ETF/6/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

The Strategic Lead (Operations) clarified that the Trust supported awards in the Western Isles as they had been part of the historic County of Ross and Cromarty, and that those funds were sent directly to the local authority to be administered on behalf of the Trust.

During discussion, the importance of supporting Gaelic education was emphasised, and it was highlighted that there were several other sources of funding available for Gaelic projects, including Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

The Sub-Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the financial position of the trust funds as set out in sections 3.1 (Resource) and 3.3 (Risk) of the report;
- ii. **NOTED** that the requested funds far exceeded available income; and
- iii. **AGREED** the recommendations set out in section 6 of the report.

12. Sutherland Educational Trust

Transparency Statement: Ms L Dundas declared a connection to this item on the basis that a close family member was employed by High Life Highland as a Music Tutor. However, having applied the objective test, she did not consider that she had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No ETF/7/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

The Strategic Lead (Operations) explained that the applications far exceeded the available funds. There was provision in the Trust Scheme to give priority to recurring bursaries but, due to the limited funds, recommendations had not been made for the remaining applications.

Following discussion, the Sub-Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the financial position of the trust funds as set out in sections 3.1 (Resource) and 3.3 (Risk) of the report;
- ii. **NOTED** the applications exceeded the value of available funds in the Sutherland Educational Trust; and
- iii. **AGREED** to determine the applications set out in section 6 of the report as follows:

	Application Ref No.	Decision
6.1	ETF/G/344/26	APPROVED an award of £450.
6.2	ETF/G/336/26	APPROVED an award of £500.
6.3	ETF/G/335/26	DECLINED due to limited funds, and on the basis that the applicant had received an award from Inverness-shire Educational Trust.
6.4	ETF/G/326/26	APPROVED an award of £350.
6.5	ETF/G/319/26	APPROVED an award of £350.
6.6	ETF/G/318/26	APPROVED an award of £350.
6.7	ETF/G/315/26	APPROVED an award of £500.
6.8	ETF/G/314/26	APPROVED an award of £500.
6.9	ETF/G/266/26	DECLINED due to limited funds, and on the basis that the applicant had received a grant previously.

13. Inverness Royal Academy Endowment Trust

There had been circulated Report No ETF/8/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

The Sub-Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the financial position of the trust funds as set out in sections 3.1 (Resource) and 3.3 (Risk) of the report; and
- ii. **AGREED** the recommendations set out in section 6 of the report.

At this stage, in response to a question, it was confirmed that the opening dates for applications to the Trust Funds were communicated to all schools and Community Development Managers and were advertised in libraries and on social media.

The meeting concluded at 11.00 am.