

Agenda Item	14.
Report No	CPPB/16/26



Highland
Community
Planning
Partnership

Com-pàirteachas
Dealbhadh
Coimhearsnachd

na Gàidhealtachd

Highland Community Planning Partnership Board – 12 June 2026

Title of report – Natural Capital Short-Life Working Group Update

Report by – Graham Neville, Head of Operations – North, NatureScot

Report Classification (tick as appropriate):

Strategic Priority: People Place Prosperity

Cross-Cutting Theme (tick all that apply):

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Connecting People and Places | <input type="checkbox"/> Employment / Employability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Whole Family and Community-Based Approaches | <input type="checkbox"/> Housing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shared Approaches to Commissioning | <input type="checkbox"/> Community Wealth Building |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aligning Partnership Practices | |

Report Purpose (tick as appropriate):

For Noting For Approval For Decision For Comment

Recommendation(s)

The Board is asked to note the contents of this report;

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to update the Board on the work to date of the Short-Life Working Group (SLWG) on Natural Capital. The SLWG is set up to demonstrate how a natural capital approach, and specifically how NatureScot's natural capital tool, can be used to inform interventions and help achieve the 3 strategic priorities of the HOIP.

1.	Background
1.1	The Natural Capital Short-Life Working Group has been designing an approach to pilot the natural capital approach, and specifically, to demonstrate how NatureScot's Landscape-Scale Natural Capital Tool can support delivery of the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan (HOIP). Since formation of the group in

	autumn last year we have worked to include the right stakeholders with a good spectrum of interested parties across the CPP.
1.2	Work has subsequently focussed on selecting two pilot areas from a longer list of possible sites. Merkinch and Thurso have been selected. Merkinch because of the opportunities to increase natural capital through developments including the Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport, and acknowledging some of the issues around lack of access to quality greenspace, inequalities, and SIMD incidence in Merkinch. Thurso was selected as it can run simultaneously with the current master planning exercise around the single learning hub, issues around temporary worker housing, and opportunities to benefit from the high value natural capital in the River Thurso (a Special Area of Conservation) and surroundings.
1.3	The dates for in-person workshops to meet with the local Partnerships and interested stakeholders for these pilots have now been set during June. An initial online session was held for Thurso to introduce the tool on 27 May. The session was attended by representatives from across Community Planning Partnership organisations and focused on building understanding of the natural capital approach, its practical applications, and its potential contribution to the HOIP priorities of People, Place and Prosperity.
2.	Introductory workshop outcome
2.1	The group received a presentation from Donya Davidson and Sophie Manson of NatureScot, who provided an overview of the natural capital approach and demonstrated the Landscape-Scale Natural Capital Tool. The presentation highlighted how the tool can map natural assets, identify ecosystem service opportunities, and support evidence-based decision making at a landscape and community scale.
2.2	Examples were shared illustrating how the tool can identify opportunities to deliver multiple benefits through investment in nature, including improved health and wellbeing, climate adaptation and resilience, flood risk management, biodiversity enhancement, community wealth building, and sustainable economic development. The presenters also outlined examples from pilot areas across Highland, demonstrating how the tool can help identify locally relevant opportunities and support place-based decision making.
2.3	The session explored how the tool could be used to support Community Planning Partnership priorities, strengthen delivery for multiple benefits, be used for achieving goal alignment between partners, inform future investment decisions, and provide an evidence base for funding applications and local planning processes.
3.	Next steps
3.1	The Short-Life Working Group will deliver the two Highland pilot sessions in Merkinch and Thurso, working with Community Partnerships and local stakeholders to demonstrate with real examples how the natural capital approach can be applied in practice to support delivery of HOIP outcomes. Further engagement and pilot development work will take place over the coming month, with learning from the pilot intended to inform wider application across Highland.
3.2	The Board will receive further updates as the pilot programme develops towards conclusion for the September report.

4.	Risks and Mitigations
4.1	N/A
5.	Resource Implications
5.1	None

Impact Assessment

This is a demonstration exercise, but will likely have impact in demonstrating how the 3 strategic themes can be delivered through investments in nature driven by the natural capital approach. A clearer view of the impact will be available once the in-person pilot workshops have been held.

Author(s): Graham Neville

Date: 29 May 2026

Appendices: None