

Agenda Item	6
Report No	CC/18/26

The Highland Council

Committee: Caithness

Date: 3 August 2026

Report Title: Housing Repairs and Capital Report – 1 April 2026 to 30 June 2026

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides information on how the Housing Service performed in relation to Scottish Social Housing Charter and other performance indicators up to 30 June 2026.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:

- (i) **Note** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2026 – 30 June 2026.
- (ii) **Note** the progress of the Void-Plus policy which has been implemented on a trial basis in Caithness since July 2024
- (iii) **Approve** the continuation of the Void-Plus policy in Caithness as part of mainstream efforts to re-let low demand houses and support new tenants to sustain their tenancies

3 Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** - There are no resource implications arising from this report.
- 3.2 **Legal** - There are no legal implications arising from this report.
- 3.3 **Risk** - Risk is managed through regular review and reporting to allow corrective action to be taken if necessary. Note that while there are a number of benefits identified from the continuation of the Void-Plus policy, any additional expenditure incurred from the additional decorative standards will require careful monitoring against approved repairs budgets. Priority spend will continue to focus on both emergency and compliance repair works.

3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** – Health and safety risks for delivery of day to day and void repairs and capital investment are managed through the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 (CDM 2015)

3.5 **Gaelic** - There are no Gaelic 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 therefore an impact assessment is not required.

5 Background

5.1 The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) has set out the performance indicators that it will use in its scrutiny of landlords.

5.2 This report provides key performance information based on the reporting framework recommended by the Scottish Housing Regulator.

5.3 Further performance information by Council Ward can be found on the Highland Council Intranet ward reporting pages:-
http://www.highland.gov.uk/staffsite/info/13/members_intranet/37/ward_reporting/2

5.4 In accordance with the Scottish Social Housing Charter guidance, the Repairs, figures are cumulative.

5.5 Scottish Housing Network (SHN) benchmark information, derived from the performance of all Scottish Landlords, has also been provided where available.

6 Repairs

6.1 The key indicators for measuring repairs performance are considered to be the average time taken to complete Emergency repairs and Non-emergency repairs.

6.2 The average length of time taken to complete Emergency repairs is calculated in hours.

6.3 **Table 1: Average length of time taken to complete emergency repairs (hours)**
Target 12 hours
2025/26 SHN Benchmark (Group) – 3.4 hours

EME	No of Houses	2025/26				2026/27
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1
Thurso and Northwest Caithness	840	3.2	2.7	3.2	4.1	3.5
Wick and East Caithness	1205	3.2	2.9	3.0	4.3	3.2
Highland	15400	4.9	3.9	4.2	4.7	4.3

6.4 The Caithness Building Maintenance team continue to perform well with emergency repairs well within the target of 12 hours and better than the Highland Average of 4.2 hours. Emergency repairs remain a priority for the service.

6.5 Non-emergency repairs are measured in working days.

6.6 **Table 2: Average length of time taken to complete non-emergency repairs (days)**
Target 8.9 days
2025/26 SHN Benchmark (Group) – 8.6 days

NON-EME	No of Houses	2025/26				2026/27
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1
Thurso and Northwest Caithness	840	5.6	6.2	6.7	7.2	7.0
Wick and East Caithness	1205	6.7	6.7	7.5	7.5	7.3
Highland	15400	6.5	6.8	7.3	8.0	6.6

6.7 The Caithness Building Maintenance team continue to perform strongly in delivering non-emergency repairs and remain within the performance target of 8.9 days in both wards.

6.8 In gathering the information for repairs indicators, we do not include instances where we have been unable to gain access to properties. This is in accordance with the Scottish Social Housing Charter guidance.

7 Void Management

7.1 Table 3 provides information on the average re-let time comparing with in previous years for comparison.

7.2 **Table 3: Average re-let time (days) Target 55.6 days
2025/26 SHN Benchmark (Group) – 51.9 days**

Avg relet time, ARC	No of Houses	No of relets	2025/26				2026/27
			Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1
Thurso and Northwest Caithness	840	19	53.8	54.2	50.6	47.8	42.8
Wick and East Caithness	1205	24	44.1	41.3	37.8	37.7	42.9
Highland	15400	285	47.5	46.1	46.1	44.0	33.9

7.3 Caithness re-let times have progressively improved compared to previous quarters, although Wick and East Caithness Ward has experienced a slight increase in relet time with some hard to let properties. The implemented Void-Plus Policy is designed to help create sustainable tenancies in parts of Caithness where there has been difficulty in re-letting void Council housing. It involves an enhanced decorative standard at the void stage to encourage applicants to bid for these houses as part of the Caithness Choice-Based Letting process.

8 Capital Programme

8.1 The 2022–2027 Capital Investment Programme continues to support key areas of planned investment; Capital Investment Programmes provides for:

- Replacement of key building components at end of lifecycle
- Heating system upgrades and energy efficiency improvements
- Delivery of aids and adaptations
- Support for local building maintenance teams to address component failures

The programme balances long-term asset management priorities with responsive and needs-led delivery.

8.2 Current Programme Delivery

A summary of key projects and their status is provided in the table below:

Table 4

Programme Code	Work Type	Properties Completed	Status
CSH24000	Windows and Doors	50	Complete
CSH24021	Heating	10	Ongoing
CSH25001	Roofing	-	Mobilisation
CSH25003	Rewires	11	Ongoing
CSH25005	Heating	39	Complete
CSH25010	Heating	12	Ongoing
CSH26002	Windows & Doors	-	Initiation

There has been a strong level of investment in the area throughout the 2022–2027 programme, as outlined in Table 4. The Asset Investment Team continues to review and progress projects in line with the remaining budget as the current five-year programme approaches completion.

8.3 D-C Programme

The Chancellor announced at Budget in November 2025 that the UK Government had taken the decision not to renew Energy Company Obligation (ECO4), originally due to end 31 March 2026 the scheme was extended by nine months until 31 December 2026. Following a period of uncertainty around ECO funding, we are pleased to report that the programme is now progressing once again. While access to fully funded measures is no longer available, opportunities remain to secure partial funding for eligible properties.

The Asset Investment Team continues to work closely with the Climate Change and Energy Team to identify properties that may benefit from external funding support and target investment where it can deliver the greatest benefit to tenants and the housing stock.

To support the continuation of this work, additional provision has been made within the 2026/27 Capital Funded from Current Revenue (CFCR) allocation. This funding has been profiled to help offset the increased cost of delivering measures where full external funding is no longer available and to ensure that progress on energy efficiency and decarbonisation objectives can continue.

Key priorities for 2026/27 include:-

- Identifying properties eligible for partially funded energy efficiency measures.
- Maximising the use of available external funding opportunities.
- Supporting the continued decarbonisation of the housing stock.
- Improving energy efficiency and helping tenants reduce energy costs.
- Adopting a Highland-wide approach to investment, ensuring resources are targeted towards properties and communities where they will have the greatest impact.

This collaborative approach will help maximise available funding, extend the reach of the programme and continue to deliver energy efficiency improvements across Highland communities.

Prior to the pause in the programme 84 properties had been successfully delivered in the Caithness area. The revised programme currently includes a further 3 properties identified for delivery.

8.4 One-off Capital Programme

Local teams will continue to deliver one-off capital works during 2026/27 in response to component failures and priority replacement requirements across the housing stock.

The 2025/26 year-end position highlighted significant expenditure pressures across several capital budget areas, including:-

- Kitchens
- Heating systems
- Equipment and Adaptations

These pressures were managed through the use of available contingency funding and budget realignment, allowing the overall programme to be balanced and sufficient funding to be carried forward into the 2026/27 programme.

During 2026/27, the focus will be to:-

- Continue to respond to component failures and priority replacement needs.
- Closely monitor expenditure and demand across key budget lines.
- Review budget performance with local teams throughout the year.
- Identify any emerging pressures at an early stage and implement corrective measures where required.

This approach will help ensure available resources are targeted towards the highest-priority investment needs while maintaining effective budget control throughout the year.

8.5 Environmental Capital Projects

The Environmental Capital Programme continues to support local environmental improvements and estate enhancement initiatives across Caithness. As a member-led budget, priorities are informed through local engagement and Ward Business Meetings, with officers continuing to review opportunities to maximise the benefit of available resources.

As part of this work, a review of the garage estate is currently underway. The review will consider a range of potential options for these assets, with any resulting Environmental Capital investment opportunities being developed and communicated to Members for consideration.

Officers continue to assess and develop potential projects that support local priorities, improve housing environments and address identified infrastructure needs.

- 8.6 Please see appendix 1 Which demonstrates what has been delivered to date. Note that **Appendix 1** does not include projects which are currently active.

Please note that a financial breakdown is not available in this report. This is in part due to current transfer of Finance business partners at the time of preparing this report.

9 Void-Plus Pilot

- 9.1 The Void-Plus Policy was implemented on a trial basis in July 2024 as part of the Council's Delivery Plan portfolio. It was designed to help create sustainable tenancies in parts of Caithness where there has been difficulty in re-letting void Council housing. It involves an enhanced decorative standard at the void stage to encourage applicants to bid for these houses as part of the Caithness Choice-Based Letting process.
- 9.2 As part of the process, the Housing Management Team approve the identification of properties where additional incentives for re-letting may be required. This consists of streets which have experienced a low demand from applicants or where applicants with housing need have refused an offer of housing in order to await a future offer elsewhere.
- 9.3 Members are reminded that due to area-specific low demand issues, a choice-based letting scheme currently applies in Caithness. In Caithness, housing applicants can register an interest (also known as a 'bid') in a property and will be considered for allocation to that property.
- 9.4 Following a review of Building Maintenance capacity – including existing commitments to deliver repairs in Council houses in Caithness – an additional painter post was approved in December 2024.
- 9.5 While the Void-Plus Policy is focused primarily on decorative works, it should be noted that some properties have also benefited from the supply of white goods and carpeting. In order to increase levels of tenancy sustainment all new tenants are offered support to apply for new carpets and white goods, although some tenants have showed a preference to install their own carpets and white goods.

- 9.6 Some of the relevant properties have also had capital works such as new kitchens and bathrooms installed at re-let. This investment in the properties has been acknowledged by the new tenants who have moved into these houses.
- 9.7 An update on progress on the pilot was submitted to this Committee on 28 April 2025. It was agreed that the trial continue and that officers continue to collate information relating to the Void-Plus policy.
- 9.8 Analysis of the outcomes of the policy since implementation indicate that:-
- Void-Plus works attract applicants in greater housing need (i.e. higher housing points) and minimise the impact of offers being refused and/or bids from applicants in limited housing need (i.e. with 0-40 housing points). The reduced number of refusals has saved administrative time within the Housing Options Team and has allowed officers to focus their activity on supporting applicants in greatest housing need;
 - Tenant satisfaction with their new houses and the decorative standard remains high. New tenants have indicated that the additional standard has assisted them with the settling-in period and has saved them considerable time and effort in carrying out decoration themselves;
 - It is unclear as to whether the Void-Plus works will help with overall tenancy sustainment in Caithness. Tenancy sustainment rates in Highland remain high compared to national benchmarking comparisons and issues such as employment and access to public services are likely to have a significant impact on individual household circumstances and their housing decisions; and
 - Section 7 of this report provides information on re-let times. Information from the local teams suggest that the time saved from fewer refusals is offset against the longer time taken to complete decoration works. However, there is likely to be a benefit in terms of future re-let times for the relevant properties as less decorative works will be required at these properties if they become void at some stage in the future.
- 9.9 Based on the above analysis, a pilot closure report was approved at the Reconfiguring Our Asset Base Board on 28 May 2026. It recommended that this Committee is provided with the recommendation that Void-Plus continues in Caithness as a mainstream re-letting activity. The local team will continue to monitor progress to ensure that the objectives are achieved and remain balanced with other priorities and service delivery actions.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

Date: 21 July 2026

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Background Papers: Scottish Housing Regulator: The Scottish Social Housing Charter: Indicators and Context Information

Appendices: Appendix 1 – 2026 Delivery Output

2026 Delivery Output – Caithness – Appendix 1

ELEMENT	BUDGET	COUNT
Front Door Installation	ENERGY EFFICIENCY	2
Window Installation	ENERGY EFFICIENCY	1
Bathroom Replacement	MAJOR COMPONENT	4
Date Kitchen Installation	MAJOR COMPONENT	1
Date Heating Installation	ENERGY EFFICIENCY	26
Solar Panel Installation Date	ENERGY EFFICIENCY	9
Full Re-Wiring	MAJOR COMPONENT	5