

Agenda Item	10
Report No	CP/20/26

The Highland Council

Committee: Communities and Place

Date: 13 August 2026

Report Title: Abandoned and Nuisance Vehicles Update

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 Abandoned vehicles have a significant negative impact on communities, public safety and the environment. The Council has a statutory duty under the Refuse Disposal (Amenity) Act 1978 to investigate and remove vehicles that are considered abandoned. In recent years, reports of abandoned and suspected abandoned vehicles have increased substantially, rising from 936 reports in 2023/24 to 1,738 reports in 2025/26, creating increasing operational and financial pressures on the Environmental Health team who have responsibility for the statutory duties placed on the Council.

Nuisance vehicles cause obstruction and block valued parking spaces in residential areas. Whilst Environmental Health have no powers to manage vehicles identified as being nuisance vehicles, information about these will be passed to other partner agencies who may have powers to assist. These partner agencies include the Parking team within the Council as well as the DVLA and Police Scotland.

1.2 The report outlines the Council's statutory responsibilities in relation to abandoned vehicles, the distinction between abandoned and nuisance vehicles, and the respective roles of partner organisations including Police Scotland and the DVLA. It also presents service performance data for 2025/26 and proposes the adoption of a formal Highland Council Abandoned Vehicles Policy to support consistent and proportionate enforcement.

1.3 During 2025/26, Environmental Health received 1,738 reports and, following intervention, 566 vehicles were removed, including 166 vehicles that required uplift and destruction. However, 37% of reports related to vehicles that did not meet the legal threshold to be deemed abandoned, illustrating the challenges associated with nuisance vehicles and the need for effective partnership working and public awareness.

- 1.4 Demand for the service has increased significantly in recent years and expenditure associated with abandoned vehicle disposal has risen from £4,885 in 2021/22 to £32,000 in 2025/26. While improvements in cost recovery have recently been implemented, and income of £10,835 was generated during the first quarter of 2026/27, expenditure continues to exceed the existing budget provision. The report therefore highlights the need to maximise recovery of statutory charges and explore more efficient operating arrangements.
- 1.5 To strengthen the Council's response, the report sets out a programme of improvements including enhanced cost recovery, development of vehicle uplift and storage arrangements, closer working with the DVLA and Police Scotland, improved public communications, and consideration of future enforcement powers. The establishment of a vehicle uplift and storage contract and a vehicle storage compound would provide greater flexibility in dealing with abandoned and nuisance vehicles but would require additional investment and staffing resources.
- 1.6 Overall, the report demonstrates both the growing demand on the service and the proactive measures being taken to improve enforcement, environmental quality, community wellbeing and cost recovery. It seeks approval for a formal Abandoned Vehicles Policy and provides Members with an update on future service improvements designed to ensure the Council continues to meet its statutory obligations in a lawful, proportionate and financially sustainable manner.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:-
- i. **Note** the update from environmental health on abandoned vehicles including the data from 2025/26;
 - ii. **Approve** the proposed Policy on Abandoned Vehicles;
 - iii. **Note** the proposed improvements being considered to address abandoned vehicles by Environmental Health; and
 - iv. **Note** the role of the Council and wider partners in addressing nuisance vehicles and proposed improvements.

3 Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** - The resources available to Environmental Health must be prioritised, focusing on areas of greatest public health significance. The team continually explores ways to delivering services more efficiently and within budget including reviewing associated income streams and seeking efficiencies in working practice and team structure. The report highlights the demand and resource challenges on abandoned vehicles.

Issues of abandoned and nuisance vehicles also impact on the Council's Parking and Roads teams and other land-owning services, particularly Housing on council estates.

Work is ongoing to investigate the provision of a contract for the uplift and storage of vehicles which would be used by both Environmental Health and Parking. There is no identified budget for the provision of such a service so this will be submitted as a budget pressure. Without additional resources, it is not possible to implement this proposal.

- 3.2 **Legal** – The Council has a statutory duty under the Refuse Disposal (Amenity) Act 1978 to remove abandoned vehicles from land or roads within their area. The Refuse Disposal (Amenity) Act 1978 does not give Environmental Health powers to address nuisance vehicles.

For vehicles parked in car parks, the operator of the car park may be able to take action to remove nuisance vehicles as set out in the conditions of parking.

There are powers available to the Police to require vehicles causing an obstruction of the highway to be removed. The Police also have powers in relation to vehicles being driven without a valid MOT test.

The DVLA has powers to remove vehicles parked on the highway or on public land which are untaxed.

- 3.3 **Risk** – Failure to deliver statutory responsibilities for abandoned vehicles may impact on the safety of residents and visitors to the Highlands, impact on environmental quality and open the Council to reputational risks.
- 3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** – Failure to deliver statutory responsibilities for abandoned vehicles may impact on the safety of residents and visitors to the Highlands.
- 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 Integrated Impact Assessment - Summary

- 4.3.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment screening has been undertaken on 22 July 2026. The conclusions have been subject to the relevant Manager Review and Approval.

4.3.2 The Screening process has concluded that there are:-

- Positive poverty & socio-economic impacts as the removal of abandoned vehicles will have a positive impact on the quality of life in our neighbourhoods.
- Positive and perceived negative impacts on human rights – Enforcement action to remove abandoned vehicles could be construed as depriving someone of their property, but as action will only be taken to deal with vehicles which are abandoned by their owners this action is in the public interest.
- Positive impact in relation to climate change as the removal and correct processing of vehicles will allow for materials to be re-used as well as preventing environmental pollution from abandoned vehicles as they degrade over time.

Members are asked to consider the summary in **Appendix 1** to support the decision-making process.

4.3.3

Impact Assessment Area	Conclusion of Screening
Equality	No impact
Socio-economic	Positive
Human Rights	Positive & Negative
Children's Rights and Wellbeing	No impact
Island and Mainland Rural	No impact
Climate Change	Positive
Data Rights	No impact

5 Background – Abandoned Vehicles

5.1 As Members are aware abandoned vehicles are a blight on local communities and have a negative impact on the local environment for the following reasons:-

- They are potentially a danger (particularly children);
- There is a risk of serious injury from explosion or fire;
- They can become a beacon for crime and anti-social behaviour (vandalism, graffiti and fly-tipping);
- They can cause damage to the environment from leaks of fluids and fuels into the surrounding area;
- They lower the quality of life in our neighbourhoods; and
- They can take up valuable parking spaces, particularly in residential areas.

- 5.2 Other Councils have the same issues and households across Scotland regularly identify abandoned or vandalised/burnt out vehicles as an issue in their neighbourhoods, as shown in the table below from the [Scottish Household Survey results](#).

Table 1 - Percentage of adults saying a problem is very/fairly common in their neighbourhood by year (Scotland):

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2022	2023
Abandoned or burnt out vehicles	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%
Groups or individuals intimidating or harassing others	7%	6%	6%	6%	6%	6%	6%	7%	6%
Neighbour disputes	6%	6%	6%	6%	6%	6%	6%	7%	6%
Vandalism, graffiti or other deliberate damage to property	10%	8%	8%	8%	9%	8%	9%	10%	10%
Noisy neighbours or regular loud parties	11%	11%	10%	10%	11%	10%	10%	10%	10%
Rowdy behaviour e.g. drunkenness, hooliganism or loutish behaviour	13%	12%	11%	11%	12%	11%	11%	11%	11%
Drug misuse or dealing	12%	11%	12%	12%	13%	12%	14%	15%	16%
Animal nuisance such as noise or dog fouling	31%	31%	31%	31%	32%	30%	32%	31%	31%
Rubbish or litter lying around	27%	27%	28%	30%	30%	30%	31%	34%	33%

(Topic 2:Table 2.31)

- 5.3 In the Highlands, the numbers of reported abandoned vehicles have been increasing in the last few years. The investigation of many of these reports find that the vehicles reported are not covered by abandoned vehicle legislation but would be described as **nuisance** vehicles with issues such as being untaxed, no MOT, illegally parked, or causing obstruction.

2023/24 = 936 reports

2024/25 = 1291 reports

2025/26 = 1738 reports

2026/27 = 681 reports in Q1

Note, a proportion of the increase in 25/26 may be down to a change in the database as in 25/26 officers ensured every case report covered only one vehicle, whereas the format in 23/24 and 24/25 could include multiple vehicles in one case report.

- 5.4 The Council's new website has updated information on abandoned vehicles and a specific reporting form including map information. See screenshots in **Appendix 2**.

[What is an abandoned vehicle - Abandoned vehicles - Highland Council](#)

6 Statutory Duties on Abandoned Vehicles

6.1 The Council has a statutory duty under the **Refuse Disposal (Amenity) Act 1978** to remove abandoned vehicles from land or roads within their area. The Act and its supporting Regulations provide powers for the Council to service notice to remove, if necessary, store, and dispose of abandoned vehicles. The local authority can prosecute a vehicle owner for the offence of abandoning a vehicle and the Act allows cost recovery of costs as detailed below.

6.2 **Definition of 'abandoned vehicle'** - There is no legal definition of 'abandoned vehicle' and there are differing views on how the term should be interpreted. Some common characteristics used by UK Government and Police Scotland that can be taken into account in deciding if a vehicle is abandoned include:-

- It has no keeper on DVLA's database and is untaxed.
- It is stationary for a significant amount of time.
- It is significantly damaged, run down or unroadworthy - for example, has flat tyres, missing wheels or broken windows.
- It is burned out.
- It is lacking one or more of its number plates.
- It contains waste.

This is not an exhaustive list, and a vehicle would not have to be displaying the full list to be considered abandoned.

Normally if a vehicle is taxed with a current MOT test certificate, it would not meet the legal definition of abandoned unless there are other aggravating factors.

6.3 **Cost recovery** - The Act allows cost recovery of costs related to uplift, storage and disposal of abandoned vehicles where the owner can be identified and specific fees are set out in related regulations. For example, typical fee for abandoned and nuisance cars are: For removal £190; for storage £25 per 24-hour period; and for disposal £95.

The table below shows budget, expenditure on disposal and income related to abandoned vehicles.

- New procedures were introduced in late 2025 to pursue costs recovery for all abandoned vehicles where a registered keeper is listed.
- The team unfortunately deal with a number of abandoned caravans per year (often filled with waste) where it is very difficult to establish ownership and so recover costs.

Table 2 – Highland Council costs related to abandoned vehicles

Year	Budget £	Expenditure £	Income* £
21/22	3200	4885	2310
22/23	3200	7954	207
23/24	3200	11750	0
24/25	3200	17000	0
25/26	3200	32000	5700
Q1 26/27	3200	13750	10,835

*Income relates to invoices issued.

- 6.4 **Abandoned vehicles on private land** – Where an abandoned vehicle is on private land, the Council must give the landowner or occupier 15 days' notice that they propose to remove a vehicle. The Council cannot remove the vehicle if the landowner or occupier objects. The duty of removal does not apply where the costs of removing an abandoned vehicle to the nearest convenient carriageway is unreasonably high e.g. when a vehicle has been abandoned on very remote or hard to access areas, or where special and/or additional machinery is needed to aid removal.
- 6.5 **Investigation** - When undertaking investigations, officers will assess a vehicles condition and circumstances to determine if it is abandoned and then whether it is in such a condition that it should be destroyed. Where an officer has determined that the vehicle has been abandoned and should be destroyed, notice will be served and removal arranged with a contractor, usually within 10 working days. Vehicles such as these, as shown in figure 1 below, are generally straightforward to resolve, i.e., vehicles with little or no value (e.g., burnt-out, severely damaged).



Figure 1 – example of vandalised car removed in 2025/26

- 6.6 More challenging to resolve are vehicles in reasonable condition, with a registered keeper, which may meet some of the factors in paragraph 6.2, but where there is dispute over the status of the vehicle. In these cases, officers must investigate and assess the individual circumstances and may be required to monitor the situation. A balanced approach is needed here in weighing up the impact the vehicle is having on the local community against the rights of the vehicle owner to their property.

7 Nuisance Vehicles

- 7.1 The Environmental Health team often receive reports of vehicles that the complainant feels are abandoned, but on investigation are not found to be abandoned. These are often referred to as **nuisance vehicles**. These may include vehicles that are:-
- Sold on the street as part of a business.
 - Involved in a parking dispute.
 - Parked badly or causing an obstruction.
 - Untaxed, without MOT, SORN or insurance.
 - Broken down.

- 7.2 Nuisance vehicles cannot be addressed through the abandoned vehicle process as they do not meet the definition as set out in the Refuse Disposal (Amenity) Act 1978. Partner agencies such as the DVLA and Police have powers to deal with nuisance vehicles in certain circumstances as do the parking team within the Highland Council. Depending on the nature of the nuisance vehicle, cases will be passed to the relevant partner for them to assess and action as they see fit.
- 7.3 **Police Scotland** can take action to deal with obstruction of a roadway or if a vehicle is causing a danger to other road users. The Police should also respond to reports of individuals using vehicles that do not have a current MOT certificate.
- 7.4 The **DVLA** have an enforcement role where a vehicle is untaxed or does not have a 'Statutory Off Road Notification' (SORN). The Council work closely with the DVLA on this issue and a number of targeted enforcement operations have been carried out previously through the Highlands.
- 7.5 Although the Environmental Health team's statutory role is on **abandoned vehicles**, the team work locally and strategically to assist colleagues in Housing, Roads and Parking, the Police Scotland and DVLA on the wider issues of **nuisance vehicles**. Officers also work with local Housing Associations on local issues. Areas for improvement regarding nuisance vehicles are discussed in section 10 of the report.

8 2025/26 Data

- 8.1 In 2024 the Environmental Health team reviewed the data being captured on abandoned and nuisance vehicles with the aim to improve data on types of vehicles, location and outcomes. New fields were created and training provided to officers involved and changes implemented for the 2025/26 period.
- 8.2 Of the reports of abandoned vehicles received 33% were removed following our intervention (including 10% which were uplifted and destroyed) and 6% are either still under investigation or are being held as open cases for further monitoring.

37% of vehicles reported to Environmental Health were not found to be abandoned vehicles. Detailed information is now available as detailed in the tables below. Further detail for specific wards is provided in **Appendix 4**.

Table 3 - Status of reports of Abandoned Vehicles 2025/26

Outcome	Number of reports
Under Investigation/Monitoring	111
Not abandoned	639
Self-resolved	148
Following intervention, vehicle removed	400
Enforcement Action – Vehicle uplifted and destroyed	166
Invalid or duplicate Report	239
Other Outcome	38

- 8.3 The new information allows detailed reporting on vehicle types. As expected, a high percentage are cars. It should be noted that abandoned caravans can be costly to remove and destroy as they are often filled with waste.

Table 4: % of Vehicle types reported – Abandoned Vehicles 2025/26

	%
Car	73%
Van	16%
Trailer	1%
Caravan	7%
Boat	1%
Lorry	1%
Bus	0%
Motorbike	1%
Scooter	0%
Other	1%

Table 5: % Vehicle type where removed and destroyed 2025/26

	%
Car	66%
Van	17%
Trailer	1%
Caravan	16%

- 8.4 The new information illustrates the range of vehicles being reported which, not unexpectedly, includes both vehicles identified as abandoned and also those described as nuisance vehicles.

9 Policy on Abandoned Vehicles

- 9.1 The Environmental Health team currently operate to agreed procedures. Similar to the approach for litter, a policy on abandoned vehicles would assist with enforcement and send a clear message that abandoned vehicles are unacceptable in the Highlands. A proposed policy is detailed in **Appendix 3**.

Officers have reviewed the proposed Abandoned Vehicles Policy against current practice across a range of UK local authorities and national guidance.

Common areas which have been included in the proposed policy are:-

- Recognition of the environmental, safety and community harms caused by abandoned vehicles, including risks to children, fire hazards, pollution, antisocial behaviour and loss of local amenity.
- Use of nationally recognised criteria to assess whether a vehicle is abandoned, consistent with GOV.UK guidance.
- A clear commitment to take reasonable steps to identify and contact vehicle owners before removal.
- Compliance with statutory notice, removal, storage and disposal procedures, including recovery of statutory charges where applicable.
- A proportionate enforcement approach that allows discretion, including consideration of prosecution where appropriate.
- Recognition of the legal position regarding vehicles on private land, including exemptions where removal costs would be unreasonably high.

- 9.2 The proposed policy focuses on abandoned vehicles, which are subject to Environmental Health's statutory powers and duties. While nuisance vehicles are referenced, they would not be removed under this policy unless they are judged to be abandoned. Vehicles that cause concern but do not qualify as abandoned will be addressed, where appropriate, through alternative powers such as parking enforcement, roads legislation, and through close partnership working with organisations including Police Scotland and the DVLA. This approach reflects established UK local authority practice, ensures decisions are lawful and proportionate, and helps manage public expectations regarding the Council's powers of removal.

10 Areas of Improvement

- 10.1 Several improvements have been identified and are being progressed. Joint working with Waste, Parking and Housing teams are well established.
- **Cost recovery** - The team are working to increase cost recovery and will seek permitted cost recovery **for all uplifted vehicles** where a registered keeper has been identified. Data for Q1 of 26/27 shows that this is happening in all cases where cost recovery is possible.
 - **Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) pilot** - A pilot has commenced in Balintore with housing and parking teams to establish TROs for car parks that have ongoing issues with abandoned and nuisance vehicles. TROs are now in place with further work required on related vehicle uplift.

- **Vehicle uplift for storage** – Currently, only abandoned vehicles that are in such a condition they should be destroyed, can be uplifted, as destruction by contractors is the only option available. Research has been undertaken to introduce **vehicle uplift for storage** which will require a suitable uplift vehicle, contract and a suitable vehicle storage compound. This would introduce further options to address identified abandoned vehicles (of value) and nuisance vehicles and would assist the parking team with persistent fine evaders. The Council can recharge storage costs to the registered keeper of the vehicle.
 - **Vehicle uplift for storage - contract** - In 2025, work started with procurement on an uplift for storage contract. Other Councils in Scotland have been consulted on similar contracts. This is being progressed in 2026/27. The contract may involve possible multiple lots with local garages/scrap businesses providing uplift & storage at own secure pound and/or Council temporary/permanent vehicle storage compound. The option of an inhouse vehicle uplift option is also being considered. Additional funding would be required in order to progress this option.
 - **Vehicle storage compound** - To enable uplift for storage and enforcement work with the DVLA, work is ongoing with the Council's estates team on identifying a vehicle pound in inner Moray Firth area. Five sites investigated – work on one site is ongoing. Additional funding would be required in order to progress this option.
 - **Abandoned Vehicle Sales** – The Refuse Disposal (Amenity) Act 1978 enables local authorities to dispose of vehicles in their custody in such a manner as they see fit. With a vehicle storage compound, abandoned vehicles that have a value may be uplifted, stored and sold. Should an owner subsequently come forward within one year, the authority is required to pay them the proceeds of the sale, minus all removal, storage and disposal costs.
- **DVLA joint enforcement** – There has been very positive recent engagement with the DVLA on re-establishing regular joint enforcement exercises targeting untaxed vehicles. Work is ongoing to identify a suitable temporary vehicle storage compound.
- **Comms & education** – the team are working with the Corporate Communications team on general messaging on abandoned vehicles to raise public awareness and to consider communications linked to enforcement exercises.
- **Website** – Linked to the general comms and education point above, a review of the website is underway to better explain when to report abandoned vehicles to the Council and who to report nuisance vehicles to. A streamlined process for signposting the public to the correct service to deal with nuisance vehicles is being designed. This will result in a quicker response for the public as it would remove Environmental Health as an intermediary in the process. This would then better allow officers to focus on the abandoned vehicles.
- **Police Scotland liaison** – the team are engaging with Police Scotland's road traffic team on offences related to vehicles either parked on the road or being driven with no MOT.

- **DVLA devolved powers** – the team are engaging with DVLA on devolved powers for untaxed vehicles. The Parking team had considered this a number of years ago but was not viable at that time. We are aware of a Council in England that has successfully gained the devolved powers which are enforced by their environmental health team to use as required. This is a future option for Highland but will require a suitable permanent vehicle storage compound either provided directly by the Council or through a contractor.
- **Prosecution** – the team are liaising with Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service on reporting of offenders where sufficient evidence is available.
- **Legislation changes** – The team have engaged with Scottish Government on statutory fees for removal, storage and disposal of vehicles with a view to ensuring these permit full cost recovery for Local Authorities.
- **Legislation changes** – The team have discussed with the Scottish Government on introduction of Fixed Penalty Notices for abandoned vehicles as available in England and Wales. It is hoped this is an option that would be made available for Scottish Local authorities in the future.
- **Council facilitation** – When the uplift contracts are established, the team will review the possibility of the Council using the contract to facilitate requests from the public to uplift their own vehicles. This would be on a full cost recovery basis, including the administration costs of such a scheme. Other Councils operate similar schemes and by simplifying the process and making it easily accessible this may be a useful further option to remove vehicles from communities.

10.2 **Staff Resources**

As Members are aware, the Environmental Health team face significant challenges in meeting statutory demands and prioritise resources to areas of greatest public health or safety. The team who primarily investigate reports of abandoned vehicles also have responsibilities towards litter, fly-tipping, dog fouling and dog control.

The resource demands to implement some of the proposed improvements are being assessed. Additional resources would be required, for example, for the administration of a vehicle storage compound, or implementation of the devolved DVLA powers.

Previous work has identified the following posts that may be required:-

- HC05 Education & Enforcement officer for Skye & Lochalsh area.
- HC05 Education & Enforcement officer for Lochaber area.
- If contracts are established for vehicle uplift and storage and operation of a pound, a minimum of an HC06 Operational support officer will be required to co-ordinate all operations. Support from businesses support will be required on new invoicing.

A detailed business case to clarify the demands and resource calculations is being prepared.

10.3 **Prioritisation and Expectations**

Environmental health prioritise our resources based on several factors including public health, public safety, environmental risk and statutory responsibilities. Officers will assess incoming service requests against these factors and their and other officer's availability for investigations. As stated, the team work closely with colleagues in waste, parking and housing teams and this support is greatly appreciated.

All reports of abandoned vehicles are followed up by the team, but priority is given to vehicles with a clear safety risk e.g. burnt out or vandalised. Officers will explain to complainants that the process can take time to complete, i.e., to ensure adequate steps are taken to trace the owner, statutory notice periods are followed and the time involved with practical arrangements of visiting the site location and the availability and arrangements on uplifting the vehicles, if required.

If, at the conclusion of Environmental Health investigation, the vehicle is not deemed to meet the criteria to be designated as an abandoned vehicle, the team will, if appropriate, notify the relevant agency (DVLA/Police) and the complainant of the outcome of our assessment.

10.4 **Redesign Board**

Following discussion at the Board's March meeting, a workshop on abandoned and nuisance vehicles was held on 4 June 2026. Members engagement on this challenging issue was welcomed by the Environmental Health team. In addition to discussions on the improvement ideas at 10.1 further suggestions were provided. These included developing FAQs for Councillors and the public, stronger enforcement of existing provisions, using byelaws to define the Council's approach, develop a zero-tolerance approach, review of anti-social powers, and avoiding cases 'bouncing' between agencies. A follow-up report will be going to the Redesign Board's meeting on 27 August 2026.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

Date: 22 July 2026

Author: Alan Yates, Strategic Lead - Environmental Health & Bereavement Services
Barry Cumming, Senior EHO

Background Papers: None

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Integrated Impact Assessment
Appendix 2 – THC Website Extract
Appendix 3 – Proposed Policy on Abandoned Vehicles
Appendix 4 – 2025/26 Ward Data – Summary of Abandoned Vehicles

Appendix 1

Integrated Impact Assessment Screening

High level summary of the proposal: This report provides an update to members on issues with abandoned and nuisance vehicles.

Who may be affected by the proposal? Highland Council residents & visitors

1. Equality - Protected characteristics - No impact

2. Poverty and socio-economic

Prospects and opportunities: No impact

Places: Positive

Financial: No impact

Poverty and socio-economic impact details:

- Abandoned vehicles are a blight on local communities and have a negative impact on the local environment for the following reasons:
- They are potentially a danger (particularly children);
- There is a risk of serious injury from explosion or fire;
- They can become a beacon for crime and anti-social behaviour (vandalism, graffiti and flytipping);
- They can cause damage to the environment from leaks of fluids and fuels into the surrounding area;
- They lower the quality of life in our neighbourhoods;
- They can take up valuable parking spaces, particularly in residential areas.
- The removal of abandoned vehicles can therefore clearly have a positive impact on communities.

3. Human rights – Positive & Negative

Human rights impact details: Positive impact - Improve private and family life by improving the community as described in the poverty & socio economic impact details.

Negative impact - This policy could result in personal property (vehicles) being removed and sold or destroyed. Checks are in place to ensure that only vehicles which are judged abandoned are subject to removal.

4. Children's rights and wellbeing - no impact

5. Data protection – no impact

6. Island and mainland rural communities – no impact

7. Climate change

Does the proposal involve activities that could impact on greenhouse gas emissions (CO₂)? Yes

Does the proposal have the potential to affect the environment, wildlife or biodiversity? Yes (positive)

Does the proposal have the potential to influence resilience to extreme weather or changing climate? No

Provide information regarding your selection above: Abandoned vehicles have a negative impact on the local environment for the following reasons:

- There is a risk of serious injury from explosion or fire;
- They can cause damage to the environment from leaks of fluids and fuels into the surrounding area.

Appendix 2 THC Website extract

In this section

1. What is an abandoned vehicle
2. [Before you report](#)
3. [Report an abandoned vehicle](#)
4. [What happens next](#)

What is an abandoned vehicle

A vehicle may be considered abandoned if:

- it has been vandalised or damaged
- doors or the boot are left open or unsecured
- it has been partially or fully burnt out

Not all damaged or unused vehicles are abandoned; some may be nuisance vehicles.

If you have a notice on your vehicle and wish to claim it, find out [how to claim an abandoned vehicle](#).

Nuisance vehicles

Abandoned vehicles are often confused with nuisance vehicles.

A nuisance vehicle is not necessarily abandoned. It could be:

- sold on the street as part of a business
- involved in a parking dispute
- parked badly or causing an obstruction
- untaxed, without MOT, SORN or insurance
- broken down

Nuisance vehicles should **not** be reported as abandoned.

Before you report

Before reporting an abandoned vehicle, carry out the relevant checks.

Check if the vehicle is untaxed

If the vehicle is untaxed or registered as off the road and is on a public road, you can [report it to the DVLA](#).

[Check if the vehicle is taxed](#)

Report dangerous vehicles

If a vehicle is dangerous or blocking an area, report it to Police Scotland by calling [101](#).

Consult neighbours

Ask neighbours or nearby businesses if they know who owns the vehicle.

Check with the landowner

If the landowner has given permission for the vehicle to be stored there, it is not abandoned.

Illegally parked vehicles

If a vehicle is parked illegally, report it to our parking enforcement team.

[Report a parking issue](#)

Appendix 3 Proposed Policy on Abandoned Vehicles

The Highland Council

Policy on Abandoned Vehicles

1. Purpose

This policy sets out how the Highland Council will carry out its statutory duties in relation to abandoned vehicles, using powers provided by:

- a. Refuse Disposal (Amenity) Act 1978
- b. Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984
- c. Removal and Disposal of Vehicles Regulations 1986

2. Impact of Abandoned Vehicles

The Council recognises that abandoned vehicles are a blight on local communities and negatively affect the environment. In particular, abandoned vehicles:

- a. Pose potential dangers, especially to children;
- b. Create risks of serious injury through fire or explosion;
- c. Attract crime and anti-social behaviour, including vandalism, graffiti and fly-tipping;
- d. Can pollute land and water through leaks of fuel and other fluids;
- e. Reduce the quality of life in neighbourhoods;
- f. Occupy valuable parking spaces, particularly in residential areas.

3. Offences and Enforcement

Abandoning a vehicle is an offence under the Refuse Disposal (Amenity) Act 1978. The Council will consider prosecuting vehicle owners who abandon vehicles and will seek to recover all statutory costs where possible.

4. Principles for Dealing with Abandoned Vehicles

In dealing with abandoned vehicles, the Council will:

- a. Take reasonable steps to identify and contact vehicle owners and allow them the opportunity to remove the vehicle;
- b. Arrange removal in the most economical and safe manner possible;
- c. Comply with the duty of care for waste and ensure contractors hold all required permissions, registrations and licences;
- d. Follow all statutory procedures for the removal, storage and disposal of vehicles;
- e. Recover statutory charges wherever possible;
- f. Consider prosecution where appropriate.

5. Identifying an Abandoned Vehicle

In determining whether a vehicle is abandoned, the Council may consider one or more of the following factors:

- No registered keeper on the DVLA database and the vehicle is untaxed;
- The vehicle has remained stationary for a significant period;
- The vehicle is substantially damaged, run-down or unroadworthy (e.g. flat tyres, missing wheels, broken windows);
- The vehicle is burnt out;
- One or more number plates are missing;
- The vehicle contains waste.

This list is not exhaustive. A vehicle does not need to meet all of these criteria to be considered abandoned.

The Council recognises that some vehicles may cause nuisance or inconvenience without meeting the legal tests for abandonment. Complainants will be advised of the appropriate enforcement body to report such nuisance vehicles to.

6. Vehicles on Private Land

Where an abandoned vehicle is located on private land, the Council notes that the duty to remove may not apply if the cost of relocating the vehicle to the nearest convenient carriageway is unreasonably high.

In such cases, decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis, taking account of relevant factors including the statutory charges set out in the Removal, Storage and Disposal of Vehicles (Prescribed Sums and Charges etc.) (Scotland) Regulations 2019.

7. Enforcement Approach

All enforcement activity will be carried out in line with the Council's Enforcement Policy and will be:

- a. Helpful;
 - b. Open;
 - c. Proportionate;
 - d. Consistent;
 - e. Fair and equal;
 - f. Targeted.
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Appendix 4 - 2025/26 Ward data - Summary of abandoned vehicles

abandoned vehicles 25/26	reported	Under Investigation/ Monitoring	Not Abandoned Case Closed	Self-resolved	Following intervention, vehicle removed	Vehicle uplifted and destroyed
1 N, Wand Central Sutherland	30	2	9	1	15	
2 Thurso and Northwest Caithness	77	2	19	3	35	6
3 Wick and East Caithness	67	1	17	8	32	3
Landward Caithness	57	3	20	5	20	
4 East Sutherland and Edderton	71	2	17	7	33	5
5 W Ross, Spey and Lochalsh	65	3	29	9	6	4
6 Cromarty Firth	149	3	60	9	31	16
7 Tain and Easter Ross	151	1	63	6	31	21
8 Dingwall and Seaforth	119	1	52	10	13	13
9 Black Isle	39	3	18	6	9	4
10 Eilean a Cheo	33	1	6	6	7	5
11 Caol and Mallaig	43	5	9	3	15	8
12 Aird and Loch Ness	37	7	10	3	6	7
13 Inverness West	74	15	26	8	11	8
14 Inverness Central	139	8	61	12	19	19
15 Inverness Ness-side	75	3	29	5	9	8
16 Inverness Millburn	67	12	25	7	18	5
17 Culloden and Ardersier	92	7	35	4	24	4
18 Nairn and Cawdor	33	5	15	4	1	1
19 Inverness South	53	16	21	8	12	3
20 Badenoch and Strathspey	84	5	30	13	9	3
21 Ft William and Ardnamurchan	117	2	40	2	37	17
	1672	105	611	139	393	160