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AUDIT SCOTLAND

Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board (those charged with governance)

2 November 2026

Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board
Audit of the 2025/26 annual accounts

Independent Auditor's Report

1. The audit work on the 2025/26 annual accounts is now substantially complete. I anticipate being able to issue unmodified audit opinions in the Independent Auditor's Report on 2 November 2026. The proposed Independent Auditor's Report is attached at Appendix A.

Annual Audit Report

2. Under International Standards on Auditing in the UK (ISA (UK)), I am required to report specific matters identified from the audit of the annual accounts to those charged with governance of Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board in sufficient time to enable appropriate action. For Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board, those charged with governance is the Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board (the Board). I present for the Board's consideration my draft Annual Audit Report on the 2025/26 audit. The section headed "Significant findings and key audit matters" sets out the issues identified in respect of the annual accounts, including those that I am required to report to you.

3. The Annual Audit Report also sets out conclusions on the wider scope areas that frame public audit as set out in the Code of Audit Practice.

4. The Annual Audit Report will be issued in final form after the audit of the annual accounts has been completed.

Uncorrected misstatements

5. I also report to those charged with governance all uncorrected misstatements in the annual accounts which I have identified during the course of my audit, other than those of a trivial nature, and request that these misstatements be corrected.

6. There are no uncorrected misstatements to report.

Other ISA (UK) matters

7. In presenting this letter and the Annual Audit Report to the Board, I seek confirmation from those charged with governance on the following matters:

- if they are aware of any instances of actual, suspected, or alleged fraud;
- if they are aware of any subsequent events that have occurred since the date of the financial statements;
- if they are content that the methods, assumptions, and data used in making accounting estimates in the annual accounts are appropriate;
- if all related party relationships and transactions they are aware of are reflected in the annual accounts; and
- if they are aware of any non-compliance with laws and regulations.

8. Any issues that I have identified from my audit in relation to other ISA (UK) matters that I am required to report to those charged with governance have been reported in the section headed “Other matters to report” in the Annual Audit Report.

Representations from the Treasurer

9. As part of the completion of the audit, I am seeking written representations from the Treasurer on aspects of the annual accounts, including the judgements and estimates made.

10. A draft letter of representations is attached at Appendix B. This alongside the annual accounts will be signed using DocuSign following the Board meeting on 2 November 2026. This takes place prior to the Independent Auditor’s Report being signed.

Appendix A: Proposed Independent Auditor's Report

Independent auditor's report to the members of Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board and the Accounts Commission

Reporting on the audit of the financial statements

Opinion on financial statements

I certify that I have audited the financial statements in the annual accounts of Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board for the year ended 31 March 2026 under Part VII of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973. The financial statements comprise the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, Movement in Reserves Statement, Balance Sheet, Cash Flow Statement and notes to the financial statements, including material accounting policy information. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and UK adopted international accounting standards, as interpreted and adapted by the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2025/26 (the 2025/26 Code).

In my opinion the accompanying financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board as at 31 March 2026 and of its income and expenditure for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with UK adopted international accounting standards, as interpreted and adapted by the 2025/26 Code; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014, and the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003.

Basis for opinion

I conducted my audit in accordance with applicable law and International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)), as required by the Code of Audit Practice approved by the Accounts Commission for Scotland. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of my report. I was appointed by the Accounts Commission on 5 June 2023. My period of appointment is five years, covering 2022/23 to 2026/27. I am independent of the Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to my audit of the financial statements in the UK including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard, and I have fulfilled my other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. Non-audit services

prohibited by the Ethical Standard was not provided to the Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board. I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern basis of accounting

I have concluded that the use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work I have performed, I have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

These conclusions are not intended to, nor do they, provide assurance on the Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board's current or future financial sustainability. However, I report on the Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board's arrangements for financial sustainability in a separate Annual Audit Report available from the Audit Scotland website.

Risks of material misstatement

I report in my Annual Audit Report the most significant assessed risks of material misstatement that I identified and my judgements thereon.

Responsibilities of the Treasurer and Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Responsibilities, the Treasurer is responsible for the preparation of financial statements that give a true and fair view in accordance with the financial reporting framework, and for such internal control as the Treasurer determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Treasurer is responsible for assessing the Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless there is an intention to discontinue the Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board's operations.

The Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board is responsible for overseeing the financial reporting process.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement,

whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. I design procedures in line with my responsibilities outlined above to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. Procedures include:

- using my understanding of the local government sector to identify that the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014, and the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 are significant in the context of the Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board;

- inquiring of the Treasurer as to other laws or regulations that may be expected to have a fundamental effect on the operations of the Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board;

- inquiring of the Treasurer concerning the Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board's policies and procedures regarding compliance with the applicable legal and regulatory framework;

- discussions among my audit team on the susceptibility of the financial statements to material misstatement, including how fraud might occur; and

- considering whether the audit team collectively has the appropriate competence and capabilities to identify or recognise non-compliance with laws and regulations.

The extent to which my procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud, is affected by the inherent difficulty in detecting irregularities, the effectiveness of the Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board's controls, and the nature, timing and extent of the audit procedures performed.

Irregularities that result from fraud are inherently more difficult to detect than irregularities that result from error as fraud may involve collusion, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control. The capability of the audit to detect fraud and other irregularities depends on factors such as the skilfulness of the perpetrator, the frequency and extent of manipulation, the degree of collusion involved, the relative size of individual amounts manipulated, and the seniority of those individuals involved.

A further description of the auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of my auditor's report.

Reporting on other requirements

Opinion prescribed by the Accounts Commission on the audited parts of the Remuneration Report

I have audited the parts of the Remuneration Report described as audited. In my opinion, the audited parts of the Remuneration Report have been properly prepared in accordance with The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014.

Other information

The Treasurer is responsible for the other information in the annual accounts. The other information comprises the Management Commentary, Annual Governance Statement, Statement of Responsibilities and the unaudited part of the Remuneration Report.

My responsibility is to read all the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or my knowledge obtained in the course of the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If I identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, I am required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact. I have nothing to report in this regard.

My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon except on the Management Commentary and Annual Governance Statement to the extent explicitly stated in the following opinions prescribed by the Accounts Commission.

Opinions prescribed by the Accounts Commission on the Management Commentary and Annual Governance Statement

In my opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the Management Commentary for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements and that report has been prepared in accordance with statutory guidance issued under the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003; and

- the information given in the Annual Governance Statement for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements and that report has been

prepared in accordance with the Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (2016).

Matters on which I am required to report by exception

I am required by the Accounts Commission to report to you if, in my opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements and the audited part of the Remuneration Report are not in agreement with the accounting records; or
- I have not received all the information and explanations I require for my audit.

I have nothing to report in respect of these matters.

Conclusions on wider scope responsibilities

In addition to my responsibilities for the annual accounts, my conclusions on the wider scope responsibilities specified in the Code of Audit Practice, including those in respect of Best Value, are set out in my Annual Audit Report.

Use of my report

This report is made solely to the parties to whom it is addressed in accordance with Part VII of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 and for no other purpose. In accordance with paragraph 108 of the Code of Audit Practice, I do not undertake to have responsibilities to members or officers, in their individual capacities, or to third parties.

Esther Scoburgh CPFA
Audit Scotland
102 West Port
Edinburgh
EH3 9DN

Appendix B: Letter of Representations (ISA (UK) 580)

2 November 2026

Esther Scoburgh CPFA
Audit Scotland
102 West Port
Edinburgh
EH3 9DN

Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board Annual accounts 2025/26

Dear Esther

This representation letter is provided in connection with your audit of the annual accounts of Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board, hereafter referred to as the Board, for the year ended 31 March 2026 for the purpose of expressing an opinion as to whether the financial statements give a true and fair view and have been properly prepared, and for expressing other opinions on the Remuneration Report, Management Commentary, and Annual Governance Statement.

I confirm to the best of my knowledge and belief, and having made such enquiries as I considered necessary, the following representations given to you in connection with your audit of the Board's annual accounts for the year ended 31 March 2026.

General

I have fulfilled my responsibilities for the preparation of the 2025/26 annual accounts as set out in your 2025/26 Annual Audit Plan. All the accounting records, documentation, and other matters which I am aware are relevant to the preparation of the annual accounts have been made available to you for the purposes of your audit. All transactions undertaken by the Board have been recorded in the accounting records and are properly reflected in the financial statements.

I confirm that the effects of uncorrected misstatements are immaterial, individually and in aggregate, to the financial statements as a whole. As you have reported, there are no uncorrected misstatements.

Financial Reporting Framework

The annual accounts have been prepared in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2025/26 (2025/26 Code), and the requirements of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, and the Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014.

In accordance with the Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014, I have ensured that the financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Board at 31 March 2026 and the transactions for 2025/26.

Accounting Policies and Estimates

All material accounting policies applied are as shown in the note included in the financial statements. The accounting policies are determined by the 2025/26 Code, where applicable. Where the 2025/26 Code does not specifically apply, I have used judgement in developing and applying an accounting policy that results in information that is relevant and reliable. All accounting policies applied are appropriate to Board's circumstances and have been consistently applied.

The methodology, significant assumptions, and data used in making accounting estimates are reasonable, and have been properly reflected and disclosed in the financial statements in accordance with the 2025/26 Code. Judgements made in making estimates have been based on the latest available and reliable information. Estimates have been revised where there are changes in the circumstances on which the original estimate was based or as a result of new information or experience.

Going Concern Basis of Accounting

I have assessed the Board's ability to continue to use the going concern basis of accounting and have concluded that it is appropriate. I am not aware of any material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt on the Board's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting.

Assets

All assets at 31 March 2026 of which I am aware have been reported in the financial statements.

There are no plans or intentions that are likely to affect the carrying value or classification of the assets recognised in the financial statements.

Liabilities

All liabilities at 31 March 2026 of which I am aware have been reported in the financial statements.

Provisions have been recognised in the financial statements for all liabilities of uncertain timing or amount at 31 March 2026 of which I am aware where the conditions specified in IAS 37, as adapted by the 2025/26 Code, have been met. The amount recognised as a provision is the best estimate of the expenditure likely to be required to settle the obligation at 31 March 2026. Where the effect of the time value of money is material, the amount of the provision has been discounted to the present value of the expected payments.

The accrual recognised in the financial statements for annual leave untaken by 31 March 2026 has been estimated on a reasonable basis.

There are no plans or intentions that are likely to affect the carrying value or classification of the liabilities recognised in the financial statements.

Contingent Liabilities

There are no significant contingent liabilities.

Litigation and Claims

All known actual or possible legal claims have been disclosed to you and have been accounted for and disclosed in the financial statements in accordance with the 2025/26 Code.

Fraud

I understand my responsibilities for the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control to prevent fraud and I believe I have appropriately fulfilled those responsibilities.

I have provided you with all information in relation to:

- my assessment of the risk that the financial statements may be materially misstated as a result of fraud,
- any allegations of fraud or suspected fraud affecting the financial statements, and
- fraud or suspected fraud that I am aware of involving management, employees who have a significant role in internal control, or others that could have a material effect on the financial statements.

Laws and Regulations

I have disclosed to you all known instances of non-compliance or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations whose effects should be considered when preparing financial statements.

Related Party Transactions

All material transactions with related parties have been appropriately accounted for and disclosed in the financial statements in accordance with IAS 24, as adopted by the 2025/26 Code. I have made available to you the identity of all of the Board's related parties and all the related party transactions of which I am aware.

Remuneration Report

The Remuneration Report has been prepared in accordance with the Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014, and all required information of which I am aware has been provided to you.

Management Commentary

I confirm that the Management Commentary has been prepared in accordance with statutory guidance, and the information is consistent with the financial statements.

Corporate Governance

I confirm the Board has undertaken a review of the system of internal control during 2025/26 to establish the extent to which it complies with proper practices set out in *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework 2016*. I have disclosed to you all deficiencies in internal control identified from this review or of which I am otherwise aware.

I confirm that the Annual Governance Statement has been prepared in accordance with the *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework 2016* and the information is consistent with the financial statements. There have been no changes in the corporate governance arrangements, or issues identified, since 31 March 2026 which require to be reflected in the Annual Governance Statement or annual accounts.

Events Subsequent to the Date of the Balance Sheet

All events subsequent to 31 March 2026 for which IAS 10, as adopted by the 2025/26 Code, requires adjustment or disclosure have been adjusted or disclosed.

Yours sincerely

Brian Porter CPFA
Treasurer