Agenda Item	7
Report No	EDU/33/26

The Highland Council

Committee: **Education**

Date: **18 November 2026**

Report Title: **Delivery Plan Monitoring & Progress Update – My Highland Future Quarter 2 2026-2027**

Report By: **Assistant Chief Executive - People**

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 The Delivery Plan 2024-2027 consists of 66 projects/programmes, managed through 6 Portfolio Boards. This number will fluctuate as future work is developed, current projects close or work is restructured in order to improve an approach for successful delivery. Each project is reported to a relevant committee for consideration and scrutiny in terms of the Portfolio Reporting Cycle agreed at Council on 14 May 2026. Exceptions to this general rule may apply when, for example, circumstances merit a standalone project/programme report to either committee or Council. If exceptions apply this report will signpost to where the relevant reporting can be found.

1.2 This report provides financial, performance, risk and general information on the following Delivery Plan projects/Programme:

- School Curriculum & Business Links
- Foundation Apprenticeships
- Modern Apprenticeships
- Entrepreneur Development
- School Based Interventions
- Community Learning and Development (CLD) & Employability Support
- Accelerated Degree Pathways

1.3 The content and structure of the report is intended to:

- assist Member scrutiny and performance management
- inform decision making and aid continuous improvement, and
- provide transparency and accessibility

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

i. **Note** the Delivery Project updates provided in this report;
ii. **Note** the revised format of this report, which includes the use of portfolio board project dashboards from the Performance and Risk Management System (PRMS), with accompanying project narrative sections aligned to the content of these.

3. Implications

3.1 Resource - There are no resource implications arising as a direct result of this report. Any resource implications (if any) for delivery plan projects or programmes are detailed in the Financials sections of each of the project updates provided below.

3.2 Legal - This report contributes to the Council's statutory duties to report performance and secure best value in terms of Section 1(1)(a) of the Local Government Act 1992, and Section 1 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, respectively.

3.3 Risk - There are no risk implications arising as a direct result of this report. Project/Programme risks are assessed via the Council risk management process and monitored through the Portfolio Boards.

3.4 Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people) - There are no implications arising as a direct result of this report.

3.5 Gaelic - There are no implications arising as a direct result of 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 an update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

5. School Curriculum & Business Links

5.1 Overall Project RAG & Milestones

Below is an extract of the first page of the PRMS project dashboard which contains the Overall Project RAG and Key Project Milestones against which, project progress is tracked.

Workstream: My Highland Future - Universal

Project: School Curriculum & Business Links — G

There is a core lifelong offering to engage the 31,000 children in schools and their parents in understanding the vision for the future green economy of the Highlands, which relates to the Regional Workforce and DYW Plan, focusing on construction, engineering, tourism and care:

- A major campaign to raise public awareness of the future workforce opportunities in the area and to galvanise talent attraction
- Learner-centred 3-18 Programmes address future careers & unconscious Bias
- Through the BGE, family-centred activities to learn about careers and entrepreneurship (including careers fairs, STEM inputs, entrepreneur programmes, class-based learning about the future opportunities and SDS inputs)
- In the senior phase, all young people have access to careers coaching and mentoring, with specific careers advice and guidance.
- Better connected virtual and digital offers

ACTIVITY
- Engage with employers, schools and sector partners to shape and deliver a campaign focusing on future workforce opportunities and pathways.
- Support consistent approaches to curriculum planning for all schools to deliver career education entitlements, including experiential career learning.
- Provide better alignment between social value / community benefit inputs and school curriculum/ campaigns for young people and families through support of ECL programmes and activities within schools

PROJECT ELEMENTS
- Strategic Promotional Campaign: Work with Workforce North to develop and deliver multi-level awareness campaigns for employers, schools, partners, and communities - WP1
- ECL Curriculum Review & Support: Support self-evaluation and data mapping to align school programmes with curriculum rationale - WP2
- Social Value: Improve and align social value processes to support cross-portfolio workstreams and ensure equitable, planned school engagement - WP3

Portfolio: My Highland Future

Portfolio Sponsor: Assistant Chief Executive

MILESTONES		CURRENT STATUS
Starts Jul25 / Completes Dec25	School & Business Links: WP3b Workforce North – Create online portal [WBL]	M2 26/27 Completed
Starts Mar26 / Completes May26	Digital Schools: Finalise Digital School Position Statement for Highland	M2 26/27 Completed
Starts Jan26 / Completes Jun26	School & Business Links: WP2g Devise and roll out data dashboard for input and access for stakeholders to show all ECL activity	M3 26/27 Completed
Starts Jan26 / Completes Jun26	School & Business Links: WP2h Ensuring senior phase access to careers coaching and mentoring	M3 26/27 Completed
Starts Sep25 / Completes Dec26	School & Business Links: WP3c Devise a menu of options to be included in tender thresholds linked to community benefits	M6 26/27 Some Slippage
Starts Dec25 / Completes Sep26	School & Business Links: WP1b Workforce North – Develop and deliver a campaign of promotional packages	M6 26/27 Completed
Starts Oct25 / Completes Sep26	School & Business Links: WP2e Plan growth and embed experiential career learning (ECL) activity in s	M6 26/27 On Target
Starts May25 / Completes Dec26	School & Business Links: WP2d Monitoring work experience data, target support in key sectors & geography	M7 26/27 On Target
Starts Mar27 / Completes Mar27	School & Business Links: Project Closure and transfer to BAU	

5.2 Overall Project RAG

The *School Curriculum & Business Links* project has continued to build momentum, with activity increasingly focused on implementation and delivery. A key development has been the successful recruitment of the additional posts approved through the Council's budget process. This additional capacity has strengthened the programme's ability to develop strategic partnerships with employers, coordinate curriculum-linked career learning opportunities and support a more coherent approach to workforce awareness across Highland schools.

The new staffing resource is already supporting the expansion of initiatives linked to Workforce North and Industry Connect Highland, enabling greater engagement with employers, improved coordination of sector-based learning opportunities and stronger alignment between curriculum delivery and workforce priorities.

Collectively, these developments are helping to move the project from individual engagements and activities towards a more strategic and sustainable model that embeds employer partnerships, enriches curriculum experiences and strengthens learner understanding of the pathways available to them beyond school.

5.3 Milestones

The **Workforce North campaign** has continued to expand, bringing together employers and education partners across priority sectors including care, hospitality, construction and engineering. Alongside sector events and employer engagement activity, the Workforce North Magazine was distributed to all S3-S6 learners across Highland secondary schools. The magazine provides learners and families with information on regional investment, future workforce opportunities, apprenticeship pathways and local career case studies, helping to support informed subject choices and career planning.

Experiential career learning opportunities have also been expanded through collaboration with partners including NHS Highland, social care services, UHI and industry representatives. Increasingly, these activities are being coordinated as part of a regional offer that aligns learner aspirations, curriculum delivery and labour market demand.

A significant development has been the launch of **Industry Connect Highland**, a new employer engagement model designed to create sustained partnerships between schools and industry. Seventeen secondary schools have now been matched with STEM employer partners linked to regional workforce priorities, including organisations such as SSEN Transmission, Siemens Energy, Hitachi Energy, Balfour Beatty, Morgan Sindall and BAM. The programme was supported by a series of preparatory webinars for schools and employers and formally launched during the September In-Service Day. STEM teachers and employer partners worked together to develop plans for curriculum-linked activity throughout the academic year. A key strength of the model is the opportunity it provides for employers and teaching staff to better understand each other's roles, contributing to more meaningful curriculum inputs, stronger workforce awareness and clearer learner pathways into future careers.

Progress has also been made in strengthening the evidence base available to schools and partners through the continued development of **My Highland Future data dashboards**. New tools supporting work placement mapping, learner aspirations, Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) planning and Foundation Apprenticeships are helping schools and partners make more informed decisions regarding curriculum pathways, employer engagement and workforce planning. Training has commenced to support consistent use of these resources.

Further work has focused on improving **coordination across STEM partners**, with The Highland Council facilitating closer collaboration between UHI, STEM outreach providers and the Science Skills Academy. This is creating a more coherent STEM offer for schools, reducing duplication and ensuring activities align more closely with My Highland Future ambitions around workforce development, learner pathways and enriching curriculum experiences. A recent example of this approach can be seen through partnership working to enhance delivery of the National 5 Laboratory Science course. Through collaboration with the RESILIENCE Hub at Heriot-Watt University, teachers and pupils have participated in curriculum-linked workshops aligned to National 5 learning outcomes. Alongside practical laboratory activities and engagement with industry professionals, learners have utilised virtual reality

technology to experience laboratory environments and procedures that would not normally be accessible within schools. This immersive approach has helped bring curriculum learning to life, strengthen understanding of real-world applications of science and increase awareness of pathways into laboratory science and medicines manufacturing careers, while also providing valuable professional learning opportunities for teaching staff.

Next Steps - The next phase of delivery will focus on embedding and expanding the progress achieved to date.

Delivery of Industry Connect Highland will continue across the initial cohort of schools, with a second cohort of school-employer partnerships planned for launch in the new year. Opportunities are also being explored to provide professional learning sessions for subject staff with employer partners during the February In-Service Day, strengthening understanding of industry practice, workforce demand and curriculum links.

Work will continue through the Workforce North programme to increase employer engagement and expand experiential career learning opportunities linked to regional workforce priorities.

Continued support to embed the use of My Highland Future data dashboards and planning tools to support schools and partners to make more informed decisions around learner pathways and employer engagement.

Within STEM, the focus will be on further developing the emerging secondary STEM programme in partnership with UHI STEM Outreach and the Science Skills Academy. This work aims to provide schools with a more coordinated and progressive offer, aligning enrichment activities, employer engagement and curriculum support to regional workforce opportunities.

5.4 <u>Key Risks & Measures of Success</u>

Below is an extract of the second page of the PRMS project dashboard which sets out the Key Risks and Measures of Success for the project.

INVESTMENT		LATEST UPDATE
£	Future Highland Workforce: Investment: EMR (Current FY Forecast)	£ 78,360
£	Digital School: Investment: EMR (Current FY Forecast)	£ 46,142

MEASURES OF SUCCESS	CURRENT STATUS
School Curriculum & Business Links: % of schools engaged in strategic employer partnerships - Starts reporting AY26/27	45 %
School Curriculum & Business Links: % of school registered for Workit platform. AY26/27	83 %
School Curriculum & Business Links: % of senior phase pupil uptake & use of Workit platform - Annual	33 %

KEY RISKS ASSESSED / RESPONSE	CURRENT RISK RATING	RESPONSE
Digital School: Failure to successfully grow Digital School concept in Highland	8	Tolerate
School & Business Links: Lack of Engagement with WorkIt platform	9	Treat
School & Business Links: School Capacity to Engage with Experiential Career Learning Initiatives	4	Tolerate

5.5 Key Risks

There are no new or emerging risks to report at this stage, and no changes to existing risks. Current risk mitigations remain appropriate, and risks continue to be monitored through established governance arrangements.

5.6 Financial Measures

There are no Delivery Plan Financial Indicators directly associated with this project.

5.7 Performance & Measures of Success

Performance and measures of success figures shown in 5.4 above are correct as at end of Q2 2026/2027.

Given that much of the activity within Curriculum & Business Links is relatively new and has only recently moved into implementation, the measures reported this year should be viewed as baseline indicators against which future progress and impact can be assessed. Initial data shows that 45% of schools are currently engaged in strategic employer partnerships through initiatives such as Industry Connect Highland, while 33% of senior phase learners have actively engaged with the WorkIT platform through registered logins. As employer engagement activity, experiential career learning opportunities and digital career planning tools continue to be embedded across schools, these baseline figures will provide an important reference point for monitoring growth in participation, engagement and system-wide impact over future reporting periods.

6. Foundation Apprenticeships

6.1 Overall Project RAG & Milestones

Below is an extract of the first page of the PRMS project dashboard which contains the Overall Project RAG and Key Project Milestones against which, project progress is tracked.

Workstream: My Highland Future - Targeted

Project: Foundation Apprenticeships — G

Continue to review and expand our offering of Foundation Apprenticeships and Modern Apprenticeships across the partnership (focusing on key economic priorities)

ACTIVITY
- Baseline and benchmark existing apprenticeship data
- Plan FA and HC MA expansion scoping alternative models of delivery and funding to support this.
- Work with partners to support promotion of apprenticeship routes and vocational opportunities (linked to WFN theme 2)

PROJECT ELEMENTS
- Expand and streamline pathways through the apprenticeship sectors (link with Skills Boards/ academies) - WP1
- Promote apprenticeship opportunities (link with Engagement Project) - WP2

Portfolio: My Highland Future

Portfolio Sponsor: Assistant Chief Executive

MILESTONES		CURRENT STATUS
Starts Aug25 / Completes Nov25	Foundation Apprenticeships: WP1a: Baseline and benchmark apprenticeship data	M8 25/26 Completed
Starts Sep25 / Completes Mar26	Foundation Apprenticeships: WP2: Workforce North - Promotion of work-based learning pathways and their benefits	M1 26/27 Completed
Starts Sep25 / Completes Jun26	Foundation Apprenticeships: WP1d: Highland school pupils all have the chance to experience a vocational qualification as part of their senior phase	M3 26/27 Completed
Starts Aug25 / Completes Sep28	Foundation Apprenticeships: WP1c: Workforce North - THC will continue to expand apprenticeship provision in sectors of labour market need - in schools	M6 26/27 On Target
Starts Sep28 / Completes Sep28	Foundation Apprenticeships: Project Closure and transfer to BAU	

6.2 Overall Project RAG

Foundation Apprenticeships (FA) continue to provide an important pathway for young people to gain industry-recognised qualifications and workplace experience while still at school. Participation remains strong, with approximately 8% of the senior phase cohort enrolling in a Foundation Apprenticeship last session. These qualifications are now included within the options process in 26 secondary schools, with learners able to access 10 of the 15 available apprenticeship frameworks. While the range available varies across schools depending on local demand, delivery arrangements and cohort viability, the programme continues to provide learners across Highland with access to a broad range of vocational pathways aligned to key employment sectors.

Performance remains strong, with completion rates of around 95%, demonstrating positive learner engagement and successful outcomes. In addition, Foundation Apprenticeship data is now being incorporated within the My Highland Future dashboard suite, providing schools and partners with improved insight into participation, attainment and progression outcomes and supporting more informed curriculum and pathways planning.

6.3 Milestones

Alongside delivery of existing provision, activity has focused on identifying opportunities to expand FA pathways aligned to future workforce priorities. A Foundation Apprenticeship Steering Group, involving key delivery partners, has been established to review participation data, identify gaps in current provision and consider future growth opportunities. As part of this work, initial scoping has been undertaken with UHI and Skills Development Scotland to explore development of a new Level 5 Energy Foundation Apprenticeship, reflecting the significant workforce demand emerging across the energy sector and wider infrastructure investment programmes.

Early engagement has taken place with employers and school staff to explore the potential of the Global Infrastructure in the Built Environment (GIBE) pathway. This Level 6 Group Award, currently being piloted in Midlothian and Perth & Kinross, offers flexibility for schools to tailor unit choices to local industry and workforce priorities. Discussions have focused on the potential to use GIBE as part of a progressive learning pathway, introducing learners to infrastructure, construction and engineering themes from the Broad General Education phase and building towards the senior phase qualification.

Next Steps - Building on recent engagement with schools and employers, work will continue to scope a potential Highland pilot of the Global Infrastructure in the Built Environment (GIBE) pathway. This will include exploring how GIBE can be used to introduce learners to infrastructure, construction and engineering sectors during the Broad General Education phase, creating a clearer progression route into senior phase vocational qualifications and Foundation Apprenticeships.

The recently established Foundation Apprenticeship Steering Group will continue to work with partners to develop progressive pathways across Level 4 and Level 5 provision, including further exploration of a potential Level 5 Energy Foundation Apprenticeship with UHI and Skills Development Scotland.

6.4 Key Risks & Measures of Success

Below is an extract of the second page of the PRMS project dashboard which sets out the Key Risks and Measures of Success for the project.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS	CURRENT STATUS
Foundation Apprenticeship: No of senior phase pupils enrolled in Foundation Apprenticeships - Annual	645

KEY RISKS ASSESSED / RESPONSE	CURRENT RISK RATING	RESPONSE
Foundation Apprenticeships: Failure to Increase Access to Foundation Apprenticeships	9	Tolerate

6.5 Key Risks

There are no new or emerging risks to report at this stage, and no changes to existing risks. Current risk mitigations remain appropriate, and risks continue to be monitored through established governance arrangements.

6.6 Financial Measures

There are no Delivery Plan financial measures directly associated with this project.

6.7 Performance & Measures of Success

All performance and measure of success figures are shown above.
Participation in Foundation Apprenticeships remains strong and consistent, with 645 senior phase learners enrolled during 2025/26. This represents approximately 8% of the senior phase population and continues an upward trend seen over recent years, reflecting the expansion of delivery models, increased school engagement and the growth of in-school delivery approaches. While participation has continued to increase, future expansion presents some challenges as current funding credits are approaching partner delivery capacity limits.

7. Modern Apprenticeships

7.1 Overall Project RAG & Milestones

Below is an extract of the first page of the PRMS project dashboard which contains the Overall Project RAG and Key Project Milestones against which, project progress is tracked.



MILESTONES		CURRENT STATUS
Starts Apr26 / Completes Sep26	Modern Apprenticeships: WP1e: Explore options for shared apprenticeships initiating discussions with potential partners	**M6 26/27 Completed**
Starts Jun26 / Completes Sep26	Modern Apprenticeships: Launch and promote eLearning Module for managers	**M3 26/27 Completed**
Starts Oct26 / Mar27	Modern Apprenticeships: Secure a partner organisation for a shared apprenticeship arrangement following initial discovery discussions	
Starts Apr27 / Completes Oct27	Modern Apprenticeships: Complete partner engagement and secure agreement for a shared apprenticeship	
Starts Sep28 / Completes Sep28	Modern Apprenticeships: Project Closure and transfer to BAU	

7.2 Overall Project RAG

A shared apprenticeship model enables an apprentice to gain experience across more than one organisation, helping to create opportunities where a single employer may be unable to provide the full range of work required. This can involve the creation of a new apprenticeship post with salary costs shared between organisations, typically on a 50/50 basis, or an arrangement where the apprentice spends an agreed period of time working with a partner organisation, with costs either fully met by Highland Council or shared between partners.

The Modern Apprenticeship project continues to progress in line with planned timescales, with key early milestones completed, including exploration of shared apprenticeship opportunities and the launch of e-learning resources for managers.

Activity is now focused on developing partnership arrangements that will support shared apprenticeship models across the Highland area, helping to increase apprenticeship opportunities and strengthen workforce development pathways.

The project supports wider workforce planning objectives by improving access to Modern Apprenticeships, enhancing manager awareness of apprenticeship opportunities, and exploring collaborative approaches with external partners. Progress to date indicates that delivery remains on track, with no significant issues currently affecting achievement of the overall project objectives.

7.3 Milestones

- Completed initial discussions with potential partners to explore opportunities for shared apprenticeship arrangements (September 2026).
- Successfully launched and promoted an e-learning module for managers, improving awareness of recruiting and supporting Modern Apprenticeships (July 2026).
- Commence partner engagement activity to identify and secure an organisation willing to participate in a shared apprenticeship arrangement (October 2026 to March 2027).
- Complete negotiations and formalise a shared apprenticeship agreement with partner organisations (April 2027 to October 2027).
- Embed agreed arrangements and transfer delivery into business-as-usual processes, with project closure scheduled for September 2028.

Next Steps – Continue engagement with potential partner organisations, including public sector partners such as NHS Highland, HLH and the Highland Valuation Joint Board, to establish suitable shared apprenticeship arrangements. Parallel activity will focus on promoting apprenticeship opportunities across Council services and identifying opportunities to expand apprenticeship participation through external funding and collaborative delivery models.

7.4 Key Risks & Measures of Success

Below is an extract of the second page of the PRMS project dashboard which sets out the Key Risks and Measures of Success for the project.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS	CURRENT STATUS
No. newly enrolled and upskilled via THC Modern Apprenticeships per year	167

Limited partner engagement
Potential partner organisations may be unwilling or unable to commit to a shared apprenticeship model.

Mitigation: Early engagement with a range of partners, clear articulation of benefits, and development of flexible partnership arrangements that meet organisational needs.

7.5 Key Risks

Key risks are currently being considered and will be included in the next report to committee.

7.6 Financial Measures

There are no Delivery Plan financial measures directly associated with this project.

7.7 Performance & Measures of Success

Success will be measured through delivery of the agreed project milestones, including establishment of a formal shared apprenticeship arrangement with at least one partner organisation and successful transition of the model into business-as-usual operations by September 2028.

Whilst early project milestones have been completed, the most significant measure of success will be securing partner commitment and demonstrating that a shared apprenticeship model can be implemented sustainably. Progress will therefore be monitored through:

- Delivery of project milestones within agreed timescales.
- Completion and uptake of the Modern Apprenticeship manager e-learning module.
- Securing and formalising at least one shared apprenticeship partnership agreement.
- Increased opportunities for Modern Apprenticeships across Highland Council services and partner organisations.
- Improved awareness amongst managers of apprenticeship recruitment and support processes.
- Apprentice retention and completion rates throughout programme delivery.
- Evidence that shared apprenticeship arrangements can be sustained beyond the life of the project.
- Strengthened partnership working across the Highland area to support workforce development and skills pathways.

The project remains dependent on external partner engagement, budget and organisational capacity to support apprenticeships. The next phase of work will therefore be critical in determining whether the intended benefits can be realised at scale. Continued focus will be required to mitigate risks relating to partner commitment, funding, and operational capacity, particularly as the project moves from exploration and planning into implementation.

8. Entrepreneur Development

8.1 Overall Project RAG & Milestones

Below is an extract of the first page of the PRMS project dashboard which contains the Overall Project RAG and Key Project Milestones against which, project progress is tracked.

Workstream: My Highland Future - Targeted

Project: Entrepreneur Development G

Project:
Working with local Entrepreneur's to help access expertise and funding to develop new sustainable businesses in Highland.

- Review existing entrepreneur skills development activity - WP1
- Develop entrepreneur skills development programmes - WP2
- Promote programmes - WP3

Portfolio: My Highland Future

Portfolio Sponsor: Assistant Chief Executive

MILESTONES		CURRENT STATUS
Starts Jul25 / Completes Sep25	Entrepreneur Development: WP1: Review existing entrepreneur skills development activity, identify gaps & connections	M7 25/26 Completed
Starts Dec25 / Completes Feb26	Entrepreneur Development: WP3: Plan promotion of programmes of activity	M1 26/27 Completed
Starts Oct25 / Completes Jun26	Entrepreneur Development: WP2a: Develop programmes to support Entrepreneur & business start-up skills growth for Young people	M5 26/27 Completed
Starts Oct25 / Completes Jun26	Entrepreneur Development: WP2b: Develop programmes to support Entrepreneur & business start-up skills growth for Post-school/adults	M6 26/27 Completed
Starts Mar27 / Completes Mar27	Entrepreneur Development: Project Closure and transfer to BAU	M6 26/27

8.2 Overall Project RAG

The *Entrepreneur Development* project has continued to build momentum, with activity increasingly focused on implementation and delivery.

The Schools Hub SharePoint now hosts a repository for Entrepreneur Development, where all 29 secondary schools can access entrepreneur learning resources, partnerships and guidance – this will now be imbedded in business as usual and updated with new resources as they become available.

8.3 Milestones

Activity focused on identifying opportunities to strengthen entrepreneurial development pathways and increase awareness of self-employment and business creation across Highland. Engagement has taken place with key stakeholders to explore how entrepreneurial learning can be embedded more consistently within the learner journey and linked to future workforce and economic development priorities. The project created a central resource hub to build entrepreneurial skills, encourage innovation and create clearer progression routes for young people interested in developing business ideas, social enterprises or self-employment opportunities.

Initial scoping was undertaken to map the range of entrepreneurship support available across the region, identifying opportunities to improve awareness, reduce duplication and strengthen referral pathways. Focus was on the development of a more coordinated support model, with a strong entrepreneurial learning offer available to schools, enabling individuals to access appropriate guidance, training and start-up support to start their entrepreneurial journey.

Opportunities to strengthen innovation and enterprise activity through partnerships with existing incubator programmes and business networks were explored, supporting

individuals to develop ideas into sustainable ventures while contributing to economic growth, community wealth building and local job creation across the Highlands.

A Depute Head Teacher Network session was delivered to support the development of entrepreneurial learning within schools. The programme included keynote presentations from Young Enterprise Scotland and the Social Enterprise Academy, highlighting effective practice and opportunities to embed entrepreneurship and social enterprise education across curricular and wider achievement experiences. The sessions also showcased tools, resources and approaches that can support the development of entrepreneurial and enterprising mindsets in young people.

8.5 Key Risks

There have been no risks identified for this project.

8.6 Financial Measures

There are no Delivery Plan financial measures directly associated with this project.

8.7 Performance & Measures of Success

Success is measured through the development and publication of a comprehensive suite of entrepreneur development resources, information and guidance materials. This includes the creation of a central repository of enterprise and entrepreneurship opportunities, support programmes, learning resources and progression pathways available to schools and learners.

Promotional materials and signposting resources will also be developed and made available on the Schools Hub, with targeted communications issued to School DYW Leads to raise awareness and encourage utilisation. Success will be demonstrated by the number of secondary schools delivering entrepreneurial learning, supported by the availability and accessibility of these resources, engagement from schools with the materials provided, and increased awareness of entrepreneurial development opportunities among staff and learners.

Specifically, the project delivered a Schools Hub entrepreneur development resource page, promotional and signposting materials for schools, and communication to all School DYW Leads outlining the available support and resources.

9. School Based Interventions

9.1 Overall Project RAG & Milestones

Below is an extract of the first page of the PRMS project dashboard which contains the Overall Project RAG and Key Project Milestones against which, project progress is tracked.

Workstream: My Highland Future - Intensive

Project: School Based Interventions G

School-based interventions for those at greatest risk of exclusion from the labour market

ACTIVITY
- Improve attendance, engagement, and wellbeing of young people.
- Support young people to achieve personal goals and recognised qualifications.
- Strengthen relationships between youth work, education, and community. through common Youthwork Framework
- Provide flexible, youth-led learning opportunities.
- Track and evidence the impact of youth work in education using Youthwork Framework
- Create and support programmes that offer mentor support and pathways planning to those most at risk of exclusion from labour market

PROJECT ELEMENTS
- Pilot integrated youthwork approaches to engage young people at risk of disengaging from school (UKSP funding) - WP1
- Recruit additional Youth Support Officers - WP3
- Establish intervention planning, target and measurement tools linked to skills development and youthwork support - WP1
- Map, share and scale up intervention programmes of support on offer for at risk groups - WP2
- Partnership working to support early intervention and streamlined support linked to post school pathways planning with partner services (SDS; Employability: Adult learning) - WP1

Portfolio: My Highland Future

Portfolio Sponsor: Assistant Chief Executive

MILESTONES		CURRENT STATUS
Starts Jun25 / Completes Jul25	School Based Interventions: WP3a Draft detailed project plan and budget plan	M5 25/26 Completed
Starts Aug25 / Completes Oct25	School Based Interventions: WP3b Recruit youth work officers	M6 25/26 Completed
Starts Oct25 / Completes Dec25	School Based Interventions: WP3c Phase 2 - Integrating support – school staff training	M8 25/26 Completed
Starts Oct25 / Completes Mar26	School Based Interventions: WP1a Gather and analyse post school service data	M1 26/27 Completed
Starts May26 / Completes Aug26	School Based Interventions: Recruit Transitions Co-ordinator	M3 26/27 Completed
Starts Jan26 / Completes Sep26	School Based Interventions: WP3d Evaluation and next steps	M6 26/27 On Target
Starts Jan26 / Completes Dec26	School Based Interventions: WP2a Map out intervention approaches and programmes	M6 26/27 On Target
Starts Aug26 / Completes Jun27	School Based Interventions: WP1c Provide early intervention support in schools	M6 26/27 On Target
Starts Jan27 / Completes Jun27	School Based Interventions: WP2b Provide a platform to share interventions	
Starts Jun27 / Completes Jun27	School Based Interventions: Project Closure and transfer to BAU	

9.2 Overall Project RAG

This project was supported by UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) which concluded at the end of September. This project was on track, with a green RAG, and transition to complete by the end of September. During early October the team will finalise the project evaluation to inform next steps.

CLD youth work approaches continue to play an important role in supporting engagement, attendance, skills development and progression for young people. Through relationship-based practice, targeted interventions and youth-led learning, young people experiencing barriers to engagement have benefited from personalised support, accredited learning, community-based activities and opportunities to develop confidence, wellbeing and employability skills.

An asset-based approach was used, supporting young people to make school feel like a place where they wanted to be, rather than treating attendance as an isolated issue.

Evidence from the attendance and engagement pilot project demonstrates that sustained relationships with trusted adults can improve confidence, participation, school engagement and attendance. Young people have achieved recognised awards and qualifications while developing stronger aspirations for future learning,

training and employment. The work has reinforced the importance of viewing attendance and engagement within the wider context of the young person's circumstances, with relationship-based support acting as a key enabler of positive outcomes.

Youth Development Teams have also strengthened links with local authority 16+ planning processes, contributing to support for young people at risk of negative post-school destinations. Youth workers are often the trusted adult best placed to understand young people's strengths, aspirations and support needs, enabling effective signposting, coordinated transition planning and improved continuity of support as young people leave school. Increased collaboration between youth services, schools, Employability and partner agencies has strengthened multi-agency approaches to supporting positive destinations.

Joint working between Education, Youth Services and Employability colleagues has continued to develop through staff training and shared understanding of school systems, work experience processes, 16+ planning arrangements and post-school support pathways, as mentioned in the CLD and Employability project update. This has enabled a more integrated approach to supporting young people's learner journeys and progression opportunities.

With the conclusion of this pilot, which enabled additional Youth Support Officer capacity, learning from the programme is informing future service delivery, which aims to embed successful relationship-based approaches within core service delivery, strengthening early intervention, school-community partnerships and integrated support pathways.

9.3 Milestones

The UKSPF project involved working across 3 secondary schools, Alness Academy, Inverness High School and Invergordon Academy between June 2025 and August 2026. Funding was also used to increase capacity to support a cohort of young people in Golspie.

Learning was centred through 121 support and experiential group activities, connecting across school and in community settings, delivered by the Youth Support Officers and through funding of Third sector organisations.

Third sector community organisations brought a varied approach to learning across the school day, by offering a diverse range of activities through a partnership approach.

Young people who were part of the attendance project at school also started to attend community youth provision. Evidence is suggesting attendance appears to be an outcome of improvements around the development of skills and by not focusing purely on attendance.

In this regard, as hoped, attendance improved by developing confidence, relationships, belonging, wellbeing, participation and achievement, which is consistent with the National Youth Work Outcomes and Skills Framework.

Young people said,

“I feel more confident knowing my attendance has gone up. It has made me feel better about coming to school. When my attendance was low it was causing trouble at home and making my anxiety worse about coming in.”

Remaining milestones are now complete or about to complete as noted below:

- Map intervention approaches and programmes – complete
- Provide early intervention support in schools – complete
- Evaluation and next steps – initial evaluation work is underway and will complete by the end of Oct 2026

Next Steps - As a next step, work has already started in establishing The Workforce Response Team (WRT) Pilot across 7 Secondary schools, which aims to provide targeted support for young people who may be at risk of leaving school without a clear post-school destination. The pilot focuses primarily on S4 learners who are intending to leave next summer or Christmas 2027 and aims to strengthen progression into employment, apprenticeships, training and further learning opportunities. The pilot involves education, youth teams and wider Workforce North delivery partners to support targeted intervention planning for these learners. The model combines early identification with personalised support, including career planning discussions, work readiness assessments, personal work-ready profiles, employer engagement opportunities, mentoring where appropriate, and access to wider partner agency support.

The pilot has been designed to complement existing school guidance and support structures rather than replace them, with school staff playing a central role in identifying learners, supporting assessment activity and coordinating support with partners and families. The overall aim is to improve positive destinations through earlier planning, targeted intervention and increased employer engagement.

9.4 Key Risks & Measures of Success

Below is an extract of the second page of the PRMS project dashboard which sets out any Key Risks and Measures of Success for the project.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS	CURRENT STATUS
Pupils entering positive destinations (CHN11)	93.50 %
% Participation rate for 16-19 year olds (per 100) || CHN21	93.8 %
School Based Interventions: Increase CEYP in positive destinations - Starts reporting AY26/27 - Annual	68 %
School Based Interventions: % Increase of referrals to post school employability service - Annual	

9.5 Key Risks

There were no specific risks identified for this project, mainly current issues which are managed. Recruitment and retention of staff cross-portfolio for short-term projects is an on-going risk.

9.6 Financial Measures

There are no Delivery Plan financial measures directly associated with this project.

9.7 Performance & Measures of Success

This project focused on S2 cohort with attendance between 40% & 70%, delivering an early intervention pilot to help young people engage with school. The key performance measures are linked to positive destinations and will not show at this stage. The true outcomes of this work will become visible in future years.

The young people engaging with youth work approaches on a regular basis through this project translated to 32% of the young people involved increasing attendance with school.

Young people engaging at Inverness High School, Alness High School and Invergordon High School were monitored through a pilot with Youth Work Outcomes and Skills Framework.

- 124 young people participated in skills development
- 80 participants affected by poverty
- 734 activity sessions took place
- 1899 learning hours
- 4 Skills were tracked and measured across the project;

- Confidence
- Communication
- Resilience
- Building Relationships

- 72% of participants made progress in at least one skill

Young people engaging in group work activity and employer mentoring at Golspie High School.

- 29 young people actively engaged in activities on a weekly basis
- 39 interactions recorded, reflecting sustained and repeat engagement for some young people
- 8 young people matched with a volunteer mentor
- 7 young people were supported through one-to-one work, providing consistent, individualised support tailored to each young person's needs
- 6 young people have taken part in group work activities, fostering peer connection and broader skills development
- 8 have been supported through paired work activities, offering a collaborative approach to personal development.

10. CLD & Employability

10.1 Overall Project RAG & Milestones

Below is an extract of the first page of the PRMS project dashboard which contains the Overall Project RAG and Key Project Milestones against which, project progress is tracked.

Workstream: My Highland Future - Intensive

Project: CLD and Employability Support — G

Interdependencies:
· Universal – DYW approaches, careers standards, embedding work-related learning and employability skills with Young People, working with industry and partners to build pathways to employment (Skills Boards)
· Targeted – links with Apprenticeship opportunities, entrepreneurship development & and Council Future Workforce development
· Intensive – School-based interventions to support attainment and positive outcomes

Portfolio: My Highland Future

Portfolio Sponsor: Assistant Chief Executive

MILESTONES		CURRENT STATUS
Starts Jan25 / Completes Sep25	Tailored Employment Support: Design refreshed model	M6 25/26 Completed
Starts Jun25 / Completes Sep25	Tailored Employment Support: Full launch/ roll-out of model	M6 25/26 Completed
Starts Sep25 / Completes Jun26	CLD & Emp. Supp.: WP2b: Workforce North partnership H2.18 - Review existing pre-employment schemes and programmes of support	M11 25/26 Completed
Starts Dec25 / Completes Mar26	Tailored Employment Support: Review programme/ products 2025	M12 25/26 Completed
Starts Sep25 / Completes Apr26	CLD & Emp. Supp.: WP2a Workforce North H2.19 - Implement process to ensure continued expansion of schemes, focusing on all individuals	M1 26/27 Completed
Starts Sep25 / Completes Apr26	CLD & Emp. Supp.: WP2c Workforce North H2.20 - Implement process for the continuous review of schemes impact	M1 26/27 Completed
Starts Aug25 / Completes Dec26	CLD & Emp. Supp.: WP3a Develop strategic and operational plan supporting CLD/E-service delivery	M7 26/27 On Target
Starts Sep25 / Completes Dec26	CLD & Emp. Supp.: WP3b Develop client referral system connecting client movement between service teams	M7 26/27 On Target
Starts Sep25 / Completes Dec26	CLD & Emp. Supp.: WP3c Identify areas where CLD and Employability can connect and improve client journey	M7 26/27 On Target
Starts Dec26 / Completes Dec26	Tailored Employment Support: Review programme/ products 2026	
Starts Jan26 / Completes Aug27	School Based Interventions: WP1b Plan pilot approaches to create closer links & streamline client process	M7 26/27 On Target
Starts Mar27 / Completes Mar27	CLD & Emp. Supp.: Project Closure and transfer to BAU	

10.2 Overall Project RAG

This workstream is integrating CLD and Employability service provision with the aim of strengthening areas of shared practice to provide a simple, connected journey for service users in Highland – whatever their age or stage in life.

The project is working on key areas - People, Process, Policy, Performance and Platform (digital). This work incorporates budget reviews, and it is linked to an approved efficiency savings target of £300,000 for 2026/27. This saving is to be achieved through redesign of the collective CLD and Employability service teams.

The redesign has become the focus of the project, as it will inform and shape outcomes of the key areas noted above. During this reporting period there has been initial engagement with staff to understand their needs and challenges, review of budgets leading to forecasting discussions, review of staffing and HR establishment data, consideration of potential risks and issues, development of draft redesign options for consideration, and draft integrated impact assessments.

During the redesign process business as usual has continued, in what has been a challenging period of uncertainty for the staff. Teams have continued to support their communities, monitor outcomes and work positively towards achieving existing performance indicators.

Staff have engaged with Workforce North, particularly a pilot to improve 16+ planning arrangements and post-school support pathways. This has enabled a more integrated approach to supporting young people's learner journeys and progression opportunities.

The redesign and savings target went live in March 2026 and directly impacted the existing project actions and indicators. A change request was submitted to support this impact and was approved to extend the completion dates of the actions to the end of December 2026.

The project RAG is currently Green, with redesign work moving forward. However, the lead manager is due to move to a new post at the end of October, and this may impact future progress until their vacated post is filled.

10.3 Milestones

Milestones relating to connecting the work of the teams and improving the client journey, identifying areas where CLD and Employability approaches meet, is ongoing through the team’s approach to continuous improvement, and will gather momentum post-redesign.

Both CLD and Employability have Strategic and Operational Plans for the Highland region that inform their work, post redesign this will be developed into overarching CLD/E Service Strategic and Operational Plans, connecting service delivery.

10.4 Key Risks & Measures of Success

Below is an extract of the second page of the PRMS project dashboard which sets out any Key Risks and Measures of Success for the project.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS	CURRENT STATUS
My Highland Future: Number of people in employment, including self-employment, following support - Start Reporting FY25/26	343
Number of People that have progressed to a Positive Destination as a Result of their Participation in Council Funded or Operated Employability Activities - Annual	57
Number of People that have participated in Council Funded or Operated Employability Activities - Annual	1,273
Total number of Work.Life.Highland website visits - Annual	24,600
Number of unique Work.Life.Highland website visits - Annual	11,500
Number of new refferals generated via Work.Life.Highland website - Annual	243

10.5 Key Risks

In essence this workstream is a change programme to integrate service areas under a single structure. With that comes challenges managing the impact of change for stakeholders - service users, staff and partners.

A major element of change and improvement will come through the service redesign. During this period of change management key risks are linked to staff morale during a period of uncertainty, and ensuring the redesign positively impacts service delivery and performance, particularly where linked to external funding and agreed targets.

10.6 Financial Measures

There are no Delivery Plan financial measures directly associated with this project.

10.7 Performance & Measures of Success

The performance and measures of success for this project are linked to increasing the number of people participating in Council funded or delivered employability activities, and as a result aiming to increase the numbers of people who then progress into positive destinations.

These positive destinations are not limited to employment (a job), but may also include improved employment opportunities, apprenticeships, starting further or higher education and volunteering – it is whatever the positive progress looks like for a person as a result of their participation.

Due to work by the Employability service team developing partnership approaches through a hybrid delivery model, performance has grown in attracting new clients. The hybrid delivery model supported by the Highland Employability Partnership (HEP) has nearly doubled the new start figures for Q1 compared to Q1 last year. As the year progresses, the team will start to see how this increase in new starts could convert to positive destinations.

A review of the measures recently took place to refresh details and ensure fit for purpose in the current environment. This review has rationalised the measures to:

- Number of People that have participated in Council Funded or Operated Employability Activities – with sub-categories to reflect starting in different reporting period
- Number of People that have Progressed to a Positive Destination as a Result of their Participation in Council Funded or Operated Employability Activities – with sub-categories for types of positive destinations

The Employability service team report quarterly to HEP and Scottish Government for the No-one Left Behind grant funding and have developed data dashboards to illustrate key data and track trends. The CLD team are also developing data use and annually feed into national CLD Key Performance Indicators.

11. Accelerated Degree Pathways

11.1 Overall Project RAG & Milestones

Below is an extract of the first page of the PRMS project dashboard which contains the Overall Project RAG and Key Project Milestones against which, project progress is tracked.

Workstream: My Highland Future - Intensive

Project: Accelerated Degree Pathways **CL**

ACTIVITY
Work with further education partners to support accelerated degree pathways (including Graduate Apprenticeships) for young people incorporating HNC provision in S6 to allow fast track into HND or degree courses post school.

PROJECT ELEMENTS
• Map and analyse current provision linked to S6 degree modules and HNC courses across FE partners
• Scope expansion of these aligned to growth sector areas and how school curriculum and industry engagement can support this pathway

Portfolio: My Highland Future
Portfolio Sponsor: Assistant Chief Executive

MILESTONES		CURRENT STATUS
Starts Sep25 / Completes Nov25	Acc. Degree Pathways: Map and analyse current S6 provision	M8 25/26 Completed
Starts Sep25 / Completes Sep26	Acc. Degree Pathways: Workforce North - Developing pathways for young people incorporating HNC provision in S6	M3 26/27 Completed
Starts Mar27 / Completes Mar27	Acc. Degree Pathways: Project Closure and transfer to BAU	M4 26/27

11.2 Overall Project RAG

The Accelerated Degree Pathways project has successfully achieved its objectives and, following consideration by the Portfolio Board, the project closure report has

been approved and the project formally transitioned to business-as-usual delivery. The project was established to expand senior phase pathways, strengthen progression into higher and further education, increase retention of young people within Highland and support parity of esteem between academic and vocational routes.

Since its inception, participation has grown from an initial cohort of 20 learners to 43 enrolments, with delivery expanding across 10 HNC subject areas. The model enables S6 learners to remain on their school roll while undertaking HNC study with UHI Inverness, creating accelerated progression routes into HND, degree and graduate apprenticeship pathways. All project objectives were achieved, with strong progression outcomes and an embedded partnership model between schools and UHI.

The project has demonstrated its value in increasing access to higher-level study locally, broadening the senior phase offer and creating clearer progression routes aligned to regional workforce needs. Established arrangements for recruitment, delivery, progression tracking and partnership working are now embedded within existing senior phase planning processes, providing a sustainable model that supports both My Highland Future and Workforce North ambitions.

11.3 Milestones

All milestones complete and project closed with on-going business as usual activity.

11.4 Key Risks & Measures of Success

Below is an extract of the second page of the PRMS project dashboard which sets out the Key Risks and Measures of Success for the project.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS	CURRENT STATUS
My Highland Future: Number of Young People accessing and HNC course whilst still at school - Starts reporting FY25/26 - Annual	43

11.5 Key Risks

This project is now closed and moved to business as usual therefore there are no current project risks.

11.6 Financial Measures

There are no Delivery Plan financial measures directly associated with this project.

11.7 Performance & Measures of Success

The above Measure of Success will be reported as part of the Service Quarterly Performance Reporting to the Education Committee on an ongoing basis.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - People

Date: 21 October 2026

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