The Highland Council

Agenda Item	**10**
Report No	**SR/35/26**

Committee: **Isle of Skye and Raasay**

Date: **30 November 2026**

Report Title: **Abandoned Vehicles Update**

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

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report provides an update on the management of abandoned vehicles on the Isles of Skye and Raasay, and outlines current service performance, operational challenges and improvement activities underway within Environmental Health.

1.2 Reports of abandoned vehicles continue to increase both across Highland and locally on Skye and Raasay. During the first six months of 2026/27, Environmental Health received 51 reports relating to Skye and Raasay, compared with 36 reports during the whole of 2025/26. Despite this increase, the majority of cases (88%) have been resolved without the need for formal vehicle uplift through investigation, owner engagement or validation of reports.

1.3 The Service continues to meet its statutory responsibilities through a Highland-wide approach, supported by the local Environmental Health Team where appropriate. Work is progressing on a number of service improvements, including enhanced cost recovery, procurement of vehicle uplift and storage arrangements, engagement with the Scottish Government regarding legislative changes and development of additional enforcement options. However, increasing demand, geographical challenges, contractor availability and resource pressures continue to present operation challenges in delivering this service.

1.4 Beyond meeting statutory obligations, the investigation and removal of abandoned vehicles by the Environmental Health Team contributes to wider Council priorities relating to public health, environmental protection and community wellbeing. Investigations by officers helps reduce risks associated with unsafe and vandalised vehicles, prevents pollution from leaking fuels and fluids, and supports the quality of the local environment for residents and visitors.

2 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to **note** the update from environmental health on abandoned vehicles on the Isle of Skye and Raasay including the data from 2026/27.

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 on the Isle of Skye and Raasay.

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 need to be considered as part of a future budget setting process.

3.2 **Legal** – The Council has 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 Isle of Skye and Raasay, 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 Isle of Skye and Raasay.

3.5 **Gaelic** – There are no Gaelic implications arising from this report.

4. Impacts

4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.

4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.

4.3 This is an update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

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 As reported recently to the Communities and Place Committee, the numbers of reported abandoned vehicles in the Highlands 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 = 1206 reports in Q1 & Q2 (681 in Q1, 525 in Q2)

5.3 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.

5.4 The Communities and Place Committee on 5 November 2026 approved a policy on abandoned vehicles which included guidance to the public on the factors officers consider when assessing a reported abandoned vehicle:

In determining whether a vehicle is abandoned, the Council will consider the following factors:

- No registered keeper on the DVLA database and the vehicle is untaxed;
- The vehicle has remained stationary for a significant period (more than 6 weeks);
- 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. Note the presence of one or more factors does not automatically mean that a vehicle will be deemed abandoned. The Council will consider all relevant circumstances of each case before determining whether a vehicle has been abandoned.

6. Abandoned vehicle reports - Isle of Skye and Raasay

6.1 The data for Isle of Skye and Raasay follows a similar trend as Highland with numbers of reports to Environmental Health increasing:

	2025/26	2026/27	
		01/04/26 to 30/9/26	% of Total Reported
Under Investigation/ Monitoring	0	9	18%
Not abandoned - case closed	7	14	27%
Self-resolved	7	6	12%
Following intervention, vehicle removed	8	3	6%
Vehicle uplifted and destroyed	8	6	12%
Invalid or duplicate report	6	13	25%
Total reports to Environmental Health	**36**	**51**	**100**

6.2 Despite the increase in reports, a substantial proportion of cases (88%) continue to be resolved without the need for formal uplift, either because investigations establish that a vehicle is not abandoned, reports are found to be invalid or duplicated, or owners voluntarily remove vehicles following contact from the Council.

The service currently operates through a Highland-wide approach, with the Education & Enforcement Officer (EEO) based in Dingwall undertaking abandoned vehicle investigations and enforcement across Skye and Raasay. Support is also provided by locally based Environmental Health staff where appropriate, particularly where complaint numbers do not justify a dedicated visit from Dingwall or where officers are already undertaking work in the area. This flexible approach helps ensure reports are investigated in a timely manner whilst making best use of available resources across a geographically large area. Timescales of removal are impacted by other factors such as the availability of contractors.

The increase in reports, together with the island geography and travel requirements associated with investigations and vehicle removals, continues to present operational challenges. However, the combination of specialist support from the EEO and assistance from the Skye Environmental Health Team has enabled the service to maintain effective case management and resolution outcomes across Skye and Raasay.

The Environmental Health team in Skye are currently in the recruitment process and an appointment will assist in managing the cases on Skye and Raasay.

6.3 Examples of Abandoned Vehicles uplifted in the Skye and Raasay area:





7. Areas of Improvement

7.1 As reported recently to the Communities and Place Committee, officers are progressing a number of improvement actions related to abandoned and nuisance vehicles. Progress has been made on the following actions:-

- **Cost recovery -** The team are seeking permitted cost recovery for all uplifted vehicles where a registered keeper has been identified. Data for Q1 & Q2 of 26/27 shows £21,380 costs recharged to owners (to 5/10/26).
- **Vehicle uplift for storage - contract –** A draft specification has been prepared and discussions ongoing with procurement on tender process, subject to a budget being identified and agreed with members.
- **Vehicle storage compound -** To enable uplift for storage and enforcement work, work is ongoing with the Council's estates team on identifying a vehicle pound in inner Moray Firth area. Further sites in other areas is being considered as part of the uplift and storage contract.
- **Communications & education** – The Council's corporate communications from mid-September have been issuing posts on Facebook, Instagram, X and BlueSky highlighting the impacts of abandoned vehicles and promoting correct approach to end-of-life vehicles. Corporate communications have confirmed the posts all performed well having more than 40k views. A post messaging the Council's ability to trace owners and recover costs had most interest to members of the public.
- **Legislation changes –** The team have engaged with Scottish Government on the 2019 statutory fees for removal, storage and disposal of vehicles. The Scottish Government have confirmed a formal consultation will take place in November 2026 on revising the fees.
- **Legislation –** The team have discussed with the Scottish Government on the introduction of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) for abandoned vehicles as available in England and Wales. The Scottish Government have indicated that there are no current proposals to introduce similar FPNs in Scotland. Officers are engaging with COSLA and other professional groups to seek similar powers in Scotland.
- **DVLA devolved powers** – The team are continuing to engage with DVLA on devolved powers for untaxed vehicles. The DVLA have provided examples of a number of Councils in England that have successfully gained the devolved

powers. Officers are preparing a business case on this matter and will provide an update to this Committee early in 2027.

With particular reference to Skye & Raasay, the Environmental Health Team are seeking to boost their resilience by actively recruiting; a process which is currently underway.

7.2 Officers are also progressing work including updating the Council website, a roadmap for members setting out appropriate contacts, and engagement with SEPA and Police Scotland.

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Background Papers:	None
Appendices:	None