

Chapter 12 : Historic Assets, Brownfield Land and Empty Buildings

<p>Information required by the Act regarding the issue addressed in this section</p>	<p>Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended: Section 15(5)(a):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the principal physical, cultural, economic, social, built heritage and environmental characteristics of the district. the principal purposes for which the land is used 												
<p>NPF4 LDP Requirements</p>	<p>NPF4 Policy 7:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LDPs, including through their spatial strategies, should support the sustainable management of the historic environment. LDPs should identify, protect, and enhance valued historic assets and places. <p>NPF4 Policy 9:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LDPs should set out opportunities for the sustainable reuse of brownfield land including vacant and derelict land and empty buildings. 												
<p>Links to Evidence</p>	<p>(THC180) HES Evidence Submission (THC181) HES Consultation Response (THC182) NatureScot Consultation Response (THC183) Contaminated Land Team Consultation Response (THC184) HLDP Listed Buildings by Ward (THC185) Brown-Green House Completions Tables (THC225) HSE Consultation Zones and Hazardous Sites</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="491 1563 1423 2009"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="491 1563 1174 1608">Online Resources</th> <th data-bbox="1174 1563 1423 1608">Date Accessed</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="491 1608 1174 1693">Our Past, Our Future: The Strategy for Scotland's Historic Environment</td> <td data-bbox="1174 1608 1423 1693">22.10.25</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="491 1693 1174 1778">Historic Environment Policy for Scotland (HEPS)</td> <td data-bbox="1174 1693 1423 1778">22.10.25</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="491 1778 1174 1863">Managing Change in the Historic Environment guidance notes</td> <td data-bbox="1174 1778 1423 1863">22.10.25</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="491 1863 1174 1912">Sustainable Investment Tool</td> <td data-bbox="1174 1863 1423 1912">22.10.25</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="491 1912 1174 2009">The Skills Investment Plan for Scotland's Historic Environment</td> <td data-bbox="1174 1912 1423 2009">22.10.25</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Online Resources	Date Accessed	Our Past, Our Future: The Strategy for Scotland's Historic Environment	22.10.25	Historic Environment Policy for Scotland (HEPS)	22.10.25	Managing Change in the Historic Environment guidance notes	22.10.25	Sustainable Investment Tool	22.10.25	The Skills Investment Plan for Scotland's Historic Environment	22.10.25
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HES Designations Portal	22.10.25
Highland Historic Environment Record (HER)	22.10.25
Trove.scot	22.10.25
National Library of Scotland	22.10.25
Am Baile	22.10.25
Highland Archaeological Research Framework	22.10.25
Flow Country World Heritage Site Map	22.10.25
Flow Country World Heritage Site UNESCO Factsheet	22.10.25
Flow Country World Heritage Site Development Guidance	22.10.25
THC Flow Country World Heritage Site Planning Position Statement 2	22.10.25
Wester Ross Biosphere Reserve UNESCO Factsheet	22.10.25
North West Highlands Global Geopark UNESCO Factsheet	22.10.25
Highland Conservation Areas	22.10.25
Highland HER Map	22.10.25
Tain Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan	22.10.25
Thurso Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan	22.10.25
Wick Pulteneytown Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan	22.10.25
Strathpeffer Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan	22.10.25
Culloden Muir Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan	22.10.25
Inverness Conservation Area Character Appraisal	22.10.25
Inverness Old Town Conservation Area Management Plan	22.10.25
The Highland Council's Shopfront Design Guidance	22.10.25
Interim Guidance on the designation of conservation areas and conservation area consent	22.10.25

THC Windows in Conservation Areas Interim Planning Guidance	22.10.25
HES Designations Application Form	22.10.25
THC Listed Buildings Guidance and Advice	22.10.25
HES Introductory Report of Scotland's Thatched Listed Buildings	22.10.25
Highland Historic Marine Protected Areas	22.10.25
Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Conserving Underwater Heritage	22.10.25
Highland Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes	22.10.25
Highland Inventory of Historic Battlefields	22.10.25
The Inventory of Historic Battlefields: Battlefields Planning Best Practice Report	22.10.25
THC Historic Environment Strategy Supplementary Guidance	22.10.25
ALGAO Guidance for Peatland Restoration and the Historic Environment	22.10.25
ALGAO Delivery of Public Benefit and Social Value	22.10.25
Pointing the Way to the Future	22.10.25
HES Green Recovery Statement	22.10.25
HES Guide to Climate Change Impacts	22.10.25
HES Your Historic Place: A Lens for the Place Standard Tool	22.10.25
Scotland's Improvement Districts	22.10.25
BARR Review	22.10.25
The Scottish Vacant and Derelict Land Survey (SVDLS)	22.10.25
SVDLS Statistics Tables	22.10.25
Scottish Land Commission Transform Scotland's Approach to Tackling Vacant and Derelict Land	22.10.25
DUSTE sites	22.10.25
SVDLS Site Register	22.10.25
PAN33	22.10.25

UK Government's Land Contamination and Risk Management Guidance Note	22.10.25
THC Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2023–2028	22.10.25
THC Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP)	22.10.25
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Small Area Household Estimates Data by 2011 Data Zone	22.10.25
Housing Land Audit	22.10.25
Planning Circular 6/2011	22.10.25
Compulsory Purchase Reform: Progress Report December 2024	22.10.25
Scottish Government Compulsory Purchase Order Reform in Scotland Consultation	22.10.25
The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045	22.10.25
Scottish Government Climate Change Plan 2018-2032 – Update	22.10.25
Buglife Introduction to Brownfields Document	22.10.25
Buglife Identifying Open Mosaic Habitat Document	22.10.25
Wildlife and Countryside Link Open Mosaic Habitats High Value Guidance Document	22.10.25
NatureScot Commissioned Report 606: Open mosaic habitats on previously developed land; survey and recommendations for habitat planning and management in Scotland	22.10.25

In order to avoid repetition of content contained elsewhere within the Evidence Report, this chapter should be read in conjunction with other chapters. We recognise that there are relevant crossovers between Historic Assets, Brownfield Land and Empty Buildings and other topics including:

- **Chapter 4: Climate and Energy**
- **Chapter 5: Nature and Environment**
- **Chapter 6: Coastal Development and Aquaculture**
- **Chapter 8: Economy, Business, Tourism and Productive Places**
- **Chapter 9: Housing**
- **Chapter 11: Infrastructure**

- **Chapter 13: Design, Wellbeing, Local Living and Placemaking**

Where apparent, the Council has referenced relevant linkages between policies areas throughout the chapter.

Summary of Evidence

12.1 This chapter presents the Council's evidence in relation to historic assets and brownfield land, including empty buildings. The Council considers it has undertaken thorough engagement with stakeholders for this chapter and collected sufficient evidence on the topic for the Proposed Plan development. This Summary of Evidence focuses on information relating to:

- **Historic Assets and Places**
- **Brownfield, Vacant and Derelict Land**

Historic Assets and Places

12.2 The Council's ambition is to reinforce our existing communities across the entire Highland region to ensure they are modern, resilient and fit for the future, whilst identifying, protecting and enhancing our valued heritage assets, which contribute to the character, culture and sense of place across Highland.

Policy Context

12.3 [Our Past, Our Future: The Strategy for Scotland's Historic Environment](#) is Scotland's five-year strategy for the historic environment. Developed collaboratively and collectively owned, it sets out a national mission to sustain and enhance the benefits of Scotland's historic environment, for people and communities now and into the future. In addition, [Historic Environment Policy for Scotland \(HEPS\)](#) includes six policies to define how the historic environment should be managed, and supporting [Managing Change in the Historic Environment Guidance Notes](#) can help to assess the impact of a proposed change in given instances. In support of this, the new [Sustainable Investment Tool](#) (SIT) enables visualisation around decision-making for projects and investment in built heritage and will help organisations as well as community and interest groups with heritage assets to explore sustainability, enabling greater resilience for Scotland's places.

- 12.4 [The Skills Investment Plan for Scotland's Historic Environment](#) has also recently been refreshed and ensures it can support both the delivery of [Our Past, Our Future](#) and NPF4 and to grow the skills needed to deliver on their priorities, particularly in emerging areas such as retrofit and energy efficiency. These policy documents along with data sources will support the Council's decision-making in preparing its new HLDP.
- 12.5 The primary sources of historic environment data for Highland are Historic Environment Scotland's [HES Designations Portal](#) and the [Highland Historic Environment Record \(HER\)](#). The HER is maintained by the Council and contains information on c.70,000 recorded archaeological sites, monuments, cultural landscapes and historic buildings and heritage areas, information on c.5,500 surveys and investigations as well as management reports, including Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans. Other important sources of historic environment information include [Trove.scot](#), which has now combined records from [HES Designations Portal](#) and previously known Canmore into a single system. Historic maps are available through [National Library of Scotland](#). There are many other sources of online information and digital archives available to review, including those held by local and national museums and Highlife Highland's [Am Baile](#). The [Highland Archaeological Research Framework \(HighARF\)](#) provides a useful overview of the current state of knowledge about the area's cultural heritage and highlights key research questions and recommendations to inform future work.
- 12.6 Across the Highland Council region, we have a range of historic environment assets that are summarised as follows.
- UNESCO World Heritage Designations
 - Conservation Areas
 - Listed Buildings
 - Scheduled Monuments
 - Historic Marine Protected Areas
 - Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes
 - Inventory of Historic Battlefields
 - Non-designated Historic Assets and Places
 - Climate Change and Historic Assets
 - Scotland's Improvement Districts
 - Church Estates
 - Buildings at Risk
 - Grants supporting restoration of Highland historic assets

UNESCO World Heritage Designations

- 12.7 The Flow Country World Heritage Site is an important designation that will be considered as part of HLDP. Further information of which can be found in this https://map-highland.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/04749b8d2c5b49a89cd9f9d0d36ea35a_0/explore?location=58.319317,-3.971254,9.89Flow Country World Heritage Site UNESCO Factsheet. While other World Heritage Sites contain peatlands, The Flow Country is the only World Heritage Site inscribed purely for its qualities as a peatland ecosystem. Inscribed in July 2024, it is Scotland's seventh World Heritage Site and the first inscribed only under natural criteria. The Site was nominated under both 'natural' and 'cultural' criteria ix) and x) of the World Heritage Convention but has since been inscribed under criterion ix) only and is therefore the first World Heritage Site in Highland and Scotland to be inscribed only under 'natural' criteria. Therefore, the Flow Country World Heritage Site, and the Council's supporting Development Guidance and Planning Position Statement 2 specific to it, are further detailed in **Chapter 5: Nature and Environment**. Although not considered a historic asset, this is an important consideration included within Policy 7I and so mentioned within this chapter.
- 12.8 Other UNESCO designated sites include the Wester Ross Biosphere Reserve and the North West Highlands Global Geopark. These do not have any specific supporting guidance but will still have material consideration in development proposals. These are also discussed in more detail in **Chapter 5: Nature and Environment**.

Conservation Areas

- 12.9 Highland has 30 Conservation Areas, of which 29 are within the area covered by the HLDP, and one additional within the CNPA portion of Highland. Each conservation area is of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. These conservation areas can be viewed on the Highland Historic Environment Record - Highland HER Map.
- 12.10 Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans have been completed for Tain, Thurso, Wick Pulteneytown, Strathpeffer and Culloden Muir. A

character appraisal has also been undertaken for [Inverness](#) and a Management Plan for [Inverness Old Town](#).

- 12.11 The Council will continue to review existing Conservation Areas, including producing guidance in the form of Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans. [The Highland Council's Shopfront Design Guidance](#) will remain relevant in relation to ensuring alterations to shopfronts in Conservation Areas are appropriate. The Council will prepare additional Conservation Area Planning Guidance to provide applicants with clear advice on the management of change within Conservation Areas and will consider whether the removal of permitted development rights (Article 4 Directions) may be required to ensure an appropriate level of control. Furthermore, the Council will consider whether further areas warrant Conservation Area designation (in line with [Interim Guidance on the designation of conservation areas and conservation area consent](#)).
- 12.12 The Council's Windows and Doors in Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Planning Guidance has been withdrawn following the most recent amendment to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992. The Council will revisit this guidance in due course with [Windows in Conservation Areas Interim Planning Guidance](#) on Class 7A development provided.

Listed Buildings

- 12.13 Highland has 3003 Listed Buildings as found on the [HES Designations Portal](#), which includes buildings within the Highland portion of the CNPA. Listed buildings are buildings of special architectural or historic interest and are designated by Historic Environment Scotland under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997. Listed building distribution by ward can be found in **(THC184)** with all Listed Buildings across Highland shown on the [Highland HER](#). The first lists for Highland Council were made statutory in the early 1970s. All the burghs and parishes were resurveyed from 1982 to 1996 and therefore most of the listed building records will date to this period. These descriptions are brief and may not explain why the building is of interest for listing. Currently, a fuller description of the building is listed, with photographs and indicative polygon maps for new and recently reviewed records can be found through HES.

- 12.14 The Council will consider listings dating to before 1 April 2015. Under the terms of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (Scotland) 1997, any object or structure within the curtilage of a listed building which, though not fixed to the building, forms part of the land and has done so since before 1st July 1948 shall be treated as part of the building. In addition, it must be noted that earlier listed building records may use the word 'excluding' or 'not included', but if the Act is not quoted, the record has not been revised to reflect current legislation, and the exclusions carry no legal weight.
- 12.15 Any requests to review listings and proposals are made to HES by completing its [Designations Application Form](#). This process involves research and evidence gathering and takes a number of months to complete.
- 12.16 The Council also supply its own [Listed Buildings Guidance and Advice](#) that will continue to support the protection and enhancement of Listed Buildings in Highland. In cases where Listed Buildings in Highland are at risk they may be protected using Compulsory Purchase Orders, further detailed in Compulsory Purchase Orders. Table 12:1 Highland Listed Building categories represented by percentage of total.

Table 12:1 Highland Listed Building categories represented by percentage of total (THC180)

Listed Building Category	Number of Buildings	Percentage across Highland
Category A	183	6.1%
Category B	1625	54.1%
Category C	1195	39.8%
All Listed Buildings	3003	100%

- 12.17 [The Highland Council's Shopfront Design Guidance](#) will remain relevant to ensure alterations to Listed Buildings containing shopfronts are appropriate. Further policy and advice on how historic built heritage can be adapted for climate change would inform HLDP once available.
- 12.18 HES also provide an [Introductory Report of Scotland's Thatched Listed Buildings](#). HES are in the process of reviewing existing listings where there is a thatched roof. HES have completed a review of this building type in all council areas apart from Highland and Argyll and Bute. In Highland, HES have already prioritised the removal of thatched buildings which were found to no longer meet the criteria for listing and have amended existing listings to provide a bilingual statutory address in Gaelic and English. There are still a number of

thatched sites in Highland under review and HES are progressing this work. Table 12:2 shows the current state of Thatched buildings in Highland and Scotland. Highland currently present 13.6% of Scotland's total number of listed thatched buildings.

Table 12:2 Listed Thatched Buildings Numbers

Location	Listed Thatched Buildings	% of Listed Thatched Buildings
Highland	32	13.6%
Scotland	236	100%

12.19 The exposed location and harsher weather conditions of Highland have also had an impact on the way the thatched tradition developed. This can be seen in the building profiles and thatch fixing mechanisms developed for the buildings. Therefore, highlighting its importance of protection and enhancement of these buildings and the communities they once provided for. A number are thatched buildings, including A-listed Groam Cottage, The Corr, Laidhay Barn and B-listed 11 Melvaig are recorded as Buildings at Risk concentrations of which are found in Wick (16) Tain (6) and Cromarty (4). Further details of all Highland buildings at risk which can be found in **Buildings at Risk**.

12.20 HES note that over 40 years have passed since the last resurvey of Highland. The understanding and appreciation of buildings of all types and period has evolved and younger buildings are now eligible for listing. While buildings which are less than 30 years old are not normally considered for listing, there will be a significant number of sites and places within the city constructed between the 1960s and 1990s which contribute to the historic environment and meet the criteria for listing.

Scheduled Monuments

12.21 Highland is home to 1280 Scheduled Monuments (SMs) within the area to be covered by HLDP. These are archaeological sites and monuments of national importance. Any work that directly impacts a SM requires Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) which is granted by HES on behalf of Scottish Ministers. Impacts on setting do not require SMC but setting is a material consideration in the planning process. Therefore, SMC is required for direct impacts on scheduled monuments but not for impacts on the setting of a

scheduled monument. These SMs can be viewed and details found on the [Highland HER](#).

- 12.22 It must be noted that some records that are old and have not been subsequently amended, with the earliest unamended records dating to 1930s. Earlier scheduling's (generally before the 1980s) often have very brief descriptions (simply a name in many cases) and will not explain why the monument is of national importance. Any requests to review scheduling's are made to HES by completing its [Designations Application Form](#). This process involves research and evidence gathering and takes a number of months to complete.
- 12.23 Both an A-Listed Building and Scheduled Monument Fort George is a key historic environment consideration. The proposed status of Fort George in IMFLDP2 allocated the site as an Economic Development Area covered by a wide range of uses including tourism, housing, industry and business. The Council will work closely with its Historic Environment Team and external key agencies to ensure a sustainable future for this important historic environment asset.

Historic Marine Protected Areas

- 12.24 Highland contains 4 of Scotland's 8 [Historic Marine Protected Areas](#) which are designated under the Marine Scotland Act (2010) and visible on the [Highland HER](#). Historic Marine Protected Areas aim to preserve historic assets of national importance and are considered alongside other marine designations as discussed in **Chapter 6: Coastal Development and Aquaculture**. HES [Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Conserving Underwater Heritage](#) provides guidance on conserving underwater heritage around the coasts of Scotland and in freshwater environments such as lochs and rivers. It is practical guide, primarily for practitioners and decision-makers who encounter underwater heritage in the course of their duties, as well as those who want to understand the impacts of a proposed change, on how to assess and manage the impacts of change while respecting the cultural significance of underwater heritage sites. This guide will be considered as part of HLDP alongside other marine designations.

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes

- 12.25 The Highland area includes 46 sites included in the [Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes](#), which are visible on the [Highland HER](#). Many of these sites have been assessed as outstanding. Whilst sites included in the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes do not have the statutory protection that listed buildings and scheduled monuments do, Inventory status does, however, mean that a site's cultural significance can be considered in the planning process. Planning authorities consult Historic Environment Scotland about developments they believe might impact an Inventory site. Like other parts of the historic environment, gardens and designed landscapes are a fragile and finite resource. They are vulnerable to a range of impacts that can diminish their value and potential.
- 12.26 The Council will consider whether further policies are required to protect these historic assets, as well as considering whether there is sufficient need and evidence to develop a local list of 'locally and regionally important Gardens and Designed Landscapes'. The Council is additionally considering whether there is a need to serve Tree Protection Orders in sites included in the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes, recognising the links between these historic assets and **Chapter 5: Nature and Environment**.

Inventory of Historic Battlefields

- 12.27 Highland has 9 battlefields, included in the [Inventory of Historic Battlefields](#) and viewable on the [Highland HER](#). Like Gardens and Designed Landscapes, inventory Battlefields are a non-statutory designation. The Planning Authority consults HES to ensure that Inventory sites are considered in plans, policies and decision-making processes. The Council ensures that: Inventory battlefields are recognised in the development planning process, that any impacts upon battlefields are considered and that development plans include policies that identify battlefields in our area and outline criteria for their protection, conservation and management within the planning system.
- 12.28 HES commissioned Lichfields UK to produce [The Inventory of Historic Battlefields: Battlefields Planning Best Practice Report](#) in the context of petition PE1852 introduced to the Scottish Parliament on 3 February 2021 calling for increased planning protection for Scotland's battlefields. The purpose of the document is to provide evidence-based recommendations that inform best practice in the designation and management of Inventory battlefields in the

planning system. The report concludes that while policy protections which exist are functioning as intended, a number of changes could improve its working.

- 12.29 The Council will consider the need for preparation of bespoke policy for individual Inventory historic battlefields to aid in their management. In particular, a consideration is needed for whether the Inventory historic battlefield of Culloden would benefit from a spatial plan that outlined expectations and aspirations as understanding of this significant site evolves. In addition, the Council will consider updating existing guidance for the area such as the Culloden Muir Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan. In doing so the Council will use this opportunity to work with all stakeholders on this, including HES.
- 12.30 The Council will consider whether further policies and/or Battlefield Management Plans are required to protect these important assets. Development proposals impacting nationally important Historic Battlefields will only be supported where they protect and, where appropriate, enhance their cultural significance, key landscape characteristics, physical remains and special qualities.

Non-designated Historic Assets and Places

- 12.31 Many historic assets and places are non-designated, otherwise termed undesignated. NPF4 prescribes that non-designated historic environment assets, places and their setting should be protected and preserved in situ wherever feasible. Where there is potential for non-designated buried archaeological remains to exist below a site, developers will provide an evaluation of the archaeological resource at an early stage so that planning authorities can assess impacts. Historic buildings may also have archaeological significance which is not understood and may require assessment.
- 12.32 Where impacts cannot be avoided, they should be minimised. Where it has been demonstrated that avoidance or retention is not possible, excavation, recording, analysis, archiving, publication and activities to provide public benefit may be required through the use of conditions or legal/planning obligations.
- 12.33 At least 95% of Highland's heritage is not designated. The [Highland HER](#) includes records of thousands of other archaeological sites, monuments and landscapes and historic buildings that span all periods of human activity across the area. It is known that additional historic assets and places are not yet

recorded on the HER or remain to be discovered and identified; the potential for unrecorded historic assets to survive is also relevant. Through archaeological research and survey, much of which is developer led, more sites continue to be discovered above and below ground, adding to our cultural identity and contributing further understanding and knowledge of our past. The undesignated historic environment is managed through the development process, with any new discoveries added to the HER.

- 12.34 The Council is aware that there are locally important buildings that are not included on the statutory list and the Council will consider if there is sufficient need and evidence to develop a 'local list' and any policy protection this list could require.
- 12.35 Across Highland, there are a significant number of derelict or underused undesignated historic buildings, and the Council is keen for a variety of reasons to ensure these are brought back into regular and sustainable use. While the Council does not hold a conclusive log of these buildings, HLDP will remain cognisant of any developments to consolidate these records to ensure these buildings can be appropriately reused.
- 12.36 The Council's existing [Historic Environment Strategy Supplementary Guidance](#) will also be reviewed, as will Council guidance that details required Standards for Archaeological Work conducted through the development process, with content to be retained (subject to any review and updates) being included in the HLDP or otherwise forming non-statutory planning guidance. We will also consider how publications by the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers (ALGAO Scotland)), including [Guidance for Peatland Restoration and the Historic Environment](#) and [Delivery of Public Benefit and Social Value](#) can inform decision making.

Climate Change and Historic Assets

- 12.37 Climate change is an important consideration in how historic assets can be protected throughout the lifetime of this plan. Matters relating to climate change and the HLDP area as a whole are further detailed in **Chapter 4: Climate Change and Energy**. However, matters specifically relating to how climate change will impact historic assets will be discussed here.
- 12.38 [Pointing the Way to the Future](#) is HES' climate and nature crisis position statement that recognises that the historic environment is part of a just transition to net zero. It contributes to our places, communities and identities

and the reuse of historic assets is central to sustainable development. This position statement refers to HES role in the planning system and other decision-making processes for land management and explains how HES undertake their regulatory functions in a way that responds to their wider environmental responsibilities.

- 12.39 Further information and examples of the role that the historic environment can play in the transition to a low carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive economy are set out in [HES Green Recovery Statement](#). This statement can be used to articulate how the historic environment contributes to the national transition to a low carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive economy.
- 12.40 In addition, [HES Guide to Climate Change Impacts](#) sets out many of the risks and hazards of climate change that are facing Scotland's historic environment and offers routes to take action, to implement adaptation measures and enhance resilience to climate change. This document can be used to identify and share climate change adaptation solutions, demonstrating the resilience and adaptability of Scotland's historic environment.
- 12.41 The [HES Your Historic Place: A Lens for the Place Standard Tool](#) has also been designed, and to be used alongside the Place Standard Tool. It can help to spark and support conversations which explore the connections between people, place, and our historic environment. The lens has been developed by Historic Environment Scotland, supported by the Place Standard Implementation Group. It follows the successful launch of other Place Standard Tool lenses which focus on climate change and air quality. It must be recognised however that this lens is currently available as a pilot version. Once this pilot phase is completed within 6-9 months, HES will develop a final version to be used to support place making projects.

Scotland's Improvement Districts

- 12.42 Highland Council has 3 of [Scotland's Improvement Districts](#): Inverness City Centre, Visit Inverness Loch Ness, and Nairn. The Improvement Districts seek to improve local economies and help communities grow – this is through working with communities, businesses, tourism/visitor providers. The Council will welcome exploration of the potential for historic assets to play a positive role in this process. Scotland's network of thriving improvement districts is a trailblazer, not only in through the expansive collection which operate under the long-established Business Improvement District (BID), but in innovating

and creating new models under which communities can mould operations and projects to meet their specific needs. Most of these have been UK – and even world – firsts. Further details on Scotland’s Improvement Districts and Business Improvement Districts can be found in **Chapter 13: Design, Wellbeing, Local Living and Placemaking**.

Church Estates

- 12.43 HES Evidence Submission (**THC180**) confirms that the Church of Scotland are currently undergoing an estate review that will likely lead to a number of buildings to be disposed of. For example, HES are aware that up to 66 places of worship are being considered for disposal within Highland Council Area by 2027. Sixteen of these proposed disposals are listed (4 of which are Category A listed) and some may have already closed. HES are currently awaiting more precise data from emerging presbytery plans and encourage the Highland Council to contact the presbytery directly for more information. In addition, it is recognised that of all Highland Buildings at Risk, 13% (19) are churches. Further details can be found in **Buildings at Risk**. The Council will consider a proactive approach to considering the long-term options for such buildings falling out of use and look to the challenges and opportunities that these sites may offer in terms of the communities in which they are situated and the services that they require.

Buildings at Risk

- 12.44 Another consideration is the Buildings at Risk Register (BARR). The BARR has been in operation since 1990, is maintained by Historic Environment Scotland and highlights properties of architectural or historic merit that are considered to be at risk. Buildings at risk are not necessarily in poor condition, they may simply be standing empty with no clear future use or be threatened with demolition. There are 159 buildings at risk in Highland, 7% of Scotland’s total 2214 buildings at risk. The BARR is currently paused and under review of its benefit and use. The BARR therefore will be acknowledged however, not used as main source of data for Highland instead, the Council will continue to review how buildings at risk in Highland are dealt with.
- 12.45 Historic Environment Scotland (HES) commissioned a [BARR Review](#). Its main conclusions state that there is no clear evidence that the BARR is currently

fulfilling any of its identified key purposes effectively and the report identifies options for consideration by HES will follow in due course.

12.46 HES Evidence Submission (**THC180**) provide statistics on Highlands Buildings at risk, further details of which are further illustrated in Table 12:2, Table 12:3, Table 12:4 which also echo results presented by the BARR. This information is broken down by the number of buildings in Highland (including the Highland portion of the CNPA), by the division within Highland that they are located, their location in relation to settlement type, their condition, how at risk they are, and finally their listed building status.

12.47 82 buildings (52%) within Highland are located rurally, with Caithness (27%) being the area in Highland with the highest number of buildings at risk. Of all buildings at risk in Highland, 38% are in very poor or ruinous condition. 70% are of listed status and to protect these, a focus on enhancing these buildings should be considered. This is in line with details in **Listed Buildings**.

12.48 With just 9% of buildings at risk in restoration progress, a focus on restoring and enhancing more buildings at risk should be considered, this links to details in **Correlation Between Vacant Dwellings and Vacant Land**, as there may be an overlap between these sites/dwellings and buildings at risk.

Table 12:3 Buildings at risk by Highland area and category at risk and under restoration (THC180)

Divisional area	No. of buildings	% of total	Category	No. of buildings	% of total
Caithness	42	28%	At risk	154	91%
Ross and Cromarty	31	20%			
Sutherland	24	16%			
Skye and Lochalsh	22	14%			
Inverness	18	12%	Restoration in progress	16	9%
Lochaber	17	11%			
Badenoch and Strathspey	13	8%			
Nairn	3	2%			

Table 12:4 Condition of buildings at risk in highland and their locations (THC180)

Building condition	No. of buildings	% of total	Building location type	No. of buildings	% of total
Good	1	0.5%	Urban	30	19%
Fair	42	27%	Small town	23	15%

Poor	56	35%	Rural settlement	18	11%
Very poor	28	18%	Rural	82	52%
Ruinous	31	19.5%	Remote	5	3%

Table 12:5 Listed building status of buildings at risk and by how critical their condition (THC180)

Category of building	No. of buildings	% of total	Category of risk	No. of buildings	% of total
A	20	13%	Critical	4	3%
B	62	39%	High	45	28%
C	28	18%	Moderate	49	31%
Unlisted	48	30%	Low	60	38%

12.49 HES have had a number of LBC and correspondence cases in recent years for conversion/restoration of Buildings at Risk – many of these are churches, thatched buildings in rural areas or buildings (formerly) on large estates like steadings and ice houses.

12.50 HES Evidence Submission (**THC180**) provide statistics on Highlands Buildings at risk, further details of which are further illustrated in Table 12:2, Table 12:3, Table 12:4. Over half (81) are located outside settlements, a unique challenge faced by Highlands rural geography. 44% (63) are classified as residential buildings, 80% (51) of which are empty homes ranging in size from cottages to terraced houses and country houses. The residential category includes estate buildings (12) such as stables, doocots or walled gardens, collectively representing country house heritage.

12.51 13 of Highland's conservation areas have at least one At-Risk building. Further details of which have been read in **Conservation Areas**. There are clusters in Wick – Pulteneytown (9) Tain (6) and Cromarty (4). Poor is the most frequent condition assessment (51). Across BARR rural buildings are more likely to be in poorer condition than those in settlements. This pattern is broadly evident across Highland. 45% (37) of all rural buildings (81) are at Very Poor or Ruinous condition, in settlements (62) this reduces to 30% (19).

12.52 Across BARR the percentage of At-Risk buildings in areas of comparatively more deprivation (SIMD Deciles 1-3) is around 17%, in Highland it is 15% (21). There also concentrations in SIMD datazones Wick South – 06 (7) Lochaber West 01 (4) Black Isle North 05 (4) Sutherland South – 01(4) Sutherland East - 06 (4) and Wick South -01 (4). A number are also recorded on the Vacant and

Derelict Land Register such as Brora Railway Station, Bruan Free Church, Dunvegan Castle Stables, Rogart.

Grants supporting restoration of Highland historic assets

- 12.53 HES evidence submission **(THC180)** states that since 2019 HES have received approximately 125 Expressions of Interest from projects within Highland. These have included repair projects to churches, a school, a harbour, mills, a viaduct, an airport control tower, a town hall, a footbridge, a courthouse, castles, a harbour quay, a power station, a visitor centre, a hotel, a museum, thatched cottages, a barn, as well as archaeology projects, Conservation Area Regeneration Schemes (CARS), funding to the Inverness City Heritage Trust, support funding for interpretation boards, publications, training and heritage events. There have also been recovery funding streams for different organisations.
- 12.54 There are currently 17 live projects, totalling £2,363,569. The Council will continue to support the redevelopment and restoration of its historic assets, where possible being supported by grant funds to allow this redevelopment to continue. Albeit that this redevelopment must be in line with Historic Environment Policy and Guidance documents mentioned in **Policy Context**. Further details on the redevelopment of brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings in relation to historic assets, and more generally how this will be considered in HLDP can be found in **Brownfield, Vacant and Derelict Land and Empty Buildings**.

Brownfield, Vacant and Derelict Land and Empty Buildings

- 12.55 Effective redevelopment of brownfield, vacant and derelict land is recognised as delivering multiple benefits across many policy areas, from revitalising town centres, improving local living, delivering quality homes, making use of existing infrastructure, and to a modest extent, reducing the need for further greenfield development, with associated benefits for biodiversity.
- 12.56 Scottish Land Commission Transform Scotland's Approach to Tackling Vacant and Derelict Land document, suggests the conditions necessary for eradicating persistent dereliction in urban communities to realise the social, economic and environmental benefits of returning derelict urban land back to productive use. NPF4 Policy 9 requires LDP's to set out opportunities for the sustainable reuse of brownfield land including vacant and derelict land and empty buildings, and

in determining whether the reuse is sustainable, the biodiversity value of brownfield land which has naturalised should be considered.

12.57 Across the Highland Council, a range of factors considered for Brownfield, Vacant and Derelict Land and Empty Buildings are summarised as follows.

- Scottish Vacant and Derelict Land Survey
- Contaminated Land
- Empty Homes
- Correlation Between Vacant Dwellings and Vacant Land
- Brownfield House Completions
- Compulsory Purchase Orders
- Biodiversity Considerations for Brownfield Development

Scottish Vacant and Derelict Land Survey

12.58 The Scottish Vacant and Derelict Land Survey (SVDLS) is a register of each urban vacant and derelict site surveyed by local authorities collected by SVDLS, updated annually. These sites can be defined by two categories

- Vacant Land – brownfield sites which are ready for new development, and which must be within settlements; or
- Derelict – brownfield sites which can either be inside or outside settlements but are not ready for new development, for example due to the presence of unusable buildings.

12.59 The SVDLS Statistics Tables - Table 5 shows that between 2017 and 2023 the total urban derelict and vacant land area in Highland has decreased by 56.2%, whereas Scotland as a whole, has decreased by 24.7%. This suggests Highland has demonstrated some degree of success in reusing brownfield sites for development in comparison to Scotland.

12.60 The SVDLS statistics - Table 9 shows the estimated percentage of the population living within various distances of Derelict Land, 2023. Table 12:5 illustrates that those living within 500m of derelict land in Highland is presently 9.7% in comparison to Scotland (26.5%). In contrast, 78.1% of Highlands' population live 1,000m or further from derelict land in comparison to 49.3% of Scotland as a whole. It is acknowledged in Scottish Land Commission Transform Scotland's Approach to Tackling Vacant and Derelict Land Report that closer proximity to derelict brownfield sites is correlated with deprivation and poorer health outcomes, which highlights a need for place-based

intervention, as discussed in **Chapter 13: Design, Wellbeing, Local Living and Placemaking**.

- 12.61 Further highlighted in **Buildings at Risk** the percentage of At-Risk buildings in areas of comparatively more deprivation (SIMD Deciles 1-3) is around 17%, in Highland it is 15% (21). There also concentrations in SIMD datazones Wick South – 06 (7) Lochaber West 01 (4) Black Isle North 05 (4) Sutherland South – 01(4) Sutherland East - 06 (4) and Wick South -01 (4). A number are also recorded on the Vacant and Derelict Land Register such as Brora Railway Station, Bruan Free Church, Dunvegan Castle Stables, Rogart.

Table 12:6 Population and Distance from Derelict Land 2023 (SVDLS Statistics Tables)

	Total Population	Distance from Derelict Land (% of population)		
		Less than 500m	500m to less than 1,000m	1,000m or further
Highland	238,060	9.7	12.2	78.1
Scotland	5,479,900	26.5	23.7	49.3

- 12.62 SVDLS Statistics Tables – Table 19 also highlight that in 2023 In Highland there were 7 sites of derelict land reclaimed, and urban vacant land brought back into use since the previous survey. SVDLS Statistics Tables – Table 25 estimates the number of properties within 500 meters of at least 1 site reclaimed using the Vacant and Derelict Land Fund (VDLF), through which place-making priorities can be improved. Results shown in Table 12:6 and further detailed in **Chapter 13: Design, Wellbeing, Local Living and Placemaking**.

Table 12:7 Number of Properties Within 500 Meters of a Site Reclaimed Using VDLF in Highland (SVDLS Statistics Tables – Table 25)

	Number of Properties Within 500 Meters of a Site Reclaimed Using VDLF		
	1 Site	2 Sites	3 Sites Plus
Highland	14,800	2,000	100

- 12.63 In Highland, there are currently 132 sites recorded through the SVDLS, totalling 603.61Ha. Of these, 56 are categorised as vacant land while 76 are categorised as derelict land. Of the total 132 sites, 55 sites were last in use in 1980 or earlier, which equates to 41%. This is a high proportion in comparison

to Scotland's average of 9.3% and signals a continued difficulty in bringing many of these sites back into regular use over a sustained period. However, 12 of these 55 sites are recognised as developable in the short term.

12.64 Further analysis in [Scottish Land Commission Transform Scotland's Approach to Tackling Vacant and Derelict Land](#) report was undertaken to identify and characterise Scotland's *stuck sites*. These are known as Scotland's DUSTE sites, defined by:

- **Derelict** – sites with identified barriers to re-use, such as leftover buildings and materials, are likely to be more challenging to bring back into use than sites that are simply vacant – and therefore in greater need of public support.
- **Urban Sites** – sites located within communities are more likely to be causing harm to people nearby – and therefore a higher priority for action than sites located out in the countryside.
- **Unused since Two thousand or Earlier** – sites that have been on the Register since at least 2000 were not a result of the 2008 financial crash and have persisted for 18 years through market growth, crash and recovery and can therefore genuinely be regarded as 'stuck'.

12.65 Highland presents a more balanced distribution of vacant and derelict sites in comparison to Scotland whereby over half (63%) of Highland sites are located within Settlements with populations ≤ 2000 however, in comparison to Scotland's 79% in settlements with populations ≤ 2000 . Highland presents higher results of sites in the countryside (20%) compared to Scotland's 12%, and again Highland has a higher proportion of sites in settlements with populations > 2000 in comparison to Scotland's 9%. These results can be found in Table 12:7. As further explained in **Chapter 9: Housing**, Table 12:7 highlights that Highland has a high proportion of DUSTE sites at 95 sites (80% of Highlands total number of sites) meeting its criteria of being last in use 2000 or earlier.

Table 12:8 Vacant and Derelict Land Distribution (*SVDLS Site Register*)

Location	Highland		Scotland	
	No. of sites	% of total	No. of sites	% of total
Countryside	26	20%	381	12%
Settlement with pop \leq 2000	83	63%	2543	78%

Settlement with pop > 2000	23	17%	277	8%
Vacant/derelict 1980 or before	55	42%	296	9%
Vacant before 2000	95	80%	1149	35%
Total	132	100%	3277	100%
Land cover in Ha	603.61	6.4%	9382.67	100%

12.66 Table 12:8 presents the vacant and derelict sites in Highland by settlement type and by its previous land use before becoming derelict. The most common previously used site type is *Other General Use*, totalling 313.94ha. This site type is often associated with agricultural land, and results show most of this site type (304.58ha) is located within rural locations. The second highest previous site type for vacant and derelict sites in Highland is *Defence* totalling 115.78ha. Again, these sites have often been located out with or on the edge of settlements, with the majority (104.17ha) located in rural locations.

12.67 Together, *Other General Use* and *Defence* contribute to 429.72ha (71.2%) of Highlands total area of vacant and derelict sites (603.61ha). With these site types of previous use, a consideration for their possibility of being contaminated land should be acknowledged, as detailed within **Contaminated Land**. All proposed sites for redevelopment are checked by the Council's Contaminated Land Team and flagged for contamination if required, whereby the developer is required to fund any site assessments and possible remediation necessary.

12.68 It must be noted however, that the SVDLS only includes land within settlement boundaries. With Highland covering a vast expanse, with much of its land area sits out with settlements, therefore, Table 12:8 does not provide a complete record of all existing vacant and derelict land within the area covered by HLDP.

Table 12:9 Vacant and Derelict Sites by Previous Use and Location (*SVDLS Site Register*)

	Countryside		Settlement with pop. <= 2000		Settlement with pop. > 2000		Total Highland	
	Sites (#)	Area (ha)	Sites (#)	Area (ha)	Sites (#)	Area (ha)	Sites (#)	Area (ha)
Agriculture	2	0.67	10	6.77	2	0.98	14	8.42

Community & Health	1	0.38	5	62.08	0	0	6	62.46
Defence	11	104.17	9	10.41	1	1.2	21	115.78
Education	1	0.22	2	3.18	0	0	3	3.4
Forestry/Woodland	1	1.32			0	0	1	1.32
Manufacturing			5	2.79	3	13.11	8	15.9
Mineral Activity	3	13.06			2	3.44	5	16.5
Other	1	1.22	18	11.03	1	0.22	20	12.47
Other General Industry	2	304.58	5	6.45	2	2.91	9	313.94
Passive Open Space	0	0	4	3.24	0	0	4	3.24
Recreation & Leisure	1	1.16	1	1.58	0	0	2	2.74
Residential - Housing	0	0	2	0.23	2	0.66	4	0.89
Retailing	1	0.16	1	0.18	2	1.44	4	1.78
Storage	2	1.69	1	0.18	4	2.61	7	4.48
Transport	0	0	2	2.68	3	2	5	4.68
Unknown	0	0	16	34.55	1	0.19	17	34.74
Utility Services	0	0	1	0.55	0	0	1	0.55
Wholesale Distribution	0	0	1	0.32	0	0	1	0.32
Total	26	428.63	83	146.22	23	28.76	132	603.61

12.69 When a site is deemed *naturalised* it is removed from SVDLS and so further information is required to understand the number of naturalised sites are in Highland. [SVDLS Statistics Tables](#) – Table 21 indicate that 4 sites spanning 4 ha have been naturalised in Highland in 2023. Further assessments of biodiversity value and potential on vacant and derelict sites would be beneficial, recognising that brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings can contribute to nature recovery, further details of which can be found in NPF4 Policy 9; whereby ‘the contribution of brownfield land to nature recovery is recognised and opportunities for use as productive greenspace are realised where appropriate’. Further assessments of biodiversity value and potential on vacant and derelict sites would be also beneficial n recognising the opportunities to contribute to Blue and Green Infrastructure as detailed in

Chapter 13: Design, Wellbeing, Local Living and Placemaking, connections can also be found within **Chapter 5: Nature and Environment**.

- 12.70 It recognised that there is size threshold of 0.1 ha for inclusion in the SVDLS Register. This means that smaller micro-sites are generally overlooked as highlighted by [Scottish Land Commission Transform Scotland's Approach to Tackling Vacant and Derelict Land](#), even though these may be clustered, have cumulative detrimental impacts and be comparatively deliverable. Research has understood that often smaller sites, such as gap sites or buildings, can have a particularly harmful effect on the surrounding area.
- 12.71 [Scottish Land Commission Transform Scotland's Approach to Tackling Vacant and Derelict Land](#) recognise that reviewing the Register, associated Survey, and guidance would elevate it to provide a more complete picture of vacant and derelict land and lead to improved place-making outcomes. **Chapter 13: Design, Wellbeing, Local Living and Placemaking** further details the impact that vacant and derelict land has on place-making and regeneration of brownfield sites can provide good opportunities for placemaking. Development of brownfield land is anticipated to accelerate in Highland owing to the ICFGF discussed in **Chapter 8: Business, Economy, Tourism and Productive Places**, which contains several brownfield sites within the designated ICFGF Tax Sites.
- 12.72 The lack of knowledge of Micro-sites in Highland are a recognised information gap and HLDP will be informed by any new developments in the creation of this data and welcome any review of SVDLS to provide a more complete picture of vacant and derelict land in Highland.

Contaminated Land

- 12.73 Land is defined in the Environmental Protection Act 1990 as *contaminated land* if there is 'significant possibility of significant harm' to human health or 'significant possibility of significant pollution' of the water environment. To be able to legally designate land as *contaminated land* is a lengthy process. There are only two sites in Highland which have met these criteria, both have since been remediated. Contaminated Land differs from HSE Consultation Zones and Hazardous Sites (**THC225**) which are separately detailed in **Chapter 13: Design, Wellbeing, Local Living and Placemaking**.
- 12.74 There are many sites within Highland which could possibly have contamination although these have not been currently deemed 'significant possibility of

significant harm' (i.e. death, cancer, birth abnormalities etc). Regardless, the Contaminated Land team hold records of all sites which have been previously used for activities that may have resulted in some form of contamination, using historical Ordnance Survey maps which show old gasworks, tanneries, smithies, pits, coal yards, refuse tips, fuel storage etc. Planning applications where such instances arise are determined in accordance with [PAN33](#).

- 12.75 [Scottish Land Commission Transform Scotland's Approach to Tackling Vacant and Derelict Land](#) reinforce that SVDLS should be reformed to provide a clearer focus on sites that have significant barriers to reuse, incorporating accurate and up to date information about barriers to reuse including contamination. HLDP will support and consider any documentation of this as and when it emerges.
- 12.76 In addition, HLDP will consider [UK Government's Land Contamination and Risk Management \(LCRM\) Guidance Note](#). The Scottish Government, SEPA and Scottish Local Authority representatives have recently (June 2025) reviewed and agreed the guidance, providing an additional link to advice for developers in Scotland where some legislation, statutory and non-statutory guidance relating to contaminated land diverge between the constituent nations (previously the LCRM guidance only applied to England and Wales and replaced earlier withdrawn guidance).
- 12.77 The LCRM guidance provides developers with an overview of how to assess and manage the risks from historic land contamination, including the process of information gathering, site investigation, risk assessment, remediation options, and verification reporting. SEPA and Scottish Local Authorities expect developers to follow the guidance contained within LCRM when redeveloping land which may be contaminated and when providing supporting documents for planning applications. While the LCRM guidance is not specific for Highland, it provides all developers with guidance on how to approach redevelopment of sites, thus ensuring consistency.
- 12.78 HLDP will consult the Council's Contaminated Land team within the site selection process of the HLDP to understand any constraints, or need for further investigation.

Empty Homes

- 12.79 The Council is currently developing its Highland Empty Homes Strategic Framework (2025-2028). With the aim to bring long-term empty and un-

productive houses back into use, so that they provide homes for people living in Highland's communities. This framework outlines the Council's strategic approach to doing so by engaging with empty homes owners; working with communities experiencing challenges arising from empty and unproductive homes and, targeting resources at approaches which deliver homes. The Planning Service is actively participating in this work in collaboration with other Council services.

- 12.80 **Chapter 9: Housing** outlines the acute housing needs arising across Highland, where in many areas, there is an insufficient supply of housing which people can afford to buy or rent. This can have negative impacts including on people's health, educational outcomes, ability to secure sustained employment and sustainability of services and local economies. A lack of housing can influence the depopulation in some areas and impact rural economies as outlined in **Chapter 8: Economy, Business, Tourism and Productive Places**, by impacting on business' abilities to fill job vacancies, operate and expand as potential applicants cannot find suitable housing.
- 12.81 The Council's [Local Housing Strategy \(LHS\) 2023–2028](#) sets a commitment to: 'Tackle empty homes - prioritise targeted and preventative investment in areas where local housing pressure is evidenced.' It highlights that this is alongside a priority focus on delivering new build housing— noting that, due to locational and housing condition issues, the economics of empty homes activity in Highland has proven to raise value for money questions when benchmarked to new build activity. The Council's [Strategic Housing Investment Plan \(SHIP\)](#) sets out how the Council will use resources available to deliver its priorities, by considering opportunities to bring empty homes and other properties back into use as quality affordable accommodation.
- 12.82 [Household Estimates from the NRS - Small Area Household Estimates Data by 2011 Data Zone](#) provides annual data on the number and percentage of dwellings which are vacant and long term empty (LTE), alongside those that are occupied, second homes, or subject to other exemptions.
- 12.83 Although housing stock is fully detailed in **Chapter 9: Housing**, the understanding of ineffective stock does have an impact on brownfield land-use. There are many variants on ineffective stock in Highland, where vacant dwellings, long-term empty dwellings and second homes are a key factor in housing stock and needs. Figure 12:1 shows that from 2014 to 2024 the total number of dwellings in Highland have increased by 8.2%, however, during this same period, the number of vacant dwellings in Highland has also increased

from 2.62% to 4.82%. Therefore, how we manage these dwellings is highly important to managing our housing need.

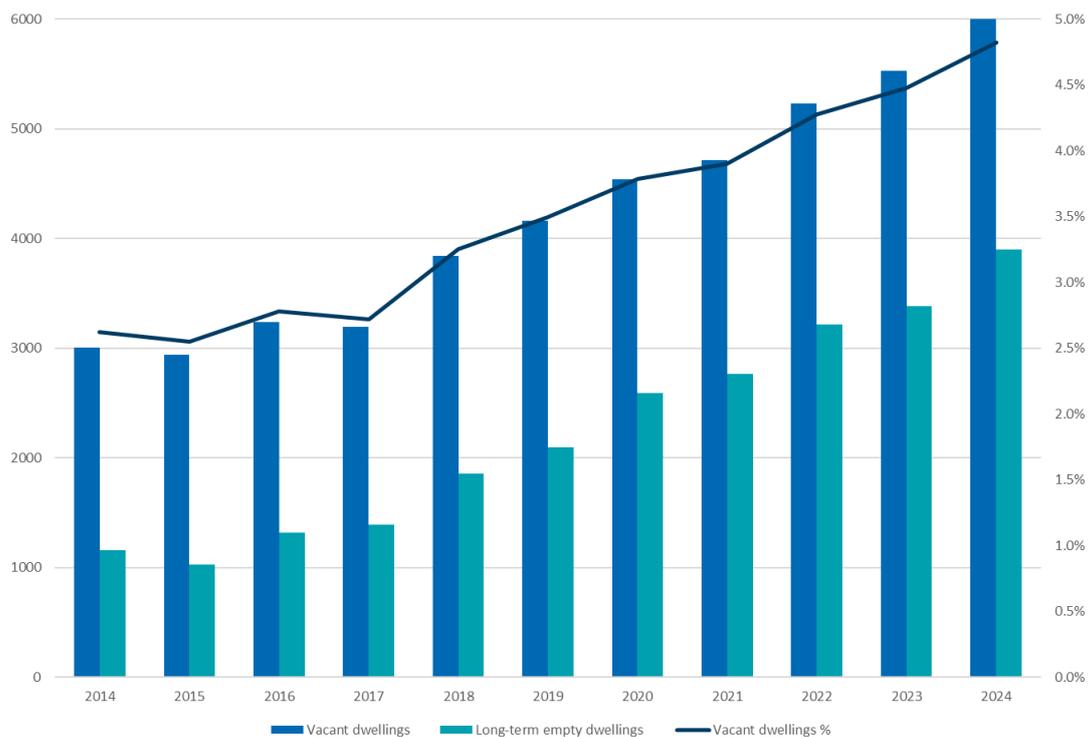


Figure 12:1 Vacant and long-term empty dwellings by percentage of total Highland dwellings (NRS Small Area Household Estimates Data by 2011 Data Zone)

Correlation Between Vacant Dwellings and Vacant Land

12.84 Within Table 12:9 it can be noted that there is a correlation between the number of vacant sites in a data zone and number of vacant or long-term empty dwellings. The below table represents statistics taken from the Household Estimates Dataset provided by National Records of Scotland and [SVDLS Site Register](#). Highland has 316 data zones each of which can be found in the [SVDLS Site Register](#) datasets, Table 12:9 shows the top five data zones with the highest number of vacant/derelict sites, vacant dwellings (by percentage) and long-term empty dwellings (by percentage) in 2023. This highlights some correlations between vacant land and buildings within various areas of Highland. Standout areas include Wick South, Inverness Central, Raigmore and Longman, Caithness North and so considerations on how these

issues are dealt with in these standout areas, as well as tackling vacant and long-term empty dwellings across Highland will be considered within HLDP.

Table 12:10 Top 5 Highland data zone vacant/derelict land and vacant and long-term empty dwellings (SVDLS Site Register/Household Estimates)

Vacant site data zones	No. of sites
Caithness North East - 02	16
Lochaber West – 06	8
Inverness Central, Raigmore and Longman – 01	7
Seaboard – 01	7
Wick South - 06	7
Vacant dwellings data zones	% vacant
Wick South - 02	19
Caithness North East – 04	18
Dingwall – 03	12
Caithness North West - 05	12
Caithness South – 01	12
Long-term empty dwellings data zones	% empty
Wick South – 02	15
Dingwall – 03	11
Badenoch and Strathspey South – 02	9
Badenoch and Strathspey Central - 02	8
Inverness Central, Raigmore and Longman - 02	8

- 12.85 Detailed in **Scottish Vacant and Derelict Land Survey** was the percentage of the population living within 500m of derelict land, this does not include vacant and long-term empty dwellings. Although only 9.7% of Highlands population are expected to live within 500m of derelict land, with some areas having over 15% vacant/long-term empty dwellings, a much higher proportion of the population likely live in proximity to vacant or long-term empty dwellings. HLDP will consider issues of vacant/derelict land, vacant and long-term empty dwellings in relation to one another, and aim to tackle standout areas across Highland where these issues are most prominent.
- 12.86 Further detailed in **Chapter 9: Housing**, The Councils states that the Council will continue to respond to opportunities presented through any future rounds of funding which would potentially assist in developing longer term vacant and

derelict land and buildings. HLDP will also consider the opportunity of funding to provide potential development of long term vacant and derelict land and buildings and will support the use of funding in development.

Brownfield House Completions

- 12.87 Highland Council data on house completions is discussed in more detail in **Chapter 9: Housing** however, the [Housing Land Audit](#) details those houses which have been completed on brownfield sites.
- 12.88 Figure 12:2 shows the downward trend in total house completions on brownfield land from 2022-2025, in Highland (correct as of June 2025). Between 2022-2025, in Highland, there were 3429 house completions, 499 (14.6%) of those were on brownfield sites. This downward trend should be taken into consideration and HLDP should encourage the future reuse of brownfield land where possible. Market housing or non-affordable tenures have contributed to a considerable portion of Highland's brownfield completions.

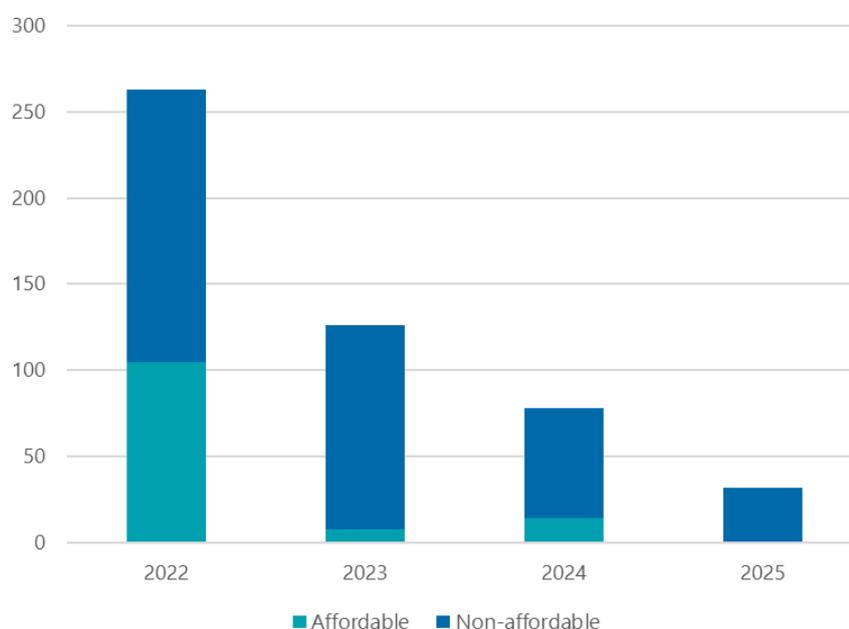


Figure 12:2 Highland house completions on brownfield sites and the proportion of which are affordable 2022-2025 (THC185)

12.89 Table 12:10 shows the top 10 settlements in Highland with the highest usage of brownfield sites for house completions from 2022-2025, and the proportion of which have been affordable homes.

Table 12:11 Top 10 settlements using brownfield sites for house completions (THC185)

	2022		2023		2024		2025		Grand Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
West Inverness	53	50%	21	20%	15	14%	17	16%	106	21%
Affordable	36	68%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	36	34%
Central Inverness	62	90%	1	1%	6	9%	0	0%	69	14%
Affordable	8	13%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	8	12%
South Inverness	30	58%	18	34%	1	2%	3	6%	52	10%
Affordable	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Dingwall	15	43%	20	57%	0	0%	0	0%	35	7%
Affordable	14	93%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	14	
Spean Bridge	20	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	20	4%
Affordable	20	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	20	100%
Nairn	18	90%	1	5%	1	5%	0	0%	20	4%
Affordable	12	67%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	12	60%
Fort William	16	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	16	3%
Affordable	15	94%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	15	94%
Kingussie	1	10%	6	60%	3	30%	0	0%	10	2%
Affordable	0	0%	5	83%	0	0%	0	0%	5	50%
Portree	0	0%	3	30%	7	70%	0	0%	10	2%
Affordable	0	0%	3	100%	6	86%	0	0%	9	90%
Lairg	0	0%	0	0%	8	100%	0	0%	8	2%
Affordable	0	0%	0	0%	8	100%	0	0%	8	100%
All other sites	48	31%	56	37%	37	24%	12	8%	153	31%
Affordable	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

Highland	263	53%	126	25%	78	16%	32	6%	499	100%
Affordable	105	83%	8	6%	14	11%	0	0%	127	25.5%

- 12.90 Overall, between 2022-2025, in the top 10 settlements using brownfield land for new house completions, 25% of homes were affordable. This matches the developer contributions expectation whereby of the number of homes built by a developer, 25% of these should be affordable (for any development of 4 homes or more). 83% of affordable homes built in these settlements were built in 2022 which highlights a great decrease in affordable built homes from 2023-2025.
- 12.91 Of the Highland total, the settlement with the highest portion of brownfield house completions was West Inverness at 21%, of which 34% were affordable. The settlements with the highest proportion of affordable homes of the total homes built on brownfield land between 2022-2025 are Lairg and Spean Bridge, with 100% of brownfield house completion being affordable, Portree also scores highly at 90%.
- 12.92 HLDP will consider creating a brownfield house completion target for Highland, however, there will be a need for this to be a place-based approach rather than Highland-wide target due to some settlements already well exceeding brownfield completions of between 90-100% of their house completions being on brownfield land.

Compulsory Purchase Orders

- 12.93 Although used in rarity, Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) are an important process that will be considered as part of HLDP. The Scottish government provides guidance on using Compulsory Purchase Orders through [Planning Circular 6/2011](#) used for public benefit, such as housing, development, and infrastructure projects to acquire land, emphasizing efficiency, fairness, and minimizing uncertainty for landowners. CPOs are used when it has proven impossible or impractical to acquire land by agreement, and the public interest outweighs the rights of those affected. The process involves an acquiring authority (like a council or utility company) preparing a CPO and submitting it to the Scottish Ministers for confirmation.
- 12.94 As part of wider planning reforms, the Scottish Government has committed to improve and modernise the CPO system details of which can be found in [Compulsory Purchase Reform: Progress Report December 2024](#) in order to

- help support the delivery of development, infrastructure and regeneration projects that are in the public interest. By helping to unlock projects in the public interest, the use of compulsory purchase can contribute to many of the Scottish Government's wider plans, policies, and strategies – such as the NPF4.
- 12.95 The Scottish Government have now opened a [Compulsory Purchase Order Reform in Scotland Consultation](#) (19 Sept 2025 – 19 Dec 2025). Whereby the Scottish Government are seeking views on how to make the compulsory purchase system simpler, more streamlined, and fairer for all, to help deliver development and new homes. This consultation also includes questions on the possible benefits of introducing compulsory sale orders and compulsory lease orders. This consultation is a significant step towards putting in place a fairer, faster and simpler compulsory purchase system for Scotland.
- 12.96 While HLDP will progress, cognisant of these evolving reforms, at present clear policies and a spatial strategy in the LDP can help determine CPO's – providing robust justification for the issuing of nil certificates. A Planning Authority has the option to issue a nil' certificate indicating that no development would have been permitted. In such circumstances, the authority must set out the reasons why it believes that no alternative types of development would be suitable for the land in question in the foreseeable future. As noted previously, either a landowner or the relevant Acquiring Authority may apply for a Certificate of Appropriate Alternative Development (CAAD) (a tool used by any party involved in a compulsory purchase scheme to help assess the market value of land or property acquired) – including seeking a nil certificate.
- 12.97 One way in which the Council could consider tackling the reuse of derelict land may be compulsory purchase orders, whereby the Council can force a sale of land that has been impossible using other methods of sale with landowners. This process may allow the sustainable reuse of derelict sites that would in other cases fall into a state of disrepair. This also could help to support the reuse of buildings at risk, and vacant or long-term empty dwellings.
- 12.98 Information provided by the Council's Legal team confirms that CPOs haven't been used in Highland for many years, except for the Inverness Southern Distributor Road in 2014. CPOs were at their peak in the 1980s but there is no formal list of these recorded as they were classed as just land purchases, albeit via a compulsory route.
- 12.99 The Council has also not often used CPO powers conferred under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997, the last CPO being made by the Council under this Act taking place in 2009 at 30 Princes

Street and 7 Sir John's Square, Thurso. Nonetheless, the Council will keep this option under constant review to ensure that Listed Buildings that may be at risk of falling into a state of disrepair are preserved.

- 12.100 The Council's [Strategic Housing Investment Plan \(SHIP\)](#) sets out how the Council will use resources available to deliver its priorities. Within which it discusses the use of Compulsory Purchase Orders. This Plan states that the Council will promote and apply their CPO powers for housing purposes, to deliver new affordable housing in areas of unmet housing demand where other negotiations have failed. HLDP will consider the use of CPOs for this matter, including in the use of CPOs to obtain vacant and derelict land and buildings across Highland where necessary.
- 12.101 In addition, through the current development of the Councils Highland Empty Homes Strategic Framework (2025-2028) considerations are being made that while the Councils main approach is to engage and support property owners, enforcement may be necessary where voluntary efforts fail or where there is a risk to the community. This may be done through the use of CPOs in circumstances whereby a property has been empty long-term (typically 2+ years), the owner is unresponsive or unwilling to act, there is a clear plan for reuse (e.g. resale, social housing). This will be done following statutory procedures - Acquisition of Land (Authorisation Procedure) (Scotland) Act 1947.
- 12.102 An understanding of how CPOs could support development in Highland is an important consideration. Additionally, HLDP must outline the role of planning obligations and CPO's in obtaining the land required to facilitate the delivery of development. Therefore, although used in rarity, CPO's will be considered in the HLDP.

Biodiversity Considerations for Brownfield Development

- 12.103 NPF4 Policy 9 requires that determining whether the reuse of brownfield land is sustainable, LDP's should consider the biodiversity value of brownfield land which has naturalised. [The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045](#); which sets out a clear ambition: for Scotland to be Nature Positive by 2030, and to have restored and regenerated biodiversity across the country by 2045 and the [Scottish Government Climate Change Plan 2018-2032 – Update](#); which sets out the Scottish Government's pathway to our new and ambitious targets set by the Climate Change Act 2019. It is a key strategic document on our green

recovery from COVID-19. Both highlight important suggestions in tackling climate change and nature recovery, that can be worked into Highland context, further discussion on this topic can be found in **Chapter 4: Climate Change and Energy** and **Chapter 5: Nature and Environment**.

- 12.104 The Highland Council recognise and will consider records that provide information on the biodiversity value of brownfield sites. Some brownfield sites become naturalised over years of abandonment and provide havens for wildlife, in otherwise built-up areas. With 41% of brownfield land in Highland last in use prior to 1980s, the likelihood of nature establishing on these sites is high, and this will be considered in the site selection process of HLDP.
- 12.105 [Buglife Introduction to Brownfields Document](#) discusses how brownfield sites are now listed as a Priority habitat on Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, as 'Open mosaic habitat on previously developed land'. These are unique habitats that often support rare species that struggle to survive elsewhere. [Buglife Identifying Open Mosaic Habitat Document](#) shares how open mosaic habitats can be identified. This therefore provides an important consideration to be made on the suitability of brownfield sites for development and Buglife suggests that full invertebrate surveys are essential on high quality brownfield sites, with this information used to identify key habitat features to be retained, as part of a suite of mitigation and compensation options to protect biodiversity.
- 12.106 NatureScot support [Wildlife and Countryside Link Open Mosaic Habitats High Value Guidance Document](#) that reinforce this by acknowledging that brownfield sites are a sustainable use of land which reduces the impact on greenbelts, and previously undeveloped land but that the high environmental value of these sites is often overlooked due to a lack of guidance on how these sites should be dealt with in practice.
- 12.107 In addition, [NatureScot Commissioned Report 606: Open mosaic habitats on previously developed land; survey and recommendations for habitat planning and management in Scotland](#) provides a remote assessment methodology that was used to assess sites listed on the Vacant and Derelict Land Register in 2009 in Scotland. This report states that Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Developed Land (OMHPDL), also known as brownfield land, contributes valuable wildlife habitat within urban green networks. Of the 382 sites identified within this assessment, 67 qualified as OMHPDL.

Summary of Stakeholder Engagement

12.108 A full breakdown of all stakeholder engagement undertaken to support the Evidence Report is provided within the Log of Engagement **(THC001)**. A summary of the key stakeholder engagement activities undertaken for this chapter include:

Stakeholders and Key Agencies

12.109 All meetings and engagement exercises with stakeholders and key agencies are detailed within the *Log of Engagement (THC001)*. Drafts of the evidence presented in this chapter were circulated to key agencies and other stakeholders on 26 June 2025, which included:

- NatureScot
- Scottish Water
- SEPA
- NHS Highland
- HIE
- HiTrans
- Transport Scotland
- Crofting Commission
- Sport Scotland
- Historic Environment Scotland
- National Trust For Scotland
- Architecture and Design Scotland
- Wider Council Services: Amenities, Environment Team, Contaminated Land, Legal, Sustainable Transport, Community Development, Empty Homes.
- Chamber of Commerce: Caithness, Lochaber, Inverness.
- BID: Fort William, Dornoch, Visit Inverness Loch Ness – Tourist, VisitNairn - Nairn, Inverness.

12.110 A summary of feedback received includes:

Key Agency: Historic Environment Scotland (THC180 & THC181)

Main views raised	<p>Provided an Evidence Submission (THC180) which provides specific historic environment records data for Highland.</p> <p>In addition, HES provided a Consultation Response (THC181) with suggested amendments including rewording of sentences, adjustment</p>
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	of historic asset numbers to provide most up to date figures, additional sources. Historic Environment Scotland's final response provides a statement of agreement that can also be found within their Consultation response.
Council's response	The Council have agreed to suggested amendments with adjustments to the evidence report having been made.
Areas of agreement	The Council agree with the comments made.
Outstanding issues	No outstanding issues.
Is the agency content with the evidence?	Yes, HES provide a statement of agreement provided in (THC181) .
Implications for proposed plan	HLDP will consider a holistic approach in dealing with historic assets which recognises and optimises the role that the historic environment plays in delivering multiple benefits across numerous policy areas.
Actions for proposed plan stage	A holistic approach to dealing with the historic environment will be taken.
Key Agency: NatureScot (THC182)	
Main views raised	Provided a Consultation Response (THC182) with suggested amendments including additional connections to further NPF4 Policies, further evidence sources, reorganise sentence structure in summary of evidence, additional sentence within summary of implications.
Council's response	Noted, the Council agrees with these amendments and amendments therefore have been made in chapter.
Areas of agreement	The Council agree with the comments made.
Outstanding issues	No outstanding issues.
Is the agency content	Yes, NatureScot provide a statement of sufficiency in (THC182) .

with the evidence?	
Implications for proposed plan	The Council recognise and will consider records that provide information on the biodiversity value of brownfield sites, the Council will also consider opportunities for nature recovery and recognise brownfield sites as productive greenspace where appropriate, this knowledge will inform HLDP.
Actions for proposed plan stage	The Council will consider the opportunities for nature recovery and recognise the biodiversity value of brownfield sites during the site selection process.

THC Contaminated Land Team (THC183)

Main views raised	Please note that I have reviewed this on behalf of the Contaminated Land Team in the context of discussion of contaminated land, brownfield land and vacant/derelict land – and not historic assets, listed buildings, archaeology etc. agree with the evidence base for producing the HLDP. Recommend you also include the UK Government’s Land Contamination and Risk Management Guidance note.
Council’s response	The Council agree with the suggestions made and have made these amendments.
Areas of agreement	The Council agree with the comments made.
Outstanding issues	No outstanding issues.
Is the agency content with the evidence?	Yes, THC Contaminated Land Team state that they agree with the evidence, provided in (THC183) .
Implications for proposed plan	
Actions for proposed plan stage	

Summary of Local Place Plan Priorities

12.111 Ardgour Local Place Plan (**THC010**) has identified the following priorities relating to Historic Assets, Brownfield Land and Empty Buildings:

- Create website to showcase heritage & culture.
- Opportunity for heritage centre in rebuilt Ardgour Hall.
- New homes should enhance local character, and development needs to conserve the special landscape and character of the community through sensitive, small-scale.
- Enhance road edges with traditional walking / verges / hedging characteristic of the area.
- Kingairloch Estate wishes to repurpose old buildings, adding a functional boat house, rebuilding the stone pier, remodelling the concrete jetty, repairing the slipway, restoring the walled garden as a vegetable garden and convening place, strengthen sense of place with uniform architectural language, signage, roadsides, tracks as well as maintaining and repairing drystone walls.

12.112 Black Isle Local Place Plan (**THC011**) has identified the following priorities relating to Historic Assets, Brownfield Land and Empty Buildings:

- Priority for more affordable homes by encouraging re-use of empty homes & conversion of other empty buildings, through more use of CPO & 'forced sales'.

12.113 Broadford and Strath Local Place Plan (**THC012**) has identified the following priorities relating to Historic Assets, Brownfield Land and Empty Buildings:

- Development of new toilets and redevelopment of old buildings
- Preference for new housing to be developed within settlements and/or on brownfield sites.
- Protect and interpret significant historic sites and built heritage including Broadford Lime Kilns, War Memorial & Bunker, Chambered Cairn, Old Pier, New (Mackinnon's) Pier, Corry Lodge outbuildings, Ashaig Chapel & Well.
- Explore potential for heritage trail or 'Eco- Museum'.
- Safeguard sites not currently Designated by HES: War Memorial & Bunker, Marble Line & Quarry site, Cleared villages of Boreraig & Suisnish.

12.114 Croy and Tornagrain Local Place Plan (**THC026**) has identified the following priorities relating to Historic Assets, Brownfield Land and Empty Buildings:

- Safeguarding main historical sites. Culloden battlefield, Clach Na Sanais Stone and many other less well-known sites.

- All new developments need to have no detrimental impact on Loch Flemington and/or Culloden Battlefield

12.115 Caol Local Place Plan (**THC024**) has identified the following priorities relating to Historic Assets, Brownfield Land and Empty Buildings:

- Welcome suggestions for restoration of the Post Office.
- Suggestion to add notice boards around the village walkways explaining about the history e.g. Shorefront/ Canal.

12.116 Dores and Essich Local Place Plan (**THC013**) has identified the following priorities relating to Historic Assets, Brownfield Land and Empty Buildings:

- Aldourie Castle Estate and former Dores Parish Church Cemetery & War Memorial, important architectural heritage.

12.117 Duror and Kentallen Local Place Plan (**THC014**) has identified the following priorities relating to Historic Assets, Brownfield Land and Empty Buildings:

- Opportunities to create a heritage centre.
- Ideas for celebrating heritage including repairing the old Seton Bridge at Cuil by Duror School and adding more historical plaques.

12.118 Fort Augustus and Glenmoriston Local Place Plan (**THC022**) has identified the following priorities relating to Historic Assets, Brownfield Land and Empty Buildings:

- Although tourism is a mainstay of the economy, managing the sheer number of visitors in a small historic village brings challenges.
- Conserve nature: we live and work in an area of unrivalled natural heritage, from rugged uplands to wooded glens and the steep-sided Loch Ness and Great Glen. Conservation of this heritage is vital for our wellbeing, economy & identity and to tackle climate change.
- A comprehensive review of visitor management is needed. including better visitor signage, information and heritage interpretation.
- Conservation and interpretation of heritage should be a key part of improving tourism's positive impact on the local community. The canal should obviously be the focal point, but many more others: history, culture, leisure activities, scenery and nature.

12.119 Gairloch Local Place Plan (**THC015**) has identified the following priorities relating to Historic Assets, Brownfield Land and Empty Buildings:

- Develop housing on various brownfield locations.
- Return empty buildings to housing stock in central areas of Gairloch.

12.120 Garve and District Local Place Plan (**THC016**) has identified the following priorities relating to Historic Assets, Brownfield Land and Empty Buildings:

- Development of the former Garve Hotel site and redeveloping the former accommodation block by either retrofitting or new buildings.
- Preserve Kinlochluichart church as an important historical feature.

12.121 Golspie Local Place Plan (**THC021**) has identified the following priorities relating to Historic Assets, Brownfield Land and Empty Buildings:

- Vacant properties and second homes do not contribute to the community. Key aspiration for good quality, energy efficient and affordable homes to reverse depopulation and safeguard the future of Golspie.
- Surveys highlighted potential resources and underutilised assets. Opportunity to survey vacant plots to find potential self-build/ renovation opportunities.
- Clause 163, CaSLDP: potential designation of the historic core of Golspie with Conservation area status.
- Improve streetscape material in line with conservation area status that could be obtained for Main St.
- Want to preserve and enhance the unique built and natural heritage
- Add Heritage interpretation along paths and new paths to connect all heritage sites together. Including from Golspie to Dunrobin Castle, Dornoch Firth, Loch Fleet SPA, and to the UNESCO Flow Country World Heritage Site.
- Add a new key seaside parkland to contribute to the Northern Green Gateway of Golspie unlocking both natural and cultural heritage.
- Opportunity for the mill to be refurbished as a Heritage Centre, with better links with the Big Burn. Other potential locations for a Heritage Centre include the Sutherland Estates Office or St Andrews parish church.

12.122 Kinlochleven Local Place Plan (**THC017**) has identified the following priorities relating to Historic Assets, Brownfield Land and Empty Buildings:

- Redevelop derelict former aluminium smelter.
- Reopen B-Listed Ice Factor or bring the building back into reuse
- Bring the many vacant and derelict premises in the village back into active use.
- Restore Manmore Lodge.

12.123 Lochalsh Local Place Plan (**THC018**) has identified the following priorities relating to Historic Assets, Brownfield Land and Empty Buildings:

- Conserve Bernera/Bearnaraigh Barracks.
- Redevelop Graham House to tackle depopulation.
- Restore B-listed Old Mill Hall and Icehouse for use as heritage and community facilities, part of larger historic steading/visitor centre.

12.124 Nairnshire Local Place Plan (**THC023**) has identified the following priorities relating to Historic Assets, Brownfield Land and Empty Buildings.

- Community wants to see repurposed, conserved, and rejuvenated town and shire architecture.
- Collaborative approach to regenerate privately owned Ballerina Ballroom required. Included in the Town Centre Building Audit to consider options.
- Possible harbour commercialisation needs a review of damaged buildings.
- Cawdor Castle estate should be considered in future tourism plan.
- Maximise the value of Nairn town centre listed buildings by preserving, restoring, repurposing for modern uses that attract visitors and businesses. Could include converting historical buildings into boutique hotels, galleries, cafes, or coworking spaces. Changes of use to be supported that support aims of a regenerated and vibrant town centre. Empty buildings identified for rejuvenation/conversion considered in Strategically Important Sites.
- Ensure Victorian bridge is retained alongside the proposed accessible bridge, as part of Nairn's railway heritage.
- A conservation area impact assessment should be considered for Nairn West End, as extension to Fishertown conservation area.
- High Street included in proposed Conservation Area. Cost benefit analysis of the impact on redevelopment of buildings on High Street must be done, along with engagement prior to designation.
- Appraisal and management plan for Fishertown Conservation Area overdue.
- Viewfield House to be considered in built heritage conservation assessment.
- Golf is an important part of Nairn's heritage, economy, and sporting culture with potential for expansion.
- The Nairn Museum's position as custodian of Nairnshire's heritage and history should be strengthened and integrated with wider cultural activity.
- The Highland Council Depot site is potentially a highly sustainable town-centre brownfield location. Opportunity for housing of mix tenure delivering for demand for social housing, or development of all-weather sports facility, supportive of the neighbouring Nairn County FC Station Park.
- A collaborative planning approach to regenerate vacant, privately owned, buildings on to Church Street. To be included in Town Centre Building Audit to consider options and viability. Currently privately owned but consider

redeveloped to provide small units of accessible social rented, housing or sheltered housing in sustainable town centre location.

- Explore options of Community Right to Buy, to bring vacant buildings back into use, with no progress leading to compulsory purchase being sought.
- Priority housing must be given to town and village centre regeneration of existing empty or neglected buildings, including bringing to market for social housing, open market rent, or open market sale of refurbished flats.

12.125 Sleat Local Place Plan (**THC025**) has identified the following priorities relating to Historic Assets, Brownfield Land and Empty Buildings:

- Protect and interpret significant historic sites and built heritage, such as Knock Castle, Dunscaith and Capisdal.
- Strategy for vacant property utilisation

12.126 Stratherrick and Foyers Local Place Plan (**THC019**) has identified the following priorities relating to Historic Assets, Brownfield Land and Empty Buildings:

- Conserve key elements of built heritage, including Wade bridges in Foyers and Inverfarigaig, Lower Foyers Bridge, the A-listed Foyers aluminium factory, Foyers Cemetery and Fraser Monument, Boleskine House, Old Church and Graveyard, Foyers and Inverfarigaig piers, Errogie kirk, Bryce Memorial at Inverfarigaig.
- Preference for new housing to be developed within the existing settlements identified in this plan and/or on brownfield sites where possible.

12.127 Torridon and Kinlochewe Local Place Plan (**THC020**) has identified the following priorities relating to Historic Assets, Brownfield Land and Empty Buildings:

- Torridon Primary School closed, discussions underway re possible Community Asset Transfer including the former playpark.

Summary of Implications for the Proposed Plan

12.128 This section sets out the implications for the HLDP Proposed Plan including the sustainable management of Historic Assets and Places and the sustainable management and use of Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings. These recommendations are in line with NPF4 Policy 7 and Policy 9, the HwLDP, and have been informed by the analysis and outputs of evidence in this report.

Historic Assets and Places

- 12.129 The Highland Council considers the implications for HLDP to be in line with NPF4 Policy 7. The HLDP, through its spatial strategies, will support the sustainable management of the historic environment. This evidence report has identified the valued historic assets and places within the HLDP area, that it will protect and enhance.
- 12.130 HLDP will be informed by HES and HER records on conservation areas, listed buildings, scheduled monuments, world heritage sites, historic marine protected areas, historic battlefields, gardens and designed landscapes and undesignated heritage assets. HLDP will also consider the extent to which more general (all encompassing) historic asset policy can rely on NPF4 policy 7a, 7m-7n.
- 12.131 The current HwLDP Policy 57 – Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage is the core policy at hand for matters relating to the natural, built and cultural heritage. It states that all development proposals will be assessed taking into account the level of importance and type of heritage features, the form and scale of the development, and any impact on the feature and its setting, in the context of the policy framework. Owing to the range of considerations across these matters, HLDP would benefit from greater alignment with NPF4 and the development of separate policy frameworks for both natural environment features as distinct from historic assets and places. The current HwLDP states in each proposed development policy that considerations should be given to the treatment of historic assets identified in the HER. Policy 28 – Sustainable Design states that proposed developments will be assessed on the extent to which they demonstrate sensitive siting and high-quality design in keeping with local character and historic and natural environment and in making use of appropriate materials.
- 12.132 The current HwLDP Policy 29 – Design Quality and Place-Making where relevant, the Council will assess proposals in terms of their contribution to place-making. Proposals should have regard to the historic pattern of development and landscape in the locality and should, where relevant, be an integral part of the settlement.
- 12.133 It should be noted that the implications for the Proposed Plan with regards to Historic Assets and Places are general principles, and possible allocations will be considered on a site-specific basis against NPF4 policy and current HwLDP policies will be reviewed with consideration given to potential for mitigation strategies such as design and layout throughout the site assessment process.

- 12.134 HLDP will consider the impact of the climate emergency and the most appropriate means to improve the resilience of all historic assets and places in the face of climate change.
- 12.135 HLDP will consider evidence on the need to develop further policy and advice on how heritage buildings can be adapted for climate change once available; including ensuring the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) process is fit for purpose in relation to historic buildings.
- 12.136 HLDP will consider a holistic approach in dealing with historic assets which recognises and optimises the role that the historic environment plays in delivering multiple benefits across numerous policy areas.
- 12.137 The Council will welcome exploration of the potential for historic assets to play a positive role in Scotland's Improvement Districts process. 7
- 12.138 HLDP will continue to support the redevelopment and restoration of its historic assets, where possible being supported by grant funds to allow this redevelopment to continue. Albeit that this redevelopment must be in line with Historic Environment Policy and Guidance documents.

World Heritage Sites

- 12.139 The HLDP will continue to support the protection of the Flow Country World Heritage Site. The Council will make itself aware of ongoing guidance emerging that will support the protection of this site during the development of HLDP.
- 12.140 HLDP will consider how to integrate the adopted supplementary planning guidance into the proposed plan.
- 12.141 HLDP will rely on the NPF4 policy 7l framework to protect its World Heritage Site.
- 12.142 Supported by HwLDP Policy 57 (3) the Council will consider the creation of its own policy in HLDP to strengthen this; however, this will more appropriately fall within **Chapter 5: Nature and Environment**.

Conservation Areas

- 12.143 HLDP will continue to protect and enhance conservation areas from the adverse impacts of development. HLDP will also consider the extent to which conservation area policy can rely on the NPF4 policy 7e-7g framework.

12.144 HLDP will continue to review existing Conservation Areas, including undertaking Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans, and considering whether further areas warrant Conservation Area status. The Council will also be preparing Conservation Area Planning Guidance that will provide applicants with clear advice on the management of change across our conservation areas.

12.145 Following the most recent amendment to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992, the Council will update their Windows and Doors in Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Planning Guidance and consider whether the removal of permitted development rights may be required to ensure an appropriate level of control within Highland most important conservation areas.

Listed Buildings

12.146 HLDP will continue to protect and enhance listed buildings and their settings from adverse impacts of development. HLDP will also consider the extent to which listed buildings policy can rely on the NPF4 policy 7b-7c framework.

12.147 HLDP will consider the progression of a favourable policy framework for enabling development, where the restoration of vacant, derelict and redundant Listed Buildings is supported.

12.148 HLDP will consider the need to preserve and protect thatched buildings in Highland and will also consider any emerging evidence provided by HES on the review and removal of any thatched listed buildings which were found to no longer meet the criteria for listing

Scheduled Monuments

12.149 HLDP will continue to protect scheduled monuments and their settings from adverse impacts of development. HLDP will also consider the extent to which scheduled monuments policy can rely on the NPF4 policy 7h framework.

12.150 HLDP will continue to protect the A-Listed Building and Scheduled Monument of Fort George as a key historic environment consideration. The Council will work closely with its Historic Environment Team and external key agencies to ensure a sustainable future for this important historic environment asset.

Inventory Gardens and Designed Landscapes

- 12.151 HLDP will continue to protect and enhance all inventory gardens and designed landscapes and their setting from any adverse impacts of development. HLDP will also consider the extent to which garden and designed landscapes policies can rely on the NPF4 policy 7i framework.
- 12.152 Inventory gardens and designed landscapes are a material consideration in the planning process. The Council will consider whether further policies, and a list of locally important gardens and designed landscapes, are required to protect these sites.

Inventory Historic Battlefields

- 12.153 HLDP will continue to protect and enhance inventory historic battlefields and their setting from adverse impacts of development. HLDP will also consider the extent to which historic battlefield policies can rely on the NPF4 policy 7j framework.
- 12.154 Historic Battlefields site's significance is a material consideration in the planning process. The Council will consider whether further policies, including Battlefield specific management plans, are required to protect these sites.
- 12.155 The Council will consider the need for preparation of bespoke policy for individual Inventory historic battlefields to aid in their management.

Historic Marine Protected Areas

- 12.156 HLDP will continue to protect historic marine protected areas in Highland from adverse impacts of development. HLDP will also consider the extent to which historic marine protected areas policy can rely on the NPF4 policy 7k framework.

Non-designated Assets

- 12.157 HLDP will provide a policy framework that supports the identification, protection and enhancement of undesignated historic assets. HLDP will also consider the extent to which undesignated historic assets policy can depend solely on the NPF4 policy 7o framework.

- 12.158 HLDP will consider if there is sufficient need and evidence to develop a 'local list' and any policy protection for locally important undesignated sites and/or buildings.
- 12.159 The Council's existing Historic Environment Strategy Supplementary Guidance will be reviewed, as will Council guidance that details required Standards for Archaeological Work conducted through the development process. The Council will also consider how publications by the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers (ALGAO Scotland), including Guidance for Peatland Restoration and the Historic Environment in Scotland **(THC192)** and Delivery of Public Benefit and Social Value Guidance for Archaeology in the Planning Process **(THC193)** and other ALGAO Scotland guidance as appropriate impact HLDP.
- 12.160 The Council will consider a proactive approach to considering the long-term options for church buildings falling out of use and look to the challenges and opportunities that these sites may offer in terms of the communities in which they are situated and the services that they require.

Buildings at Risk

- 12.161 HLDP will continue to protect and enhance buildings at risk in highland from adverse impacts of development and will encourage development that would bring these buildings back into use, sympathetic to their original character. HLDP will also consider the extent to which buildings at risk policy can rely on the NPF4 policy 7m framework.
- 12.162 A focus on listed buildings at risk will be a priority and working internally with the historic environment team to identify appropriate sites for the HLDP proposed plan.

Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings

- 12.163 The Highland Council considers the implications for HLDP to be in line with NPF4 Policy 9. HLDP will set out opportunities for the sustainable reuse of brownfield land including vacant and derelict land and empty buildings. In determining whether the reuse is sustainable, HLDP will consider the biodiversity values of brownfield land which has naturalised.
- 12.164 The current HwLDP Policy 28 – Sustainable Design, states that The Council will support developments which promote and enhance the social, economic and

environmental wellbeing of the people of Highland and that proposed developments will be assessed on the extent to which they meet a number of factors including whether they make use of brownfield sites, existing buildings and recycled materials.

- 12.165 The current HwLDP Policy 35 – Housing in the Countryside (Hinterland areas) considers the proposal involves conversion or reuse of traditional buildings or the redevelopment of derelict land; development of “brownfield” sites will be supported where a return to a natural state is not readily achievable and where a wider environmental benefit can be achieved through development.
- 12.166 The current HwLDP Policy 42 – Previously Used Land states that The Council will support development proposals that bring previously-used land back into beneficial use provided: 1. the site investigation and risk assessment are undertaken and demonstrate that the site is in, or is capable of being brought into, a condition suitable for the proposed development; and 2. The proposed development accords with all other relevant policies of this plan.
- 12.167 While brownfield land and empty buildings policies have been established within the current HwLDP, and Area LDP’s, HLDP will require to progress the sustainable reuse of brownfield land and empty buildings in a way that embeds the continued assessment of the suitability of brownfield land for reuse, in doing so its biodiversity value must be considered.

Vacant, Derelict Land and Vacant, Long-Term Empty Homes

- 12.168 HLDP will prioritise the redevelopment of brownfield sites that demonstrate clear commercial viability and potential for sustainable reuse. Ensuring significant uplift in land value to address remediation challenges. However, due to significant data gaps regarding the extent and redevelopment potential of many sites, brownfield land is recommended to play an opportunistic rather than central role in the spatial strategy for development in Highland.
- 12.169 Allocations of housing sites on areas of brownfield land have traditionally been a policy preference and Housing Land Audits undertaken by The Council have recorded completion rates of homes delivered on brownfield sites to monitor this policy.
- 12.170 For rural areas, current policies supporting brownfield redevelopment remain valid and align with NPF4 Policies 17 a (ii) and 29 a (iv). These policies promote

rural brownfield development as a national priority, ensuring such opportunities are leveraged to contribute to sustainable growth in the region.

12.171 HLDP will consider a place-based approach to tackling vacant, derelict land, vacant and long-term empty buildings across Highland, with the opportunity to deal with these areas where the issue is most prevalent.

Brownfield House Completions

12.172 The Council will continue use its Housing Land Audits to record completion rates of homes delivered on brownfield sites to monitor its policy preference of allocating housing sites on areas of brownfield land.

12.173 HLDP will consider creating a brownfield house completion target for Highland, however, there will be a need for this to be a place-based approach rather than Highland-wide target due to some settlements already well exceeding brownfield completions of between 90-100% of their house completions being on brownfield land.

Contaminated Land

12.174 HLDP will consult the Councils Contaminated Land team within the site selection process of the HLDP to understand any constraints, or need for further investigation.

Empty Homes

12.175 HLDP will be informed by any developments in the creation of the Council's Highland Empty Homes Strategic Framework (2025-2028).

Compulsory Purchase Order

12.176 The Council will consider the use of CPOs in supporting the sustainable reuse of vacant and derelict land and buildings including listed buildings through HLDP whereby all other efforts have been exhausted.

Biodiversity value of brownfield

12.177 The Council recognise and will consider records that provide information on the biodiversity value of brownfield sites, the Council will also consider opportunities for nature recovery and recognise brownfield sites as productive greenspace where appropriate, this knowledge will inform HLDP.

Statements of Agreement / Dispute

Agreement on Evidence

12.178 Agencies who responded and agreed with the evidence and content presented included:

- Historic Environment Scotland **(THC180), (THC181)**.
- Nature Scot **(THC182)**.
- THC Contaminated Land Team

Disputes with Stakeholders

12.179 No disputes were raised by respondents, small amendments that were made have been updated in this chapter and statement of agreements were provided by these agencies.

Information Gaps

12.180 The Council recognise that our knowledge of heritage assets and places in Highland is incomplete. Through ongoing research and as new surveys and investigations take place across the area, our understanding and appreciation of our past and how people interacted with our landscape, from prehistory to more recent times, continually grows and evolves. Throughout the length of this plan the Council will work closely with its internal Environment Team to be sure our historic assets and places continue to be protected and enhanced, and that development does not adversely impact our important historic assets.

12.181 The Council awaits updates from Scottish Government on Compulsory Purchase Reform. The [Compulsory Purchase Reform: Progress Report December 2024](#) recaps progress to date on the SG comprehensive programme of work to reform and modernise the compulsory purchase system in Scotland. It summarises emerging proposals and sets out next steps heading into 2025. SG state that any substantive change to compulsory purchase legislation will involve making amendments to primary legislation, which will require a Bill. Subject to the outcome of the May 2026 election and preferences of the

incoming Government, this would need to be taken forward in the next Parliamentary Session. The Council acknowledge this information gap and will consider this throughout the life of this plan.

12.182 It is considered that Highland Council's Area Place Plans would be informative evidence sources, yet it is acknowledged that some remain in production at the time of writing. Place Plans once approved will be considered in the production of the HLDP if timeously available.

12.183 It is considered that community-led Local Place Plans would be informative evidence sources of relevance, and several remain in production at the time of writing. To date, 14 communities in Highland have formally registered Local Place Plans. Any Local Place Plans registered will be considered in the production of the LDP if timeously available.

12.184 It is considered that an Urban Capacity Study would be an informative evidence source of relevance to this section of the evidence report that would strengthen the evidence base in relation to NPF4 Policy 9, yet it is acknowledged that the council does not have the resource to produce an Urban Capacity Study at present and is not in a position to commit to commissioning further consultancy work of this nature.