Chapter 11 : Infrastructure

<table>
<tr><td>Information required by the Act regarding the
issue addressed in this section</td><td>Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended:
Section 15(5)(d):
the infrastructure of the district.
Section 15(5)(e):
how that infrastructure is used.
Town and Country Planning (Development Planning) (Scotland) Regulations 2023:
Regulation 9
Have regard to the national waste management plan</td></tr>
<tr><td>NPF4 LDP Requirements</td><td>NPF4 Policy 18:
LDPs and delivery programmes should be based on an integrated infrastructure first approach. Plans should:
set out the infrastructure requirements to deliver the spatial strategy, informed by the evidence base, identifying the infrastructure priorities, and where, how, when and by whom they will be delivered; and
indicate the type, level (or method of calculation) and location of the financial or in-kind contributions, and the types of development from which they will be required.
Plans should align with relevant national, regional, and local infrastructure plans and policies and take account of the Scottish Government infrastructure investment hierarchy and sustainable travel and investment hierarchies in developing the spatial strategy.
Consistent early engagement and collaboration between relevant stakeholders will better inform decisions on land use and investment.
NPF4 Policy 12:
LDPs should identify appropriate locations for new waste management infrastructure to support the circular economy and meet identified needs in a way that moves waste as high up the waste hierarchy as possible.
NPF4 Policy 24
LDPs should support the delivery of digital infrastructure, including fixed line and mobile connectivity, particularly in areas with gaps in connectivity and barriers to digital access</td></tr>
</table>

Links to Evidence	
	(THC160) Highland Council School Roll Forecasts **(THC133)** Highland Community Facilities **(THC132)** Highland Community Facilities Improvement Funding **(CONFIDENTIAL)** **(THC179)** Community Facilities with Identified Deficiencies in the Highland Delivery Programme **(THC184)** Waste Service Evidence Submission on Site Capacity **(THC185)** Scottish Water Site Readiness Indicator Site Capacities **(CONFIDENTIAL)** **(THC179)** Communities & Place Committee Report: Long-Term Waste Management, November 2024 **(THC374)** Broadband infrastructure in Scotland: public review **(THC180)** Openreach Broadband Full Fibre Build Plan 2024 **(THC181)** Highland GP Practice List Sizes **(THC182)** Highland Health Facilities **(THC134)** Collation of Highland GP Responses **(THC136)** Accessible Amendments to Houses Analysis **(THC137)** Residential Annex for Elderly Family Analysis **(THC184)** Highland Burial Ground Capacity

Ref no.	Online Resources	Date Accessed
THC713	Commission’s Key Findings Report	19.03.26
THC714	Planning Circular 4/2025 Planning Obligations and Good Neighbour Agreements	19.03.26
THC715	Infrastructure Strategy 2027-2037	19.03.26
THC716	Infrastructure Investment Plan (IIP) 2021-22 to 2025-26	19.03.26
THC717	Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal	19.03.26
THC718	Highland Delivery Programme	19.03.26
THC719	Highland Housing Land Audit (HLA)	19.03.26
THC720	Highland School Roll Forecasts	19.03.26
THC721	Highland Investment Plan	19.03.26
THC722	HOIP 2024–2027	19.03.26
THC723	Developer Contributions Supplementary Guidance	19.03.26
THC724	Highland Learning Estate Strategy (LES)	19.03.26
THC725	School Core Facts Summary	19.03.26
THC726	HIP Progress Update - Full Council Mar 2025	19.03.26
THC727	Highland School Roll Forecasts	19.03.26
THC728	SRF methodology	19.03.26
THC729	Gaelic Language Plan 2024–2029	19.03.26

	THC730	GME catchment areas	19.03.26
	THC731	High Life Highland	19.03.26
	THC732	Developer Contributions report to E&I Committee May 2023	19.03.26
	THC733	Inverness East Development Brief	19.03.26
	THC734	Highland Council Protocol for Identifying Developer Contributions	19.03.26
	THC735	Local Living Mapping	19.03.26
	THC736	Scottish Water Site Readiness Indicator	19.03.26
	THC737	Charter for Household Recycling	19.03.26
	THC738	Waste Management (Scotland) Regulations 2012	19.03.26
	THC739	Long-term Waste Management Communities & Place Committee Report	16.05.26v
	THC740	long term solutions for waste management	19.03.26
	THC741	Scottish Government Strategic Aim - Decarbonise Disposal	19.03.26
	THC742	Scotland's circular economy and waste route map to 2030	19.03.26
	THC743	Waste data by SEPA	19.03.26
	THC744	economic assessments of climate change impacts in the Highland Region	19.03.26
	THC745	Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Plan 2022	19.03.26
	THC746	Campervan and motorhome waste disposal guidance for independent developments	19.03.26
	THC747	Scottish Waste Environmental Footprint tool (SWEFT)	19.03.26
	THC748	2022 Household Waste Results Summary	19.03.26
	THC749	Making Things Last	19.03.26
	THC750	Environment Strategy: initial monitoring framework	19.03.26
	THC751	SEPA Household Waste Management 2024	19.03.26
	THC752	SEPA Waste Site Capacity 2024	19.03.26
	THC753	Scottish Government 2021 Digital Strategy	19.03.26
	THC754	Scottish Government Forging our Digital Future with 5G: A Strategy for Scotland	19.03.26
	THC755	2025 Digital strategy for Scotland	19.03.26
	THC756	Sustainable Digital Public Services Delivery Plan 2025-28	19.03.26
	THC757	Digital telecommunications: planning guidance	19.03.26

THC758	Local Broadband Information	19.03.26
THC759	Connected Nations update: Spring 2025	19.03.26
THC760	Scottish Government R100 Data Insights	19.03.26
THC761	Project Gigabit	19.03.26
THC762	Broadband Infrastructure in Scotland: Public Review	19.03.26
THC763	Gigabit Capable Broadband Connectivity Indicator	19.03.26
THC764	Gigabit Infrastructure Subsidy Scheme	19.03.26
THC765	Gigabit in Scotland Premises Subsidy Control - Highland	19.03.26
THC766	Gigabit Scotland Public Review Report Revision 3	19.03.26
THC767	Digital Connectivity Report to Full Council May 2025	19.03.26
THC768	COHI Meeting in May 2025	19.03.26
THC769	Health & Social Care Service Renewal Framework	19.03.26
THC770	NHS Highland Strategy 2022-2027	19.03.26
THC771	NHS Hospitals	19.03.26
THC772	GP Practices	19.03.26
THC773	Pharmacies	19.03.26
THC774	GP Workforce and Practice List Sizes	19.03.26
THC775	UK best practice	19.03.26
THC776	NHS Highland GP Practice Boundaries	19.03.26
THC777	GP list size and demographics information	19.03.26
THC778	Culloden Medical Practice & Culloden Surgery	19.03.26
THC779	NHS Highland Workforce statistics June 2025	19.03.26
THC780	NHS Highland List of Dental Practitioners	19.03.26
THC781	NHS Highland consultant workforce data	19.03.26
THC782	Care homes across the Highland HSCP area	19.03.26
THC783	Care Homes for the Elderly	19.03.26
THC784	Independent Care Sector Home Overview and Collaborative Support Update 7 May 2025	19.03.26
THC785	Social Care Insights Dashboard 2022/23	19.03.26
THC786	Call for Development Sites	19.03.26
THC787	Highland Council Burial Grounds Map	19.03.26
THC788	Bereavement Service Update Report 2025	19.03.26
THC789	Public Health Scotland Death Rates by Council Area	19.03.26

	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 Infrastructure and other topics including: • **Chapter 4: Climate Change and Energy** • **Chapter 5 Nature and Environment** • **Chapter 6: Coastal Development and Aquaculture** • **Chapter 7: Flood Risk Management** • **Chapter 8: Economy, Business, Tourism and Productive Places** • **Chapter 9: Housing** • **Chapter 10: Transport** • **Chapter 12: Historic Assets, Brownfield Land and Empty Buildings** • **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

11.1 This chapter presents the Council's evidence in relation to infrastructure capacity, other than transport which has been detailed separately in **Chapter 10: Transport.** 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:

- **Context and Approach**
- **Education**
- **Community Facilities**
- **Water and Waste Water**
- **Waste Management**
- **Digital Infrastructure**
- **Health and Social Care Needs**

<u>Context and Approach</u>

11.2 NPF4 Policy 18 Infrastructure First seeks to ensure that infrastructure considerations are integral to development planning and decision making, and potential impacts on infrastructure and infrastructure needs are understood early in the development planning processes as part of an evidence-based approach.

11.3 Policy 18 of NPF4 stemmed from work commissioned by the Scottish Government and completed by the Infrastructure Commission for Scotland in July 2020. The Commission's Key Findings Report set out a new, logical, coordinated and comprehensive approach to future infrastructure planning and investment across Scotland. Unfortunately, the Report's laudable recommendations have only been partially implemented and the principle of the approach has slowly been eroded by decisions taken by all infrastructure providers since. This section explains why the erosion of the principle of a coordinated approach to infrastructure investment makes it very challenging for any local planning authority and particularly Highland to implement Policy 18 through its LDP.

11.4 Moreover, this NPF4 Policy 18 approach has not, to date, been translated into development management decision making, court decisions or most importantly the capital programmes of infrastructure providers. This is perhaps unsurprising because the wording of NPF4 Policy 18, despite its title, doesn't justify the refusal of a planning application in a case where there is insufficient capacity in all relevant infrastructure and local facility networks to support that proposal. Sufficient capacity does not need to be created first for an application to be supported. It should however be stressed that there is case law based on previous planning decisions within Scotland and the UK that have informed the criteria with both Policy 18 and the updated Planning Circular 4/2025 Planning Obligations and Good Neighbour Agreements. The Circular also provides more information on the criteria for a developer obligation to meet. Making reference to this will assist in ensuring that all stakeholders understand where developer contributions can reasonably be sought. At best, the policy requires proposals to "contribute to" and "address the impacts on" infrastructure capacity issues. "Contributing to" and mitigation to "address" are limited by the 5 planning obligation tests listed in part b) of Policy 18. It is sufficient for a developer to mitigate an infrastructure capacity issue as far as it is proportionate to do so relative to the impact of that developer's proposal. Policy 18 does not require a comprehensive and effective solution to every infrastructure capacity issue prior to a permission being issued or development commencing. Put simply, all necessary infrastructure capacity does not have to come first.

11.5 This national planning policy context suggests that a new-style LDP that promoted a different, "embargo on development unless all infrastructure capacity is provided first" approach would be deemed incompatible with NPF4 and therefore be amended/rejected by a DPEA Reporter at Examination and/or by Scottish Ministers. Instead, this NPF4 context implies that at Gate Check stage, an LPA should gather evidence on infrastructure capacity, how that may change over time, and how future development can best be matched to where spare capacity exists or can most effectively be added by new investment whether that is by the public or private sector. This chapter explains how the Council has done this. It does not pretend that all future development in Highland will be supported by sufficient infrastructure capacity from day one of its completion. Such an approach would also be impracticable because of how infrastructure providers now operate in Scotland (and the wider UK).

11.6 Decisions on infrastructure capacity investment in Highland are made by a myriad of public and private organisations. There is very little spatial and temporal coordination of these decisions and investment. Like different statutory undertakers digging up the same street for different purposes over a short time period without coordinating those works then so too the UK Government, Scottish Government, Highland Council, Scottish Water, other public agencies and the private sector, for the most part, don't coordinate their capital investment. This is understandable to a degree because each organisation has a separate capital programme, different political priorities, different investment drivers, different legacy problems, a different need and demand profile, and different legislative imperatives. For example, 95% of Scottish Water's capital programme is about maintenance of ageing pipe networks and maintaining water quality standards rather than supporting new development proposals. The electricity local distribution network providers and Scottish Water provide local network improvements on a "first-developer-in-pays-first" principle rather than via a comprehensive assessment of need and demand for their networks from new development sites. Similarly, Transport Scotland, NHS Highland and the Highland Council's Education Team concentrate on addressing the legacy of existing physical assets in less than optimum physical condition rather than strategically, adding new, future-proofed assets to support a coordinated spatial growth strategy. In many cases, because of expenditure constraints, adding infrastructure capacity to support new development is made on a "just-in-time" principle or in a reactive way as existing assets become unacceptably overloaded. Given this context, very few if any settlements in Highland have spare existing or programmed future capacity in all existing infrastructure and facility networks. There may be capacity for new development in the sewage works but not in the primary school. There may be capacity in the local road network but not in the local electricity distribution network.

11.7 Moreover, where spare capacity does exist it is not always in places where people want to live, work, be educated or enjoy recreation. Any comprehensive infrastructure and/or facility planning model should look at both supply and demand for that provision. In Highland, there are marked geographic differences in development pressure. Therefore, it is no surprise that there is a geographic mismatch between the supply and demand for most networks. For example, most Inverness City schools are close to or over capacity whereas most remoter area schools are threatened with closure. A "social engineering" spatial strategy to disperse economic opportunity and population to the remoter parts of Highland has been tried for the last 60 years but has been mostly unsuccessful. Put simply, moving people to where existing spare network capacity exists solely due to the fact that it exists, isn't a practicable spatial strategy.

11.8 Given the context explained above, the Council believes that the only logical way to approach the issue of infrastructure is to gather and assess all available and relevant evidence on the supply and demand for each infrastructure and facility network and then evolve a practicable spatial strategy that best matches new development locations to where spare capacity exists, is committed in short-term capital programmes or can be added at least cost to the public and private sector. This Chapter follows such an approach.

11.9 Infrastructure investment in Highland is allocated and delivered through various mechanisms, from Scottish Government, UK Government, local authorities and private sector. The Council are aware that a recent consultation has been launched on the Infrastructure Strategy 2027-2037 and will require to develop a policy framework for infrastructure provision cognisant of how this strategy is implemented in practice if progressed during the lifespan of the HLDP.

National Infrastructure Investment

11.10 NPF4 defines a set of National Developments which will support the delivery of the spatial strategy. LDPs are required to identify and support National Developments relevant to their areas. National Developments within Highland include:

- Energy Innovation Development on the Islands
- Pumped Hydro Storage
- Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure
- Circular Economy Materials Management Facilities
- National Walking, Cycling and Wheeling Network
- A Digital Fibre Network

11.11 However, many of these are not focused on providing additional infrastructure capacity directly to support housing and economic growth in Highland. For example, improvements to strategic renewable electricity generation and transmission infrastructure including pumped storage hydro are driven by Scottish and UK national aims of energy security, carbon emissions reductions and moving generated energy to areas of higher demand not about creating energy network capacity for new Highland homes and businesses. More positively, NPF4 referenced investment in the national walking, cycling, wheeling and digital fibre networks has had a direct benefit to Highland in enhancing local development potential.

11.12 Scottish Government's Infrastructure Investment Plan (IIP) 2021-22 to 2025-26 set out the national infrastructure pipeline for capital investment and delivery within the timeframe (now extended to 2026-27). Specific major projects included in the 2021 IIP for Highland include A-road transport improvements (see **Chapter 10: Transport**), Highland Elective Care Centre, HMP Highland (replacement facility), Inverness and Highland City Region Deal (IHCRD) and capital grant funding available to local authorities for infrastructure across numerous workstreams and programmes. The Scottish Government draft national Infrastructure Strategy for consultation from January 2026, asserts that "affordable housing is critical infrastructure" which contrasts somewhat with the definition of essential infrastructure within NPF4 which indicates that housing is something separate, and that infrastructure is required to serve. The Council considers that in rural areas, the perceived distinction between the two is blurred. Access to housing in rural areas provides access to community life within the Highlands, and sustains communities, and supports them from the risks of depopulation.

11.13 The Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal sets out a 10 year joint investment agreement between the Highland Council, UK Government and Scottish Government. It was signed in January 2017 and projects were intended for completion by end of January 2027. Many projects have been implemented but key ones remain to be taken forward, notably improvements to strategic road infrastructure at Inverness crucial to the expansion of the City of Inverness.

Highland Infrastructure Investment – LDP Delivery Programme

11.14 Like other local planning authorities, Highland's list of infrastructure deemed necessary to underpin the implementation of its existing LDPs is set out in its Highland Delivery Programme. The Council's previous three Delivery Programmes for each of its LDPs have now been consolidated into a single Highland Delivery Programme. It is structured into three sections corresponding to the existing area LDPs. The Programme signposts for developers and communities the infrastructure commitments and requirements for each main settlement and those relevant to the wider spatial strategy. Where known, timescales, financial amounts, locations and funding partners are specified.

11.15 The Highland Delivery Programme is also aligned with the latest Highland Housing Land Audit (HLA) which predicts the phasing of new housing and therefore the likely level of future developer contributions for each main settlement. The Programme also takes account of the latest Highland School Roll Forecasts, which outline the anticipated changes to pupil rolls in primary and secondary schools in Highland which in turn affect where education developer contributions are triggered.

11.16 One of the most critical aspects of infrastructure investment to stress is that in Highland, a wider package of investment mechanisms is required to provide adequate investment into diverse communities. With substantial areas having no presence from major volume-housebuilders, the Council has long recognised that alternate plans are therefore required, beyond the Delivery Programme alone. The following sections therefore set out A range of measures underway.

Highland Investment Plan

11.17 The Highland Council's own capital programme has recently been rebranded as the Highland Investment Plan (HIP). It forms part of the Highland Delivery Programme referenced previously. The HIP is subject to regular review with any significant amendments in turn being reflected within the Highland Delivery Programme and is also intended to align and support the three strategic priorities of the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan (HOIP 2024–2027). The HIP does reference partner funding such as Scottish Government grant for new schools and there is a stated desire for asset reconfiguration and co-location with other public sector partners in the new buildings created by the Plan's investment. The Plan commits £2.1 billion of capital funding over a twenty-year period, based on the ring fencing of 2% council tax per annum, or an equivalent revenue stream. These funds will be capitalised to create an investment fund that will be used to tackle the major capital challenges that Highland Council faces: transport and roads; schools and community facilities; depots and offices – as part of work towards a single public estate and integrated community operating model. One of the key objectives is to initiate a programme of improvements to the school estate recognising that 92 of the 196 Highland operational schools currently rated as "C – Poor" for condition and/or suitability, which is discussed in **Education** below.

Developer Contributions

11.18 The Highland Council Developer Contributions Supplementary Guidance (DCSG) sets out Highland Council's approach to mitigating the impacts of development on services and infrastructure by seeking fair and realistic developer contributions to the delivery of such facilities. This guidance forms part of the Council's approved development plan in terms of sections 24 and 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended.

11.19 The DCSG is applicable across the HwLDP area and still has some relevance within the Highland Council part of the Cairngorms National Park Authority area because the Council provides education, waste and transport services within that area.

11.20 The Council recognises that the DCSG will fall on the adoption of the new HLDP and therefore wishes to embody the principles if not all of the detail of its future approach to infrastructure developer contributions within the new HLDP. Table 11:1 summarises existing developer contribution requirements by development type, scale and type of infrastructure.

Table 11:1 Development Types that require Developer Contributions in Highland

<table>
<tr><th>Development Type</th><th>Schools</th><th>Community Facilities</th><th>Affordable Housing</th><th>Transport</th><th>Green Infrastructure</th><th>Water and Waste *1</th><th>Public Art</th></tr>
<tr><td>Residential *2</td><td>Yes</td><td>Yes (4 or more homes) *3</td><td>Yes (4 or more homes) *4</td><td>Yes</td><td>Yes (4 or more homes)</td><td>Yes</td><td>Yes</td></tr>
<tr><td>Business</td><td colspan="3" rowspan="3">No</td><td colspan="4" rowspan="3">Yes</td></tr>
<tr><td>Industrial (inc. energy)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Retail</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="8">*1 - For all scales of projects, water/waste connections are required and these utility costs are not usually covered by developer contributions. These should be budgeted for separately, forming part of the developer’s project costs. Scottish Water recommends that the developer submits a Pre Development Enquiry Form so that these network costs can be budget for.
*2 - Including affordable housing and any tourist accommodation suitable for permanent residential occupancy.
*3 - Developments of less than 4 homes which form part if a wider site are required to contribute towards community facilities.
*4 - Developments of less than 4 homes which form part of a wider site, and all homes in the Cairngorms National Park, are required to contribute.</td></tr>
</table>

Education

11.21 Table 11:2 illustrates the number of schooling facilities across Highland regions and divides the education estate into a number of categories; High Schools, Primary Schools, Nurseries, Additional Support Needs (ASN) and Gaelic Medium Education (GME) which will be explored in detail.

Table 11:2 School distribution across Highland

Highland Region	High Schools	Primary Schools	Nurseries	ASN	GME
Badenoch & Strathspey	2	8	7		
Caithness	2	16	12	1	
Inverness	6	36	34	1	1
Lochaber	4	23	15		1
Nairn	1	4	4		
Ross & Cromarty	7	45	35	1	
Skye & Lochalsh	2	20	16		1
Sutherland	4	14	10		
Total	**30**	**166**	**133**	**3**	**3**

Highland's Current Learning Estate Strategy (LES)

11.22 In common with other authorities, the Council is directing its education facility capacity investment into new, integrated (often ages 3-18 campus) provision and/or where it is most needed to improve the physical condition and/or suitability of older school buildings. As described in **Context and Approach**, future-proofing for education needs triggered by future housing development is a less important factor. Indeed, Scottish Government grant levels for new high schools in Highland have been limited to like-for-like replacements in capacity terms not for future-proofing. Any additional "headroom" is to be funded from additional Council capital allocations or more commonly Council borrowing the loan charges for which are met by "income" from future developer contributions. One exception to this approach is the new primary school envisaged for the Tornagrain but this has been necessitated by a significant breach of the capacity of the existing primary school at nearby Croy not provided in advance on an "infrastructure first" basis. More prudently, many Highland primary schools are now constructed in a phased, modular way so additional wings can be added off a general/common purpose rooms core. From the outset, a large enough site is purchased and serviced to allow for such phased expansion. This is a principle that the Council encourages other infrastructure providers to adopt and the HLDP will include sufficiently sized allocations to support this approach.

11.23 The geographic mismatch between the supply and demand for Highland education infrastructure is very challenging when combined with the condition/suitability issue. Some of the oldest school properties in the remoter parts of Highland have declining rolls. Physical condition issues justify investment but growth issues do not. A lack of development pressure also means little or no prospect of education developer contributions. Despite this, the Council wishes to invest in all its communities partly in the hope that new public investment will help revitalise more fragile settlements. Accordingly, capital funding has been allocated for 11 schools at Beauly, Charleston, Dingwall, Dunvegan, Fortrose, Inverness High, and Thurso in March 2025. The previous capital programme approved in 2023 included projects at Broadford Primary, Nairn Academy, Tain Campus, and a new primary school at Tornagrain. Construction work is underway on the Nairn and Tain projects. Only the Tornagrain Primary and Charleston Academy investments are required as a direct result of new housing growth.

11.24 The Highland Learning Estate Strategy (LES) sets out the principles and priorities to drive the development of the learning estate across Highland. One of the key objectives of the LES is a programme of improvements to the Council's school estate that seeks to bring all schools to, or sustain them at, B/B ratings or better for condition/suitability, as 92 of the Council's 197 operational schools currently rated as "C – Poor" for condition and/or suitability.

11.25 LDP Guidance for NPF4 Policy 18, requires LDPs and Delivery Programmes to be integrated infrastructure first. This includes capacity, condition, needs and deliverability. The condition of Highland's education estate is an important evidence consideration which will be required alongside capacity. Despite whether these schools will be eligible for developer contributions or not.

11.26 Table 11:3 highlights the condition and suitability of both primary and secondary schools across Highland. With the most common condition and suitability score for primary schools being categorised as B. For secondary schools there is a much broader mix of categories.

Table 11:3 Education condition, suitability by category (School Core Facts Summary)

	Condition				Suitability			
	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D
Primary Schools	28	85	52	0	27	82	56	0
% of total	17%	51.5 %	31.5 %	0%	16%	50%	34%	0%
Secondary Schools	10	7	11	2	11	7	12	0
% of total	33%	23%	37%	7%	37%	23%	40%	0%

11.27 The LES also aligns with the local priorities set out within the HIP vision for developing its learning estate. This means that HIP school investments are generally in locations where improved school estates are needed that would have been unlikely to have been provided by developer contributions owing to the occupancy of the schools remaining below the qualifying threshold of 90%.

11.28 The methodology and rationale for selecting the schools for investment under HIP are:

- those with the poorest condition and suitability ratings as shown in the School Core Facts Summary.
- instances where multiple schools with poorest condition and suitability ratings in one town can be improved in tandem under a joint programme.
- Instances where joint use of assets and community facilities can be provided with other agencies through Points of Delivery (PODs).

11.29 The HIP schools committed for initial investment, as agreed by a Committee of the Full Council on 27 March 2025 are therefore:

- Dingwall: 1 Primary (over 400 pupils) and 1 Special School (over 50 pupils); cost range £40M to £50M
- Thurso: 1 Secondary School (around 750 pupil) and 3 Primary Schools (over 600 pupils); cost range £80M to £100M

11.30 A new generation of community facilities is envisioned for the Highlands, with Points of Delivery (PODs) seeing a range of public services brought together in a single location. Works will range from relatively minor improvements to fabric and retrofitting, to major renovations and new build schools, linked to our Community Points of Service Delivery (POD) approach to future delivery of Council and partner services across all of our Highland Communities.

School Roll Forecast (SRF)

11.31 Quantifying the supply and demand for Highland's existing and future education infrastructure is done through Highland School Roll Forecasts (SRF). These are re-run on an annual basis using the latest school intake figures the latest Housing Land Audit site programming assumptions and taking account of population, household, GP registrations, house completions, school capacity and pupil product data. The 15-year forecasts for each school are published on the Council's website. Each forecast contains a Red-Amber-Green analysis of how close the forecasted roll is to the 90% physical capacity of the school's building(s). 90% is chosen to allow sufficient lead time for a new capital programme project to be worked up. Also, many schools find it difficult to function without at least 10% spare physical capacity. Additional space is required for unforeseen or regular operational issues such as the need to divide classes or groups of pupils for short periods of time. The SRF methodology provides a simplified approach to determining the effect of residential development on the school estate. A baseline forecast is updated and published annually, which also acts as a template that can now be used for modelling future school rolls based on testing various potential development and school estate management scenarios.

11.32 The annual Housing Land Audit (HLA), further detailed in **Chapter 9: Housing,** provides the base information for annual SRF's. Since 2016, the HLA has been prepared in parallel with the creation of the annual SRF's. In addition to programmed build out rates for LDP site allocations, allowance for smaller windfall development sites is also applied to the forecasts. Using the residential development information, estimated build out rates are aggregated by primary catchment and an updated windfall contribution is added to give a year-by-year additional housing count for each. These values are combined with the Pupil Product Ratios to predict the number of additional pupils expected per school for each year forecast. Total school rolls forecasted are reported against school capacities to highlight current and future school's capacity constraints or where schools have excess capacity.

11.33 The latest 2024/2025 SRF for each Highland school is supplied and owing to the number of over 300 schools and nurseries, these are not included in the body of the evidence report, although 53 are forecast to breach 90% physical capacity for at least one year of the 15 year forecasting period and 30 are currently operating at above 90% capacity, with some in fact operating well above 100% of their intended capacity as highlighted in Table 11:4. By contrast, 279 schools/nurseries are not anticipated to breach 90% within the next 15 years, and 176 are forecast to see their school roll decline which are spread throughout much of the remote rural and fragile areas discussed in **Chapter 8: Economy, Business, Tourism and Productive Places**. Unsurprisingly, physical capacity issues are most prevalent in the Inner Moray Firth area where development pressure is higher than elsewhere in Highland.

Table 11:4 Highland Schools already operating above 90% of capacity (SRF)

School Name	Type	Current Capacity
Charleston Academy	Secondary	94%
Beauly Primary	Primary	95%
Kinmylies Primary	Primary	110%
Kirkhill Primary	Primary	90%
Tomnacross Primary	Primary	95%
Kirkhill Primary (Nursery)	Nursery	110%
Croy Primary	Primary	119%
Croy Primary (Nursery)	Nursery	90%
Dingwall Primary	Primary	94%
Avoch Primary	Primary	96%
Avoch Primary (Nursery)	Nursery	166%
Glenurquhart Primary	Primary	99%
Carrbridge Primary	Primary	100%
South Lodge Primary (Nursery)	Nursery	91%
Inverness Royal Academy	Secondary	90%
Lochardil Primary	Primary	103%
Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Inbhir Nis (Nursery)	Nursery	148%
Hilton Primary (Nursery)	Nursery	94%
Holm Primary (Nursery)	Nursery	105%
Lochardil Primary (Nursery)	Nursery	106%
Millburn Academy	Secondary	105%
Raigmore Primary (Nursery)	Nursery	220%
Auldearn Primary (Nursery)	Nursery	100%
Cawdor Primary (Nursery)	Nursery	90%
Millbank Primary (Nursery)	Nursery	95%
Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Phort Rìgh	Primary	91%
Craighill Primary	Primary	132%
Knockbreck Primary (Tain)	Primary	104%
Miller Academy Primary (Nursery)	Nursery	115%
Wick High School	Secondary	96%

Gaelic Medium Education (GME)

11.34 The Council has a focus on increasing Gaelic usage and the number of Gaelic speakers in its Gaelic Language Plan 2024–2029. The Council continues to be committed to providing and enhancing GME, recognising this as one of the key drivers in sustaining and developing Gaelic. Education is one of the four themes of the Gaelic Language Plan 2024–2029 where the Council seeks to:

- Deliver continued promotion and growth in GME and GLE at all levels including delivery of Gaelic as a modern language, with 70% of primary schools providing Gaelic as an L2 and L3 to increase the provision of Gaelic across the authority.
- Expand the delivery of GME with increased secondary subject delivery, creation of new standalone schools and new early years, primary and secondary provision.

11.35 The growth of GME has been rapid and successful nationally, and the Council is currently the largest provider of GME, using both units within mainstream schools and standalone GME schools. Despite this however, GME schools/units have not until now been included within the formal developer contributions process, as GME schools/units previously had no formally defined catchment areas that could be used in operational terms, and it was previously considered challenging to predict how increased development could be modelled to forecast the impact on GME schools/units specifically. The current SRF assumption is that 100% of projected pupils from new housing go to the mainstream school for that catchment. A new process would be needed to more accurately reflect pupil behaviour and that may open up the possibility of taking contributions for GME.

11.36 There is anecdotal evidence of parents wishing to place their child(ren) within a GME school/unit not only for the benefits of a bilingual early education but also because, often, class sizes and therefore pupil/teacher ratios are lower relative to the adjoining mainstream school. Such parent placement requests are very difficult to predict because these comparative pupil/teacher ratios are very fluid. In some instances, parents simply wish to use GME because the primary school is newer or closer than the mainstream alternative.

11.37 In 2023, the Council completed statutory consultations to create GME catchment areas for 15 of the 20 primary schools in the Highland area that offer GME. Table 11:5 illustrates that GME enrolment is growing in numerous schools and represents a significant share of total school occupancy, in both the three standalone schools and in the GME units.

Table 11:5 Gaelic Education Data Summary and Capacity 2024

School Name	Total P1–7	GME P1–7	% GME	% Δ 23–24	Planning Capacity	% Occupancy
Acharacle Primary	51	39	76%	-1%	75	68%
Broadford Primary	62	34	55%	+3%	125	49%
Bun-Sgoil Shlèite	53	41	77%	-4%	100	51%
Bun-Sgoil Stafainn	33	22	67%	-11%	50	70%
Craighill Primary	202	49	24%	—	150	131%
Dingwall Primary	420	70	17%	+2%	442	94%
Dunvegan Primary	50	23	46%	+4%	100	50%
Gairloch Primary	48	14	29%	+7%	124	40%
Glenurquhart Primary	151	16	11%	—	150	98%
Kilmuir Primary	16	13	81%	+12%	74	22%
Lochcarron Primary	44	14	32%	—	100	44%
Mallaig Primary	61	25	41%	—	99	66%
Millbank Primary	254	33	13%	—	332	76%
Mount Pleasant Primary	166	8	5%	—	243	69%
Newtomore Primary	107	37	35%	—	50	88%
Plockton Primary	52	37	71%	—	75	69%
Ullapool Primary	118	70	59%	—	172	68%
Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar*	151	151	100%	—	150	101%
Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Phort Rìgh*	172	172	100%	—	188	91%
Bun-sgoil Ghaidhlig Inbhir Nis*	220	220	100%	—	281	78%

** Standalone GME school*

11.38 In reviewing HLDP policy on developer contributions, it is considered that with formal catchment areas in place and with evidence of GME occupancy and growth, it would be possible to develop a framework for including GME schools within developer contributions. However, the overall level of contributions per pupil should not be increased. The catchment pupil population both existing and projected should be compared to the education facility capacity (both mainstream and GME) available to serve it. Contributions would be sought for any necessary additional capacity directly attributable to new development whether that additional capacity was required via "mainstream" or GME accommodation. This may be linked to the formal designation of Gaelic Areas of Significance as discussed in **Chapter 8: Business, Economy, Tourism and Productive Places**.

11.39 The capacity, condition and suitability of standalone GME schools is illustrated in Table 11:6.

Table 11:6 GME school condition suitability and capacity (School Core Facts Summary)

School	Condition	Suitability	Pupil roll	Planning capacity	% Occupancy
Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar	A	A	156	221	71
Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Phort Rìgh	A	A	169	188	90
Bun-sgoil Ghaidhlig Inbhir Nis	A	A	230	281	82
Bun-Sgoil Shleite	B	B	53	100	53

ASN

11.40 The capacity, condition and suitability of standalone ASN schools across Highland are illustrated in Table 11:7.

Table 11:7 ASN school condition suitability and capacity (School Core Facts Summary)

School	Condition	Suitability	Pupil roll	Planning capacity	% Occupancy
Drummond	A	A	116	N/A	N/A
St Clement's	C	C	54	N/A	N/A
St Duthus	A	B	26	N/A	N/A
The Bridge	B	B	0	N/A	N/A

Nurseries

11.41 There is increasing pressure on Highland's nursery estate. This results not just from increasing numbers of children but additionally when there are increased Care Inspectorate requirements for space and capacity which results in some nurseries emerging as overcapacity. The Council does not currently take consistent developer contributions directly for nursery accommodation even though new development impacts upon its capacity. However, there is Scottish Government grant assistance to provide for the expansion of nursery accommodation that in Highland was and still is often within primary schools. Several Highland primary schools have capacity issues because of the lack of a separate building within which to accommodate nursery pupils.

11.42 The Council intends to continue to provide separate nursery accommodation as grant assistance and developer contributions allow. Such provision usually frees up spare capacity within the associated primary school which can support new development. Predicting the number and location of nursery accommodation demand is another reason not to formalise developer contributions towards its provision as there is conflicting data on this issue. As demonstrated in **Chapter 9: Housing**, Highland birth numbers are on a downward trend but the age profile of net (in-)migration has seen an increase in the 0-5 age cohort. Potential changes to preschool hours entitlement through national expansions also result in this being an evolving area than is difficult to plan for in current circumstances.

Home Schooling

11.43 Highland records of home schooling are not stored centrally in SEEMiS, the Council's formal education records management tool, however, each area retains their own list of home-schooled students. Families that move into Highland do not have to inform the authority that their children are home-schooled. This may result in a less accurate figure of home schooling known and understood by the Council, and for that reason no adjustments are made to the Council's SRF modelling to account for trends in home schooling.

Developer contributions towards education

11.44 Through the DCSG, all residential development, including affordable homes is currently required to contribute to school estate infrastructure where capacity constraints are identified, with the exception of one-bedroom homes, tourist accommodation and some other types of shared or institutional accommodation. School contributions are typically ringfenced to the individual institution. Contributions are taken according to three levels of contribution; 1 and two classroom extensions and major extension new school / costs. Land costs to support major extensions or new school provision are collected on an area specific basis according to each area LDP delivery programme.

Highland Investment Plan (HIP)

11.45 The HIP is a long-term investment programme, which incorporates the commitments contained in the existing, approved, core five-year capital programme and adds to new investment commitments in roads and transport, as well as a longer-term strategy for the school, depot and office estate. The HIP is part of the wider drive towards Council asset reconfiguration, and one of the key drivers of the delivery plan. This is in recognition of the number of assets that are in poor condition or no longer retain their prior functionality.

11.46 The HIP requires that we relinquish assets as required, refurbish those we are committed to, and create new builds as part of a place making plan. One of the key objectives of HIP is to initiate a programme of improvements to Highland's school estate, with 92 of Highlands 196 operational schools currently rated as "C – Poor" for condition and/or suitability.

Tertiary education

11.47 **Chapter 9: Housing** including the results of the 2026 HNDA, provides an assessment of student accommodation needs connected with the University of the Highlands and Islands. Highland is well served in terms of the size and location of those facilities as shown in Table 11:8. Most are within modern purpose-built accommodation. With student numbers not expected to increase significantly then there is unlikely to be any significant lack of tertiary education infrastructure capacity requiring to be addressed through the new HLDP.

11.48 The Highland HNDA includes assessment of student accommodation needs from UHI and other facilities across Highland. Once complete, the HNDA will inform capacity numbers of student accommodation across Highland. Further details of which can be found in **Chapter 9: Housing.**

Table 11:8 Tertiary Education Settings in Highland

Tertiary Education Facilities	Location
Alness Campus (UHI)	Alness
Auchtertyre Campus (UHI)	Auchtertyre
Scottish School of Forestry	Balloch
Broadford Campus (UHI)	Broadford
Dornoch Campus (UHI)	Dornoch
Fort William Campus (UHI)	Fort William
Gairloch Campus (UHI)	Gairloch
Halkirk Campus (UHI)	Halkirk
Inverness Campus (UHI)	Inverness
Highland Theological Collage (UHI)	Dingwall
Kilchoan Campus (UHI)	Kilchoan, Lochaber
Kinlochleven Campus (UHI)	Kinlochleven
Mallaig Campus (UHI)	Mallaig
Portree Campus (UHI)	Portree
Sabhal Mòr Ostaig (UHI)	Sleat, Isle of Skye
Strontian Campus (UHI)	Strontian, Lochaber
Thurso Campus (UHI)	Thurso
Ullapool Campus (UHI)	Ullapool

Community Facilities

Infrastructure

11.49 Highland has over 800 facilities that can be broadly defined as community facilities, those we are aware of are listed in **THC133**. These range from libraries and leisure centres operated by High Life Highland, to town, village and church halls and other privately operated clubs, recreation and sports facilities. A number of community facilities also serve a dual purpose as cultural and creative facilities, for example museums and galleries, these are explained further in **Chapter 8: Economy, Business, Tourism and Productive Places**.

Condition

11.50 Due to the vast number of facilities throughout Highland and that are owned and operated by numerous different organisations, comprehensive data was not available on their condition. It is known however that the condition of community facilities varies throughout Highland. The Council are aware that some facilities operated by High Life Highland are likely to require investment for maintenance and/or expansion purposes, these are highlighted in **THC133**. Some information on condition is also provided in validated LPPs, a summary is provided below within the **Summary of Local Place Plan Priorities** section of this chapter.

11.51 A number of community facilities in Highland have benefitted from funding from a range of sources, including Community Regeneration Funding, developer contributions and Ward Discretionary Funding, a summary is provided within **THC132.** Funding has been used for various purposes, for example towards increased capacity, condition, energy efficiency and accessibility improvements.

Current Approach to Developer Contributions

11.52 The Highland policy framework currently requires developments of four or more homes to contribute towards the enhancement or creation of new community facilities in areas where a deficiency has been identified.

11.53 The DCSG explains that contributions for indoor community facilities may be required for leisure/community centres, community halls or libraries. The catchment area for these contributions is usually based on secondary school catchment areas, however in some instances it is based on development brief boundaries. The rate per home for indoor community facilities is specified in the DCSG at £1,019 per home. This rate is based upon the costs for delivery of a typical community hall. This rate was increased in line with the Building Construction Information Service (BCIS) Index to £1,568 per home, following a report on Developer Contributions that was presented to the Council's Economy and Infrastructure Committee on 4 May 2023.

11.54 The DCSG explains that contributions towards outdoor facilities may be required for a district park or any specially designed playing surface, including: pitches for football; cricket; rugby; shinty; hockey; bowling greens; tennis courts; multi-sports courts; skate parks; cycle / athletics tracks; and associated land acquisition, ground enabling works, changing facilities, lighting, fencing, spectator areas and parking. Contributions are calculated on a case by case basis and the indoor facility contribution rate should be used as a guide.

11.55 The DCSG outlines that community facility contributions will either be required for indoor or outdoor facilities, but not typically for both. Where the need for both occurs, the higher of the two contribution rates applies. A number of development briefs for strategic expansion areas in Highland specify other contribution levels for new community facilities, both indoor and outdoor, for example the Inverness East Development Brief.

11.56 The use of developer contributions funds is limited to helping address known deficiencies in community facility provision in terms of capacity that require to be mitigated to serve future development, rather than condition or other improvements.

Needs

11.57 Community facilities in Highland that are known to have capacity deficiencies are contained within the Highland Delivery Programme. It identifies 35 community facilities where developer contributions may be sought, specifies the nature of expansion required and the catchment area liable for contributions. This is summarised in **THC179**. For a number of these facilities, developer contributions are committed from relevant developments and continue to be sought, these are shown in **THC132**.

11.58 Community facilities that are identified are currently largely limited to High Life Highland operated facilities. This is due to High Life Highland being a key operator of community facilities throughout Highland and delivering services on behalf of the Council. There is currently some scope for contributions to be distributed to other community facilities, as contained in the Highland Delivery Programme and **THC179** or in line with the Council’s Protocol for Identifying Developer Contributions. By taking into account evidence currently available, as well as new evidence as part of a future “Call for Ideas” there is scope for contributions to be sought towards a range of additional community facilities, and as part of this review potentially applying more ‘local’ catchment areas than secondary school catchment areas where appropriate.

11.59 Reviewing the evidence referenced above makes it clear that challenges remain to delivering new and improved community facilities. There is potential for faster delivery pathways by, for example the new plan introducing a requirement for all new homes to provide developer contributions towards community facilities where a deficiency has been identified and by reviewing the level of developer contributions sought. **Chapter 9 Housing** explains that small scale windfall development (1-3 homes) delivered an average of 258 units per year since 2012, this represents roughly one quarter of annual average annual completions in Highland. If these homes were required to contribute towards community facilities in appropriate circumstances, this would result in a significant uplift in the level of contributions received towards facilities.

11.60 As outlined above, the current developer contribution rate applied for community facility contributions is based upon the costs for delivery of a typical community hall. This rate may not always be reflective of actual costs of improvements to new and improved community facilities throughout Highland. It is important that this rate is reviewed and potential explored for a different range of rates that are tailored to specific named improvements.

11.61 LDP Guidance for Proposed Plans explains that provision for community facilities should be considered according to local need as evidenced through community engagement and assessed against existing provision in areas where there is no, limited or inaccessible provision. The Council will undertake a public Call for Ideas during 2026. A key element of the Call for Ideas will focus on seeking views on the adequacy of existing community facilities within settlements. This will help to inform the approach taken in the Proposed Plan.

11.62 Some data on existing provision and needs is currently available for many areas of Highland from validated LPPs and Area Place Plans (APPs). A summary of community facility needs from each Highland LPP is provided below within the **Summary of Local Place Plan Priorities** section of this chapter. It is clear from this review of LPPs that improved community facilities are a key priority for many Highland communities. This includes a desire for new and improved indoor and outdoor facilities to facilitate a range of services and activities. LPPs are not being prepared by all communities across Highland and therefore are an incomplete solution to identifying needs for community facilities across all of Highland that the Call for Ideas is anticipated to mitigate.

11.63 The Council's Local Living Mapping also helps to inform an assessment of existing community facilities provision. Figure 11:1 shows, in blue, areas that can be reached within a 10 minute (800m) walking distance from community facilities in Dingwall. This mapping can be amended and analysed for the HLDP area to help understand where those areas are that have no, limited or inaccessible provision. For Highland, it may be appropriate for varying accessibility thresholds to be applied based upon the nature of different geographical areas. Local Living Mapping is explained fully in **Chapter 13 Design, Wellbeing, Local Living and Placemaking**.

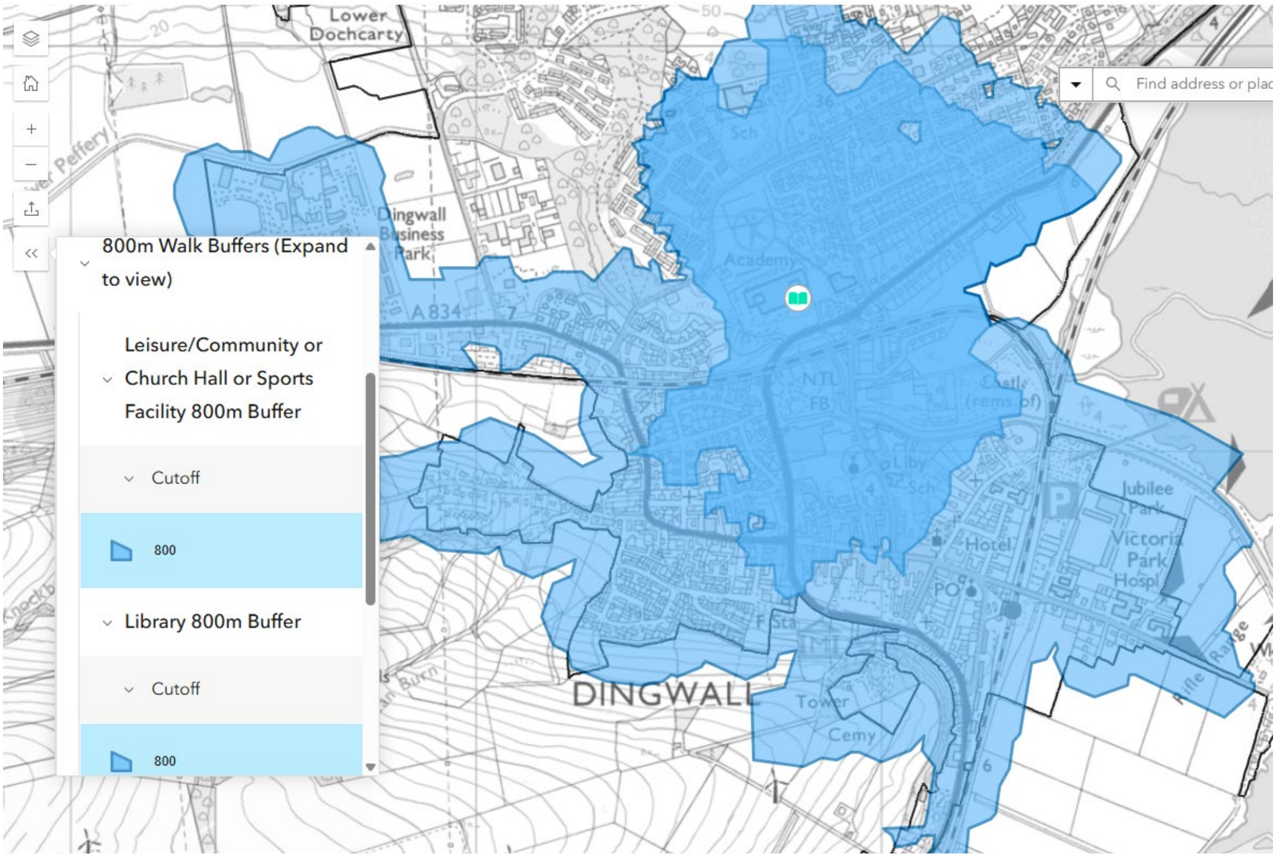

Figure 11:1 Highland Local Living Mapping - Walkable Community Facilities Extract

Water and Waste Water

Public Infrastructure

11.64 NPF4 Policy 22 seeks to support community resilience to climate change by avoiding development in areas of flood risk or locations which cannot be readily connected to the public water and sewerage network. Highland's water and sewerage network covers a vast geographic area and for the most part is dated and in need of refurbishment to maintain the resilience of water supply and to avoid adverse impacts on the water environment. Unsurprisingly therefore, Scottish Water has concentrated its past and is expected to focus its future capital investment programme on leakage reduction, replacing existing assets, improving the quality of discharged water and combining smaller individual watered and sewered network areas to improve resilience in the event of any "outage" in any individual network. As discussed in the context section, expanding the capacity of assets to support uncommitted (even though LDP allocated) housing and economic growth opportunities is not a priority.

11.65 Scottish Water is required by Scottish Government to support growth projects but only where these are committed to happen. For example, if the project has planning permission is controlled by a developer with a proven track record of delivery and there is an annual specified build programme then there is sufficient certainty for Scottish Water to amend its capital programme to create or add the necessary water and/or sewerage capacity. Even then there can be a significant lead-time. A first-time supply sewerage scheme typically takes 7 years from inception to completion. The public are often confused by the lack of Scottish Water objection as a consultee on a planning application where there is a capacity issue but Scottish Water do not object unless there's a direct physical impact on its underground plant.

11.66 Scottish Water have shared a separate evidence submission **(THC186)** detailing a Red Amber Green status of treatment works within sewered and watered areas. No works are categorised as red, the reason for this being that Scottish Water are publicly funded to ensure to provide growth for future development just ahead of need. Scottish Water are not providing capacity data by housing unit equivalent due to the extremely dynamic nature of their network which often requires site specific modelling. The Council notes that this submission indicates that amber status indicating potential future investment may be required for wastewater capacity at 155 wastewater treatment works (out of a total of 301) which are mapped and listed in full in **THC186** and include Allanfearn in Inverness City, Dingwall, Kirkhill and Kiltarlity among others.

11.67 For water treatment works, amber status indicating potential investment in water capacity may be required in 35 water treatment works (out of a total of 67) which are concentrated in Badenoch and Strathspey, Southeastern Sutherland around Dornoch, and various parts of Skye including Portree and Broadford. Again, these are mapped and listed in full in **THC186.**

11.68 **THC186** provides an indication of how close a water main or sewer connection is to a potential development site if not whether the associated pipe network or connected works has spare capacity. It provides a high-level indicative guide as to which sites may be most easily and cheaply connected to the water and sewerage networks. Where potential investment may be required, this doesn't mean development cannot be accommodated, it merely indicates that further work alongside close and early dialog is required to identify solutions.

11.69 A lack of comprehensive site-specific evidence on Scottish Water's water and sewerage capacity does not significantly hinder LDP preparation because of Scottish Government's instruction to Scottish Water to supply all committed housing and economic growth projects. Similarly, Scottish Water is very unlikely to object to an LDP allocation or planning application based on a lack of capacity in its works or network. Accordingly, the Council intends in preparing the Proposed Plan to use the available evidence on the location of the water and sewerage network and its indicative capacity as a guide in preparing its spatial strategy and in making site selection decisions and to continue to liaise with

Scottish Water throughout the LDP process to assess more detailed capacity issues as proposals become more certain and detailed local network modelling results may become available.

Private Drainage

11.70 HLDP will need to provide direction to all development, including the many sites that will come forward that are not within an allocation. Many of these will have private foul drainage and some may also have private water supplies (PWS). NPF4 Policy 22 seeks to support community resilience to climate change by avoiding development in areas of flood risk or locations which cannot be readily connected to the public water and sewerage network. **Chapter 4: Climate Change and Energy** outlines that there are over 2,500 PWS in Highland, serving a population of over 30,000 people located in rural areas where treated mains water connections are not available. Areas of climate-related risk and more vulnerable PWS reliant on surface water are mapped within the Highland Climate Change and Energy Map. NPF4 Policy 22 d has provisions for development proposals to be connected to the public water mains, or sustainable water sources resilient to scarcity should this not be feasible.

11.71 For private foul drainage, generally the impacts from these will be controlled by regulations enforced by SEPA but within Highland, specific concerns have been identified for the Loch Flemington catchment near Inverness and Nairn. This is acknowledged and addressed in Policy 3 of the existing IMFLDP2 and the Council considers that this also needs to be considered within HLDP. In line with Policy 65 of the HwLDP, all allocated developments in the Nairn and Inverness areas are required to connect to the public sewer (as defined in the Sewerage (Scotland) Act 1986). All development within the water catchment of Loch Flemington SPA must facilitate the ecological recovery of the loch by using appropriate foul drainage arrangements. It must be ensured that there is no overall increase in phosphorous discharge to the catchment. Appropriate solutions include connection to public sewer, diversion of wastewater outwith of treatment. the catchment or upgrading an existing septic tank within the catchment to a higher standard. The Council notes SEPA’s comments welcoming further engagement in the future to understand whether the HLDP shall cover wastewater via local polices in view of the fact it is not an issue explicitly covered by NFP4. The Council considers that retention of a form of IMFLDP2 Policy 3 would be beneficial and notes that no national equivalent site-specific development management mechanism to calculate or offset nutrient increases is currently in place in Scotland. The Council therefore agrees that engagement will be required with SEPA to retain this moving forward.

Waste Management

11.72 Presently the Council's Developer Contributions Supplementary Guidance does not seek contributions towards waste transfer stations or recycling centres but instead seeks that sufficient space is preserved within developments for refuse bins. Since this guidance was adopted however, the Council has changed service provision so that residential properties now receive:

- Non-recyclable waste bin
- Containers (plastics, cans) bin
- Fibres (paper, card) bin

11.73 Urban areas also receive food waste bins and green waste bins (optional, chargeable service). The preparation of HLDP offers an opportunity to revise and reflect this so that provision should be provided to ensure space is provided for all of these bins where applicable. The preparation of HLDP offers an opportunity to additionally, consider the impact of development on waste facilities, and consider whether a suitable framework for developer contributions towards waste infrastructure is warranted.

11.74 The Council's Waste Management Service operates in a highly regulated environment. This regulatory regime covers the type of collection services that must be provided to households and businesses, the national Charter for Household Recycling currently subject to ongoing consultation which will become a statutory code of practice on Councils, the operation of landfill sites and other facilities, and how material can be processed. There is an evolving, ever-changing operating environment for waste management, the pace of change accelerating in recent years, reflecting the climate and environmental requirements of Scottish and UK Governments.

11.75 Prominent changes in waste management operations are fully detailed in Long-term Waste Management Communities & Place Committee Report - but are primarily underpinned by the impending ban on landfilling biodegradable municipal waste from 31 December 2027 (following a two-year delay to the ban) as introduced through the Waste Management (Scotland) Regulations 2012. The ban on landfilling waste seeks to reduce emissions of managing such waste. All kerbside non-recyclable waste has now been diverted from landfill to an Energy from Waste (EfW) facility.

11.76 The Council has a medium-term solution in place through its contract with Viridor, which began in January 2023 and runs until 2027, with the potential to extend to the end of December 2030. This ensures that the biodegradable municipal waste – residual waste – collected by the Council will not go to landfill, but instead will be processed at a licensed energy-from-waste (EfW) facility in

Dunbar and will comply with the Waste (Scotland) Regulations prohibiting landfilling of such waste.

11.77 The Council Communities & Place Committee considered long term solutions for waste management in November 2024 which were either to:

- Send the residual waste, that which won't be recycled, to an EfW facility (akin to current practice through the Council's contract with Viridor).
- Or process waste collected by The Highland Council at a dedicated EfW facility located at the Longman closed landfill site, Inverness.

11.78 The Council considered that the most appropriate long-term strategic direction for residual waste management was to tender for a merchant provider solution to succeed the current medium-term contract.

11.79 The Longman Closed Landfill Site consists of two parts:

- A SEPA licenced facility that includes a large Waste Transfer Station and a closed Landfill Site, that restricts the site to waste operations and associated activities.
- A section that was de-licenced in February 2022 that is no longer under the permitting limitations and may be utilised for other purposes (subject to appropriate permissions).

11.80 The Scottish Government has undertaken to develop and deliver a Residual Waste Plan and a revised Code of Practice to ensure the best environmental outcome for unavoidable and unrecyclable waste and set strategic direction for management of residual waste to 2045 (Strategic Aim - Decarbonise Disposal). Furthermore, the Scottish Government has undertaken to facilitate the development of a Sector-Led Plan to minimise the carbon impacts of the Energy from Waste Sector. Although the general aspiration is to minimise waste to landfill, it is expected to continue to be required to a lesser extent.

11.81 These plans are expected in 2027. It is intended that the Residual Waste Plan and Code of Practice will set the long-term vision for future disposal practices in Scotland to minimise the environmental and climate impacts of waste whilst ensuring that Scotland has appropriate capacity in place to manage the expected, volumes of waste in the future. The Sector-Led Plan will form a specific strand of the Residual Waste Plan. It will set out how the sector will minimise climate impacts of energy from waste specifically and ensure that actions across the energy from waste sector are aligned with net zero ambitions.

11.82 The Highland Council remains focused on reducing the tonnage of residual waste through moving the waste up the Waste Hierarchy to prioritise reuse and recycling over thermal treatment and landfill. The Highland Council has recently undertaken a service change across the Highlands to increase the quantity of high quality recycling. The aim of the new collection services is to reduce the annual residual waste tonnage within Highland by nearly 9,000 tonnes, which would save 368 return transport journeys per year – as agreed on 27th November 2024 Committee.

Zero Waste Policy

11.83 Scotland's circular economy and waste route map to 2030 sets out a plan to deliver 11 priority actions that will help progress towards a circular economy, accelerate more sustainable use of our resources across the waste hierarchy: waste prevention, reuse, recycling and recovery. informed by improved understanding of the environmental consequences of how we use and dispose of resources, and by the requirements of European legislation. The Zero Waste Plan is underpinned by a determination to achieve the best overall outcomes for Scotland's environment, by making best practical use of the approach in the waste management hierarchy. It aims at increasing levels of recycling, recovery and is seeking to avoid waste generation and to use waste as a resource.

11.84 Regulations require all business and organisations to separate key materials including food waste (with the exception of where rural exemptions exist). They also have carrier bag charge regulations and single use plastic products regulations.

11.85 Waste data by SEPA aims to conserve and protect world's natural resource by reducing waste production, circulate materials, prevent waste management harms and tackle waste crime.

11.86 NPF4 Policy 12 requires Local Development Plans to identify appropriate locations for new waste management infrastructure to support the circular economy and meet identified needs in a way that moves waste as high up the waste hierarchy as possible. It sets out policies to seek reduction, reusing and recycling materials in line with the waste hierarchy. Circular Economy Materials Management Facilities are also listed as a National Development in NPF4.

11.87 Circular economic activity and climate adaptation outcomes are linked. Highland Adapts commissioned economic assessments of climate change impacts in the Highland Region, in partnership with Zero Waste Scotland, for the region and key sectors (energy, food and drink, and forest and timber). The assessments highlight how circular economy practices can strengthen climate adaptation by improving local resource security and reducing supply chain risks, building resilience in climate-sensitive industries. Climate adaptation evidence is further considered in **Chapter 4: Climate Change and Energy**.

Motorhome waste facilities

11.88 There is an increasing number of people visiting the Highlands and Islands in campervans and motor homes. Waste disposal facilities for motorhomes are provided on commercial sites throughout Highland, as part of the tourism infrastructure. Waste disposal for motorhomes includes chemical waste disposal (black water) and grey water waste disposal. The Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Plan (STIDP) 2022 identified 44 motorhome waste disposal facilities in Highland. Tourism infrastructure is considered in **Chapter 8: Economy, Business and Productive Places** as part of the Tourism evidence.

11.89 SEPA, Scottish Water and Highland Council developed Campervan and motorhome waste disposal guidance for independent developments. It sets out the considerations for providing appropriate motorhome waste disposal facilities. The guidance recognises that when there are inadequate motorhome waste facilities provided the result is inappropriate use of public toilets, with potential for blockages or spills, risk of serious environmental pollution, and health and safety risks. The guidance highlights the demand for the provision of more facilities which can be delivered and maintained by local communities, charities, businesses or other interested parties.

Relevant sources of information

11.90 Scottish Waste Environmental Footprint tool (SWEFT) – has been developed to provide a holistic understanding of the life cycle impacts of household waste and the environmental damage it can cause. It is an evolution of the Carbon Metric, a pioneering development in the monitoring of waste impacts. More recent and detailed report can be found here – 2022 Household Waste Results Summary

11.91 Scotland's circular economy and waste route map to 2030 sets out 11 priority actions for households, business, the public and third sectors to make changes, support and invest in a circular economy. This allows priority measures to take a targeted, coordinated approach to specific materials across the waste hierarchy, recognising the variation in emissions or environmental impact of production, consumption or waste management of different materials and products.

11.92 Making Things Last: a circular economy strategy for Scotland stresses the importance of reducing waste and using resources more efficiently in Scotland, delivering economic and environmental benefits.

11.93 Environment Strategy: initial monitoring framework focuses on transitioning to a circular economy, where resources are used sustainably and kept in high value use for as long as possible, minimising waste.

Local Data

11.94 The Council has a Strategy for Waste Management which focuses on reducing waste, increasing recycling and treating residual waste biologically or thermally. On 27th November 2024, The Council agreed for a long term strategic direction for residual waste management by reducing residual waste by 9000 tonnes which would save 368 transport journeys per year.

Highland's Waste Statistics

11.95 Highland recycles less and sends more waste to landfill than the national average as shown in Table 11:9, and Other diversion is also lower in Highland, suggesting fewer alternative treatments are used compared to the rest of Scotland.

Table 11:9 Household waste Overview (SEPA's Household Management 2024)

Waste	Scotland	Highland
Generated	2,315,147	112,445
Recycled	44.3%	42.5%
Landfilled	11.0%	17.9%
Other Diversion	44.7%	39.6%

11.96 As recorded in SEPA's 2024 Data set, there are 4 Operational Landfill sites, 21 non-operational Landfill sites and 4 non-authorised SEPA sites in the Highland Council Area. Two of the four operational landfill sites are operated by the Council which have significantly less engineered cell capacity than the two remaining private sites. Table 11:10 shows summary of total waste to landfill and remaining capacity from 2015-2024.

Table 11:10 Landfill data_Highland (SEPA's Waste Site Capacity 2024)

Year	Total waste landfilled	Remaining capacity	Remaining Capacity at Council Sites
2015	56,400	873,418	320,000
2016	92,754	855,342	318,000
2017	90,534	788,497	252,000
2018	75,575	700,395	200,000
2019	66,798	653,929	166,000
2020	59,201	607,436	130,000
2021	69,017	550,043	86,000

2022	60,689	478,823	30,000
2023	54,945	491,938	60,000
2024	46,723	454,126	44,000

11.97 Highland's household waste per household is shown in Table 11:11 which illustrates a declining amount of annual waste per household since 2015.

Table 11:11 Household Waste collected by Highland Council (tonnes)

Year	Total waste generated	No. of households	Waste per household
2015	130,780	106,917	1.22
2016	130,959	107,680	1.22
2017	130,190	108,450	1.20
2018	127,880	109,034	1.17
2019	124,689	109,695	1.14
2020	109,109	110,289	0.99
2021	116,066	110,974	1.05
2022	111,118	111,890	0.99
2023	111,532	112,857	0.99
2024	112,445	113,906	0.99

11.98 Increased numbers of households projected but coupled with smaller projected household sizes as detailed in **Chapter 9: Housing** is anticipated to result in differing impacts on waste generated. Smaller household sizes may reduce the volume of kerbside waste collected at a premise, but due to less available storage, smaller houses can contribute disproportionately to the volume of waste processed at household waste recycling centres. Regardless of house or household size, the volume of anticipated housing demonstrated through the iLHLR in **Chapter 9: Housing** indicates that the provision of waste collection services will remain challenging to provide with regards to implications for waste handling infrastructure, fleet and routing.

Highland's Waste Handling Infrastructure

11.99 A detailed evidence submission from the Council's Waste Service **(THC184)** provides greater detail on the operational capacity within existing waste transfer stations (WTS) and household waste recycling centres (HWRC). The Highland

Council manages household waste across a vast and predominantly rural geography, which presents distinct challenges for waste handling infrastructure and service delivery. The Highland Council currently collects and disposes of around 125,000 tonnes of waste produced by households and business waste customers each year.

11.100 The relatively high proportion of waste going to landfill compared to the national average shown in Table 11:9 suggests constraints within the region's waste management system but has been declining considerably in recent years in advance of the landfill ban of Biodegradable Municipal Waste. These include a limited number of local recycling and treatment facilities, higher transportation costs, and logistical challenges associated with serving remote communities. Additionally, the recycling rate in Highland slightly remains below the national average due to the rural nature of the area and limitation in infrastructure, indicating room for performance improvement in the capture and processing of recyclable materials.

11.101 The Highland Council undertook a significant service change throughout the Highland area during 2023 to 2025. The lower, but increasing percentage, of waste managed through other diversion methods (compared to landfill) in 2024 represent that only some areas of the Highlands had been transitioned to the new service provision, but further improvements would be expected in the following years. There continues to be limited infrastructure for food, garden waste and thermal treatment capacity in the region, however such infrastructure tends to require consolidated quantities of waste from several regions. Nevertheless, the infrastructure to bulk up such wastes in the Highlands for onwards transport is also limited.

11.102 To improve outcomes and support national circular economy targets, investment in Highland's waste infrastructure could focus on:

- Expanding material recovery and sorting capacity
- Enhancing kerbside collection coverage, particularly in remote areas and where practical
- Developing decentralised composting or anaerobic digestion facilities
- Supporting community recycling hubs or reuse schemes
- Strategic infrastructure development, coupled with behaviour change initiatives and service optimisation, could significantly reduce the region's reliance on landfill and enable Highland to align more closely with Scotland's waste reduction ambitions.

11.103 The latest figures from the Council's Waste Service, show a reduction of approximately 7,500 tonnes of waste collected at the kerbside and sent for disposal in the last 12 months compared to the previous period. Currently the

Council has 22 recycling centres, operates two landfill sites and over the years, there has been a reduction in capacity left at those sites as shown in Table 11:10.

11.104 Reviewing evidence submission from the Council's Waste Service **(THC184)**, the following conclusions are reached:

- HWRC's that would require additional capacity to serve future development that could be accommodated on their existing sites include: Aviemore, Nairn, Fort William, Alness, Dingwall, Tain & Dornoch, and Brora.
- HWRCs that would require additional capacity to serve future development that cannot be accommodated on their existing site include Inverness. The Inverness HWRC is the largest Highland facility, is at capacity and has no ability to accommodate additional traffic or tonnage on the existing site. Future development would require additional capacity at an additional Inverness facility or full relocation to a larger, more accessible and appropriate site.
- Other HWRCs serving disperse rural populations would likely only require additional capacity in the event that major developments were to arise which would often be uncharacteristic of the area.
- WTS's that would require additional capacity to serve future development that could be accommodated on the existing site include Aviemore Granish, Bower Seater, Inverness Longman, Portree, and Brora Ardachu.
- WTS's that would require additional capacity to serve future development that cannot be accommodated on their existing site include Invergordon. The building has limited suitability for any further expansion as it neither has the space, capacity or design to accommodate further waste increases to meet future statutory needs. Future development would require additional capacity at a replacement facility at an alternative location.
- Other WTS's serving disperse rural populations would likely only require additional capacity in the event that major developments were to arise which would often be uncharacteristic of the area.

Digital Infrastructure

11.105 NPF4 seeks to encourage, promote and facilitate an infrastructure first approach to land use planning, which puts infrastructure considerations at the heart of placemaking. For the purpose of applying the Infrastructure First policy the meaning of infrastructure applies to communications – including digital and telecommunications networks and connections. The Scottish Government 2021 Digital Strategy sets out ambition for high quality connectivity across all of Scotland. This includes closing the gaps in mobile provision and facilitating the grown investment in and deployment of 5G networks, as set out in the Scottish Government Forging our Digital Future with 5G: A Strategy for Scotland. The 2025 refreshed 2025 Digital strategy for Scotland focuses more on public service provision but includes provisions within the corresponding Sustainable Digital Public Services Delivery Plan 2025-28 to deliver a transformed digital service to apply for planning and building consents, operating across all local and planning authorities through a phased development and delivery. Phase 1 is expected to be rolled out in Autumn 2026, with Phase 2 in 2027, and Phase 3 in 2028.

11.106 Modern telecommunications that enhance digital connectivity is a fundamentally important utility which allows people to be connected for business and social purposes at work, home or remotely, and enables people to have immediate access to emergency services, healthcare, education, shopping, leisure etc. It supports living locally and helps to sustain and grow rural and island communities. Digital telecommunications: planning guidance notes the planning system can assist in addressing the gaps in connectivity and barriers to digital access by supporting the delivery of new digital services and technological improvements, particularly in areas with no or low connectivity capacity. These factors are critical to NPF4 aspirations which seek to:

- tackle climate change and protect local environments from its damaging impacts by reducing the need to travel and contribute to a net zero society.
- unlock opportunities for businesses, employment and remote working.
- support investment and population growth in rural areas.
- create better places by influencing the pattern and location of development and ensure connectivity is where it is needed.
- build 'smart' communities to facilitate more sustainable ways of living.

11.107 A 'Digital Fibre Network' is designated as a national development by NPF4. This NPF4 designation supports the continued roll-out of world class broadband across Scotland. This means works to deliver it could occur in any planning authority area and where the classes of national developments are met, planning applications should be processed as national developments rather than as a major application. NPF4 spatial strategy refers to this national development as a: fundamentally important utility, required to support development, community wellbeing, equal access to goods and services, and emissions reduction from reduced demand for travel.

11.108 There are a number of national digital infrastructure and related initiatives which are being rolled out which have significant consequences for the Highland area. Most recent figures suggest that 16% of people in the Highlands do not have access to digital broadband. This is estimated to be over 40,000 Highland residents, mainly in rural areas furthest from urban connectivity. The issue for Highland communities is that they are harder for the national programmes to reach. Think Broadband's Local Broadband Information as presented in Table 11:12 illustrates the availability of superfast and fibre broadband coverage in Highland relative to Scotland.

Table 11:12 Availability: Broadband – Superfast and Fibre Coverage (April 2025)

	Highland	Scotland
Premises	131,664	2,901,631
Superfast (30 Mbps and faster)	87%	97%
Gigabit	54%	81%
Full Fibre (Fibre to the Premises FTTP)	54%	69.%
Alt Net FTTP (FTTP excl Openreach KCOM)	41%	33%
Openreach FTTP	24%	51%
Fibre partial/full at any speed	95%	99%
Below 2 Mbps down	4%	0.7%
Below 10 Mbps down	9%	2%
Below 10 Mbps down, 1.2 Mbps up	10%	2%
Below 15 Mbps (High Speed Broadband)	11%	2%
Ultrafast (>100 Mbps)	54%	82%
Virgin Media Cable	0%	51%
Openreach (>30 Mbps)	85%	94%
Openreach G.fast	0%	5%

Table 11:13 Mobile 4G and 5G Coverage (Connected Nations update: Spring 2025)

	Highland		Scotland	
Geographic Coverage	**4G**	**5G**	**4G**	**5G**
No Providers	18.1%	80.1%	4.1%	40.3%
1 Provider	8.0%	16.5%	3.0%	19.2%
2 Providers	7.3%	2.5%	4.4%	17.5%
3 Providers	13.0%	0.8%	7.5%	13.1%
4 Providers	53.6%	0.2%	81.7%	17.2%
Premises (%) Coverage	**4G**	**5G**	**4G**	**5G**
No Coverage Outside	0.3%	29.6%	0.1%	14.4%
1 Provider Outside	0.6%	19.4%	0.2%	16.5%
2 Providers Outside	0.8%	15.3%	0.6%	26.5%
3 Providers Outside	4.4%	16.6%	2.4%	24.6%
4 Providers Outside	93.9%	19.1%	97.1%	29.3%
No Providers Inside	1.5%	*	15.4%	*
1 Providers Inside	2.9%	*	1.4%	*
2 Providers Inside	5.2%	*	3.5%	*
3 Providers Inside	12.7%	*	10.3%	*
4 Providers Inside	77.7%	*	84.4%	*

**For 5G services, only outdoor coverage information is provided*

11.109 Given the expanse of Highland, aggregated averages obscure significant variations between the more connected urban area of Inverness and the remote rural regions. This data is visualised within Think Broadbands Broadband Coverage & Speedtest Result Maps, which demonstrates the distribution of properties by their Project Gigabit Status, Full Fibre to Property Status, and postcodes Without Superfast Broadband speeds (<30 Mbps).

11.110 Mobile Connectivity data extracted from the Connected Nations update: Spring 2025 indicates similar trends as summarised in Table 11:13, with greater geographic areas covered by no 4G and 5G providers in Highland, and with lower shares of premises served by 4G and 5G providers for both indoor and outdoor coverage compared to Scotland nationally.

Scottish Government Led Connectivity Programmes

11.111 The Scottish Government is running several projects aimed at improving digital connectivity, specifically faster broadband access for homes and businesses, and improved mobile services. Projects include:

11.112 **Reaching 100% Programme – R100** – aiming to provide every home and business in Scotland with access to broadband speeds of at least 30Mbps.

11.113 **Scottish Broadband Voucher Scheme – SBVS** – providing subsidies up to £5,000 to help eligible properties install faster broadband, covering installation costs from registered suppliers. SBVS provides subsidies of up to £5,000 per property for direct install costs with registered broadband suppliers. Eligible properties will have a current broadband speed less than 30Mbps and will not be included in R100 plans. Householders and business owners have to apply for a voucher. When the voucher is approved, they then have to identify a suitable supplier, of which there are 19 covering Highland out of a total of 40 in Scotland and arrange for an install.

11.114 **Scottish 4G Infill Programme – S4GI** – improving access to mobile services, particularly in areas with poor coverage. S4GI is a £28m project delivering 4G mobile coverage to 55 mobile "notspots" in rural and island parts of Scotland. Activity in the Highlands and Islands was part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund. All the 55 planned mobile masts have now been delivered and are live, and 17 of these are in Highland.

11.115 **Connecting Scotland** – providing internet-enabled devices, connectivity and digital skills support to those who are digitally excluded, delivered in partnership with the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO). It aims to provide devices, connectivity and support for people who are digitally excluded. Over 61,000 devices have been issued since May 2020. Although not directly providing any new connectivity infrastructure, the programme is supporting those people who have access to broadband but need assistance to make use of it.

11.116 R100 is a £600+ million programme that has been bringing faster broadband to thousands of homes and businesses across Scotland with the aim of providing "superfast" broadband to every home and business in Scotland by the end of 2021. "Superfast" was defined in 2016 as speeds higher than 30Mbps, noting that this is probably no longer seen as a particularly fast speed, particularly for larger households and businesses. It was estimated that 113,000 properties would be connected through R100, split across 3 geographical areas – North, Central and South, defined by postcode areas, with Highland falling entirely within North.

- R100 is being delivered via 3 routes:
- Scottish Government contracts with Openreach.
- Planned commercial investment by a variety of broadband providers.

11.117 Scottish Broadband Voucher Scheme (SBVS) providing funding for properties not covered by the above, up to £5,000 to help eligible properties install faster broadband, covering installation costs from registered suppliers.

11.118 By March 2025, 78,000 premises had been connected (69% of the total). Approximately 23,000 of these are in the North area. Table 11:14 shows a detailed progress update dating from January 2025, which shows that progress in the North has been significantly less than the other areas.

Table 11:14 R100 Rollout Progress – Jan 2025 (Scottish Government R100 Data Insights)

Contract Area	Total Premises for Delivery in R100 Contracts	R100 Contract Premises Delivered	R100 SBVS Premises Delivered
Central	30,286	32,204	1,835
North	60,764	31,237	3,576
South	21,889	26,841	654
Total	**112,939**	**90,282**	**6,065**

UK Government Led Connectivity Programmes

11.119 The two key UK Government initiatives are:

- **Project Gigabit** – is a £5bn investment across UK managed by Broadband UK (BDUK). In Scotland this runs in conjunction with R100, providing additional funding on top of Scottish Government funding. Whereas R100 aims to provide broadband coverage of at least 30Mbps to properties where it is not yet available, Project Gigabit aims to provide increased speeds (1,000Mbps+) in areas where such developments are not commercially viable. There are areas of overlap where the combined funding will bring additional benefit to the Highlands.

- **Shared Rural Network - SRN** was announced in 2020 with the aim to provide 4G mobile coverage to 95% of the UK landmass by the end of 2025, with a £1b investment. The biggest improvements were expected to be in rural parts of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In September 2024, it was announced that 94.9% pf the UK landmass the had mobile coverage from at least 1 operator. Areas with coverage from all 4 operators had increased from 66% to 84%.

11.120 In March 2021, the UK Government announced an ambition to deliver nationwide gigabit-capable broadband as soon as possible, recognising that there is a need for government intervention in the parts of the country that are not commercially viable. This will be spent through a package of coordinated and mutually supportive interventions, collectively known as Project Gigabit, with an initial intervention of £1.2bn targeting at least 85% gigabit coverage of the UK by 2025.

11.121 Under the UK Government's Gigabit Infrastructure Subsidy Scheme guidelines, public sector intervention in broadband infrastructure investment is limited to those areas where there is no current or planned (within the next 3 years) commercial deployments, to avoid distorting what might otherwise be/become a competitive market.

11.122 The Scottish Government's issued a Broadband Infrastructure in Scotland: Public Review to determine the eligible intervention area for investment of public funds into gigabit-capable broadband infrastructure. In line with the Gigabit Infrastructure Subsidy Scheme guidelines, the Scottish Government has classified premises as White, Grey, Under Review or Black. Project Gigabit will only subsidise build to premises which have been designated as White.

11.123 **White:** Indicates premises with no gigabit network infrastructure and none is likely to be developed within 3 years,

11.124 **Black:** indicates premises with two or more qualifying gigabit infrastructures from different suppliers being available, or will be deployed within the coming 3 years,

11.125 **Grey:** indicates premises with a single qualifying gigabit infrastructure from a single supplier is available, or is to be deployed within the coming 3 years,

11.126 **Under Review:** indicates premises where suppliers have reported current or planned commercial broadband coverage, but where claimed current gigabit coverage has not been verified, or, in respect of planned build, where evaluators are confident that gigabit infrastructure will be delivered, but some risks to delivery remain, or there are some gaps in evidence.

11.127 The Office for National Statistics publishes the Gigabit Capable Broadband Connectivity Indicator; a map showing the coverage of premises able to connect to a gigabit capable service. The Scottish Government has used this information to define the eligible Intervention Area for potential future procurements under the Gigabit Infrastructure Subsidy Scheme and is in the process of finalising the design of procurement areas as a subset of the intervention area. One of these procurement areas – Lot 5 Dundee, Aberdeenshire, Angus and Moray, encompasses a small area of Highland in Nairnshire and is a regional procurement with an initial 48,914 in-scope premises of which 2,960 are within Highland. The estimated contract award date is envisaged as May 2025. The majority of Highland's area and premises fall outwith any of the identified procurement areas, and are classed as Rest of Scotland, where the UK Government plans further interventions beyond those described above as part of Project Gigabit.

11.128 Data released by the Scottish Government through the Gigabit in Scotland Premises Subsidy Control - Highland provides the status of properties in Highland which is shown in Table 11:15, alongside comparable figures for Scotland nationally, as derived from the Gigabit Scotland Public Review Report Revision 3. Highland evidently has a greater proportion of properties classed as white, and therefore within the scope of Project Gigabit upgrades, owing to the unlikelihood of market provision.

Table 11:15 Properties by Project Gigabit Status

	Highland		Scotland	
	#	%	#	%
White	53,018	37%	380,073	13%
Black	9,855	7%	1,009,899	34%
Grey	53,924	38%	1,176,460	39%
Under Review	25,907	18%	413,436	14%

11.129 Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) were carrying out a Project Gigabit procurement on behalf of the Inverness and Highland City Region Deal (IHCRD). HIE has since confirmed that it will not proceed with the procurement.

Resilience and Digital Connectivity

11.130 There is an interdependency between projects relating to the rollout of digital infrastructure and the parallel switch-off of legacy analogue infrastructure which has cumulative effects upon Highland communities, as detailed in a report to the Digital Connectivity Report to Full Council Committee on 29 May 2025, namely through:

- The Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) which is being retired within the UK in January 2027 and will be replaced by phone services relying on the Internet, which will result in concerns about resilient communications for residents and businesses in areas more prone to power cuts;
- Radio Teleswitch Service (RTS) switch-off, affecting certain older electricity supply meters, on June 30 2025. Smart meters to replace RTS require a mobile signal to operate. This transition is expected to disproportionately affect around 30,000 households across the Highlands and Islands, where reliance on electric heating is more prevalent due to limited access to the gas grid.

11.131 Scottish and UK Government initiatives are helping to address connectivity challenges but are running slower in the Highlands than other parts of Scotland. There are also likely to be a higher proportion of properties that will be reliant on satellite broadband as the only possible option.

11.132 Both individually and in combination, these projects are likely to be having a proportionally greater negative impact on those people who are more vulnerable, less well off, living in more rural areas and less digitally aware. These people could be in a situation where they will struggle to maintain telephone access, face difficulties with heating, incur additional costs for heating and be disproportionately affected by a reliance on more expensive and less resilient broadband options. NPF4 sets out that LDPs should support the roll out of digital infrastructure and in Highland it is recognised that some of the more difficult remaining areas as of yet unconnected by any of the initiatives are in remote rural areas of the Highlands, potential resilience issues if the programmes do not complete timeously.

11.133 Engagement with the UK and Scottish Government alongside Ofgem, BT, HIE and other stakeholders as part of COHI Meeting in May 2025, where progress on the digital connectivity initiatives was discussed, alongside the disproportionate impact on communities that remain unconnected, and the costs of connecting the remaining 1% that are currently out with the scope of Project Gigabit.

11.134 Initiatives seeking to achieve geographic coverage targets such as SRN have been challenging to support through the planning process, in locations that are subject to natural heritage designations as discussed in **Chapter 5: Nature and Environment**. While NPF4 contains strong policy support for digital infrastructure, NPF4 Policy 24 states that development proposals will only be supported: where the visual and amenity impacts have been minimised through careful siting, design, height, materials and landscaping, taking into account cumulative impacts and relevant technical constraints; where it has been demonstrated that before erecting a new ground based mast the possibility of erecting antennas on an existing building, mast or other structure, replacing an existing mast and/or site sharing has been explored and where there is no physical obstruction to aerodrome operations, technical sites or existing transmitter/receiver facilities.

11.135 Demonstrating the visual and amenity impacts have been minimised has formed a crucial component of several mast applications taking considerable time in the planning process. Submission of planning applications for telecommunications masts from various operators has also hampered the ability to gauge the cumulative impacts. In such instances following engagement with the applicant operators, applications are generally withdrawn, resubmitted in alternate locations and then supported, rather than refused outright, as indicated in Table 11:15.

Table 11:16 Highland Planning Records for Telecommunications Masts – as of 05/09/2025*

		No. of Applications	% of Valid Applications Received
Valid Applications Received		485	
Withdrawn		78	16.1%
In Planning		3	0.6%
Approved	Delegated	327	67.4%
	Committee	56	11.5%
	CNPA	5	1.0%
Refused	Delegated	4	0.8%
	Committee	12	2.5%
	CNPA	0	0.0%
Enquiries/Pre-Apps		429	

** Includes erection of new/replacement Mobile Network Masts, Emergency Services Network Masts, Radio Masts and Smart Meter Masts, and additional equipment to existing masts. Does not include anemometer/meteorological masts and amateur radio masts.*

Health and Social Care Needs

Overview

11.136 LDPs should identify the health and social care services and infrastructure needed in the area, including potential for co-location of complementary services, in partnership with Health Boards and Health and Social Care Partnerships.

11.137 Scotland's Health and Social Care Service Renewal Framework provides a high-level guide for change, to ensure the sustainability, efficiency, quality, and accessibility of health and social care services in Scotland. The framework's 'Community Principle: More care in the community rather than a hospital focused model' seeks to support people to live well locally, in line with the 'Local Living' principle of NPF4. Future planning and delivery of community hubs seek to ensure that opportunities for infrastructure co-location are considered to further develop person-led approaches for access to seamless and coordinated care.

11.138 NHS Highland (NHSH) services cover the entirety of Highland and Argyll and Bute Councils, spanning an area that equates to 42% of Scotland's landmass. The Highland Health and Social Care Partnership (HHSCP) covers the Highland Council area. NHS Highland is the Lead Agency for Integrated Health and Social Care for Adults, while The Highland Council is the lead agency for Integrated Health and Social Care for Children - NHS Highland Strategy 2022-227: Together we care with you, for you.

11.139 As Highland's population is broadly equally divided across urban areas, small towns, rural areas and very rural areas, delivery of health and social care services to large populations living out with settlements places significant challenges on NHS Highland's operational delivery relative to other Health Boards with more compact population distributions.

11.140 Outside Inverness and the Inner Moray Firth, a number of key settlements including Wick and Thurso, Fort William, Aviemore, and Nairn act as local service centres for the extensive rural areas which make up the majority of the region

Primary & Secondary Care Facilities

11.141 Information on known health facilities within Highland was accessed from the Improvement Service Spatial Hub, which provides records of NHS Hospitals, GP Practices, and Pharmacies. Summarised in Table 11:16, there are currently 11 Community Hospitals across Highland, two Rural General Hospitals in Wick and Fort William, one mental Health Unit in Inverness and one District General (Acute) Hospital (Raigmore) in Inverness.

11.142 Information on General Practice provision was accessed via Public Health Scotland. Specifically, the number of practices and the average practice list size was accessed via the PHS GP Workforce and Practice List Sizes datasets and is shown in Table 11:19, which is supported by individual responses from Highland GP Practices provided in **(THC134)**.

11.143 There is a widespread public perception that new development adversely affects the capacity of primary healthcare facilities in Highland. Two Inverness City GP practices have recently been closed to new patients which has raised the profile of the issue. The HLDP will consider whether its developer contributions policy should require developer payments to offset these impacts. The first step is to consider whether there is sufficient evidence of a direct causal connection between new development and the need for additional primary healthcare facility accommodation in Highland.

Table 11:17 Hospital Provision in Highland

Site Name	Location	Type of Facility	Tenure
Raigmore Hospital	Inverness	District General Hospital	Owned
Belford Hospital	Fort William	Rural General Hospital	Owned
Caithness General Hospital	Wick	Rural General Hospital	Owned
New Craigs	Inverness	Mental Health Hospital	PFI/NPD
Badenoch & Strathspey Community Hospital	Aviemore	Community Hospital	Owned
Broadford Hospital	Broadford	Community Hospital	Owned
Town & County Hospital	Wick	Community Hospital	Owned
Dunbar Hospital Thurso	Thurso	Community Hospital	Owned
Ian Charles Hospital	Grantown on Spey	-	*Closed*
Invergordon County Community Hospital	Invergordon	Community Hospital	PFI/NPD
Lawson Memorial Hospital	Golspie	Community Hospital	Owned
Migdale Hospital 2011	Bonar Bridge	Community Hospital	Owned
Portree Hospital	Portree	Community Hospital	Owned
Ross Memorial Hospital	Dingwall	Community Hospital	Owned
Royal Northern Infirmary	Inverness	Community Hospital	Owned
Town & County Hospital Nairn	Nairn	Community Hospital	PFI/NPD
Abban Street Chiropody Clinic	Inverness	Clinic*	Owned
Bruce Gardens Day Centre	Inverness	Clinic*	Leased
Culloden Health Centre	Inverness	Clinic*	Owned
Dunbeath Health Clinic	Dunbeath	Clinic*	Owned
Dundonnell Clinic	Badcaul	Clinic*	Owned
Harm Reduction	Inverness	Clinic*	Leased
Kilchoan Nurses Base	Acharacle	Clinic*	Leased
Raasay Clinic	Isle of Raasay	Clinic*	Owned
Staffin Nurse's Base	Staffin	Clinic*	Owned
Unit 67 Eastgate Centre	Inverness	Clinic*	Leased

** Clinics include Day Hospitals and Resource Centres*

11.144 There is published evidence available via Public Health Scotland of GP practices, their locations, GP numbers, together with registered patient totals, their ages and how these figures have changed over time. Table 11:17 indicates the 20 practices that have seen the greatest change in their roles between 2019-2025.

However, there isn't published data on the existing and potential future capacity of GP practice land and buildings in Highland.

Table 11:18 GP Practice Roll Changes 2019-2025

Site Name	Location	% Change in Registered Patients 2019 – 2025
Burnfield Medical Practice	Inverness	29.2
The Pearson Practice	Wick	20.0
Kinmylies Medical practice	Inverness	14.0
Dunbeath Surgery	Dunbeath	11.9
Tain and District Med Group	Tain	11.5
Dornoch medical Practice	Dornoch	11.3
Drumnadrochit Medical Practice	Drumnadrochit	10.1
Applecross Surgery	Applecross	10.0
Cill Chuimein Medical Centre	Fort Augustus	9.2
Cromarty Medical Practice	Cromarty	8.7
Lairg Health Centre	Lairg	8.2
Armadale Medical Practice	Thurso	7.4
Tongue Medical Practice	Tongue	6.9
Fairfield Medical Practice	Inverness	6.8
Aird Medical Practice	Beauly	6.6
Kingussie Medical Practice	Kingussie	6.5
Dunedin Medical Practice	Inverness	6.5
Munlochy Surgery	Munlochy	6.5
Torridon Medical Practice	Torridon	5.9
Croyard Surgery	Beauly	5.7

11.145 There is no Scottish standard on the GP practice floorspace required per patient. There also isn't any published data on future primary care need and demand to forecast whether these physical capacities will be breached. UK best practice on this issue is found in London where local councils and health authorities work together in estimating future needs and required developer contributions. This is a need and demand led infrastructure planning model which predicts a future population, its age profile and therefore (based on comprehensive existing data) its forecast annual GP visits. This need and demand are then compared to existing primary care floorspace and the predicted shortfall identified and costed with proportionate developer contributions calculated accordingly. Although several meetings have taken place with NHS Highland it hasn't been possible to acquire the information to replicate the London model within Highland.

11.146 Similar evidence issues may be behind why the Scottish Government has not progressed the Health Impact Assessments for major developments provision within the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended. Facing these evidence gaps, the Council, in October 2025, contacted the 62 lead GP practices in Highland to seek better evidence on the premises capacity issues each faced. Responses (summarised in the following paragraphs) were anecdotal rather than quantitative but demonstrate how there is not a simple direct causal connection between new development and GP practice accommodation impact.

11.147 As with other infrastructure such as schools, staffing numbers or more accurately Whole Time Equivalent GP numbers are more a driver of the capacity of the practice to deliver health services than the physical capacity of the accommodation. This is particularly true in remote rural practices where recruitment and retention of staff is a particular problem. However, it is widely accepted that general taxation rather than developer contributions fund staffing impacts. While NHS Highland GP Practice Boundaries have defined geographic catchments which could facilitate contribution catchments, these sometimes overlap where an area could conceivably be covered by multiple catchments, and there is no requirement to register with your nearest GP so estimating need and demand and the ringfencing of any developer contributions becomes more problematic.

11.148 Many householders of new houses will already be registered with a local GP and therefore identifying the proportion that are net additional to those existing is not straightforward. Also, GP List Sizes are slight over-estimates of true populations because there is a lag in the patient's new practice informing the old practice that they've moved (people rarely de-register with a practice) or they move away and don't register with another UK GP practice. The physical condition/suitability of GP premises is often more of a factor than total floorspace. NHS Highland like other infrastructure providers directs the majority of its capital programme into addressing legacy issues rather than strategic future-proofing to accommodate new development.

11.149 The mixed tenure of Highland GP premises is another complicating factor. Roughly, one third of Highland premises are owned by NHS Highland and leased to the practice, one third are leased privately and one third are GP owned. If developer contributions were sought and received then the apportionment of those monies is not straightforward. Privately owned or leased practices have a financial incentive to make do with cramped or otherwise substandard accommodation. If the Council were to make the contributions available to NHS Highland then their distribution to practices may not be equitable and/or on the basis of where the need/demand and contributions arose. Yet another complication in proving a direct causal connection is that many demands on GP practice accommodation come from Scottish Government initiatives to change the point of delivery of care (for example physiotherapy and mental health), training and pharmacy dispensing to practices rather than in hospitals or other specialist units.

11.150 Other accommodation capacity issues raised by practice managers were the need for additional consulting rooms that had a window, sufficient privacy and/or disabled patient access. Again, these are about the suitability of premises not their physical capacity.

11.151 All of these complications suggest that seeking developer contributions for primary healthcare would be challengeable and therefore it is the intention of the Council not to proceed with such a policy unless better evidence can be provided by NHS Highland, nationally by Scottish Government and/or direct from GP practices. The Council will also continue to monitor the effectiveness of other authorities' LDPs in seeking such contributions and the DPEA's position on this issue as expressed though other Gate Check reports. If pursued then a health facility developer contributions policy would be most defensible if applied to the City of Inverness, where there has been a large percentage increase in patient list sizes as a result of new development and where moves between "catchments" are generally within the wider City settlement boundary, and contributions could be pooled for NHS Highland to distribute in a fairer way rather than to one practice that may be privately owned. It is accepted that contributions should only be used for the provision of additional clinical space within a practice because this type of space is most directly attributable to an increased list size which is most directly attributable to an increase in housing or other development.

11.152 While Highland has lower average practice list sizes than Scotland as a whole, 23% of Highland's registered patients are aged 65+ in contrast with Scotland's 19%. Detailed indications of demand at individual practices was accessed via PHS General practice list size and demographics information which are correct as of April 2025.

11.153 In general, GP Practices in the Inverness Area have a greater share of registered young patients aged 0-14, often equating to between 13-18% of total patients registered. By contrast, GP Practices in Wester Ross, Skye and Sutherland have a greater share of registered patients aged 65+ which often exceed 30% of total patients registered. A full dataset **(THC181)** of registered patients at individual practices is provided detailing this information further.

11.154 Practices that have experienced the greatest increase in registered patients from October 2023 to April 2025 include Kinmylies Medical Practice (9.4%), Dunedin Medical Practice (6.7%), and Burnfield Medical Practice (5.4%), which are all located within Inverness. Several other practices with significant increases in registered patients include The Pearson Practice in Wick, Dornoch Medical Practice in Sutherland, Drumnadrochit Medical Practice South of Inverness, and Cromarty Medical Practice in the Black Isle.

Table 11:19 GP Patients registered in Highland and Scotland by Age Group (April 2025)

		Highland	Scotland
No. of Practices		62	**897**
No. of GPs (whole time equivalent)		307	**5,209**
Patients Age Group	0-4	9,466	**237,880**
	5-14	24,669	**607,758**
	15-24	23,804	**685,493**
	25-44	59,947	**1,744,497**
	45-64	71,347	**1,589,398**
	65-74	31,664	**633,541**
	75-84	20,863	**400,840**
	85+	6,928	**135,160**

11.155 List Closure Notices were received from Culloden Medical Practice and Culloden Surgery in July 2024 and for a one year period since August 2024, both practices did not registered new patients, although this has since lapsed and the practices are again registering patients. The Practices have highlighted concerns about their increasing list size for a number of years, and this has been accelerated by the high volume of new homes being built in the area.

11.156 The Practices have been in discussions with NHSH about expanding the size of their premises. However, as there is a pause of capital spending across NHS Scotland, no premises work can progress at this time. The Council seeks to continue engagement with NHSH on the issue of rising list sizes as detailed in **Chapter 11: Infrastructure**.

11.157 NHSH, as with other health boards, are increasing the placement of primary care staff in general practices and in the community, where they can work alongside GPs and practice teams to deliver an increased range of services. Provision of GP Practices and Pharmacies are summarised at area level within Table 11:19, using 2022 Census population estimates to illustrate the provision per 10,000 population. A full dataset **(THC182)** of this information at settlement level is available, evidencing that most settlements tend to have one of each facility.

11.158 NHS Highland Workforce statistics to 30 June 2025 reported 426 total GPs, an increase in 11.2% over the last 10 years and a 3.9% annual change. NHS Highland reports 14.3% of GP practices had vacancies (total 16) and around 80 vacant sessions per week (3.2%), which are both lower than the Scottish average of 22.1% of practices with vacancies and 7.6% vacant sessions per week. Over 80% of general practices in NHS Highland use locums (temporary or short-term staff), with 29.2 WTE locums required (26.5 WTE are filled locums). Highland had 87% percent regular locum sessions which is comparable to the Scotland-wide figure of 88%.

11.159 There were a total of 208 dentists (including primary care) employed in NHS Highland as of 31 March 2025 (NHS Scotland Workforce statistics to 30 June 2025). There are 60.8 primary care dentists per 100,000 population (compared to 59.2 per 100,000 in Scotland). NHS Highland maintains a list of dental practices and their practitioners in Highland (NHS Highland List of Dental Practitioners) which is summarised in Table 11:20. It is noted that dentists are listed as providing services at multiple practices and evidence on dental clinic hours, or dentist FTE hours was not available. Also, any dental practices not contracted to NHS are not included in this list.

Table 11:20 Provision of Primary Care Facilities (GP and Pharmacy) in Highland Administrative Areas

Admin Area	GP Practice		Pharmacy	
	No.	Per 10,000 Population	No.	Per 10,000 Population
Badenoch and Strathspey	4	2.8	3	2.1
Black Isle	3	2.9	1	1.0
Caithness	7	2.8	6	2.4
Dingwall and Seaforth	1	0.8	4	3.1
Easter Ross	3	1.3	7	3.1
Inverness and Area	14	1.7	16	1.9
Lochaber	7	3.5	3	1.5
Nairnshire	1	0.7	2	1.5
Skye	5	5.0	1	1.0
Sutherland	8	6.1	4	3.0
Wester Ross Strathpeffer and Lochalsh	9	7.4	4	3.3
Total	**62**	**2.6**	**51**	**2.2**

Table 11:21 HHSCP North and West Highland Operational Unit Dental Practices and Practitioners contracted to provide NHS Dentistry, September 2025 (Source: NHS Highland List of Dental Practitioners)

Admin District	Dental	
	Dentists	Practices
Caithness	16	7
Sutherland	9	6
Skye, Lochalsh and West Ross	7	5
Lochaber	22	4
East Ross	21	5
Mid Ross	14	6
Inverness East	56	14
Inverness West	26	8
Nairn, Ardersier, Badenoch & Strathspey	23	9
Total	*****	**64**

**A figure of total number of dentists is not reported as some dentists in each district serve multiple practices or districts.*

11.160 NHS Scotland Workforce statistics to 30 June 2025 report 9,459.6 WTE employees of NHS Highland, total of 11,420 headcount staff. The medical workforce is 723 WTE, and the non-medical workforce is 8,736.5 WTE (including 3, 578.8 nurses and midwifes WTE). The headcount workforce is 81.9% female (compared to 77.1% females across for NHS Scotland), with a median age of 47 (older than for NHS Scotland at 44 median age), and 30.6% over 55 years (23.2% NHS Scotland).

11.161 In nursing and midwifery there are 328.5 total vacancies, predominantly within adult nursing (200+). Medical and dental consultants have 12 WTE vacancies which is well below previous vacancy rates ranging from 20-40 WTE post-Covid. Allied health professions had 38.4 WTE vacancies (including physiotherapy, occupational therapy, podiatry, speech and language therapy and diagnostic radiography).

11.162 NHS Highland consultant workforce data reports 167.7FTE consultants, across a range of specialties which includes:

- Emergency medicine – 11.1 FTE
- Anaesthetics – 38.6 FTE
- Intensive care – *nil reported*
- Clinical laboratory -17.7 FTE
- Medical – 11.4 FTE
- Psychiatric – 20.2 FTE
- Surgical – 45.6 FTE

- Paediatrics – 8.5 FTE (plus 6.4 FTE community paediatric consultants)
- All dental – *nil reported*

Social Care Facilities

11.163 Information on Social Care facilities and capacity are provided by NHS Highland **(THC135)**, outlined in Table 11:21. Capacity figures are up to date as of September 2025. There are 66 Care Home and Day Care service facilities in Highland. Any facility with 90% or more capacity filled is highlighted in blue in Table 11:21.

Table 11:22 Capacity of Care Homes and Day Care services in Highland, by sector (Source: THC135)

Care Home, by location	Total capacity (Number of beds)	Capacity filled (%) Sept 2025	Sector
Easter Ross			
Catalina House Nursing Home	28	54%	Private
Innis Mhor Care Home	40	**95%**	Private
Kintyre House	41	85%	Private
Mull Hall Care Home	42	**100%**	Private
Redwoods Nursing Home	42	**93%**	Private
Mid Ross			
Eilean Dubh Care Home	40	**93%**	Private
Fairburn House Nursing Home	40	78%	Private
Fodderty House Care Home	16	**94%**	Private
Nansen - Tigh Na Cloich	4	75%	Third Sector
Seaforth House Respite and Care Centre	22	86%	Private
Strathallan House	32	**94%**	Private
Urray House Care Home	40	85%	Private
Wyvis House Care Home	50	88%	Private
Caithness			
Bayview House	23	83%	NHS
Pentland View Care Home	50	80%	Private
Pulteney House Resource Centre	18	**100%**	NHS
Riverside House Nursing Home	44	84%	Private
Seaview House Nursing Home	42	**90%**	Private
Sutherland			
Meadows Nursing Home	40	**90%**	Private
Melvich Centre	6	67%	NHS
Oversteps Eventide Home	24	**92%**	Third Sector
Seaforth House Resource Centre	15	**93%**	NHS
Inverness			
Ach-An-Eas	24	67%	NHS

Aden House	24	**92%**	Private
Ballifeary House	24	**92%**	Third Sector
Birchwood Highland Recovery Centre	23	9%	Third Sector
Cameron House Eventide Home	-	-	-
Castlehill Care Home	88	57%	Private
Centred Recovery Centre - Block	23	26%	Third Sector
Centred Recovery Centre - Spot	23	70%	Third Sector
Cheshire House For The Highlands	16	25%	Third Sector
Culduthel Care Home	65	83%	Private
Daviot Care Home	74	76%	Private
Highview House Nursing Home	83	87%	Private
Isobel Fraser Residential Home	30	73%	Third Sector
Kingsmills Nursing Home	60	87%	Private
Kinmylies Lodge Nursing Home	18	**94%**	Private
Maple Ridge	13	69%	Private
Maple Ridge - High Dependency Unit	5	80%	Private
Mayfield Lodge Residential Home	12	**100%**	Private
Meallmore Lodge - Drumboe Unit	74	22%	Private
Nansen - Fram House (Residential)	5	80%	Third Sector
Pittyvaich Care Home	58	59%	Private
Southside Nursing Home	33	70%	Private
Nairn			
Bruach House	22	86%	Private
Carolton Care Ltd	20	**95%**	Private
Hebron House Nursing Home	22	**91%**	Private
Hillcrest House Nursing Home	23	65%	Private
St Olaf Nursing Home	-	-	-
The Manor Care Centre	43	58%	Private
Whinnieknowe Residential Home	24	79%	Third Sector
Badenoch & Strathspey			
Grant House Resource Centre	20	50%	NHS
Lynemore Care Home	40	83%	Private
Mains House Care Home	31	77%	NHS
Wade Centre Community Care Unit	22	36%	NHS
Lochaber			
Abbeyfield House	30	**110%**	Third Sector
Invernevis House Resource Centre	32	**100%**	NHS
Mackintosh Centre	8	88%	NHS
Moss Park Nursing Home	40	55%	Private
Telford Centre Community Care Unit	10	**90%**	NHS
Skye and Lochalsh			
An Acarsaid	10	**90%**	NHS
Home Farm Care Centre	35	71%	NHS
Wester Ross			
Howard Doris Centre	n/a		Third Sector

Isle View Nursing Home	25	88%	Private
Lochbroom House Community Care Unit	11	**91%**	NHS
Strathburn House Resource Centre	14	43%	NHS

11.164 Care homes across the Highland HSCP area are mapped by NHS Highland, demonstrating the spatial distribution of care homes provided by the public sector, private sector and third sector. This data is also available on the Improvement Service Spatial Hub Care Homes for the Elderly.

11.165 As of May 2025, there are 62 total care homes across north Highland, 45 which are operated by independent sector care home providers and 17 of which are in-house care homes operated by NHSH (Independent Care Sector Home Overview and Collaborative Support Update 7 May 2025). As reported in Table 11:18, as of September 2025 there were 1675 care home beds available in Highland, with around 1463 provided by private or third sector care homes. In terms of size of care homes, within Highland, there are 9 private sector care homes have 50 beds or over, with 2 of these being over 80 beds. The majority of care homes are under 50 beds, with 28 care homes operating with 20 beds or less.

11.166 For Highland, figures from the Public Health Scotland Social Care Insights Dashboard 2022/23 show that 36 per 1,000 people are supported by Social Care Services, which include: care at home, care home, meals, community alarm/telecare, housing support, social worker and day care. This rate is lower than the Scottish equivalent of 42.8 per 1,000 people but represents a slight increase relative to figures for 2017/2018, and the rates of increase are slightly higher in Highland than Scotland as a whole. From recent data it is estimated that there are 26,179 unpaid adult carers in the North Highland area, this information is obtained from the Carers Census 23/24 which is currently the most up to date published figure. However, it is recognised and estimated that in reality this figure is likely to be 30% higher as it is known that unpaid carers do not self-identify as an unpaid carer especially in the older adult population.

11.167 Care at Home provision in Highland, by provider type is presented in Figure 11:2. External care home provision is most prevalent, especially in Inverness, Nairn, Easter Ross and Mid-Ross. However, in Sutherland, Skye and Lochalsh, Lochaber, Caithness and Badenoch and Strathspey in-house care at home provision is more prevalent. Reablement, short term provision of care at home up to 6 weeks, to support recovery from illness or injury, has limited provision in Highland.

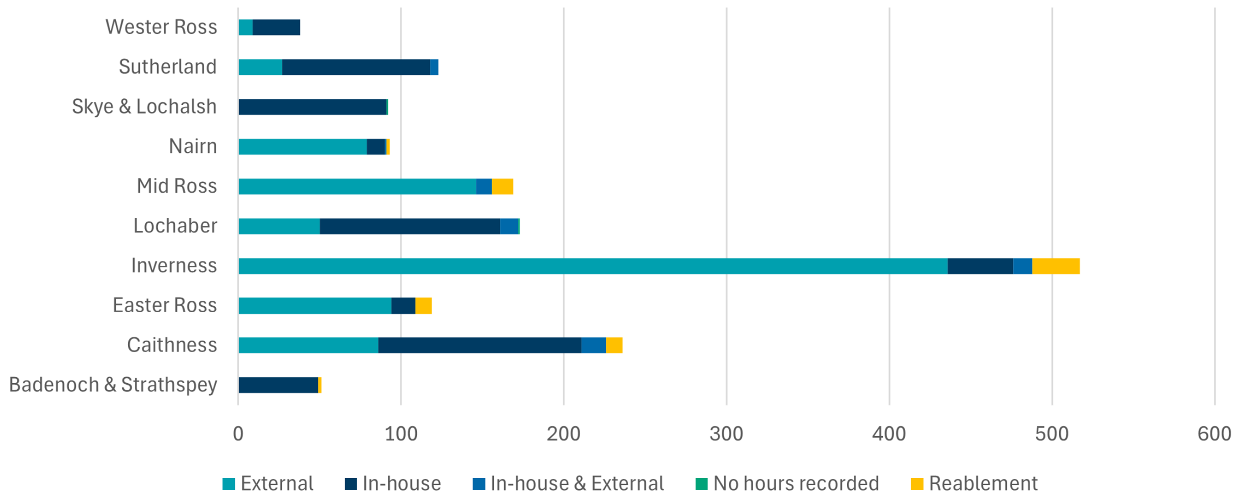

Figure 11:2 Provision of Care at Home services in Highland by area, at 26 October 2025. (Source: NHS Highland)

11.168 The Care at Home waiting list by level of need varies by area in Highland, as shown in Figure 11:3. Lochaber and Inverness have both the largest waiting lists and highest level of Critical and Substantial need, and Caithness also has a comparably similar waitlist for Critical need.

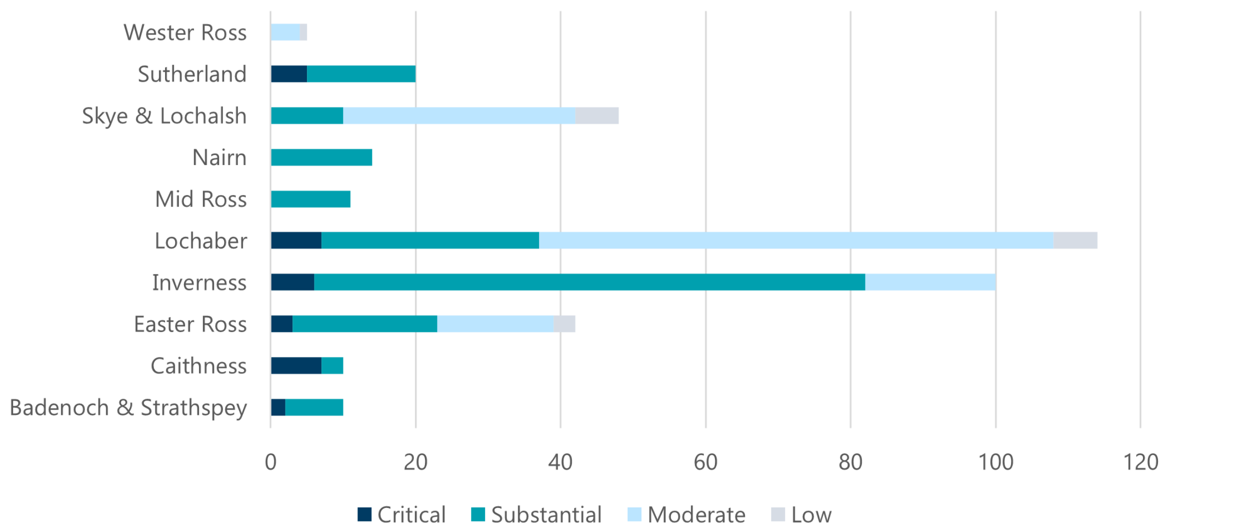

Figure 11:3 Care at Home waiting list by level of need, by area of Highland, at 26 October 2025 (Source: NHS Highland)

11.169 The [Independent Care Sector Home Overview and Collaborative Support Update] details that over the course of 2024/2025 there have been continued sustainability concerns and arising quality issues within the independent sector care home market within Highland. There is a higher proportion of smaller size of operator and smaller scale of provision within north Highland. Whilst this smaller scale provision reflects Highland geography and population, it presents increased financial sustainability and vulnerability risks, particularly given that the National Care Home Contract (NCHC) rate is calculated on the basis of a 50 bed care home, operating at 100% occupancy.

11.170 Independent providers and NHSH care homes continue to experience difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff and this represents a very high risk across the sector. The most significant difficulties are with recruiting nurses to work in care homes. Staffing difficulties are further exacerbated in homes in rural locations away from the larger population centres but are not limited to these locations. Further, smaller care homes in rural communities are very vulnerable to availability of workforce and housing availability is a key factor in being able to recruit and retain workforce. Some care homes are in older buildings and the Care Inspectorate environmental requirements on the buildings are becoming increasingly difficult to comply with - making those services increasingly vulnerable to closure.

11.171 Since March 2022, there have been 6 independent sector care home closures and 4 NHSH in-house care home closures with a total loss of 204 registered beds (Independent Care Sector Home Overview and Collaborative Support Update 7 May 2025). Strathburn, Gairloch has since re-opened in spring 2025. There have also been three care home acquisitions by NHS Highland / The Highland Council since November 2020 (Home Farm, Main's House and Moss Park). A common theme across many of these closure situations relates to staff recruitment and retention, the cost of securing agency cover and financial viability. This has coincided with increasing rates of delayed discharges from hospitals which remain a concern both nationally and within NHS Highland and more care-at-home capacity needs to be generated to alleviate this issue (Independent Care Sector Home Overview and Collaborative Support Update 7 May 2025).

11.172 Additional capacity has been added with the opening of Pittyvaigh, a 58 bed care home in Milton of Leys in Inverness, in June 2025. Planning applications for two further care homes, which if granted would provide a further 22 beds. The Call for Development Sites for the HLDP, which received suggestions from landowners, developers and others from 31 January to 2 May 2025, included one suggested site for a care home in the Black Isle.

11.173 NHSH are developing a locality model as a preferred and intended direction of travel for the provision of health and social care services, the key objectives of which are safe, sustainable and affordable locality provision. This is the direction as set out in the Joint Strategic Plan. However, there has been and continues to be, immediate and operational challenges from arising and anticipated care home closures, which require to be addressed. Given the evolving nature of the developing situation, the available courses of action to prevent a significant scale of lost provision may not entirely align with the intended strategic direction but these actions are being taken or considered out of necessity (Independent Care Sector Home Overview and Collaborative Support Update 7 May 2025). Work to progress a care home strategy, commissioning plan and market facilitation plan has been delayed due to operational pressures. Capacity has now been created within the Partnership's joint Transformational Programme, which will now see some much-needed progress in these areas. This transformational activity will consider sustainable forward care models.

11.174 However, there has been and continues to be immediate operational challenges arising from care home closures which require to be addressed in the short term, diverting resources away from fully progressing the locality model. There is insufficient capacity within the health and social care system to cope with the ongoing scale of lost provision. Mitigating actions are therefore required to avoid whole system destabilisation, whilst ideally at the same time, moving toward the locality model in development. Given the evolving nature of the developing situation, and the unpredictability of the future of independent sector care homes, more precise forecasting of care home needs in Highland are being developed through the forthcoming draft Commissioning Plan (expected late November 2025), for approval end of December 2025. The Highland Health and Social Care Partnership Commissioning Plan for Adult Care will evaluate future demand and capacity for Adult Care services across all of Highland, including considerations for a changing model of care for Adult Social Care.

11.175 In Highland, many care homes are at capacity (Figure 11:3) and have waitlists. Care homes are increasingly being used only for people with the highest level of need due to the limited number of spaces. A consequence is that delayed discharges from hospital are common. For example, as shown in Figure 11:4, in October 2025 over 20 people were waiting in hospitals in Sutherland, Easter Ross, Caithness and Inverness to enter care homes. NHS Highland have noted there is a recognised deficit of up to 3,000 care-at-home hours per week.

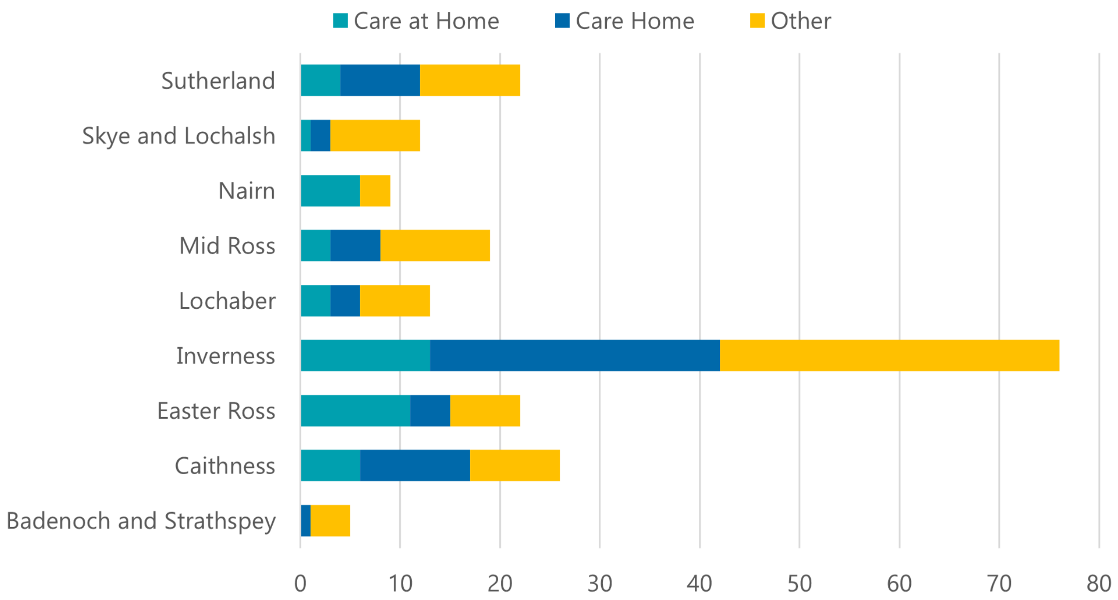

Figure 11:4 Number of delayed discharges from hospital, by destination care type at 27 October 2025 (Source: NHS Highland)

11.176 NHS Highland recognise the limitations of the current locality model for social care. The Commissioning Plan being developed is charting a path toward a changing model of care with more of a localised care service, working in partnership with local organisations and agencies to deliver care-at-home services and to support people to live in their homes for longer. Projected population and household estimates may enable the Council and HSCP to identify how Adult Social Care services could be impacted by future development and could therefore inform future Developer Contributions.

11.177 The prevalence of residential annexes or accessible amendments to homes may indicate unmet demand for adult care or reflects that people do not want to be in residential care. Whatever the driver, some families are taking it on themselves to prepare for or provide accommodation (with unpaid care or in-home care services) for elderly or disabled family members. Analysis of Council development management data from 2012-2025 identified 195 planning applications for residential annexes, of which 45 were specified for Elderly Parents, 15 for Other Family members and the remainder unspecified **(THC137)**. Of the 195 annexes, 38 were licensed and converted to short term lets. There were 121 planning applications approved for accessible amendments to homes from 2012-2025 (excluding Highland Council HRA funded portfolio) **(THC136)**. Addition of access ramps were the most common amendment (96 applications), and more than 10 applications were received in the following areas: Badenoch and Strathspey, Culloden and Ardersier, Inverness Ness-side and Nairn. Between 2013-2017, 96 accessible amendment planning applications were approved. Further consideration as relates to housing is discussed in **Chapter 9: Housing**.

Burial Grounds

11.178 Section 3 of the Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016 requires each local authority to provide at least one burial ground within its area. The Council has 245 burial grounds as shown on the Highland Council Burial Grounds Map. The Council also operates Inverness Crematorium, located at Kilvean, Inverness. The Bereavement Service Update Report 2025 confirms that the service undertakes around 1300 cremations and 1700 burials per year as detailed in Table 11:22. Annual rates of burials and cremations in Highland evidence a 43% rate of cremation in contrast with the Scottish average of 70%.

11.179 Capacity within Highland Burial Grounds is detailed separately **(THC183)**, owing to the large number of burial grounds and settlements, which shows an approximate average 57-year supply of burial ground, based on previous burial rates and annual rates of lairs sold. This is summarised in Table 11:22.

Table 11:23 Burials and Cremations in Highland

Year	Cremations	Burials	Total	% Cremation
2016	1100	1647	2747	45.55
2017	1127	1690	2817	44.21
2018	1240	1771	3011	45.00
2019	1237	1594	2831	43.70
2020	1239	1445	2684	46.16
2021	1264	1713	2977	42.46
2022	1403	1677	3080	45.55
2023	1360	1716	3076	44.21
2024	1270	1552	2822	45.00
2025	1359	1530	2889	47.04
Total	**12599**	**16355**	**28934**	**43.54**

11.180 While the 57-year burial ground supply represents an average number of years supply across all burial grounds, it is recognised that capacity at individual burial grounds varies and there are 19 identified burial grounds with a supply of less than 6 projected years until all lairs are sold **(THC183)**. The Highland death rate as specified within Public Health Scotland Death Rates by Council Area statistics is currently 1% of the population per annum. The matter of need for burial space in Highland will be considered in the proposed HLDP.

*Table 11:24 Burial Ground Capacity in Highland's Administrative Areas **(THC184)***

Admin Area	Av. Burials per Annum	Av. # Lairs Sold per Annum	Unsold # Lairs	Projected # Years until all Lairs Sold
Alness	77	38.4	643	27.5
Badenoch & Strathspey	85.3	44	1538	51.4
Dingwall & Black Isle	185.9	67.8	3820	80.6
Drummuie	96.3	61.8	3455	103.7
Gairloch	21	11.4	339	53.8
Inverness	370.5	166.9	2237	67.9
Kyle	14.9	11.5	239	17.2
Lochaber	138.9	74.6	788	46.0
Nairn	99	30.2	416	30.4
Skye & Lochalsh	122.9	98.7	2283	43.3
Tain	45	27.8	541	25.9
Caithness & NW Sutherland	257.9	138.8	2199	40.2
Ullapool	15.4	5.4	570	88.2
Total	**1,530**	**777.3**	**19,068**	**57.4**

Summary of Stakeholder Engagement

11.181 A full breakdown of all stakeholder engagement undertaken to support the Evidence Report is provided within the Log of Engagement **(THC001)**. Drafts of the evidence presented in this chapter were circulated to key agencies and other stakeholders on 30 January 2026. A summary of feedback received will be presented once received.

11.182 Prior to the drafting of the HLDP Evidence Report an early engagement exercise HLDP Evidence Consultation was undertaken from 31st Jan – 2nd May 2025. Responses to the HLDP Evidence Consultation (including from key agencies) are included in **THC006**. Drafts of the evidence presented in this chapter were then circulated to key agencies, listed below, and a range of other stakeholders, not listed, on 30 January 2026:

- NatureScot
- Scottish Water
- SEPA
- Historic Environment Scotland
- NHS Highland
- HIE
- HiTrans
- Transport Scotland

- Crofting Commission
- Homes for Scotland
- Scottish Land and Estates
- HNDA Housing Market Partnership Stakeholders
- CNPA
- UHI
- Highlife Highland
- SSEN-T
- SSEN-D

11.183 A summary of feedback received is presented below:

11.184 The Council is still awaiting response from HIE, which once presented, will be included within this section.

Homes for Scotland (THC090)	
Main views raised	Reference should be made to Planning Circular 4/2025 Planning Obligations and Good Neighbour Agreements and NPF4 Policy 18 Infrastructure First. Minor point: section 11.44 repeats what is in the two paragraphs above. Education: Add research undertaken by the Scottish Futures Trust to maximise the use of space within existing schools to the evidence base as an option to maximise use of existing facilities and potentially negate the need for developer contributions. Health: support intention not to seek contributions towards healthcare given that private sector healthcare providers could benefit from these contributions. Suggest additional evidence to justify this.
Council's response	Agree with the points made and additions to the evidence base have been included.
Areas of agreement	Agree with the need to add additional evidence to this chapter.
Outstanding issues	No outstanding issues.
Is the agency content with the evidence?	Yes, Homes for Scotland are content with the evidence presented in this chapter.
Implications for proposed plan	No implications have arisen from these comments.

Actions for proposed plan stage	No actions have arisen from these comments.

NatureScot (THC088)	
Main views raised	In previous HLDP consultation highlighted NPF4's definition of Infrastructure First includes green and blue infrastructure, and highlighted link to NPF4's policy 20 Blue and green infrastructure, however NatureScot unable to find these highlighted within this chapter. Also looking for clarification on whether information from Open Space Audits and Greenspace Audits that can help to plan for the protection and enhancement of blue and green networks, and which could help to form nature networks and active travel options would be considered within the summary of implications for the proposed plan. Unable to find reference to these comments, but if reflected in other chapters such as Chapter 10: Transport, suggest helpful to cross reference. Once comments have been addressed in revised Chapters 8, 9 and 11, can agree that the evidence within them will be sufficient on matters relevant to NatureScot.
Council's response	Blue and Green Infrastructure are discussed in **Chapter 13: Design Wellbeing Local Living and Placemaking**. Transport is discussed in **Chapter 10: Transport**. In the interests of brevity, we have focused Chapter 11 on other infrastructure matters. Cross-overs between this chapter and others are denoted at the beginning of the chapter.
Areas of agreement	
Outstanding issues	
Is the agency content with the evidence?	
Implications for proposed plan	
Actions for proposed plan stage	

Summary of Local Place Plan Priorities

11.185 Ardgour Local Place Plan **(THC010)** has identified the following priorities relating to Infrastructure:

- Childcare across the area supplementing Clovullin nursery.
- Enhanced community facilities around the school and hall in Clovullin such as new community centre, community garden / greenspace, all-weather pitch & better play facilities.
- Provide infrastructure, simplify consents; commuted sums paid by developers in relation to affordable housing developer contributions should be invested in the Community Council area;
- Our community needs people. Younger people, workers and families in particular need to be able to stay here or to move here. If not addressed, the school roll will continue to fall, population will continue to age, job vacancies will continue to remain unfilled, and providing vital services and activities will get even harder.
- Treslaig Village Hall improvements, including potential extension and terrace area, car park enlargement and outdoor space.
- Ardgour (Clovullin) Village Hall improvements, for example roof & other repairs, heating, insulation, solar panels, kitchen, parking.
- Clovullin Community Hub:
    - New Ardgour Hall (Clovullin) - opportunities for a youth space, cafe, heritage centre, cafe, shop/vending, public toilets, workspace, heritage centre etc.
    - Creation of central village green.
    - Upgrade existing community field - All-weather pitch and better play facilities - Install all-weather pitch, Multi Use Games Area, better play facilities, pumptrack, sports equipment, lighting etc.
- Community garden(s) - with polytunnels, orchard, events, rhododendron removal etc.
- Achaphubuil - add play, paths and seating to existing greenspace.
- Enhanced community facilities around the school and hall in Clovullin such as new community centre, community garden / greenspace, all-weather pitch & better play facilities
- Improvements and extensions to existing community paths at Camusnagaul/Achaphubuil and Clovullin/North Corran in particular
- Support for community-led renewable power generation & micro-grid options in principle.
- Improve broadband
- Care for older people – home-based care and respite/residential care at Dail Mhor in Strontian.
- Flexible GP catchments and transport

11.186 Black Isle Local Place Plan **(THC011)** has identified the following priorities relating to Infrastructure:

- Fit-for-purpose school buildings, facilities and education.
- Review and upgrade school facilities and education in Fortrose, Avoch, Munlochy and Conon Bridge.
- Consider need for 3-18 Campus in Fortrose/Rosemarkie.
- Access to all-weather sports pitches and swimming opportunities.
- Network of local play facilities for children and teens across the Black Isle (play parks, pump track etc.)
- Better facilities & services for disabled people.
- Develop new / strengthen existing community hubs in Culbokie, Fortrose, Munlochy and Tore.
- Make more of hubs for social activities (in partnership with Black Isle Leisure Centre and Leanaig Centre), public services (e.g. health and police) and other opportunities like home working, training and lifelong learning.
- Support use of halls and schools for additional activities such as youth clubs, training and adult education.
- Build up community assets to generate income and run services, for example re-use of former churches in Cromarty / Munlochy and community energy generation.
- Visitor facilities including motorhome waste disposal.
- Sewerage upgrades and public toilets.
- Good quality broadband across the Black Isle.
- Care for older people (in their own homes & residential care)

11.187 Broadford and Strath Local Place Plan **(THC012)** has identified the following priorities relating to Infrastructure:

- Welcome prospect of new primary school and community facilities at Broadford new and existing infrastructure should tie into this development.
- Elgol School – community aspiration for this mothballed primary school to be reopened. Encourage options for 'meantime use' include community learning hub, visitor or heritage centre, workspaces etc. to maintain building
- New Broadford Primary School – to include nursery and community facilities.
- Childcare and education facilities to be available across Broadford and Strath to encourage families to stay and work in the area. Explore the potential for mobile outdoor learning and play facility.
- Broadford West:
  - South Skye Community Campus – phased development of leisure and recreation facilities, could include swimming pool, climbing wall and soft-play area.

- Old toilet block – mixed-use facility including business and community space.
- Land opposite Broadford Village Hall - potential for community purchase for amenity use.
- Protect and enhance community green and amenity spaces - including the Community Garden, the 'arboretum' strip at Old Corrie Industrial Estate, the garden at the current (2024) primary school and the 'Clay Pools' natural swimming spot.

- Elgol:
  - Elgol School - options for 'meantime use' of mothballed primary school, including community learning hub, visitor or heritage centre, workspaces etc.
  - Elgol Village Hall - support future development of sport and leisure facilities in and beside hall site, including play park and community garden.
- Broadford West industrial estates - consider provision of waste/recycling facilities.
- Widespread concern over litter, anti-social behaviour and general neglect and untidiness. This needs to be managed through better communication, education and improved waste/recycling facilities, potentially in Broadford industrial estate.
- Support key services and drivers of economic activity. Continued support for business to be encouraged as appropriate, in particular for start-up businesses. Priority to be given to waste and recycling facilities.
- Upgrade broadband and electricity supply in outlying areas including Elgol/Torrin.
- Old hospital site and helipad – should be used to further health and social care provision for the wider area.
- Consider last-time housing options of various types in the right locations – generally close to services and facilities, especially health care.

11.188 Caol Local Place Plan **(THC024)** has identified the following priorities relating to Infrastructure:

- Promote adult learning
- More local tuition
- Introduce community garden, produce to be shared in community cupboard.
- A general feeling that facilities at the community centre and school/pitches are not being utilised to the best of their ability. Janitorial type keyholder, Access to school/ YC also to ensure spaces can be booked for clubs etc, options for events, such as mother & baby group, School campus accessible by all, improved coordination

- Option to have a community gym facility in the centre, corner shop on Castle Drive/Riverside
- Request for post office in village again
- Concerns for mental health, need opportunities to improve support.
- Importance of ensuring long -term needs of our elderly residents are respected and considered including nursing care, residential medical care and care at home needs.
- Manage campervan infrastructure including the need for waste disposal facilities in the village.
- Identify opportunities for kerb side food waste collection, circular waste and reduce food waste through community cupboard.

11.189 Dores and Essich Local Place Plan **(THC013)** has identified the following priorities relating to Infrastructure:

- Community concerns over Primary School roll decline.
- Dores - current site of public toilet under the Comfort Scheme is inadequate, preference for standalone provision elsewhere.
- Dores – upgrade Parish Hall including additional toilet block and extension.
- Dores – new hall or community hub, however preference for developing and upgrading existing Parish Hall.
- Dores – allocate land to north of Dores Inn for community use as per IMFLDP1
- Lack of waste disposal and parking area for campervans.
- Dores – lack of waste water provision for black water disposal, potential site south west of Dores Hall
- Dores - expand existing cemetery site (proposal already developed)
- Dores – use site C1/H4 (east of Torr Gardens) to develop a care home, sheltered housing or assisted living facility.

11.190 Duror and Kentallen Local Place Plan **(THC014)** has identified the following priorities relating to Infrastructure:

- Suggestion for education facilities and education centre for local heritage/ecology/outdoor pursuits at Cuil Bay.
- The potential loss of the village school is causing stress to many in the area, who see it as a valuable local resource.
- Opportunity for adult evening classes.
- Requirement for nursery services and wrap around child care.
- Cuil Bay struggles with the influx of camper vans during the summer, and there were suggestions for the installation of public toilets there,
- Explore extension of community centre including full time café, public toilets, office space and small community shop.

- Need people to establish and run services – such as a permanent café, activities for school-age children.
- Need reliable broadband and mobile phone service across the region.
- Opportunity for drop in surgery in community centre at Ballachulish.
- Wastewater and fresh water provision needed for campervans.

11.191 Fort Augustus and Glenmoriston Local Place Plan **(THC022)** has identified the following priorities relating to Infrastructure:

- Suggestion for education facilities and education centre for local heritage/ecology/outdoor pursuits at Cuil Bay.
- The potential loss of the village school is causing stress to many in the area, who see it as a valuable local resource.
- Opportunity for adult evening classes.
- Requirement for nursery services and wrap around child care.
- Upgrade Fort Augustus play areas and tennis court, create outdoor shelter for young people.
- Acquire Fort Augustus Memorial Hall for community space.
- Community resilience facilities in halls.
- Open up campus outdoor recreation facilities outwith school hours.
- More activities for school-age children after school time inc. local swimming lessons.
- Upgrade public toilets in Fort Augustus & Invermoriston.
- Upgrading and/or increased use of access to healthcare (especially dentistry).

11.192 Gairloch Local Place Plan **(THC015)** has identified the following priorities relating to Infrastructure:

- Improve and maintain roads and pathways
- Improve sports facilities and access to changing rooms and toilet facilities.
- Improve infrastructure to support tourism
- Develop sports and recreation facilities on the Glebe.
- Create a better outdoor play facility for children.
- Create a shared working space/ business hub.
- Develop improved facilities for tourists.
- Improvement of health care support and provision, including dental and eye care
- Develop infrastructure for internet and phone connection.

11.193 Garve and District Local Place Plan **(THC016)** has identified the following priorities relating to Infrastructure:

- Retain education provision at Strathgarve Primary School, and improve facilities

- Fear of Strathgarve Primary School under threat of closure due to the state of the building and potential reducing school roll. Want children to continue to attend school in Garve with improved learning environment including more indoor space.
- Improved rail and bus services and road maintenance.
- Improve infrastructure to support tourism such as public toilets, parking, and waste disposal for campervans.
- Concerns over Kinlochluichart Church – Currently we are seeing a general trend towards the closure. Important to its current congregation but is also an important historical feature within the community which we would hope to preserve.
- Garve Hotel building is in disrepair and causing concerns for local residents. Attempting to engage with owners has proved unsuccessful, desire to see this building and land developed quickly.
- Better infrastructure to support tourism is essential - public toilets, parking, and waste disposal for campervans.
- Parking is an issue, especially at playpark.
- An improved Fire Service is essential for our remote community
- Improvement of health care support and provision, including easy access to NHS services dental and eye care and sheltered housing that is local.
- Develop infrastructure for internet and phone connection.
- Reliance on private water supplies and a desire to upgrade them

11.194 Golspie Local Place Plan **(THC021)** has identified the following priorities relating to Infrastructure:

- Consider options to build a new 3-18 yo school campus.
- Long term plans for the Village Hub depend on the potential relocation of key facilities (High School, Primary School and Care Home).
- Improve local green networks, walking and cycle routes.
- Add self-service petrol station with parking and electric charging points.
- Use Drummuie site as an outdoor training centre (similar to Glenmore lodge).
- Add supermarket/food shop at business park and add more affordable food shop units on the Main St.
- Retain playing field and add/improve changing facilities. Access to playing fields should also be made free if possible.
- Retain allotments and add collective composting areas. Other potential small community garden sites.
- Golspie Town Cycle Centre/Facility. Add new facility Provide Village Centre changing and bike servicing facilities to encourage the Wildcat Trail users to stay in the town. Bike washing and maintenance facilities will also be provided at the Caravan site.

- Health centre to be retained
- Need affordable and reliable digital infrastructure

11.195 Kinlochleven Local Place Plan **(THC017)** has identified the following priorities relating to Infrastructure:

- Reboot the school campus and Leven Centre.
- Improve public services - including education, health, transport, employability and planning (and to complement the forthcoming Kinlochleven Locality Plan that will address inequalities).
- Improve/create playparks.
- Reinvigorate the village centre including renovation of derelict buildings such as the Aluminium Story Visitor Centre, Ice Factory and business park.
- Grow the community garden, re-open post office and open community cafe.
- Upgrade path network, and improve public/community transport.
- Restore Mamore Lodge as hotel.
- Create village maintenance squad.
- Manage visitor parking, camping and motorhomes including waste disposal.
- Retain GP surgery & pharmacy.
- Fix community composting site.

11.196 Lochalsh Local Place Plan **(THC018)** has identified the following priorities relating to Infrastructure:

- Affordable/easier community access to school facilities, indoor and outdoor.
- Improve safer routes to school
- More training, apprenticeships & work premises.
- Community acquisition of old Post Office for community use in Plockton
- Retain airstrip and extend car park to provide more spaces and include seating, ev charging, upgraded toilets/showers, jetty, workshop in Plockton.
- Desire for more community facilities in Stromeferry, and redevelop former hotel and Macaroni Yard.
- Visitor facilities to increase benefit & reduce harm from tourism.
- More cultural, sporting & social facilities & activities for all ages, especially <30s.
- Land for growing & promotion of local produce.
- Mental health support services for all ages, particularly
- Recycling options locally

11.197 Nairnshire Local Place Plan **(THC023)** has identified the following priorities relating to Infrastructure:

- Supports the development of education/ training/ further education facilities alongside commercial development and business start-up opportunities, including a physical centre (innovation hub) designed and operated around commercial and industrial innovation.

- Suggestion for development of common good land at Sandown for A Wetlands Education Centre Community Greenspace, Sustainable energy generation, and some community-led development and Sports facilities.
- Option for vacated Nairn Academy to be used as adult further learning centre.
- Suggested options for the future use of the St Ninian's church include a recycling and re-use centre, a climbing centre or relocation of Nairn library.
- Request that all new development and regeneration should improve the utility infrastructure position and not burden or create a deficit.
- Support the audit and consolidation of the public use of community buildings to support the viability of key community assets.
- Support for applications for community district heating schemes and community-led energy generation schemes should be supported.
- Scope to modernise the swimming pool using renewables with surplus used for district heating.
- Support the previously included commercial land to the Nairn East (NA05) North site as a sustainable location for expansion for business to locate.
- Town centre growth and any community hub developments should encourage small businesses and sole traders, including co-working spaces.
- Support business use of office space/ co-work uses including developing the harbour as a place for business associated with harbour/water uses including tourism.
- A Nairnshire focussed tourism strategy is needed.
- Nairnshire LPP adopts the proposed expansion space for the Gordon & Son Sawmill.
- Safeguarding and promoting key tourist and resident Links and beach front, including the re-development of the old paddling pool into the Team Hamish Splash Pad and proposal for the existing mini and crazy-golf courses, outdoor board games.
- The Former 'Morganti Land' site is promoted by the NRCC for a Community Right to Buy application.
- Development of a pump track to replace the BMX track at Riverside.
- Concerns of Green Free Port putting pressure on healthcare services.
- Retain greenspaces to boost health and wellbeing.
- Ensure high-speed broadband and mobile data connectivity available to all residents.

11.198 Sleat Local Place Plan **(THC025)** has identified the following priorities relating to Infrastructure:

- Local water supply approaching capacity limits.
- Recognise Sleat's unique economic and cultural position as a Gaelic education hub and its strong tourism potential.

- Digital skills development programme.
- Creation of traditional and digital skills training programmes, in partnership with educational providers such as SMO and the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI).
- Development of environmental education centre (Tormore) and agricultural education centre.
- Limited sport and leisure facilities.
- Desire for creation of flexible workspace hub and trades-focused business units, ideally at existing sites, such as Ardvasar old sheds, around Armadale or within the Kilbeg development.
- Recognise and support key businesses in Sleat including retail, food, hospitality and services including enhanced support to encourage seasonal businesses to open for longer.
- Development of sustainable tourism infrastructure including establishing a ranger service.
- Enhanced path network management.
- Develop purpose-built business centre, year-round tourism economy, integrated traditional and modern business hub, and comprehensive local food system.
- Enhance parking facilities and ev charging points.
- Gaps in healthcare services, particularly dentistry, concerns over social isolation, suggestion for integrated health care facilities, expanded local health care especially for elderly residents
- Suggestion for mental health and community wellbeing support programmes and community care coordination.
- Systematic mapping of connectivity gaps, support programmes for digital inclusion and enhanced mobile coverage in black spots with medium/long-term goal of universal full fibre broadband coverage.
- Acknowledge waste management infrastructure gaps, request for enhanced public waste facilities, seasonal waste management solutions, local recycling facilities and community composting scheme.
- Negative impact on water quality in the Sound of Sleat from dredge sand dumping, cruise ships and poor-quality wastewater discharges, suggestion for Marine litter reduction programme.

11.199 Stratherrick and Foyers Local Place Plan **(THC019)** has identified the following priorities relating to Infrastructure:

- Explore the future of local schools.
- Create sports and recreational facilities in Foyers: Riverside Field and Foyers Bay.
- Retain Foyers Post Office and shop.

- Create, maintain and upgrade local community hubs including The Hub in Foyers, Foyers Medical Centre, Foyers Shop, Camerons Tearoom, Boleskine House, Stratherrick Village Hall (Gorthleck), Whitebridge Hotel, Wildside Centre (Whitebridge), Errogie Kirk, Torness field sports club and Inverfarigaig forest school.

11.200 Torridon and Kinlochewe Local Place Plan **(THC020)** has identified the following priorities relating to Infrastructure:

- Re-purposing Torridon and Kinlochewe schools.
- Expand and enhance play facilities.
- Improved infrastructure to connect all properties to the grid.
- A requirement that fish farm development and management should require strong community engagement and partnership working.
- An aspiration that Loch Diabaig could be community owned or managed.
- Development of new National Trust visitor centre in Torridon with options for grey waste disposal.
- Retention of post office and shop in Kinlochewe.
- New mountain bike tracks developed as part of hydro scheme tracks in Kinlochewe.

Summary of Implications for the Proposed Plan

Education

11.201 HLDP will continue to seek developer contributions towards schools and the delivery programme shall require to be maintained to identify schools where capacity will be needed to accommodate future development.

11.202 GME schools have not been included in developer contributions towards education, but GME is growing with many schools reporting increasing GME enrolment, which in some schools outnumbers English Median enrolment. In reviewing HLDP policy on developer contributions, it is considered that with formal catchment areas in place and with evidence of GME occupancy and growth, it would be possible to develop a framework for including GME schools within developer contributions.

11.203 The completed HNDA will provide housing need and demand estimates by sub-Highland housing market area and inform how regions within Highland will likely experience different pressures on school capacity. While current SRF's cannot yet utilise this information and make adjustments it is anticipated that the final HNDA will enable the Council to estimate impacts on capacity and for the LDP to plan accordingly.

Community Facilities

11.204 The HLDP will recognise the important role of the vast range of community facilities throughout Highland. Based on various sources of evidence previously described, including reviewing the existing Highland Delivery Programme, a future ‘Call for Ideas’, LPPs and APPs, analysis of Local Living Mapping it will identify the need for any new or improved community facilities in areas of no, limited or inaccessible provision in the Proposed Plan.

11.205 The HLDP will continue to seek developer contributions towards community facilities. It will seek to update the policy framework in a number of ways. This includes:

- A review of the level of contributions currently charged.
- The potential to be more reflective of smaller scale and/or rural development by requiring developments for 1-3 houses also make proportionate contributions.
- A review of facilities contributions are taken towards with a view to the inclusion of a wider range of facilities where a need is identified.
- A review of catchment areas for seeking contributions, potentially applying more ‘local’ catchment areas than secondary school catchment areas where appropriate.

11.206 The completed HNDA will provide housing need and demand estimates by sub-Highland housing market area and inform how regions within Highland will likely experience different pressures on community facilities. While seeking community facilities developer contributions cannot yet utilise this information and make adjustments it is anticipated that the final HNDA will enable the Council to estimate impacts on capacity and for the LDP to plan accordingly.

Water and Wastewater

11.207 The HLDP will recognise constraints in the capacity of water and wastewater infrastructure.

11.208 A lack of comprehensive evidence on water and sewerage capacity does not significantly hinder LDP preparation because of Scottish Government’s instruction to Scottish Water to supply all committed housing and economic growth projects.

11.209 HLDP will need to provide direction to all development, including sites that come forward that are not within an allocation. While NPF4 Policy 22d has provisions for connecting to water supplies, connection to wastewater is not covered to the same degree as existing local policies. HLDP will aim to retain existing policy direction on this issue and will require ongoing engagement with SEPA as to whether further European sites are evidenced to be in unfavourable condition to the extent that would warrant similar policies to those used for the Loch Flemington SPA catchment.

11.210 The completed HNDA will provide housing need and demand estimates by sub-Highland housing market area and inform how regions within Highland will likely experience different pressures on waste and wastewater capacity. While current water and wastewater capacity cannot yet utilise this information and make adjustments it is anticipated that the final HNDA will enable the Council to estimate impacts on capacity and for the LDP to plan accordingly.

Waste Management

11.211 The HLDP will need to recognise future capacity needs in Household Waste Recycling Centres and Domestic Waste Transfer Stations and develop a policy framework to support planning proposals for these and secure developer contributions, where necessary if further capacity is required to serve future development, to support national circular economy targets.

11.212 The Highland Council currently collect the following waste streams from all householders; paper and card; plastic and metal containers; non-recyclable waste. Urban and some semi-urban areas will also have food and green waste collections. New properties should be provided sufficient space to accommodate all such waste containers (which may be combined areas for communal residential buildings, e.g. flats) that aligns with current statutory requirements or national guidance. Glass is currently collected through a network of ‘bring sites’ and any major developments should include a suitable area for additional glass bring banks. Should statutory or service requirements change requiring kerbside glass collections of glass then developers would be required to ensure the development of future properties include the space for an extra recycling bin, but the need for major developments to provide a location for a ‘bring site’ is likely to be no longer required.

11.213 The completed HNDA will provide housing need and demand estimates by sub-Highland housing market area and inform how regions within Highland will likely experience different pressures on waste capacity. While current waste capacity cannot yet utilise this information and make adjustments it is anticipated that the final HNDA will enable the Council to estimate impacts on capacity and for the LDP to plan accordingly.

Digital Connectivity

11.214 HLDP should take account of the overall policy approach, as set out in Policy 24 of NPF4, to support the delivery of digital infrastructure, particularly in areas with gaps in connectivity and barriers to digital access as outlined in the Digital

Telecommunications Planning Guidance. Digital connectivity improvements are fundamental to facilitating rural business and remote working across the Highlands. HLDP should identify and support national developments which are located in the Highlands.

11.215 The impact of digital infrastructure developments on the built and natural environment, historic assets and designated sites must be considered and demonstrated to be minimised, taking cumulative impacts into account.

11.216 The spatial strategy for HLDP should have cognisance of the current availability of ultrafast and gigabit connectivity for new properties. HLDP must have regard to Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) once statutory guidance on RSS has been prepared and adopted, at which stage the duty to prepare RSS will come into force. RSS will provide a long-term spatial strategy which specify the area/s to which they relate, and identify:

- the need for strategic development.
- the outcomes to which strategic development will contribute.
- priorities for the delivery of strategic development.
- proposed locations, shown in the form of a map or diagram

11.217 The completed HNDA will provide housing need and demand estimates by sub-Highland housing market area and inform how regions within Highland will likely experience different pressures on digital connectivity. While current digital connectivity capacity cannot yet utilise this information and make adjustments it is anticipated that the final HNDA will enable the Council to estimate impacts on capacity and for the LDP to plan accordingly.

Health

11.218 HLDP will require to consider how bespoke housing solutions can support NHSH's developing locality model to increase future adult health and social care provision at home, owing to the fragility of the care home sector in Highland. Ongoing engagement with Council officers liaising with NHSH on this work will be required as part of this. The impacts of factors related to Highland's housing challenge and their implications for the staffing and subsequent operations of care homes are noted. As discussed in **Chapter 9: Housing**, HLDP will require to consider developing a policy framework that responds to the needs of Highland's key workers.

11.219 The Council has an established mechanism in place for securing developer contributions, but this has not previously included contributions towards primary care settings or health and social care settings. As part of preparing HLDP, the Council will require to work with NHSH to consider whether a policy framework for these would support and respond to the pressures faced by NHSH, and seeks to collaborate in doing so, learning from other authorities which have established developer contributions policies towards healthcare facilities. The Council notes that building capacity has been directly attributed to GP Practice list closures in two locations in the East of Inverness and that rising numbers of registered patients has been observed in other locations which witnessed housing developments, such as Dornoch and Drumnadrochit. The Council considers that continued engagement with NHSH will be required to consider the role of developer contributions further.

11.220 The completed HNDA will provide housing need and demand estimates by sub-Highland housing market area and inform how regions within Highland will likely experience different pressures on healthcare capacity. While current healthcare capacity cannot yet utilise this information and make adjustments it is anticipated that the final HNDA will enable the Council to estimate impacts on capacity and for the LDP to plan accordingly.

11.221 Most evidence reviewed relating to pressures within NHSH signals that pressures for Care Homes are primarily caused by financial viability of small care homes alongside staffing and recruitment challenges, rather than capacity limits within existing buildings. These staffing challenges are exacerbated by a lower pool to recruit from in Highland and context-specific challenges of a highly seasonal economy in some areas. As developer contributions are principally concerned with funding required expansions of services, there is uncertainty as to whether this model would respond to the needs and priorities of NHSH in the short to medium term.

11.222 Future need for care homes in Highland is not yet fully understood. The Proposed Plan will have consideration for the future HHSCP Commissioning Plan – Adult Care which will provide Evidence on future needs.

11.223 The matter of need for burial space in Highland will be considered in the proposed HLDP and shall be informed by evidence where burial capacity is known to be constrained.

Statements of Agreement / Dispute

Agreement on Evidence

11.224 Statements of agreement will be sought once this Chapter has been circulated to key agencies.

Disputes with Stakeholders

11.225 None.

Information Gaps

11.226 The Council does not consider that current evidence on primary health care facilities is sufficient to seek developer contributions and would likely be unable to pursue such a policy unless robust evidence were to come forward in preparing the proposed plan.

11.227 The condition and capacity of a number of community facilities in Highland remains unknown. This is due to the vast range and nature of facilities throughout Highland that are owned and operated numerous different organisations. Where this information is not available, qualitative information sources will used to help inform the approach in the HLDP, including from validated Local Place Plans and the Call for Ideas in 2026.

11.228 It is considered that community-led Local Place Plans would be informative evidence sources of relevance to this section of the Evidence Report, and several are understood to remain in production at the time of writing. To date, 20 communities in Highland have formally registered Local Place Plans, but the progress is supported and communicated by the Council's Community Planning Lead. Any Local Place Plans registered will be considered in the production of the LDP if timeously available.