

# ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

## BULLETIN ITEM

**Subject:** Highland Council Area Regional Land Use Partnership Pilot (RLUP)

**Date:** 2 December 2021

**ECO:** Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

### 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 The paper provides a progress update on the Highland Council area Regional Land Use Partnership (RLUP) which is being delivered by NorthWest2045 in partnership with Highland Council.

### 2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

### 3 Background

- 3.1 In 2020 the Scottish Government committed to support the emergence of Regional Land Use Partnerships (RLUPs) from 2021 and for Regional Land Use Frameworks (RLUFs) to be developed by 2023. Ministers agreed to pilot 5 RLUPs across Scotland. Those are situated in the Cairngorms National Park, Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park, North East and South of Scotland and Highland. Ministers further agreed that pilot RLUPs are to be established in line with Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) groupings of planning authorities.

Due to the scale of Highland, the timescales involved to deliver Phase 1 and the need to undertake community engagement the Council agreed to partner with NorthWest2045 to deliver a more geographically targeted RLUP.

Each RLUP is expected to identify opportunities for land use change at a landscape level to tackle the twin climate change and environment crises. The Scottish Government will work with pilot areas to develop an approach to RLUPs which enables national and local government, landowners, stakeholders, and local communities to work together to find ways to optimise land use in a fair and inclusive way.

The aim of these initial five pilots is to test approaches to governance and implementation, before any wider roll-out across Scotland. Specifically, this first phase will focus on the establishment of a partnership structure able to deliver a collaborative approach to land use change decision-making.

The RLUP pilots will not have a role in directing funding for land use change projects at this point in time. Funding is intended to cover the specific costs associated with the initial phase of the work, i.e., the establishment of a RLUP, this will include liaising with SG as the project develops; working to identify and engage with key stakeholders, facilitating community meetings and resourcing a secretariat function for the RLUP pilot governance process.

Further phases are envisaged in 2022. No further funds have yet been committed to these phases.

<b>Phase 2</b>	March 2022 to end 2023	The second phase is for the RLUP regions to develop their Regional Land Use Frameworks (RLUFs). <b>No funds committed</b>
<b>Phase 3</b>	2023 Onwards	Once the RLUP structures and RLUF are developed, the Partnership will be active. In this phase the focus will be on delivering the objectives in the Framework by making collaborative land use change decisions in the region. <b>No funds committed</b>

### 3.2 Northwest 2045

The Highland Council area RLUP is being administered by the Council but led by North West2045. NW2045 is a project which aims to advocate the needs of NW Highland by creating a vision for 2045. North West Highland is defined as north of Ullapool to Bettyhill.

This group is drawn from representatives of the Assynt Development Trust, Assynt Foundation, Highland Council, HIE, John Muir Trust, North Highland Initiative, North West Highlands Geopark, Scottish Land Commission, Scottish Wildlife Trust, Scourie Community Development Company, Up North Development Trust and Wildland Ltd. It has a 25-year vision for the north west Highlands based on community consultation. The project area has a mix of community owned estates, particularly in the parish of Assynt, as well as non-governmental organisation-owned estates and privately owned estates.

Some landowners are already engaged with the NorthWest2045 project and local communities are aware of and engaged in the project. This means that some of the work needed to bring the RLUP together has already happened.

## 4 Progress

4.1 The following actions have been undertaken to date:-

- A steering group has been established to coordinate the first phase of RLUP.
- An advert for a project manager has attracted six applications and interviews got underway early in November.
- A skills matrix has been developed to support the recruitment of formal Board members.
- Several formal meetings of the RLUP group have been held to date.
- Highland Council and the NorthWest2045 chair attend monthly RLUP coordination meetings with other RLUP pilot groups, hosted by the Scottish Government.

- The NorthWest2045 vision, which includes developing approaches to land management through the RLUP, was adopted by the Sutherland County Committee on August 16, 2021.
- An engagement plan is being developed.
- Communications/Press: The Highland RLUP pilot has been featured in the press as part of a newspaper column in HN Media's local newspapers and has also been covered by the P&J. Also, as has already been stated, strong tracks left by previous Northwest consultation process should be easy to follow.
- Draft governance structure and terms of reference in progress.

The Scottish Government has submitted a bid to the spending review for a similar budget for financial year 22/23 to support development of the Regional Land Use Frameworks. Therefore, it is likely that the project will continue to progress to Phase 2 in Summer 2022.

4.2 Further information and progress updates can be found on the NorthWest2045 website at [www.northwest2045.scot/](http://www.northwest2045.scot/)

A further progress report will be brought back to committee early in 2022.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

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