

The Highland Council

Planning Performance Framework 2021-22

Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd

Frèam Dèanadas Dealbhaidh 2021-22

July 2022



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Welcome to Highland

Highland covers 26,171.13 square kilometres (10,104.73 square miles), making it the largest region by area in Scotland. Mid 2020 estimates indicate a population at 235,430¹; the 7th largest Scottish local authority by population. The area combines urban areas – which mainly centre around the City of Inverness – about 4.5 dwellings for every square kilometre, reflecting the sparsely populated rural areas of the region. The largest settlement in the region is Inverness with a population (mid 2020) of 63,730, next is Fort William with 10,260 people followed by Nairn with 10,190.



¹ <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/population/population-estimates/settlements-and-localities/mid-2020>

Introduction

As Chair of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee of The Highland Council I am pleased to submit the Planning Performance Framework for 2021 – 2022.

The Planning Performance Framework outlines our continued commitment to delivering high quality development across the Highlands. This submission reflects the good work of the Service over the course of this last year highlighting the progress made on key improvements, our commitment to engagement, collaborative working and our impact on the Highland economy.

This year our focus has largely been on recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic in what has still been a challenging year. The Case Studies presented demonstrate how we have continued to deliver a high-quality Planning Service and by both working across the Council and in partnership with others how we have delivered plans and projects that are specifically aimed at the transition to a greener and fairer future.

Much progress has been achieved in creating new opportunities for active travel and the production of green energy, particularly in and around the City of Inverness. Highland's role as one of Scotland's most important tourist destinations has been reinforced with the work ongoing at Inverness Castle, and our Flow Country UNESCO World Heritage Site bid which also contributes significantly to climate change. The Service is also supporting and enabling regeneration and development that will have the biggest impact and benefit for our communities including the Opportunity Cromarty Firth project.

As we continue to experience high volumes of planning applications, we continue to experience pressure on our key performance indicators, a position that it is hoped to redress next year with the opportunity that the recent uplift in planning fees present.

Our Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy continues to provide a strong framework for planning the future of our region, and its major contribution on the national stage. We look forward to seeing how the new NPF supports a more coordinated approach to investing in our communities and collaborating and empowering them to shape their future.



Ken Gowans

Chair of Economy and Infrastructure Committee
The Highland Council

Performance Markers

1. Decision Making

We processed 2543 applications in the 2021/22 period, 294 more than the previous year (2249).

We determined 18 major scale planning applications in total during 2021/22. While this was 3 less than the preceding year, 11 had processing agreements and we were able to determine 81.8% of these within the agreed timescale. The average time taken to determine those remaining 7 applications without processing agreements increased from 27.8 weeks to 56.7 weeks in comparison with the preceding year.

The number of non-householder applications determined in 2 months dropped from 56.8% in 2020/21 to 44.9% for this period. The average time taken to determine these applications increased from 13.4 weeks last year to 15.4 weeks this year.

The number of householder applications approved within 2 months also reduced this year from 86.8% to 80.4% with the average time taken to determine these applications moving from 7.6 weeks to 8.3 weeks for this period.

Planning performance has been impacted this year through a significant and continued increase in application numbers. This coupled with the continued impact of interim measures put in place at the time during the pandemic in 2020/21 through staff redeployment along with delays to information being submitted resulted in an increase in the number of undetermined applications. Consequently, this ripple effect of the pandemic is continuing into the 2022/23 period through the increase in time taken to determine planning applications is a reflection of the cumulative impact of the increase in workload with case officers not being able to process applications as quickly and as efficiently as they previously did.

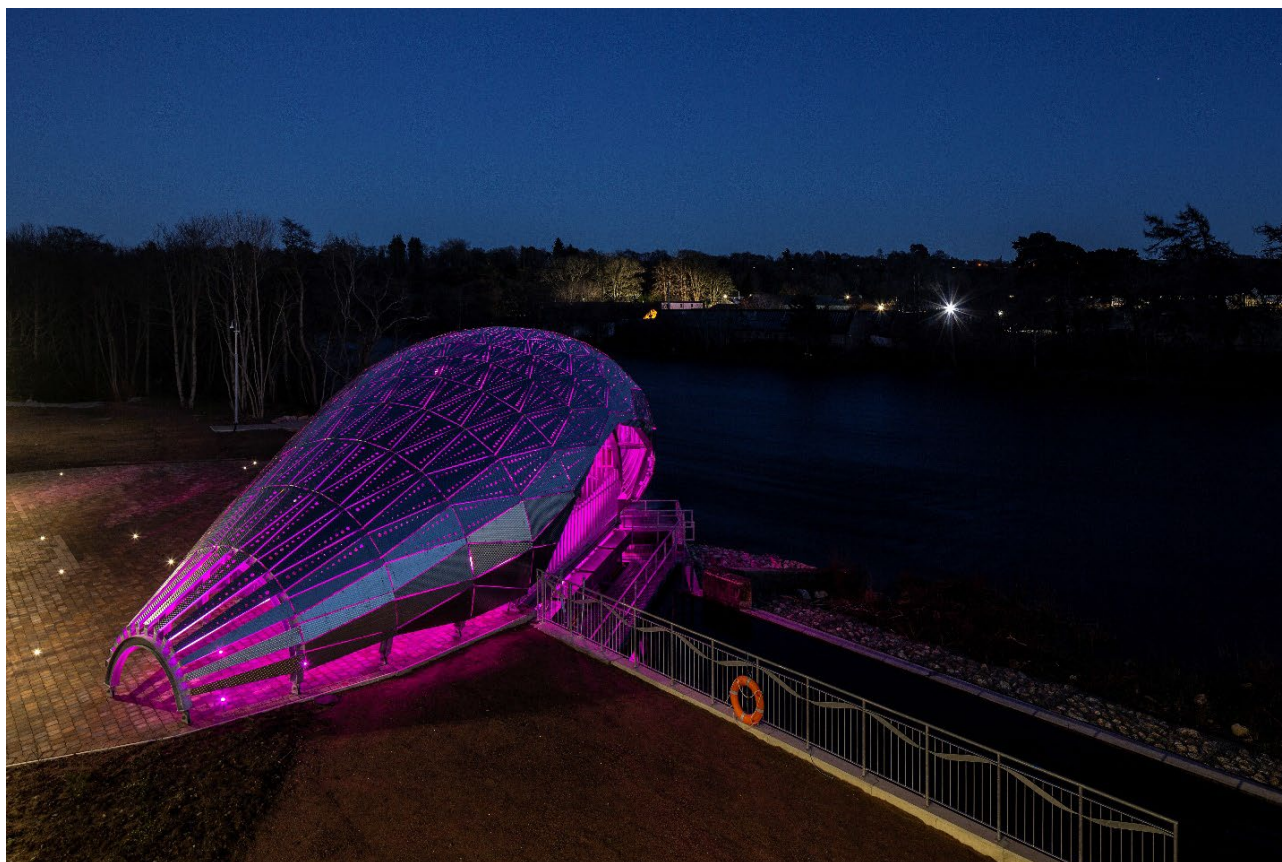


2. Processing Agreements

We offer processing agreements to all applicants for major applications and those that are locally significant. In doing so we clearly set out the expectations for all parties to facilitate certainty in the timescales for determination and decision. Within the last year we agreed processing agreements for 34 applications, 8 more than the preceding year, 11 of which were major scale developments.

Information on our approach to [processing agreements](#)² is available on our website. A link is provided in all major application pre-application advice packs. All completed processing agreements are available on the electronic case files and are publicly available.

Where applicable other project management tools available to non-major (and not local) applications are Extensions of Time which, on occasion, may be necessary to seek further time to allow for full assessment and consideration of S26; Conservation/LBC; Advertisement applications where there have been delays with advertising requirements; further information/consultations from 3rd parties; Committee site visit requirement; Legal issues; referral to committee or delays suffered by the applicant supplying requested information. Their use allows for controlled stop the clock protocol to be followed in agreement with the applicant and favours the applicant and not the planning authority.



² <https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/180/planning - applications warrants and certificates/579/major developments/2>

3. Early Collaboration

Pre-application Advice

A key component of our service delivery is providing [Pre-application Advice](#)³. We are now offering a more tailored service that includes three categories of pre-application advice according to development type – [Local Small Scale](#)⁴, [Local Medium Scale](#)⁵ and [Major](#)⁶.

The major development pre-application process ensures that the contributions of all Key consultees, both internal and external to the Authority (Including Naturescot, SEPA, Transport Scotland etc), is provided on prospective development proposals. These Meetings are held monthly and this partnership working with key consultees and developers allow for a smoother process to identify key issues and concerns at an early stage. Discussions can also clarify the information needed for subsequent applications, help improve the quality of proposals and save time and money on working up proposals.

In total we issued 44 major development pre-application advice packs in 2021/22, up considerably from last year (36.3%). In addition, we dealt with 372 local pre-application advice applications and 891 permitted development enquiries.

We undertook a soft launch of a [Wind Farm Design Workshop](#)⁷ in 2021/22 where we started to deliver a service to look at the design, landscape, and visual impact issues related to wind energy development. This service was borne out of a need to speed up the decision-making process. In doing so a solutions-based workshop is held with developers to consider key design viewpoints, potential alternative approaches, and design implications of the scheme proposed. This takes into account the onsite constraints to deliver solutions to any concerns related to landscape and visual impacts of a scheme. We will report further on this in the 2022/23 PPF.

Design Review Panel

The Inverness Design Review Panel met 3 times during 2021-22 period. The most significant centred around the re-development of Academy Street but has also, for the first time, included new school proposals. The number of projects coming through the panel is again low this year despite our promotion of it. This may simply be a reflection on the general reduction in large scale applications for non-housing and non-renewable generation schemes within the Council area as a whole.

³ <https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/205/planning - policies advice and service levels/785/>

⁴ <https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/205/planning - policies advice and service levels/785/pre-application advice/2>

⁵ <https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/205/planning - policies advice and service levels/785/pre-application advice/3>

⁶ <https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/205/planning - policies advice and service levels/785/pre-application advice/4>

⁷ <https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/205/planning - policies advice and service levels/785/pre-application advice/6>

A. Raigmore Active Travel Link

Part of the Inverness City Active Travel Network, The Raigmore Active Travel Link, is the construction of a brand-new route encouraging walking, wheeling, and cycling.

The Raigmore Active Travel Link consists of a four metres wide 'Z' type path intended to provide a gentler incline allowing easy access for pedestrians, cyclists, wheelers, and mobility scooters. The width of land available was limited, so the active travel link is supported by sheet piles clad in Ekki hardwood. The scheme also includes a guardrail, a continuous handrail, path lighting, active travel link signage and a landscaping scheme.

The Raigmore Active Travel Link was designed to provide a low gradient route, reducing the effects of the steep hill leading up to the Raigmore Community and Inverness Campus, providing a wide walking, cycling, and wheeling ramp with rest areas to enable all users to enjoy. The existing stairs which joined Raigmore Community to the interchange have been upgraded to tie into the new design, to ensure quick direct access.

Viewed as part of an overarching vision of walking and cycling improvements in and around the area, this project has the potential to generate a large number of additional active travel trips between the Campus, Raigmore Estate and Inverness City Centre. The opportunities will be further boosted when improvements planned for Raigmore Interchange and Millburn Corridor are implemented.



This project brought together several teams within The Highland Council's Infrastructure, Economy and Environment Service to deliver this well used Active Travel link. In addition, collaboration with the key external Stakeholders, Transport Scotland and Sustrans was instrumental in the success of the project. The Raigmore Community Council and Local Members were consulted from the outset to gain support for the project with several attending the opening ceremony. Site investigations were completed, including wildlife survey and ecological walkover by The Highland Council's Laboratory Services team. The retrospective installation of a cycle and pedestrian counter will provide useful statistics that will show that the link is being well used, even during the winter months.

B. Hydro Ness

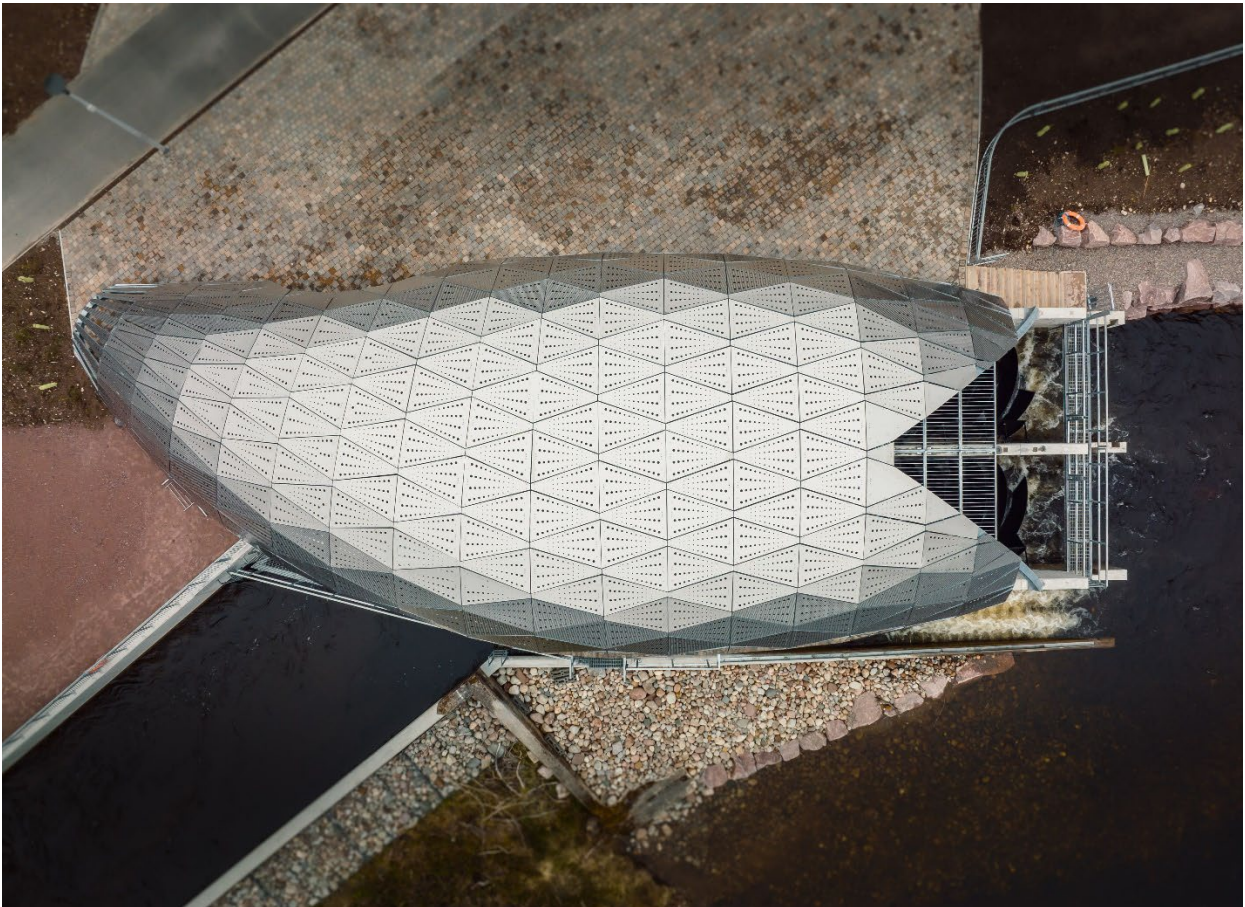
Hydro Ness is a £2.67m self-financing project delivered by Highland Council. This intervention will deliver a 92kW 'Archimedes Screw' hydroelectric scheme and interactive visitor experience on the River Ness. The Hydro Ness will provide a multitude of benefits to Inverness City and the wider Highland region, including but not limited to:

- Carbon savings of **142,000kg CO2e per annum** that will help the Council meet ambitious Climate and Ecological Emergency targets;
- Generating and supplying ~50% of the electricity demand to Inverness Leisure Centre – one of the highest consuming buildings in Highland Council's estate;
- Further **protecting the Council from future energy price increases**, providing long-term financial stability;
- Developing an **innovative structure with complimentary interpretive content and landscaping** that will be fully accessible by the public and serve to enhance the visitor experience;
- Providing a hub for **STEM learning**

Hydro Ness uses simple, effective and proven engineering that works with nature, rather than against, it to create renewable energy. By harnessing the natural power of the river to create energy the scheme won't negatively impact the natural environment; utilising Archimedes screw technology to ensure salmon habitat are protected and can navigate the river without risk of harm (this will be demonstrated through a connected fish counter).



Whilst the Hydro Ness will have a vitally important functional purpose, the stainless-steel envelope and the unique history of the site and river presents a unique opportunity to attract, educate and inspire a wide range of visitors. Located adjacent to a popular core active travel route, the site is likely to experience high footfall and as such requires strong supporting materials to help promote key themes and associated messaging – this will serve to strengthen the visitor experience. Interpretation will be presented in the form of high quality, robust and fully bespoke boarding's with further messaging being accessed via QR codes. Visitors will be encouraged to access the QR content through a BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) approach, allowing a truly individual visitor experience. Furthermore, this allows content to be refreshed over time to reflect the changing landscapes around the key themes and presents an opportunity to articulate or highlight projects and interventions relating to Highland Council and our key partners.



Improved planting and landscaping of the surrounding area will celebrate the unique nature of the Highlands and improve a neglected area of the river. The Highlands environment is diverse and beautiful, and the River Ness is celebrated for providing habitats to a wide range of biodiversity. The scheme will celebrate the unique environments in Highland which supports a wide variety of plant, animals and other species. The interpretive content on site will explore the species native to Highland and celebrate the community projects ongoing across Highland to boost the regions biodiversity and inspire people to get involved.

This is a flagship project for sustainability which is utilising historical infrastructure from a disused hydro scheme (dating back to 1929). This intervention is a long-term investment for the organisation and the asset itself will last well over 50 years. In addition, the site itself will act as a hub for STEM learning – showing young STEM enthusiasts a practical example of green engineering that can help contribute to a better Highland.

C. Opportunity Cromarty Firth

The Highland Council has been a key member of the [Opportunity Cromarty Firth](https://opportunitycromartyfirth.co.uk/)⁸ partnership – a growing number of private, public and academic organisations committed to ensuring the Cromarty Firth and wider region becomes a major global hub for green energy. The plans being formed would not only help to transform Highland communities but also act as the best catalyst for accelerating the UK and Scotland's transition to a thriving green economy, providing energy security and making a major contribution towards Net Zero targets. Opportunity Cromarty Firth represents a central component of The Highland Council's Regional Spatial Strategy which sets out the overarching vision for the region. Fundamental to realising Opportunity Cromarty Firth's plans is the prospect of securing Green Freeport status through a competition jointly launched by UK and Scottish Governments in March and closed in June 2022.

The Council recognised the importance of cross-sector collaboration in promoting the opportunities which exist not just for the region and its regeneration but the floating wind and hydrogen industries itself which are both in their infancy. For over 2 years the Council has provided regular input to help shape the plans of the partnership and the Green Freeport bid itself. With Planning Officers being the main Council representatives, it has involved disseminating information across many Council services and coordinating input from Officers on issues such as environmental considerations, property, economy and regeneration, housing, transport, finance, energy, climate change and corporate communications. Not only has it been a genuinely corporate approach, it has also ensured certain other Council workstreams have been prioritised, including a decarbonisation strategy and updated economic strategy. To help provide early and independent advice on the proposals which are emerging, the Council has also established a Key Agency Group. This will play an important function in the future should Green Freeport status be awarded. Officers have had ongoing engagement with Members from across Highland and this is reflected by unanimous cross-party support for the project.

D. Greenspace Mapping

In May 2019, the Highland Council declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency. As a result, commitments have been made by the council to mitigate against and reduce the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss. These commitments include assessing Highland Council sites to identify opportunities to improve them for biodiversity and to provide spaces for community food-growing projects.

Since 1970, 49% of Scottish species have decreased in abundance, while only 28% have increased. There has been a 24% decline in average Scottish species abundance since 1970. Habitat loss and fragmentation are main drivers of biodiversity loss. Increasing natural habitats within THC greenspaces will not only improve biodiversity, it also has well documented benefits for communities. Healthy ecosystems contribute to better air quality, water quality, flood prevention and pollination, and access to nature has benefits for mental and physical health.

⁸ <https://opportunitycromartyfirth.co.uk/>

Community food-growing also provides a variety of benefits to people and wildlife. These include benefits to physical health, provision of healthy food to families on lower incomes, grant-spending on community projects and community engagement. Aside from benefitting people, food-growing can also boost biodiversity, by providing habitats and food sources to a variety of wildlife.

The aim of this study was to identify Highland Council sites that could be improved for biodiversity and/or used for community food-growing. Recommendations have been made regarding which potential uses would be best on specific sites. The sites and recommendations will be made available to THC employees and to the public via the Highland Council website.



This study will contribute to the Highland Council delivering on its commitments relating to biodiversity and community food-growing by identifying sites for related projects and indicating the most effective way these sites can be used.

3556 sites were identified that could potentially be improved for biodiversity and/or used for community food-growing. Due to the number of sites, it is not possible to present them individually in this report. The recommendations made include native woodlands, wetlands, hedges, reduced/alternative management, wildflower meadows, community food-growing, orchards and allotments. Pilot sites have been selected (two for each operational area) to demonstrate how this tool can be used to identify suitable sites for improvement.

The GIS layer that has been produced in this study will need to be updated periodically to reflect where sites are no longer available, and where new sites have been identified. There is also the potential to add more details into each site to indicate specifically where biodiversity improvements/community food-growing projects could be located.

The project was completed and supervised by the Environment Team. There was a significant amount of cross-service work required, crucially with the Contaminated Land Team, who were required to identify any potential contamination issues in any of the sites highlighted by the report. The report will have significant positive uses for Amenities and Housing, as well as the Roads department amongst others.

E. NW2045 Regional Land Use Partnership

In 2020, the Scottish Government committed to support the emergence of pilot RLUPs from 2021 and for Regional Land Use Frameworks (RLUFs) to be developed by 2023. RLUPs are to be established in line with Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) groupings of planning authorities.

In Highland the RLUP is being administered by the Council but led by Northwest 2045 (NW2045). NW2045 is a community-based initiative which aims to advocate the needs of NW Highland by creating a vision for 2045.

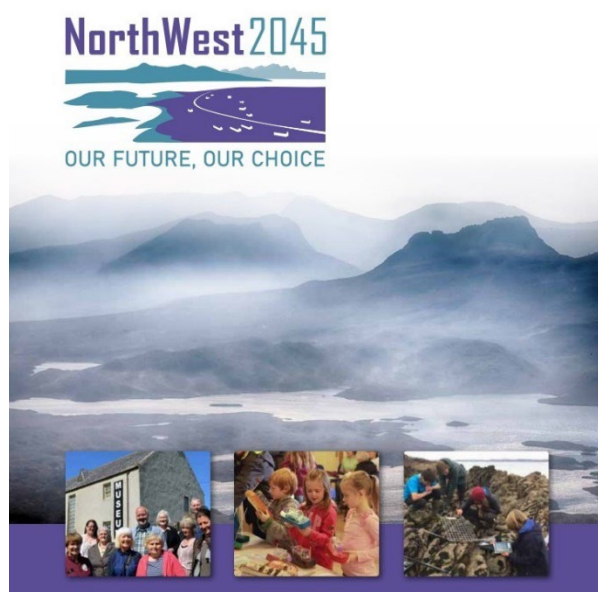
During 21/22 NW2045 RLUP undertook an initial phase of collaborative, community-centred activity to explore potential governance options and partnership working on a regional scale to better understand how to:

1. Establish the partnership structure (RLUP) able to deliver a collaborative approach to land use change decision-making involving national and local government, landowners and managers, communities and stakeholders.
2. How to use a natural capital approach to identify and agree upon current and potential land use changes across the region that support the delivery of Scottish Government's climate change targets and other environmental objectives, including improving biodiversity.

NW2045 Cross sector engagement and collaboration

Significant and ongoing engagement has been undertaken in 2021. Early collaboration saw joint working across a wide cross section of stakeholders e.g.: 3 community development trusts; community landowner; 2 Environmental NGO's; 4 statutory bodies; the NW Highland Geopark and the Scottish Land Commission.

The RLUP also engaged with - The NH Climate Action Hub and Highland Adapts; UHI: NHC Rural Studies; West Highland College; The Centre for Mountain Studies; Environmental Research Centre; Planet Sutherland; Development Trusts; Deer Management Groups; Landowners including community landowners; Highland Council Councillors, UNESCO World Heritage Flows Officer; Scottish Land and Estates; NfUS, North Highland Initiative, including NH Products; Nature Scot/ Peatland Action; Community members involved in NW2045 Vision research; Crofting Commission; SEPA; Forestry Land Scotland.



Progress

An initial RLUP Board was established in March 2022. The Board is intended to widen and develop as the RLUP moves beyond the first Phase of the Pilot RLUPs. The Board and Project Manager continue to be involved in Scottish Government led sessions on natural capital and data management and attend SG RLUP network meetings and collaboration meetings with the leads of the other 4 RLUPs.

With confirmation of the 22/23 budget the RLUP will now move to Phase 2 - delivery of a stakeholder engagement strategy, identify natural capital assets and data sets required to develop a Regional Land Use Framework and identify regional priorities for the framework. This phase will also see the RLUPs link more strategically with the IRSS, place-plans and the Regional Economic Partnership.

F. Memorial Field Avoch

In July 2021 a development of 34 affordable homes were completed at the Memorial Field in the village of Avoch. The development is a significant affordable housing project for the Black Isle on a site that has been allocated in the local development plan for housing for many years.

Cairn Housing Association initially submitted an application for 34 units in 2017. This application was followed by an application for phase two, a development of 12 units, in 2019. Development on the site commenced in the Autumn of 2019. Despite the challenging conditions during the Covid pandemic worked continued to completion of the development in July 2021.

The Planning Service actively engaged with the applicant to ensure that both consents were determined timeously. Negotiations secured the provision of a dedicated play area within the development, a controlled pedestrian crossing and a series of educational display boards within the development which highlight the local flora and fauna.



4. Legal Agreements

While we reported last year that the anticipated benefits of improved turnaround times of applications subject to legal agreements was taking longer to conclude, an additional planning solicitor has been recruited and this is already having a positive impact on the turnaround of s75 agreements. Given the continued interest in developing land for housing, the demand for s75 agreements to secure developer contributions remains high.

Going forward, Planning Officers have been asked to liaise with Legal Services to ensure that all information to be provided in the s75 instruction is clearly and comprehensively contained in the report of handling. The aim is to streamline the process as much as possible to free up time for both planning and legal staff.

5. Enforcement Charter

Our [Enforcement Charter⁹](#) has been reviewed this year and will be going to Committee in August 2022 for approval by the Infrastructure, Environment and Economy Committee.

There are two substantive changes in the 2022 Charter. As required by the provision of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, there is now a commitment to monitoring of the implementation of planning permissions for major developments. Also, an amendment is proposed to the Council's approach to Freedom of Information and Environmental Information requests related to enforcement cases to ensure investigations which may lead to court action are not prejudiced by the release of information until investigations into the potential breach of planning control are completed.

6. Continuous Improvement

Service Improvements Delivered 2021/22

Introduction of Committee workflow tasks

COMPLETE

Last year we committed to undertaking process improvements for those applications being reported to committee in our established electronic case management system in much the same way as is already in place for delegated decisions. We have introduced a suite of Enterprise tasks which allow us to differentiate between delegated decisions and committee decisions within our workflow system helping us prioritise and manage workload more efficiently.

When a planning application reaches the recommendation stage, the case officer populates the Recommendation field on the Decisions tab in Uniform with either DEL (delegated) or COM (committee), and any subsequent workflow tasks until the decision notice is issued are identified as either Delegated or Committee tasks/cases. New committee tasks were created to provide workflow prompts for case officers; shared business support team; Principal Planners and Team Leaders to better reflect the process, timescale and duties required for an application prior to and post Committee.

⁹ <https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/180/planning - applications warrants and certificates/170/planning enforcement/6>

Further process improvements in relation to committee dates and committee history were also completed as part of the project: -

- The Council has two planning application committees. These cover the north (NPAC) and south (SPAC) of the Councils area. Upcoming dates for both committees were entered into the system to provide pop up lists of dates allowing officers to now select the relevant date when completing the recommendation screen. Annual maintenance will take place to update the committee dates when new dates are approved.
- The selected committee date also auto-populates the associated committee history details on the Recommendation screen. Additional information, such as reasons for deferral and any follow updates can be stored by the case officer within the Committee History Details ensuring a true reflection of the overall history of the application at Committee is retained for future reference.

A piece of follow up improvement work has been identified to ensure continuity and good practice across case officers to ensure the Report of Handling is easily available for shared business support when preparing the decision notice post committee.

Virtual/Online Planning Training for Elected Members

COMPLETE

We have developed a self-service online training guide for Elected Members taking a topic-based approach to explain our process and policy framework of our current planning system. Using Microsoft Sway, the interactive storytelling presentation entitled “The Planning System” aims to give Elected Members an understanding of what the planning system seeks to achieve, and an overview of the processes involved in decision-making.

To begin the process, we brought together officers to form a working group. A storymap was created to establish the main content and to ensure the information provided would be continually available for use as a reference, easily accessible and simple for Elected Members to navigate. The training guide uses text, images, videos, weblinks to further material, as well as audio recordings to make the advice and guidance more interactive and engaging.

Moving on, a service improvement for the current year is to develop this for Community Council use.

Enforcement Improvements

COMPLETE

This year we introduced workload reports for managers to have better visibility of officer workloads and the spread of work between enforcement officers. This allows for transfer of cases in busy times and to allow better support during leave or absence periods.

New document templates were also introduced and include all the Enforcement notices which are generated automatically from the information stored in the Uniform System – these allow for consistency across the Enforcement officers; ensures that all legal information is included in correspondence and saves time creating and issuing the Enforcement notices.

Develop position statement on planning and adopted roads**ONGOING**

Our roads and transportation guidance require private roads serving 5 or more houses to be upgraded to a standard capable of adoption. While our planning policies at one time contained a similar requirement, they have not done so for some years. As development pressure increases within the hinterland of our larger towns and City so too do the calls for such roads to be adopted.

Changes within the management of the Transport Planning Team has meant that the project had stalled but discussion on how to progress the matter are ongoing.

Local engagement to inform our approach to economic recovery and our contribution to national outcomes**ONGOING**

Significant progress has been made in how the Council supports communities across Highland to shape their future and enhance their future, including how they respond to issues exacerbated by the pandemic. Highland's emerging [Regional Spatial Strategy](#)¹⁰ has provided a strong framework for such work with the vision and outcomes being tailored to and considered against the unique circumstances and issues that each of Highland's sub-regions faces.

The Skye & Raasay Future project www.highland.gov.uk/skyeraasay¹¹ has involved engagement with partners across that area throughout 2021 and has led to the publication of a place based plan that has been adopted by the Area Committee and a range of partners in early 2022.

Alongside this, the service has been supporting the NorthWest 2045 partnership group in preparing a community-led place plan for north west Highland: [VISION | NORTHWEST2045](#)¹². An opportunity was taken to capitalise and build upon this work by successfully applying for Highland to become a pilot region for Regional Land Use Partnerships.

In advance of more formal guidance being published the service has continued to provide assistance and signposting to several communities that have expressed an interest in preparing a Local Place Plan for their area. A formal call for interest in preparing these will be issued as part of the Development Plan Scheme in early 2023.

In December 2021, the service's leading role in shaping and delivering the place based approach in Highland culminated in [the Council formally adopting a Place Based Framework](#)¹³ to inform how the Council operates and includes a commitment to preparing place plans for all of Highland's sub-regions. This is leading to the next phase of place plans being taken forward in key areas of Highland.

¹⁰ https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/178/local_and_statutory_development_plans/927/national_planning_framework

¹¹ <https://www.highland.gov.uk/skyeraasay>

¹² <https://www.northwest2045.scot/>

¹³ https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/79296/10_future_highlands_strategic_partnership_priority_4_-_place_based_planning_and_investment_in_communities

Continued effort to align Planning and Corporate Services and Priorities

ONGOING

The planning service has been making continued efforts to highlight how the planning directorate directly delivers, supports and enables corporate commitments of the Council. Highland's Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy continues to act as our 30-year vision and has been tailored to particular geographical areas and our place based work, and policy work has been focussed on beginning to take forward the NPF and RSS policies and priorities.

The Place Based work outlined in the 'Local Engagement' service improvement above has culminated in [the Council formally adopting a Place Based Framework](#). The planning service has therefore been instrumental in putting people and place at the heart of decision making and the corporate structure of the Council. This is helping to inform and evolve the Council's place based approach and the next round of plans that the Council aims to put in place for our various sub-regions.

Plans are also being developed to adapt and strengthen the role of the Developer Contributions Action Group to take a more proactive role in coordinating infrastructure planning and delivery in liaison with the Council's Capital Programme Board.

Securing positive effects for biodiversity

COMPLETE

We have further developed our approach to securing biodiversity enhancement through our development plan policy to ensure close alignment with the draft NPF4. We also completed Phase 1 of our Council Greenspace Mapping Project which will help inform where and how the Council can secure biodiversity enhancements on the Council's estate.

Service Improvements 2022/23

Review of planning process

As part of our continual review of our planning process we will be looking at:

- Improving data entry at validation and enhanced data monitoring to help improve reporting information i.e., affordable housing numbers; land use; Photovoltaic Units; Air Source Heat Pumps; Hydro Schemes; Electric Charge Units; Wind Farm information etc. This piece of work was identified last year but due to staffing issues caused by Covid; work for Covid recovery this was postponed.
- New tasks will be implemented for the Notices of Initiation and Notice of Completion documents received from applicants. This will give greater visibility to case officers on the permission stage and allow easier time management for site visits to check the works have started/been completed in line with the planning permissions.
- Phase 2 of the Council's Greenspace Mapping and Enhancement Project will be identifying and where possible implementing a suite of biodiversity enhancements on Council owned and managed land.
- Additional work is being undertaken to further refine NatureScot's draft Developing with Nature Guidance to develop targeted biodiversity enhancement measures and strategies tailored towards specific local conservation concerns.

- Develop and implement resources paper to identify future resource needs for the service to develop improvements and NPF4. Secure additional post to provide specialist ecological advice to the planning service.
- On-line virtual planning training for Community Council members.
- Frequently Asked Question (FAQ's) to be compiled and added to our website to provide help and assistance for the general public and free up officer time.

7. Local Development Plan

The average age of our adopted Local Development Plans at the end of the 2021/22 financial year was 5 years and 5 months, as follows:

- HwLDP (April 2012) – 10 years 0 months
 - IMFLDP (July 2015) – 5 years 8 months
 - CaSPlan (August 2018) – 3 years 7 months
 - WestPlan (September 2019) – 2 years 6 months
- = **AVERAGE – 5 years 5 months**

Whilst the average age of our development plans marginally exceeds the 5 year target it should be noted that two of our four plans fall well within that target, and the Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plans is progressing well in line with the DPS, has been through a Proposed Plan consultation and will now proceed towards Examination. Supplementary Guidance for Rural Housing has been adopted to provide greater certainty on how the rural economy and rural housing will be positively supported.

While the Highland-wide LDP is not being reviewed within a 5 year timescale – and has contributed to the average age exceeding 5 years for the first time - Members have recognised the value in awaiting the full details of NPF4 (and have formally agreed to do so) before embarking on a more significant planning policy review. We are also conscious of the legislative changes that will result in a 10 year review period. No Highland Local Development Plans were submitted to Scottish Ministers during the year 2020-21.

8. Development Plan Scheme

The 2022 Development Plan Scheme was considered by our Economy and Infrastructure Committee in February 2022 to keep people up to date on the arrangements for development plans in Highland. A mid-year update of the DPS was scheduled for mid-2022, but this was put on hold while the Council awaits the forthcoming publication of National Planning Framework 4.

The review of the Inner Moray Firth LDP has progressed well, with the Proposed Plan consultation having been undertaken in compliance with the updated Participation Statement set out in the DPS. Meanwhile, the Highland-wide LDP review has remained on hold until the implications of NPF4 can be more fully understood. The Council particularly looks forward to understanding how it will gather evidence for the preparation of this new style development plan and sharing details of this approach through the DPS.

9 Early Engagement of Elected Members

National Planning Framework 4

During 2021-22 the Highland Council continued to accord high priority to engaging in the preparation of NPF4, through making direct submissions to Scottish Government as well as providing some evidence via the Parliamentary process and taking part in workshops and events. This included workshops and events arranged by Scottish Government and its consultants, by Heads of Planning Scotland and by the Royal Town Planning Institutes in addition to discussions at the North of Scotland Development Plans Forum, the Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership and other fora. Our particular efforts to ensure early – and effective – engagement of elected Members in the preparation of the NPF4 have continued, most notably in giving consideration to Draft NPF4 published in November 2021 and in preparing the Councils response to it for submission to Scottish Government by the end of March 2022.

Following early work by officers from across the Council giving consideration to Draft NPF4 and provision of initial information to elected Members, a progress report was considered by the online meeting of the Committee in early February 2022 and all Elected Members were invited to an online workshop later that month. The process followed provided equal access to members and ensured that they were able to shape the Council's submission ahead of the pre-election purdah period leading to the Council elections in May. Elected Members' support on the direction being taken and further steer on refinements required were both very beneficial to the focussing and finalisation of the Council's response, in which we support some aspects of Draft NPF4 and seek a number of improvements such that final NPF4 will serve Highland well through delivery of strategy and policies, support our regional priorities and reflect our contribution to national outcomes.

Looking ahead, we recognise the need for continuing engagement of Elected Members, particularly those elected in May who were not on the Council in the previous Council term and require to be briefed on NPF4 and the Council's position, and all in any further steps of NPF4's preparation in which we can inform the plan and implementation once it has been finalised and adopted.

10. Early Engagement of Cross Sector Stakeholders

The following are examples of where we have worked collaboratively with internal and external partners and our communities to achieve outcomes:

Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan

The Highland Council's Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan process during 2021-2022 has been a good example of adaptability to changing circumstances through the pandemic, internal Council restructuring, and progression to more effective online consultation. The year included the end of the Main Issues Report consultation, committee reporting and the start of the Proposed Plan consultation.

In early 2021, with the pandemic still impacting on public service provision and public consultation the Development Plans Team realised that its Main Issues Report consultation would need to evolve previous, standard practice.

We decided to transition to a mainly online consultation but with options for those unable to access the web in any way. We blended a mixture of traditional methods (postcard mailshot, phone-arounds of community councils, paper copy adverts, comments forms and a telephone enquiry service) with more innovative methods such as videos, a targeted social media campaign, Teams/Zoom meetings and more [dynamic mapping content](https://highland.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/sidebar/index.html?appid=e9d9bea60dca43f1a8e7bfb442b2d40d)¹⁴. Over 1,400 comments were received by the end of April 2021 – a record for any local development plan in Highland. Anecdotally, a mainly online consultation broadened the age range of respondents and topics raised compared to a standard consultation.

Settlement Map 4

Avoch



Figure 1: Screenshots of dynamic, zoomable mapping

¹⁴ <https://highland.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/sidebar/index.html?appid=e9d9bea60dca43f1a8e7bfb442b2d40d>

Adapting to internal restructuring of the Highland Council has also been necessary. Committee reporting and endorsement involved 7 committee reports and approvals. Staffing changes also necessitated dealing with losing and training up new staff to keep the Plan on timescale.

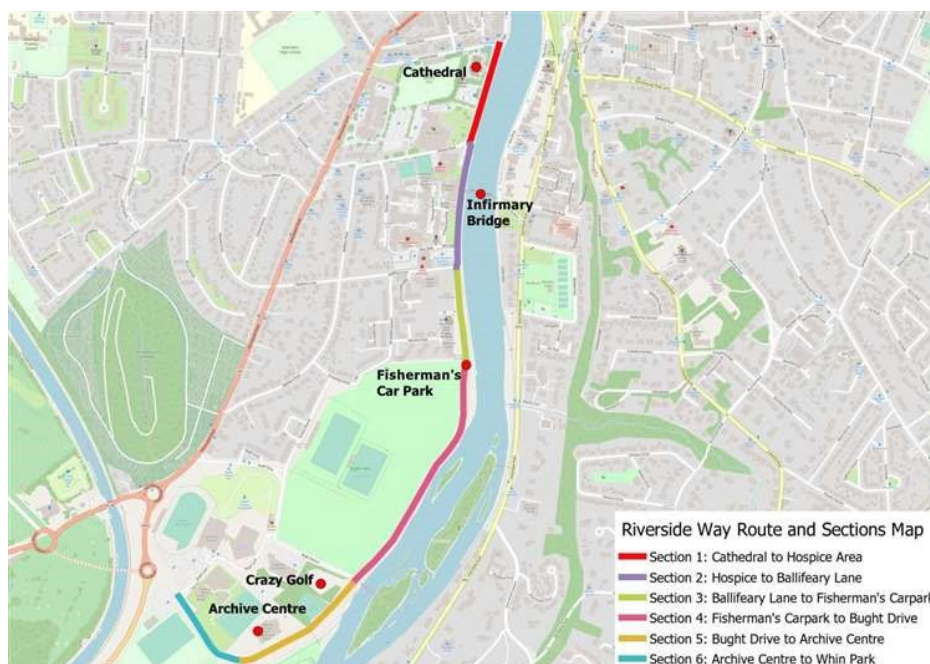
Moving into 2022, as the pandemic restrictions eased, we adapted again by adopting a hybrid mix of consultation methods for our Proposed Plan. Normally for Proposed Plan stage we wouldn't undertake any public meetings but because of the lack of in-person meetings during 2021 we offered the option of either online or in-person meetings to all community councils within the Plan area. 17 events were arranged 14 of which were in-person. One of the online meetings was an open invite to the development industry which was very well attended perhaps reflecting that engaging with a broad geographic range of interested parties is best done online.

Fort William – Black Parks

Key active travel route away from the A82 connecting Fort William Town Centre/Inverlochy with Childcare Centre, Lochaber High School, Medical Centre, employment sites/business parks and Caol/Corpach. The Black Parks Road improvements (surfacing and drainage work) were aimed at encouraging the local community to continue walking and cycling in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The route is now closed to vehicle-through-traffic which has made the road more pedestrian and cycle-friendly. This route has an average of 450 walkers and 200 cyclists per day.

ICATN Riverside Way – Road Traffic Regulation Order

Riverside Way is part of the Inverness City Active Travel Network (ICATN), a series of strategic active travel corridors to enable a modal shift in transport behaviours, enabling walking, wheeling and cycling over personal car use for local trips, commuting throughout the city. The 20mph scheme was the first step in making the Riverside and Ballifeary better areas for people walking, cycling and wheeling. In 2020 a one-way traffic order was implemented along with a cycle contraflow. In 2021 we promoted the permanent traffic order which will “pave” the way for the future active travel intervention.



Aviemore – Grampian Road/Dalfaber Road junction Improvements

The Active Aviemore project was developed in 2018 with the objectives being to promote the use of walking and cycling for everyday journeys, to improve the ease of access for non-motorised users and to improve the health and wellbeing of the residents and visitors to the Aviemore area. A feasibility study was carried out for the entirety of the Active Aviemore scheme exploring potential interventions which could be implemented and the Grampian Road/Dalfaber Drive junction was identified as a section which should be improved not least due to the construction of the NHS (Highland) hospital site in close proximity to the junction and the impact that the additional traffic would have on non-motorised user trips.

The existing layout of the junction will be upgraded to a signalised crossing to enable emergency vehicle priority when accessing or exiting the new hospital site. In addition, the pedestrian and cycling facilities and crossings will be upgraded to improve accessibility and safety around and through the junction.

Work commenced on site in 2022 and will be completed in quarter 2.

The Flow Country UNESCO World Heritage Bid

Work is progressing well on the nomination dossier and management plan, which form the documentation that will be submitted to UNESCO, through DCMS, in December 2022. Almost all the writing is now complete and being reviewed. A major milestone in this process was the completion of the draft boundary, which has formed the basis of ongoing consultation.

Following on from extensive soft consultation, with presentation being provided to numerous interest groups (Deer Management Groups, Forestry interests, Fisheries, etc.) a series of in person ‘drop in’ events has just concluded. Sixteen events were held, covering the wide area encompassed by proposed Flow Country World Heritage site.

The Flow Country Partnership has also been raising awareness of the significance of the bid nationally through a media and stakeholder engagement campaign entitled ‘Keep Us Covered’, which aims to communicate not just why The Flow Country should become Scotland’s first World Heritage site inscribed for purely natural criteria, and only the third in the UK; but also, how political representatives and other key stakeholders can help the bid succeed.

As part of this campaign the team has held a series of online briefing sessions with MPs and MSPs in recognition that their active support will substantially strengthen the bid to UNESCO, which will be finalised this autumn by the Flow Country Partnership and submitted by the UK Department of Culture, Media and Sport by the end of the 2022.

To this end the Flow Country Partnership successfully hosted a visit by Minister for Scotland Iain Stewart MP on 9th June to the RSPB Forsinard Flow Country visitor centre and the Minister has kindly agreed to host a reception for MPs to highlight the bid at Dover House in September. Shadow Secretary of State for DCMS John Nicolson MP has also been extremely supportive and the Partnership hopes that he will address guests at Dover House to express cross-party support for the bid. The bid team is also planning to arrange a joint reception or policy briefing for MSPs at the Scottish Parliament after the summer recess.

Updates on the progress of the Flow Country World Heritage Project have been provided regularly throughout 2021: the Economy & Infrastructure Committee (05.05.2021), the Climate Change working Group (18.08.2021), the Caithness Committee (03.10.2021) and the Sutherland Committee (22.11.2021). The updates provided were warmly received and continued support was assured.

Furthermore, at the Economy & Infrastructure Committee, it was agreed that The Highland Council should, alongside NatureScot, assume the status of 'accountable body' for the bid. Further involvement of members was provided through the inclusion of both Carl Rosie and Deirdre Mackay on the project steering group.



11. Regular and Proportionate Policy Advice

In addition to the regular pre-application advice service, examples of proportionate policy advice can be found in the following specific aspects of the Service's work:

Rural Housing Supplementary Guidance

In late 2021 Highland Council finalised and adopted its Rural Housing Supplementary Guidance to support new rural housing which safeguards, supports, and sustains Highland rural communities and encourages people to live and work in healthy, high-quality environments. The Supplementary Guidance also provides detailed advice on acceptable locations for new house sites and advice on the siting and design of new housing.

The work to review the former 'Housing in the Countryside Supplementary Guidance' (adopted in 2013) was initiated in 2018 following a change in Scottish Government advice on the use of Legal Agreements securing residential properties to landholdings and a general acceptance that the existing guidance was no longer fit for purpose.

During the review period, extensive engagement was undertaken with Members, the public and key stakeholders in both physical and virtual meetings, which led to full support from Elected Members at the final Council Committee.

Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans

In 2020/21 Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans for Tain and Wick Pulteneytown conservation areas were drafted and consulted upon. In both cases enlargements to the conservation area boundaries were proposed to incorporate architecturally and historically important parts of townscape that were previously excluded from the designation. In 2021/22 both appraisals and management plans were approved and adopted at the relevant Area Committee.

In 2021/22 Thurso Conservation Area was re-surveyed; the first detailed assessment of the conservation area in 35 years. A draft conservation area appraisal and management plan has now been prepared along with a more tightly defined boundary to ensure the conservation area accurately encapsulates what is of architectural and historic importance. Two public consultation events have taken place in Thurso and it is planned to bring the reports and proposed boundary amendments to the Area Committee in August 2022 for adoption. Strathpeffer Conservation Area has also seen a fresh heritage assessment and it is hoped to have a draft appraisal and management plan prepared and out to public consultation late 2022/23.

12. Corporate Working Across Services

Ecology Service

We have successfully recruited into the post that was agreed between The Highland Council and NatureScot have agreed that a shared resource to move Council policy and strategy as it relates to the twin climate and ecological emergency forward would have significant benefits to both organisations and is an excellent example of joined up thinking across local and national government.

We now have a resource available to the Environment Team that will provide an improved level of biodiversity advice for the Service.

Furthermore, it is intended to expand the Ecology Team so it can continue to provide an Ecological Clerk of Works service to Council projects, and undertake ecological survey, including protected species survey to enable the Council to discharge its duties effectively, efficiently and in line with statutory requirements.

Joint work with Education – Inverness east school catchment area

Inverness has been a key focus of housing need and demand within Highland over many years and the school roll forecasts show that it is critical for appropriate investment in new and enhanced schools provision to ensure further growth can be accommodated. In response to growing capacity pressures within the school estate in and around Inverness arising mainly from existing and proposed housing developments, Officers came together from across the Council. The purpose of doing so was to identify the constraints, ensure a fit-for-purpose school estate and to facilitate the delivery of affordable housing to meet the needs and demands of the area.

The work has helped to identify when and what will be needed to support the people and place in terms of schools and will be an important resource in advising on capital investment decisions for the Council.

The work builds on the regular meetings established between Planning and Care & Learning colleagues, and for this focused work attendance was extended to include colleagues from Housing, Finance and the Developer Contributions Officer. It has involved a thorough and focused analysis of housing development and infrastructure delivery scenarios, the corresponding impacts on the school estate and possible funding options. The collaboration between corporate services has resulted in a manageable programme of Council investment being identified for both primary and secondary education with innovative solutions being brought forward to address the issues. Work on this will continue in the years to come and be rolled out across Highland.

Short Term Lets

Representatives from Planning, Licensing, Environmental Health, and Corporate Services have been working together to develop the internal systems to consider and determine the expected 10,000 short-term let licensing applications which will be submitted following the commencement of the Scottish Government Licensing Scheme in October 2022.

Collaborative cross service working has brought time savings and a clearer understanding of the likely implications of the legislation from a corporate perspective.

Ward 20 (Badenoch & Strathspey) Short-term Let Control Area Proposal

Following Ward Member request to establish a Short-term Let Control Area to control the number of houses utilised for secondary letting across Ward 20 (Badenoch & Strathspey), only the second such proposal across Scotland following the recent enactment of the new legislation, officers set up a cross-service working group. This working group not only brought together officers from Development Plans, Development Management, and Legal and Democratic Services, but also includes officers from the Cairngorm National Park Authority in which much of Ward 20 sits.

Having such a close cross service working party has allowed the full consideration of the potential impact of the new legislation to be considered and allowed for a fully collaborative Committee Report to be prepared, which achieved unanimous Member support.

13. Sharing Good Practice, Skills and Knowledge

Seasonal Rangers

As a result of a particularly busy summer tourist season in 2020, The Highland Council created a Visitor Management Plan to improve and co-ordinate its services. Within this, a need for staff to engage with visitors to the Highlands has been recognised and a team of Access rangers dealing specifically with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code was proposed. These new posts liaised with other services and partners and took a co-ordinated approach to visitor management particularly in honey pot sites. They were the eyes and ears of the Council and reported back to relevant services. Data was collected on patrols over 3 days within a week. This was collated by the Outdoor Access Manager (OAM) and is presented in this report.

The Access Ranger team has received numerous compliments and messages of support from local residents and visitors. This has been directly by word of mouth, email, Facebook

posts. This support has been recognised by Highland Council Ward Members and Senior Management and the continuation of the service has continued into 2022. Reports and updates of the Rangers actions and progress was made to several Highland Council Committees, notably the Tourism Committee and Area Committees who unanimously commended the Rangers team on the difference they were making to our local communities and countryside. This culminated in the awarding of a Highland Council Staff Recognition Award for local area response and working with communities. The work of the Access Ranger team will be featured in a 4-part Channel 4 documentary to be filmed during 2022.



Inverness Castle Redevelopment

Planning permission and listed building consent (LBC) applications were submitted in early 2021 for the redevelopment of Inverness Castle; both applications were granted at the South Planning Committee on 27th April 2021. The Castle was A-listed on 21 May 1971 and sits elevated above the city-centre, as the principle landmark building within the city. The Castle sits in some isolation on Castle Hill, the embankment being open to the River Ness on the west, with the Bridge Street offices/IMAG and Town House to the north. To the east, across Castle Street, are a range of commercial premises, some of which have residential uses on the upper floors.



The site is roughly triangular in shape and incorporates the entire area bounded by Castle Road to the west, Castle Steps & Wynd to the north, and Castle Street/View Place to the east/south-east. The Castle itself is formed from the North and South Towers, with a linking-wall and round tower to the west. The western side of the site is a steeply sloping grassy embankment down to Castle Road, where it is bounded by a high masonry wall; this embankment has some mature and semi-mature trees and forms the primary setting for the Castle in riverside views. The southern esplanade has a central roadway with grassy sides, leading up to the Flora Macdonald statue (C-listed) looking wistfully to the SW, with the road continuing around the eastern side to the North Tower. Most of the flat-area around the Castle was utilised for car-parking. The eastern side of the site has a shallower grassy embankment and the Town-House car park, for which no alterations are planned.

The proposal is for a change-of-use and alteration/extension of Inverness Castle, following the re-location of the Courts Service from both North and South Towers, as well as the North no longer being required for Highland Council offices. The site's change of use will be for a variety of new functions, forming a hub and visitor attraction for tourists, with venue, exhibition and café spaces; around the Castle a new landscaping scheme will be implemented.

The site has two points of access, a pathway and steps from Castle Wynd to the north, as well as a vehicular and pedestrian access from Castle Street/View Place to the south; the steep hill-top location prohibits any other access being developed.

Pre Application Consultation: a project team, including Council Planning/Estates, Highlife-Highland (the end-user), LDN Architects and Historic Environment Scotland, had been meeting for a number of years to develop the project. This in particular has focussed on the design of the link-building, as well as the roof-terrace and access lift/lobby.

Public Consultation: although not a major application a public consultation event was held by the applicant/agent in the Inverness Museum and Art Gallery from 10th October to 31st December 2020.

The planning and LBC applications were consulted with (internally) Access Officer, Archaeology, Community Council, Contaminated Land, Environmental Health, Forestry Officer, Historic Environment Team, Transport Planning, and externally with Historic Environment Scotland and Scottish Water.

The South Tower is being largely restored to its original layout, focussing on the main court-room and this building will house the principal exhibition and visitor-experience rooms; the main new addition to the South Tower is a lift-accessed roof-terrace over the south-central block, giving 360 degrees of the city and surrounding countryside. The North Tower has one large court-room for business use but otherwise is for offices and servicing.



Image: LDN Architects. Showing the South Tower roof-terrace, angled stairwell extension and cubic lift-shaft

The principal new addition to the Castle is the linking block between the North and South Towers, housing reception/orientation and the café. This is a clearly contemporary element, formed by p.c. fins (pink to match the Castle sandstone, with pink aggregate) and a rhomboid-grid roof structure exposed internally.

All abilities access has been a key priority for the design process, with all main areas/rooms within the Castle having step-free access (with new lifts in both towers) and many new ramps to facilitate ease of circulation. Similarly, all landscaped areas around the Castle buildings shall have ramped access to negotiate any changes in level.



Image: LDN Architects. Linking block between the Towers

Following extensive archaeological evaluation/excavation of the link-building site, and strip-out to both Towers of contemporary fabric and partitions, work on the re-development has commenced in early 2022 on what will be a 3-year project. An on-line webinar was presented to the RTPi (nationally) on 6th May 2021 by Norman Brockie (case officer) and Stuart Mackeller (project architect).

14. Stalled and Legacy Cases

The number of legacy cases determined in 2021/22 rose from 72 to 89 from the preceding year. Although we determined 17 more legacy cases the number that remained undetermined rose slightly from 99 to 102. One factor related to this has been our continued desire to help address and resolve planning issues and where possible to enable appropriate development to proceed through constructive dialogue. A larger number of applications had been delayed due to the Covid pandemic as developers, applicants and consultees alike were in a large number of cases unable to undertake essential survey work which can be seasonal in nature for developments. All of these factors combined to significant delay the submission of information and survey work required prior to the determination of number of planning applications during the course of the year.

	2021/22	2020/21
Number cleared during reporting period	89	72
Number remaining	102	99

15. Developer Contributions

Contribution Forecasting

Continued efforts have been made to improve the quality of our Developer Contribution Forecasting in order to better inform future Infrastructure Spend of The Council and how this can be partly funded through Developer Contributions.

The first stage of the process has seen us link two existing Council documents (The School Roll Forecast and the Housing Land Audit) to be able to create a relatively true view on expected housing development year-on-year, broken down by housing development/settlement area. From these figures, we can then apply the appropriate Contribution rate relevant to the development/area (for example any Primary or Secondary Education contributions and which level, any community facilities contributions for specific projects, and any transport infrastructure contributions already being sought). This allows us to see a year-by-year contribution figure for various different Council-funded projects, and the hope is that this will in turn allow the Council to budget more accordingly going forward. It should also be noted that several “normalising” calculations are also factored in, with expected reductions in figures for reasons such as “house vs flat” rates, 1-3 house small developments, and “expected vs actual” build-out rates, all giving as accurate a forecasting figure as we can obtain.

The next stage in the process would be to digitize and record all Council Infrastructure projects in our computer system and balance this off a yearly-reviewed forecasting figure, allowing the Council to have a dynamic, up to date view of all funding requirements at the press of a button. This will require working closely with other services to obtain all the relevant projects and their associated cost.

16. Performance Information

Key Outcome	2021-22	2020-21
Development Planning		
• Age of local/strategic development plan(s) at end of reporting period (Requirement: less than 5 years)	5 years 5 months	5 years
• Will the local/strategic development plan(s) be replaced by their 5th anniversary according to the current development plan scheme?	N	N
• Has the expected date of submission of the plan to Scottish Ministers in the development plan scheme changed over the past year?	Y	Y
• Were development plan scheme engagement/consultation commitments met during the year?	Y	Y
Effective Land Supply and Delivery of Outputs		
• Established housing land supply	32388	28583

Key Outcome	2021-22	2020-21
Development Management		
Project Planning		
• percentage and number of applications subject to pre-application advice	20.50% 534	18.54% 419
• percentage and number of major applications subject to processing agreement or other project plan	81.8% 11	50% 15
Decision-Making		
• application approval rate	96.6	96%
• delegation rate	96.6	97.56%
Validation		
• percentage of applications valid upon receipt	63.96	46.94
Decision-Making Timescales		
Average Number of weeks to decision:		
• Major Developments	50.66	52.09
• Local Developments	15.98	12.32
• Householder Developments	8.48	7.73
Legacy Cases		
• Number cleared during reporting period	89	72
• Number remaining	102	99
Enforcement		
• Time since enforcement charter published/reviewed (Requirement: review every 2 years)	34 months	22 months

Decision-making timescales (based on “all applications” timescales)

Category	2021-22	Average timescale (weeks)	
		2021-22	2020-21
Major developments	18	56.7	27.8
Local developments	2525	13.1	13.4
• less than 2 months	1420	6.9	6.0
• more than 2 months	1105	21.0	22.0
Householder developments	807	8.3	7.6
• less than 2 months	649	6.7	6.0
• more than 2 months	158	15.0	18.2
Major housing developments	2	118.0	31.8
Local housing developments	874	16.9	13.8
• less than 2 months	335	7.2	7.1
• more than 2 months	538	22.0	23.7
Major business and industry	2	17.8	11.7
Local business and industry	193	13.6	13.5
• less than 2 months	95	7.0	6.7
• more than 2 months	98	20.0	23.7
EIA developments	2	21.9	28.0
Other consents	244	9.9	9.8
Planning/legal agreements	257	20.4	19.6
• Local: less than 2 months	3	100.4	23.7
• Local: more than 2 months	254	19.5	19.6
Local reviews	23	12.2	11.7

Decision-making, local reviews and appeals

Type	Original decision upheld			
	2021-22		2020-21	
	No.	%	No.	%
Local reviews	23	74	25	64
Appeals to Scottish Ministers	23	35	10	50

Enforcement activity

Key Outcome	2021-22	2020-21
Enforcement		
Complaints lodged	539	499
Cases taken up	284	183
Breaches identified	305	239
Cases resolved	152	231
Notices served	49	9
Reports to Procurator Fiscal	0	0
Prosecutions	0	0

Context

This has been a challenging year for The Council, we had several staff redeployed to the Business Grants work in support to the Covid Pandemic throughout the year. This has impacted on performance, and the emphasis is now on completing improvement projects to ensure that efficiency remains as high as possible.

Committee information

Committees and site visits	Number per year
Full Council	7
Strategic Committees	5
Planning Committees	16
Area Committees	0 ¹⁵
Area Committee site visits	0
Local Review Body	7
LRB site visits	0

Staff structure documents

	Headcount ¹⁶	RTPI Qualified Staff	Non RTPI Qualified Staff
Director	1	1	0
Head of Planning Service	1	0	1
Manager	3	3	0
Development Management	32	30	2
Development Planning	11	8	3
Enforcement	3	1	2
Specialists	6	0	6
Other	11	1	10

¹⁵ All applications are dealt with at Planning Committee

¹⁶ Headcount is number of people not FtE

Staffing age profile	Number
under 30	6
30-39	18
40-49	11
50 and over	24

The data shown in these tables has been drawn from the Council's HR and personnel records. The information has helped shape our strategic approach to workforce planning and our proposed Single Planning Service ensuring that all planners and staff within the Service have the opportunity to upskill across a range of planning functions.

Although the Council has an ageing workforce, the planning and environment service has a reasonable spread of age groups with some vulnerability to potential retirees in particular geographic locations. We are however sighted on this and as such the data is being used to shape our approach to succession planning, flexible working, deployment of staff and the use of corporate Modern Apprenticeship/Graduate Apprenticeship in recruiting. This should alleviate the risks to the delivery of the Planning and Environment functions.

