

# Development Plans Newsletter

## Cuairt-litir Phlanaichean Leasachaidh

January 2025





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#### Appendix 1: Additional studies to support the evidence

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This is the annual update of the Highland Council’s Development Plans Newsletter which provides an overview of the timetable for preparing land use planning documents for the Highland Council area. The newsletter lets you know how and when you can get involved in preparing these plans, and acts as our Development Plan Scheme that we submit annually to Scottish Government.

## 1.1 What is the Development Plan

Development Plans guide the use and development of land within the Highland Council area, via a set of policies, proposals and spatial strategies that cover a multitude of relevant themes such as housing, town centres, transport and open spaces. Ultimately, development plans set out how places will change and adapt in the future, with a long-term vision of where developments should and shouldn’t take place. Additionally, a development plan guides decisions on applications for planning permission, whereby decisions must be made in alignment with the approved [development plan](#) unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Planning legislation sets out how local authorities must prepare local development plans.

The Highland Council is preparing a new local development plan, and we encourage early participation from the public to make sure our plans gather and consider local opinion. This newsletter provides further information on the requirements for its preparation and when people can get involved.

The best place to view and comment on Development Plans prepared by the Highland Council is the [Council's website](#) or the online Development Plans [Consultation Portal](#) – use the links provided to find out how you can contribute to the plan .

## 1.2 Revisions to the planning system

Scotland’s fourth [National Planning Framework \(NPF4\)](#) was adopted and published on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2023. It forms part of the “approved development plan” for each council area in Scotland and is therefore a very important consideration in making most planning decisions. NPF4 also contains

# 1 Introduction and Purpose

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a national vision and spatial strategy which councils should not contradict in producing a Local Development Plan (LDP). For example, NPF4 lists national developments such as large-scale renewable energy developments, the principle of which cannot be disputed at the local level.

Planning legislation sets out that each planning authority, individually or in collaboration with other planning authority, will need to produce a Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) but this will not form part of the statutory “approved development plan”. This requirement to prepare an RSS has yet to commence and it is not yet known when it will commence.

Each planning authority must prepare one or more Local Development Plan(s) (LDP) for its area, that takes into account the NPF4 as well as each registered Local Place Plan (LPP) for that area. Regard must also be had by the planning authority to any adopted RSS and any local outcomes improvement plan (LOIP) relevant to the area. Scottish Government expects that “new style” local development plans will not duplicate the policies already set out within NPF4. Instead, they are expected only to contain policies and proposals specific to the circumstances of that local area. For example, they will fill in local detail not covered in NPF4 or add a local perspective on national issues if local evidence justifies a tailored approach. Local development plans are expected to be “place-based”, visual plans with a clear spatial strategy reflected primarily in a collection of maps, development briefs and masterplans. There are 3 overarching aims for an LDP, as instructed by the [Scottish Government](#):

- Place-based
- People-centred
- Delivery focused

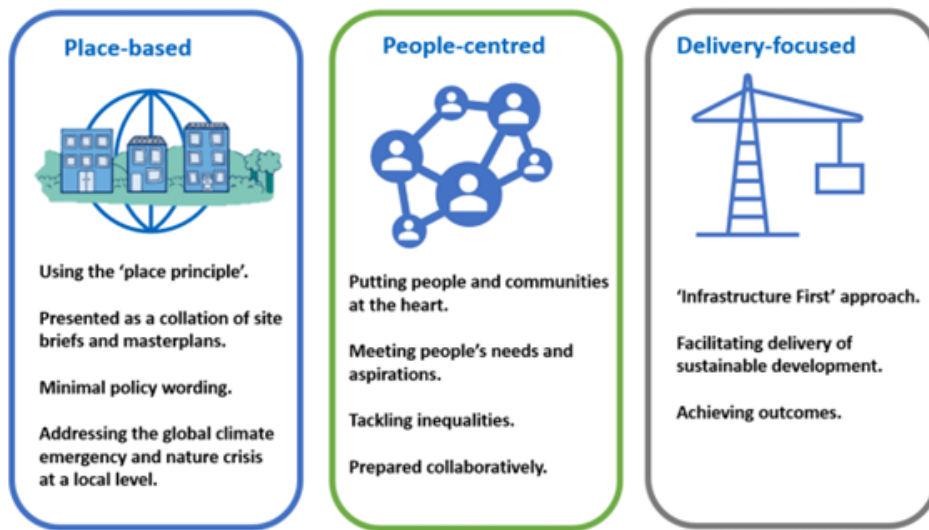


Figure 1

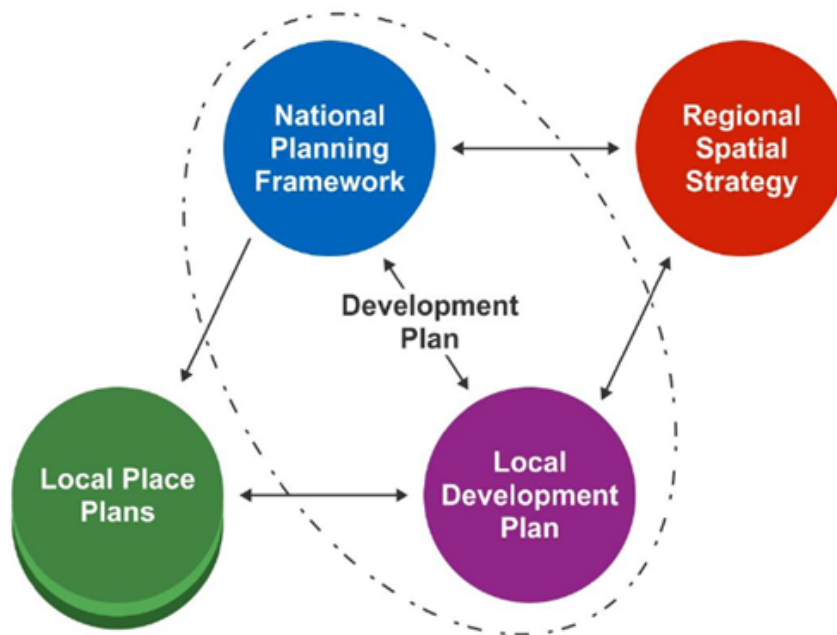


Figure 2

# 1 Introduction and Purpose

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## 1.3 The purpose of a Development Plan Scheme

Our annual newsletter serves as our Development Plan Scheme (DPS), which is a statutory document essential for communicating to key stakeholders, agencies and any other interested parties the progress with development plans in Highland. The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended, and the Town and Country Planning (Development Planning) (Scotland) Regulations 2023, require a DPS to be prepared each year. The DPS includes intended timings for various stages of LDP preparation, updates on key projects and on-going engagement and consultation, as well as general background information that is regarded as significant and relevant. A “Participation Statement” must also be prepared as part of a DPS, that outlines when consultation is likely to take place, with whom and its likely form, including the steps that will be taken to involve the public.



## 2 The current status of the Development Plan in Highland

### 2.1 Our current and future Local Development Plans

Four approved local development plans cover the Highland Council area, with a separate LDP for the areas covered by the Cairngorms prepared by the Cairngorms National Park Authority. The first of the four provides a mixture of site-specific allocations and general policies that apply across all of Highland hence this LDP is called the Highland wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP). It dates back to April 2012 and much of its content has been overtaken (but not legally superseded) by more recent Highland area local development plans and by NPF4.

There are three area local development plans which can be viewed at [www.highland.gov.uk/devplans](http://www.highland.gov.uk/devplans):

- the Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan (CasPlan) (August 2018)
- the West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan (WestPlan) (September 2019);
- the Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan 2 (IMFLDP2) (June 2024).



All of the four LDPs above will continue to form part of the “approved development plan” for their respective parts of Highland until a new style LDP is adopted for Highland (scheduled for late 2027/early 2028). In addition, there are Supplementary Guidance documents connected to one or

## 2 The current status of the Development Plan in Highland

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more of the existing Highland LDPs which provide more detailed policy and guidance on specific topics or geographic areas. These Supplementary Guidance documents are listed in section 3 and can be accessed at [www.highland.gov.uk/devplans](http://www.highland.gov.uk/devplans).

In the last year, we have progressed our new single Highland Local Development Plan (HLDP) by gathering evidence from various data sources and stakeholders. Our November 2024 committee reports [here](#) and [here](#) provide further detail. In addition, we adopted the most recent of our area LDPs on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2024. The second Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan contains an up-to-date planning policy framework for the part of Highland experiencing the most development pressure. It also contains a more nuanced, tailored to Highland, approach to some national issues such as greenspace and biodiversity.

### 2.2 Delivery Programme and Monitoring

Better evidence leads to better planning policies, better decisions and better outcomes. As well as the evidence gathering for the new Highland Local Development Plan described below, we continue to gather evidence relating to the delivery of current Local Development Plans. Recent updates include a new [2024 Housing Land Audit](#) which feeds into school roll forecasts and other infrastructure planning workstreams.

Over the last year we have updated our Delivery Programme for the Development Plan, the latest version of which is available on our [webpage](#). The Delivery Programme outlines the infrastructure and other investment that is required to support the implementation of the policies and proposals in the development plan. A delivery programme identifies, monitors and implements actions for delivering future growth in an area, whilst also identifying which infrastructure projects will be subject to developer contribution requirements. We have analysed comments submitted on a recent consultation on the Delivery Programme and this has shaped the latest version online.

There are a range of other workstreams underway that relate to delivery of the current Development Plan, including the following:

## 2 The current status of the Development Plan in Highland

### **Rural Housing**

The Council has also approved, in November 2024, a [Rural Housing Policy Explanatory Note](#). This document has been prepared to ensure a clear and consistent understanding and interpretation of the range of policies for rural housing as set out in National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) and the Council's approved Development Plan. It aims to ensure that rural housing proposals are supported in appropriate circumstances.

### **Short-Term Lets**

The Council established a Short-term Let Control Area for Ward 20 (Badenoch & Strathspey) on Monday 4th March 2024, since which time any new Short-term Lets within the Ward have required planning approval prior to being used as such. The principle and potential implications of STL Control Areas across Highland are currently under consideration with elected members and further consultation may be undertaken.

### **Housing Challenge**

In July 2024, The Highland Council declared a Housing Challenge that sought to address a range of issues to accelerate housing delivery in the area. This was partly a response to major economic development such as the Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport and the increase in workforce coming into the area to deliver the SSE infrastructure works and other developments across Highland. The Council has also prepared early analysis on the potential housing need and demands arising from developments such as the Green Freeport, taking account of the number and the types of jobs, the Green Freeport is likely to create. The study predicts 24,000 new homes will be required in the next 10 years.

The IMFLDP2 adopted in June last year earmarks housing and employment land to support the short- and medium-term requirements for the Green Freeport. The Highland Delivery Programme referenced above contains the Inner Moray Firth Draft Deliverable Housing Land Pipeline and this will be extended to all of Highland by 31 March 2025.

## 2 The current status of the Development Plan in Highland

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The Council is looking at several mechanisms to address housing delivery and respond to housing needs. We are considering the use of Masterplan Consent Areas (MCAs) as a means of coordinating and accelerating the development of both employment and housing sites. Any decision to progress an MCA will be subject to Committee decision and public consultation. This consideration will take place during 2025. The Council is also looking at holding a formal regular workshop with the housing and development industry to address housing delivery issues. The Call for Sites launched alongside the DPS is also finding a mechanism for new sites to be nominated for future development.

### 3.1 Introduction

Since the previous Development Plans Newsletter was published in March 2024, significant work has been undertaken to collate evidence for the preparation of the upcoming Highland Local Development Plan (HLDP). In November, an 'emerging evidence' paper was submitted to the Highland Council's Economy and Infrastructure Committee, categorised by a set of 'unique challenges' that will shape the preparation and content of the new local development plan and the plan implementation and delivery that will follow.

Each unique challenge is embedded by a comprehensive overview of existing secondary data, in addition to reflection on community engagement strategies that have commenced over the last year. This includes place standard tool survey and workshops, local place plan webinars and a local living tool consultation that have involved key agencies and community members. Results from the place standard tool, as well as data gathered from our local living tool has been presented as part of our 'Area Profiles', a collective source of data for each sub-region within the Highlands.

The Highland Council is currently at evidence-gathering stage, through which a range of audits and community/stakeholder engagement will lead to the submission of an evidence report to the Committee and Council for approval in mid-2025, before submission to the Scottish Government for the 'Gate Check' stage. Gate Checks are a statutory requirement in the preparation of a LDP that analyse and independently assess whether the planning authority has sufficient information and a sound evidence base to prepare the LDP.

### 3.2 Progress/Timescales

The target in last year's DPS was to complete the evidence report by the end of 2024. However, alongside other resource challenges across the Development Plans Team it has taken more time than was envisaged to pull together the evidence for the plan and, to widen out engagement and seek more feedback on the evidence, we are commencing a public consultation in early 2025. This

### 3 Move to a single Highland Local Development Plan

means that the Evidence Report is now likely to be submitted to Scottish Government in autumn 2025, as indicated in the timeline set out above, with some knock-on effect for the timing envisaged for later stages.

Approval was given for that next stage of consultation on the new plan in November 2024. That consultation in early 2025 allows people to review the emerging evidence so far. This will also provide a chance to feedback on area profiles, and for ongoing LPPs and other local input from communities, businesses and groups to shape the evidence for parts of Highland.

Some of the detailed aspects on the evidence gathered are contained within our [consultation portal](#), where we will continue to promote evidence gathering strategies to inform the preparation of our plan.

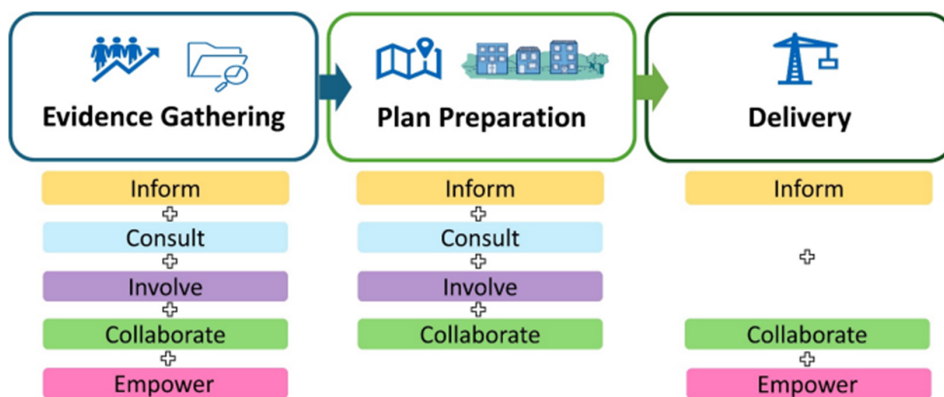


Figure 3

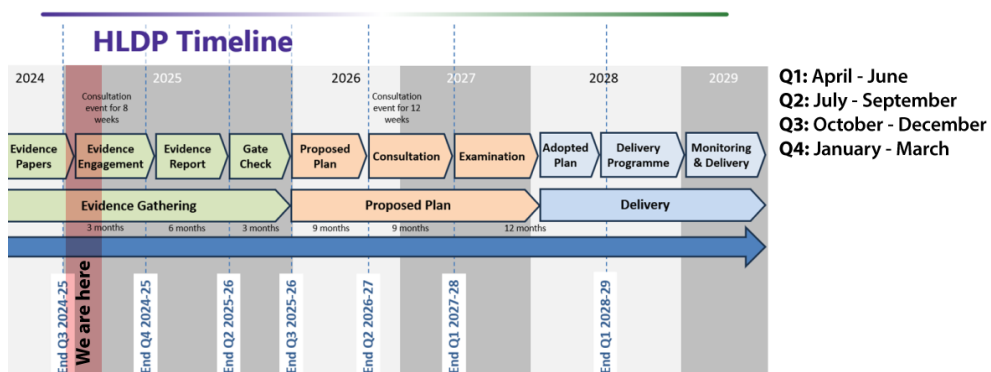


Figure 4

### 3.3 Overview of the emerging evidence

This section provides an overview of the main topics covered by the emerging evidence for the new Local Development Plan.

#### Highland's Unique Challenges

The Highland Council has identified 7 unique challenges that provide a basis for evidence gathering and strategizing for the future delivery of development and service provisions across the region. The report of each unique challenge summarises the national planning requirements relevant to the topic, provides a commentary of the existing evidence and datasets, and determines how evidence gaps will be addressed in the new development plan. The 7 unique challenges are as follows:

Unique Challenge	Overview
<b>Housing and Economy</b>	Provides an outline of how demographic forecasting presents some major challenges for the region and aims to understand the inter-relationships between employment, the economy and housing need and how such issues might be addressed. Information extracted within this section is directly pertinent to the Housing Challenge summarized previously in the newsletter. Additionally, the 2018 Business & Industrial Land Audit (BILA) is being reviewed to inform availability of the business and industrial land supply, whilst an updated vacant and derelict land survey 2023 will help to inform future land allocation
<b>Infrastructure First</b>	Provides an outline of this national policy theme that requires infrastructure considerations to be at the forefront of plan preparation.

### 3 Move to a single Highland Local Development Plan

<p><b>Transport and Connectivity</b></p>	<p>Provides an overview of the upcoming Local Transport Strategy and how this will be a key consideration for the HLDP’s transport strategy and policies, along with a Transport Appraisal that will likely be required in the build up to the proposed plan</p>
<p><b>Climate Change and Energy</b></p>	<p>Provides an outline of how existing strategies and documents such as the Highland Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy, and the Highland Net Zero Strategy will be key considerations in shaping the strategy and policies of the new HLDP. Additionally, the role of the Council’s Community Wealth Building Strategy and the Social Value Charter in addressing wider climate change and decarbonization priorities for the future is explored in this section.</p>
<p><b>Natural Environment</b></p>	<p>Provides an outline of the significance of baseline mapping for biodiversity assets in Highland, as well as mapping that will inform the identification of existing and potential nature networks and natural heritage designations. The role of the IMFLDP2 to inform the HLDP approach to fulfilling national policy requirements for biodiversity and the natural environment is also outlined.</p>
<p><b>Our Coastline</b></p>	<p>Provides an overview of national policy requirements to inform a HLDP approach that maintains Highland’s rich and varied coastline and mitigates impacts of climate change. Additionally includes a description of the existing Marine Regional Areas which provide an equivalent approach to Area Profiles discussed below.</p>
<p><b>Design, Wellbeing and Placemaking</b></p>	<p>Outlines the mechanisms required to encourage, promote and facilitate well designed developments where our residents live in friendly and welcoming communities with quick and easy access to service provisions and strong interconnections.</p>

**Table 1**

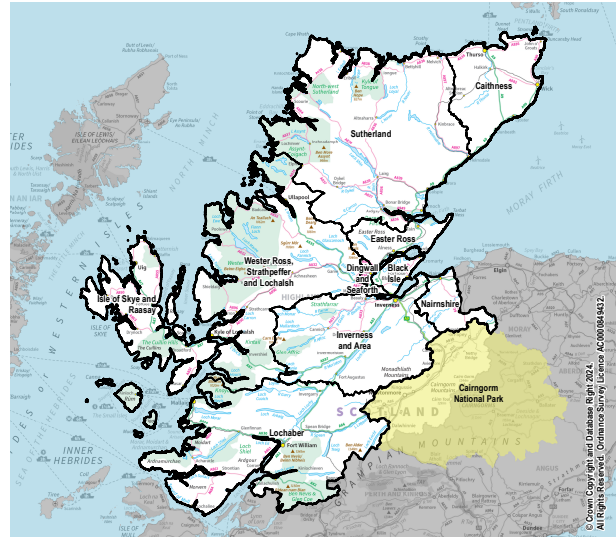


## 3 Move to a single Highland Local Development Plan

A number of more detailed studies and analysis need to be carried out to support the evidence for the new plan. These are summarised in Appendix 1 alongside with the timescales for preparing them.

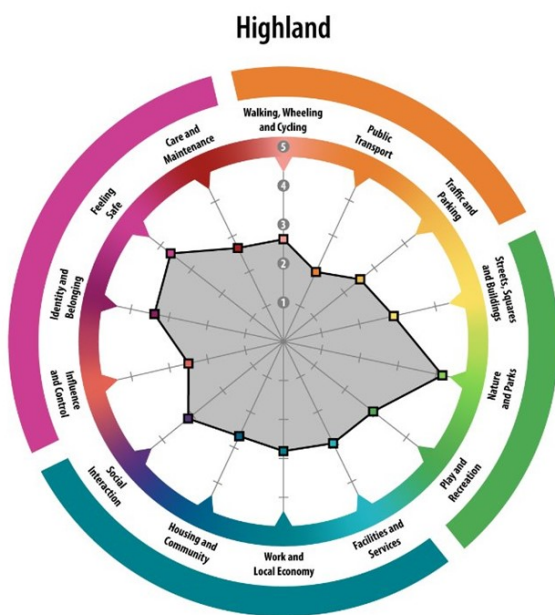
### Area Profiles

We have also been collecting and collating evidence at the more local level in what we have termed Area Profiles. The boundaries of these largely match the Council's area committee areas (see adjoining map), subject to some adjustment to cover those parts of Badenoch and Strathspey that are out with the Cairngorms National Park. The Area Profiles offer a summary of the unique attributes and characteristics of our sub-regions that shape priorities and land use strategy and policies, such as key facts and figures, the character of areas, their functionality and infrastructure capacity, place standard feedback, local place plans overviews, plus local living analysis and mapping. In person consultation events also took place in most of these sub-regions during 2024. These events presented the evidence gathered to date, whilst additionally offering members of the community an opportunity to provide their thoughts on our HLDP preparation thus far.



**Map 1**

### 3 Move to a single Highland Local Development Plan



**Figure 5**

(HLH) has been instrumental in bridging the gap between ourselves and the perceptions of young people regarding the built environment.

Any comments on the issues experienced by particular communities should be directed to the Area Profiles in the HLDP Evidence Consultation that is being launched alongside this Development Plans Newsletter.

#### **Local Place Plans (LPPs)**

Local Place Plans are community-led plans that allow a Community Council or Community Controlled Body to reflect the ambitions of their place through a set of recommendations that inform local authorities in preparing development plans. Local Place Plans must be prepared in accordance with a set of statutory requirements that are assessed by an allocated member of the Highland Council’s planning service. A number of LPPs have been registered, others submitted and more under preparation. Guidance is available for communities [here](#). We have indicated to communities that LPPs submitted in early 2025 will be documented in the emerging Evidence Report and considered in the future draft Highland LDP.

Our bespoke Place Standard model has proven to be an optimal tool for gathering evidence since launching, and feedback is reflected in the Area Profiles to help guide the priorities that the plan will need to respond to across Highland communities.

As part of a dedicated effort to capture the views and recommendations of young people to inform the preparation of HLDP, we have also worked simultaneously with Highlife Highland to reach young people and young person’s groups across Highland. Our partnership with Highlife Highland

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Validated LPPs on our Register:

Local Place Plan	Date of Validation
<b>Ardgour Local Place Plan</b>	23.04.24
<b>Black Isle Local Place Plan</b>	04.10.24
<b>Broadford and Strath Local Place Plan</b>	08.10.24
<b>Duror and Kentallen Local Place Plan</b>	30.09.24
<b>Garve and District Local Place Plan</b>	04.11.24
<b>Lochalsh Local Place Plan</b>	11.10.24
<b>Stratherrick and Foyers Local Place Plan</b>	15.09.23
<b>Torridon and Kinlochewe Local Place Plan</b>	01.11.24

**Table 2**

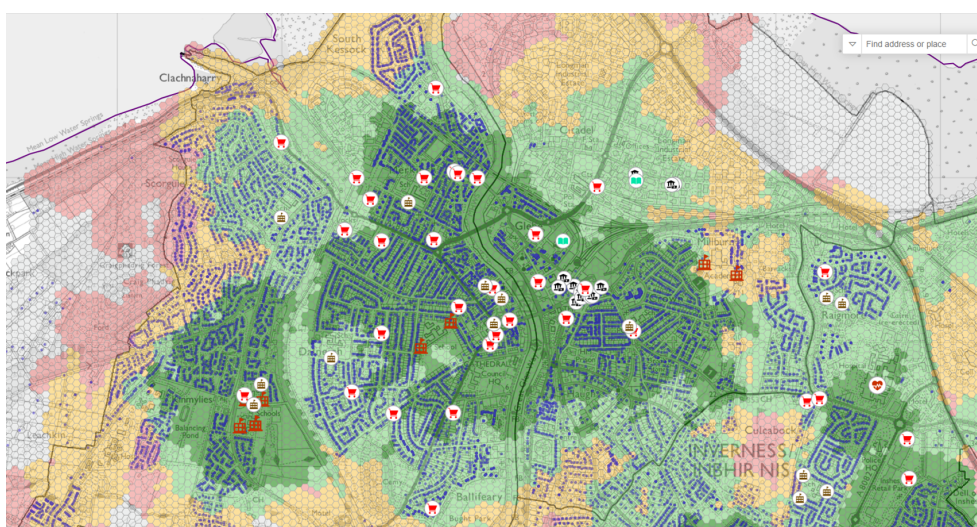
Once registered, a LPP must legally be taken into consideration by a local authority when preparing a Local Development Plan. Local Place Plans that are registered by us can also be a material consideration when planning applications are being considered by our Planning Authority. If you have any questions about Local Place Plans or submitting a Local Place Plan, please email us at [lpp@highland.gov.uk](mailto:lpp@highland.gov.uk).

**Note:** Local Place Plans prepared by communities within the Cairngorms National Park would be submitted to and taken into account by the Cairngorms National Park Authority when preparing the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan.

## 3 Move to a single Highland Local Development Plan

### A Local Living Tool

The Highland Council developed a tool to assess how well our places meet the principles of local living. The tool is map-based, utilising Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to plot the location of a variety of services including shops, greenspaces, leisure and learning facilities within over 100 of Highland's largest settlements. GIS was then used to measure the accessibility of these services within a 10-minute walking distance (800m) and presented the findings on an easy-to-use interactive map.



**Picture 1**

The Highland Council seeks to promote local living, emphasising the need for careful design and placemaking strategies that ensure optimal service provision to stimulate local growth opportunities and reduce socio-economic inequalities over Highland settlements. A consultation period ran for 9 weeks from 17 June to 16 August 2024, where views were sought on the tool in terms of the services included, the level of importance given to each service, accuracy and what approaches we could take to rural areas. Responses and comments were recorded during this time period from a variety of stakeholders, that will inform a settlement hierarchy for Highland, considering which areas may be suitable for new development, and the kinds of services and infrastructure needed to support them. Following the outcomes of the consultation, the tool was updated in November

## 3 Move to a single Highland Local Development Plan

2024 and was included as part of the Evidence Papers that went to the Highland Council's E&I committee for approval. The Local Living interactive map can be found [here](#) whilst the overview of the consultation process can be found [here](#).

### **Call for Sites**

The Highland Council will be launching an official 'Call for Sites' commencing 27<sup>th</sup> January 2025 and running until the 30<sup>th</sup> of April 2025. The purpose of this evidence gathering strategy is to help us to determine development opportunities across the Highlands in areas of land that are not already identified or prioritised for development. An initial consultation period was launched in November 2024 that allowed interested parties time to prepare site information as requested by The Highland Council, as well as reflect on whether the list of information required was clearly communicated and relevant. The formal launch will therefore ensure that a fit-for-purpose Call for Sites template can help unlock suitable pockets of land for future development and growth. The template has been designed to allow for early Strategic Environmental Assessment work to be carried out on all site submissions and options, helping decide whether any sites can be considered through the Masterplan Consent Area process where there is a demonstrable need to increase housing land supply.

The 'Call for Sites' offers a unique opportunity for interested parties to shape the future of their place and inform the Council of opportunities within their respective community that can be realised through the provision of new infrastructure. The Council are particularly interested in receiving site submissions for housing and employment land, in response to a Highland housing challenge as well as growing employment needs across the region.

### **Regional Spatial Strategy/ Interim Regional Spatial Strategy**

A Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) is a long-term spatial strategy in respect of strategic development of an area. It must specify the region it belongs to and identify the need for strategic development, the proposed outcomes that strategic development will contribute towards, priorities for the delivery process, and proposed locations which must be shown in the form of a map or a diagram.

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NPF4 has identified five areas under Regional Spatial Priorities with a narrative on challenges and opportunities offered for each. These five areas are North, North and West Coast and Islands, Northeast, Central and South. The RSS is not part of the statutory development plan but will have an important part to play in informing future versions of the NPF and LDP's. It is up to planning authorities to decide for themselves the most appropriate scale and extent of areas to be covered by Regional Spatial Strategies.

The Highland Council developed an Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy as part of a response to Scottish Government's preparation of NPF4. Read the April 2021 IRSS [here](#), or alternatively watch this [short video](#) to learn more. The Highland Council intend to formally transition the IRSS into a RSS for Highland by means of a method that aligns as much as is practicable with the preparation of the new HLDP, though completing the formal work on the RSS will be dependent upon the statutory requirement to prepare an RSS being commenced by Scottish Government and it is understood that they will first prepare statutory guidance for RSS preparation. With regards to current context however, the IRSS can still be observed as a useful document, with more up-to-date spatial strategy context for the Highlands than the content presented through NPF4, which doesn't include major economic developments such as the Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport that will initiate major changes across the region in the coming years.

### **Supplementary Guidance**

The development plan system is transitioning to one where supplementary guidance doesn't form part of the statutory development plan. No further statutory Supplementary Guidance will be prepared by The Highland Council. It is expected however that key issues which may have been previously covered in supplementary guidance, such as issues around developer contributions will be proposed to be covered in the LDP itself so they are consulted upon and scrutinised where appropriate and carry 'development plan' status. Nevertheless, non-statutory planning guidance may still be produced by local authorities for the purpose of providing guidance on specific planning issues. The Council will review the coverage and content of its current suite of Supplementary

### 3 Move to a single Highland Local Development Plan

Guidance (and other planning guidance), to establish which aspects should be covered within the new Local Development Plan itself, which aspects should be covered within non-statutory planning guidance and any aspects no longer required.

<b>Development Guidance</b>	<b>Period of Adoption</b>	<b>Statutory Document (Yes/No)</b>
<b>Aquaculture</b>	Autumn 2016	No
<b>Biodiversity Enhancement</b>	May 2024	No
<b>Coastal Development</b>	May 2010	No
<b>Developer Contributions</b>	November 2018	Yes
<b>Flood Risk and Drainage</b>	January 2013	Yes
<b>Forest and Woodland Strategy</b>	November 2018	No
<b>Green Networks</b>	January 2013	Yes
<b>Historic Environment Strategy</b>	January 2013	Yes
<b>Houses In Multiple Occupation</b>	March 2013	Yes
<b>Managing Waste in New Developments</b>	March 2013	Yes
<b>Onshore Wind Energy</b>	November 2016	Yes
<b>Open Space in new Residential Developments</b>	January 2013	Yes
<b>Physical Constraints</b>	March 2013	Yes
<b>Protected Species</b>	March 2013	Yes

## 3 Move to a single Highland Local Development Plan

<b>Public Art</b>	March 2013	Yes
<b>Renewable Energy Strategy</b>	May 2006	No
<b>Rural Housing</b>	December 2021	Yes
<b>Sustainable Design</b>	January 2013	Yes
<b>Trees and Woodland</b>	January 2013	Yes

**Table 3**

### 3.4 Strategic Environmental Assessment

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a statutory requirement that aims to ensure the environment is a primary consideration when LDPs are being prepared. The key steps of the SEA process are:

1. Scoping
2. Scoping Report (consultation with SEA Consultation Authorities) alongside publication of the Evidence Report for the Plan.
3. Assessment
4. Environmental Report (consultation with SEA Consultation Authorities and public) alongside consultation of the Proposed Plan.
5. Further assessment
6. Finalised Environmental Report
7. Post-Adoption Statement of SEA

In Highland Council, our practice is that the SEA for the LDP is undertaken by the Development Plans Team with input from colleagues across the Council, e.g. Environment Team, Flood Team, Contaminated Land Team, as well close engagement with the statutory SEA Consultation Authorities (NatureScot, Scottish Environment Protection Agency, and Historic Environment Scotland). Our



### 3 Move to a single Highland Local Development Plan

schedule of work on the SEA aims to ensure that SEA is early and effective, makes best use of evidence for the LDP, and that the SEA properly informs and influences decisions on the Plan content.

During 2025 we will be working through the Scoping process leading to the publication of the Scoping Report, alongside the publication of the Evidence Report for the HLDP, and which are scheduled to be published in summer 2025.

Plan Stage	Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)	Habitat Regulations Appraisal (HRA)	THC Integrated Impact Assessment		
			Public Sector Equality Duty Assessment	Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment	Island Communities Impact Assessment
<b>Evidence Report</b>	Scoping report	-	Screening	Screening	Screening
<b>Plan Preparation inc. site assessment</b>	Undertake assessment	Undertake assessment	Undertake assessment	Undertake assessment	Undertake assessment
<b>Proposed LDP (draft plan)</b>	Environmental report	HRA Record	Assessment Report	Assessment Report	Assessment Report
<b>Adopted Plan</b>	Post adoption statement	Final HRA Record	-	-	-

**Table 4**

### 3 Move to a single Highland Local Development Plan

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Throughout the Scoping process we will be engaging with the SEA Consultation Authorities. This will include a workshop that the Development Plans Team aims to hold with the SEA Consultation Authorities in late-March 2025.

Once the Evidence Report has cleared the Gate Check stage, we will begin the Assessment for SEA alongside, and to inform, preparation of the Proposed Plan. Again, this will include working with the SEA Consultation Authorities using both a workshop format and online collaborative working.

### 4.1 Introduction

The success of a new HLDP is dependent on the Council's commitment to ensuring that stakeholders and key agencies are involved in every stage of the process. Individuals, businesses, organisations and homeowners are just some of the key stakeholders who have an interest in the future development of the Highlands and the impact that the plan will have on those who live and work here. Our participation statement sets out the key agencies and stakeholders who we have and will continue to work alongside to gather evidence. We tailor our engagement approach for different agencies and stakeholders to ensure that unique stakeholder challenges and opportunities are appropriately identified and subsequently given weight as part of our overall evidence base to inform the HLDP.

Community engagement is a statutory requirement within development planning, enhanced in recent years by the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 which introduced Local Place Plans, as well as specific provisions to involve children and young people alongside other groups with protected characteristics such as gypsy/travellers and disabled people. Our participation statement provides a summary of how we intend to engage the public on the production, adoption and implementation of the HLDP with a focus on the specific actions we will take and how we will communicate and promote evidence gathering strategies. Comments on the suitability of the Participation statement are always welcome and should be sent to [devplans@highland.gov.uk](mailto:devplans@highland.gov.uk).

Section b, c and d that follow describe the criteria that can help to test the suitability of our approach to engagement on the local development plan. In addition, in exceptional circumstances mediation is seen as a potentially useful tool for exploring, resolving or reducing disagreement on land use plans. It can be used to aid the engagement process and to help build bridges between stakeholders. It is a voluntary process between two parties, facilitated by a third independent party. There is no legislative requirement for mediation in the Scottish planning system but there are potential scenarios where it might assist in resolving issues that arise through the preparation of different

## 4 Participation Statement

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types of land use plan. However, our aim is to remove or reduce the need for mediation by gaining awareness of proposals/sites that may prove contentious through early engagement with stakeholders in the preparation of plans including any community-led Local Place Plans.

### 4.2 Methods of Engagement

The diagram below illustrates some of the engagement opportunities that are being made available through the forthcoming consultation on the HLDP. It also mentions some of the other linked engagement opportunities that will feed into aspects of the evidence or the plan, including LPPs Area Place Plans etc. We will carefully consider how partners need to be engaged through each of these elements of plan-making.

## METHODS OF ENGAGEMENT TO PREPARE NEW HLDP



Figure 6

### 4.3 How we will make people aware

We provide a range of different communication channels that let you know how you can contribute to the preparation of the HLDP, as well as how the plan is developing and taking shape.



Figure 7

### 4.4 Who will get involved?

The following tables include some of the key agencies and participants that we will consult as part of our evidence gathering to inform the preparation of HLDP. For the avoidance of doubt, the list of stakeholders/agencies is not exhaustive. We will make efforts to engage each of these groups at each milestone stage of the plan.

Area	Participant	Main Publicity/Engagement Techniques
<b>Public</b>	Public	In-Person, social media, Mailing, Newsletters, Surveys
	Community Councils	In-Person, social media Mailing, Newsletters, LPP Assistance and Workshop, Surveys
	Other Community Groups	In-Person, social media Mailing, Newsletters, LPP Assistance and Workshop, Surveys
	Children and Young People	Tailored Engagement, Meetings, social media Website, Newsletter
	Ageing Populations	Tailored Engagement, Meetings, social media Website, Newsletter
	Disabled People	Tailored Engagement, Meetings, social media Website, Newsletter
	Gypsy/Travellers	Tailored Engagement, Meetings, social media Website, Newsletter

## 4 Participation Statement

<b>Professional</b>	Business Organisations	In-person, Mailings, social media, Call for Sites, Meetings
	Local Businesses	In-person, Mailings, social media, Call for Sites, Meetings
	Developers	In-person, Mailings, social media, Call for Sites, Meetings
	Landowners	In-person, Mailings, social media Call for Sites, Meetings
<b>Government and authorities</b>	Scottish Government	Mailings, Meetings, Workshops
	Transport Scotland	Mailings, Meetings, Workshops
	NatureScot	Mailings, Meetings, Workshops
	SEPA	Mailings, Meetings, Workshops
	Scottish Water	Mailings, Meetings, Workshops
	HIE	Mailings, Meetings, Workshops
	Sustrans	Mailings, Meetings, Workshops
	NHS Highland	Mailings, Meetings, Workshops
	Historic Environment Scotland	Mailings, Meetings, Workshops
	Neighboring Local Authorities	Mailings, Meetings, Workshops

**Table 5**



### 5.1 National Marine Plan

The previous section details how our Coastline is an important part of the new plan. However, there is an opportunity to shape national policy in this area.

Scotland's National Marine Plan (NMP) was adopted and published by Scottish Government in 2015. The NMP covers inshore and offshore waters and serves to support development and activity in the seas around Scotland, while helping to protect our marine environment through the sustainable management of marine resources. Scottish Government is required to monitor and report on the NMP at least every 3 years. The last such report was published in 2021 and concluded that there have been significant changes that would warrant the development of an updated NMP. In Autumn 2022 it was confirmed that this suggested update would be taken forward. The decision to do so cited Scottish Government's commitment to becoming a net zero nation by 2045, the impacts of EU exit and increased understanding of climate change and human activity impacts on the marine environment.

The development of NMP2 is progressing steadily, with significant milestones achieved and key phases outlined for future completion. The process began in 2022 with a scoping phase to identify emerging issues, challenges, and policy needs for Scotland's marine spaces. In November 2024, the Planning Position Statement was published, and a public consultation is currently underway, set to close on 7 February, 2025.

Following the consultation, analysis of the responses and integration of feedback into the final draft will commence in early 2025. The final draft of NMP2 is expected by mid-2025, with approval and adoption anticipated in late 2025 or early 2026.

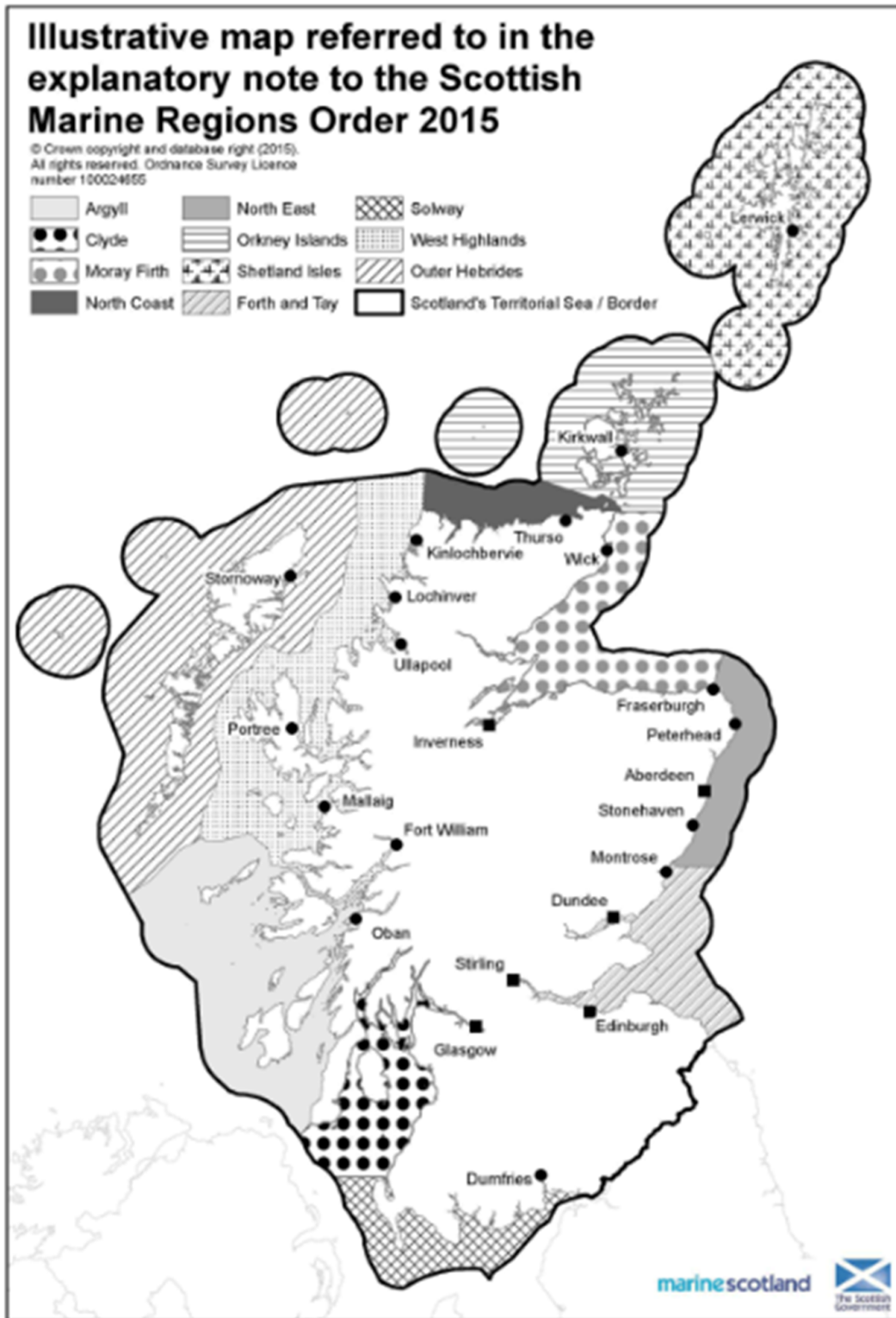
### 5.2 Regional Marine Plan

Under the Marine (Scotland) Act (2010) regional marine plans may be prepared at the local level by delegated bodies forming a regional marine planning partnership. The Scottish Marine Regions Order (2015) divided Scotland's Inshore area up into several regions, as shown in the following

## 5 National and Regional Marine Plan

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map and detailed [online](#). Three of these regions fall within the Highland Council's area: West Highlands, North Coast, and Moray Firth. To date, the national picture on regional marine plans shows that uptake has been slow with some progress made by the Clyde Marine Planning Partnership, in the Shetland Islands and in the Orkney Islands.



Map 2

## 5 National and Regional Marine Plan

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As of December 2024, the Orkney Islands Council's Regional Marine Plan (OIRMP) is in the final stages of preparation before submission to the Scottish Government for approval. The public consultation on the draft OIRMP concluded in October 2024, and the council is currently reviewing feedback to inform revisions.

The Shetland Islands Regional Marine Plan (SIRMP) remains under consideration by Scottish Ministers, having been submitted to the Scottish Government in May 2021.

The Clyde Marine Planning Partnership (CMPP) continues to develop the Clyde Regional Marine Plan (CRMP). A pre-consultation draft was released in March 2019, inviting feedback from stakeholders and the public. Since then, the CMPP has been actively engaging with stakeholders to address local issues and pressures on the coastal and marine environment, working towards the finalization of the plan.

Presently there have been no substantial forward steps taken in the Highland area to form a regional marine planning partnership. However, Highland Council will continue to listen to and work with coastal and marine stakeholders with a view to progressing regional marine planning as and when appropriate. In conjunction with this, Highland Council will engage with Marine Scotland to better understand the interactions with and dependencies on the update to the NMP.

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[Highland Development Plans](https://www.facebook.com/HighlandDevelopmentPlans)

We update our Development Plans Newsletter on at least an annual basis, please visit

[www.highland.gov.uk/developmentplansnewsletter](http://www.highland.gov.uk/developmentplansnewsletter) for future updates.

## Appendix 1: Additional studies to support the evidence

Unique Challenge	Work Package	Proposed Stage of Completion (Q/Yr)	Progress (Not Started/In progress/Complete)
Transport and connectivity	Local Transport Strategy	Q4 24/25	In progress
	Transport Appraisal	Q2 25/26	In progress
Our Coastline	Identify Developed and Undeveloped Coastline	Q2 25/26	In progress
	River Basin Management Plan: area-specific report derived from RBMP	Q3 25/26	Not Started
	Coastal Change Management Planning	Q3 or Q4 25/26	In progress
Housing and Economy	Housing Need and Demand Assessment	June 2025	Not started
	Housing Land Audit (and Pipeline)	Q4 24/25	In progress
	Identify Rural Areas Suffering Substantial Population Decline	Methodology in time for Gate check – Q1 25/26	In progress

## Appendix 1: Additional studies to support the evidence

		Detailed work carried out post-Gate check - Q3 25/26	
	<b>Vacant and Derelict Land Survey</b>	Submitted to Scottish Government October 2024	Complete
	<b>Business and Industrial Land Audit</b>	Q2 25/26	In progress
	<b>Desirability of allocating land for resettlement</b>	Q1 25/26	In progress
<b>Natural Environment</b>	<b>Updated Forest and Woodland Strategy</b>	Q3 25/26	Not started
	<b>10-Year Construction Aggregate Mineral Landbank</b>	Initial findings – Q1 25/26	In progress
	<b>Review of SLA citations</b>	Q3 25/26	Not started
	<b>Culturally and locally important soils</b>	Q2 25/26	Not started
<b>Infrastructure First</b>	<b>Infrastructure Capacity, Condition, Need and Deliverability</b>	Q1 25/26	In progress

## Appendix 1: Additional studies to support the evidence

	<b>Capacity of Education Services</b>	Q1 25/26	In progress
	<b>Health Impact Assessment, Capacity and Service Needs</b>	Q1 25/26	In progress
<b>Climate Change and Energy</b>	<b>Strategic Flood Risk Assessment</b>	Q1 25/26	In progress
<b>Design, Wellbeing and Placemaking</b>	<b>Play Sufficiency Assessment</b>	Q1 25/26	In progress
	<b>Open Space Strategy</b>	Q2 25/26	In progress
	<b>Retail Studies- Provision, Sustainability, Identify Network of Centres</b>	Q2 25/26	Not started
	<b>Town Centre Health Checks</b>	Q1 25/26	In progress

**Table 6**







**The Highland  
Council  
Comhairle na  
Gàidhealtachd**

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