

**The Highland Council**  
**Nairn and Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee**  
**25 September 2014**

Agenda Item	12.
Report No	NBS/26/14

**Grounds Maintenance Performance Monitoring Report**

**Report by Director of Community Services**

**Summary**

This report details performance management information for the Grounds Maintenance Services to end of August 2014.

The Committee is invited to note the management actions taken to address performance issues identified and agree to review required service standards at future Ward Business Meetings.

**1. Introduction**

1.1 The Council's Scheme of Delegation to City/Area Committees gives the Nairn and Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee the power:

“to approve local levels of service for grounds maintenance within the strategy and budget allocated by Community Services Committee.”

1.2 Community Services is responsible for a wide range of horticultural-related activities, including the maintenance of grass in public open spaces, designing and planting of flower and shrub beds, pruning vegetation and trees, also the inspection and maintenance of play areas.

1.3 This report details the recorded performance to end of August 2014 and the arrangements for monitoring performance of the Grounds Maintenance Services. It also provides feedback of actions taken to manage the service during the period.

**2. Background**

2.1 Report NBS-06-14 'Grounds Maintenance Programme' was presented to the Nairn and Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2014. The report detailed arrangements for the delivery of the Grounds Maintenance Service and the resources available.

2.2 In Nairn and Badenoch and Strathspey externalised grass cutting is delivered by ISS. The contract has been extended to cover the 2015 season.

- 2.3 The Council's Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2014 received summary report HH02/002 dated 10<sup>th</sup> June 2014 entitled 'Community Services – Outsourced Grass Cutting Contract – Monitoring and Payment arrangements' which presented summary of findings of an audit of monitoring during the 2012 season; the report includes an audit report action plan. An update report on delivery of the action plan was presented to the Community Services Committee on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2014.

### 3. Activities

- 3.1. Across the two Nairn and Badenoch and Strathspey Wards there are 1,069,491 square metres of public open and amenity space spread over 794 locations, with an average size of 1,300 square metres. Details of the maintained areas and numbers of annual tasks are contained in **Appendix A**.

Location	Maintained area (m <sup>2</sup> )				Total Area (m <sup>2</sup> )
	Grass Area Contracted	Grass Area DLO	Planted Area	Hard Landscaped	
Nairn	544,200	4,550	8,299	8,549	565,618
Badenoch & Strathspey	469,607	2,056	6,562	25,648	503,873
<b>N, B&amp;S Totals</b>	<b>1,013,807</b>	<b>7,606</b>	<b>14,861</b>	<b>34,197</b>	<b>1,069,491</b>

- 3.2. Activities are carried out to the standard specified in the Grounds Maintenance Service Level Agreement (SLA). **Appendix B** provides details of the Grass Cutting Amenity Standards. The SLA and specification apply Highland-wide and provide a consistent set of standards, including methods for measuring compliance across Highland.
- 3.3. A copy of the SLA and a list of plots are available to Members on request.

#### **4. Asset Management**

- 4.1 There is an on-going programme of refinement and improvement of the data required to manage the assets involved in Grounds Maintenance. We have a large electronic database defining all the plots and relevant tasks.
- 4.2 A mapping exercise has been undertaken to provide a database of all the grass cutting areas. Final maps for Nairn and Badenoch and Strathspey are programmed for completion during 2014. Maps are being produced in "pdf" format for issue to Ward Members and Community Councils. Subject to ICT agreement it is intended to make the maps available in electronic format via the Council's website during 2014/15.

#### **5. Contract Supervision & Performance**

- 5.1. The basis for all SLA or contract inspections is to determine if the site management, including contracted services, is sufficient to maintain the service standard of the Service Level Agreement (SLA).
- 5.2. The first level of inspection is carried out as self-assessment by in-house or contracted service delivery teams and managers. This first stage assessment is independently validated by Contract Supervisors.
- 5.3. Monitoring of all works Highland-wide is currently carried out by a Contract Performance and Inspection Coordinator with 3 Contract Supervisors, one of whom has responsibility for monitoring Nairn and Badenoch and Strathspey. They are part of the Roads & Community Works HQ team in Inverness who are also responsible for management and supervision of the Public Convenience cleaning contract and monitoring the Garden Aid contract.
- 5.4. In the summer months, monitoring is supported by seasonal Inspector(s) employed to undertake the monitoring of the Garden Aid contract.
- 5.5. The section handles approximately 100 complaints and enquiries per month.
- 5.6. Planned and reactionary validation inspections are undertaken with the objective of covering all grounds maintenance disciplines. Focused inspections are carried out in known problem areas or as a result of reported complaints. Re-inspections are often undertaken following the issue of a Breached Standard notice.
- 5.7. Where failure is recorded, an improvement request or informal notice is issued to the service provider, whether internal (DLO) or external contractor.
- 5.8. Failure to return the site to the required standard within 48 hours results in an escalation and issue of a remedial notice.
- 5.9. A follow up inspection will be made on or after the completion date and if there has been no improvement then either a Nonconforming Service Report or a Default Notice will be issued to the DLO manager or the contractor respectively.

- 5.10 For the grass cutting activities and other grounds work the number of inspections and resulting breached standards issued to the contractor and in-house operation during April to August 2014 are shown below:

<b>Grounds Maintenance Performance (All tasks and all service providers)</b>					
<b>Contract Monitoring</b>			<b>Breached Standards</b>		
<b>Month</b>	<b>Inspections</b>	<b>Pass Rate</b>	<b>Issued</b>	<b>Completed within 7 days</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
April	34	53%	16	16	100%
May	50	52%	20	17	85%
June	106	29%	32	23	72%
July	54	100%	4	1	25%
August	32	88%	6	4	67%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>78%</b>

- 5.11 Overall 78% of all breached standards were rectified within 7 days. Compared with the maintained area of 1,069,491square metres and the 17,370 annual tasks undertaken, the number of breached standards is low. The level of performance differs between service providers, as presented in **Appendix C**.

## **6. Management Actions**

- 6.1 The 2014 grass growing season has seen exceptional grass growth in April, May and June across the Highlands. Operations are normally programmed for a traditional slow growth rate in April with seasonal staff recruited for successive starts until full establishment is reached in May. The rapid grass growth has seen all service providers struggling to reach full manning levels whilst delivering the required service.
- 6.2 Members will be aware of the high profile publicity surrounding reduced performance across a range of activities and the commitment to improve grass cutting service in Highland.
- 6.3 Following these performance issues, a senior management meeting was held with ISS and the Director of Community Services on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2014. ISS committed to a recovery action with the deployment of further resources including a dedicated team for dealing with hotspots and remedial actions
- 6.4 A review meeting attended by the Chair of Community Services Committee and the Director of Community Services was held with ISS on 7<sup>th</sup> August 2014.

- 6.5 Report COM/21/14 'Grounds Maintenance Service Delivery' was presented to the Community Services Committee on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2014. The Committee agreed to extend the existing contractual arrangements for delivery of amenity grass cutting for the 2015 season so that all contracts terminate at the same time.
- 6.6 When a Breached Standard is issued and a contractor fails to complete acceptable remedial action, the Authority is entitled to recover its inspection costs and all losses which arise as a result of the deficient Services. There is no recovery of costs from in-house service delivery.
- 6.7 Recovery of inspection costs for 2014 for the months of April to June have been agreed with ISS.

## **7. Consultation with Ward Members on Standards**

- 7.1 Engagement at Ward level is required to review and agree the appropriate standards at specific sites. Changes can be made that alter the designations between low/general/high amenity with the proviso that overall the change must be cost neutral. If one site goes up, another has to come down or a site be reduced in area. These are changes "within the budget and strategy allocated".
- 7.2 Some meetings have already taken place but further meetings will be arranged as more accessible and up to date maps are available to discuss required standards. Changes will be implemented as soon as is practical thereafter.

## **8. Implications**

- 8.1 There are no resource, legal, equality, climate/Carbon Clever, risk, Gaelic or rural implications arising from this report.

## **9. Recommendations**

Members are invited to;

- (i) scrutinise the performance management and remedial action information provided on the grounds maintenance service set out in this report;
- (ii) note the management actions taken to address the performance issues identified; and
- (iii) agree to review required service standards at future Ward Business Meetings

Designation: Director of Community Services

Date: 8 September 2014

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## Appendix A - Grass Cutting Maintained Areas and Annual Tasks

<b>Nairn and Badenoch &amp; Strathspey</b>						
<b>Area Maintained</b>		<b>Square Metres</b>	<b>Contracted</b>		<b>In House</b>	
	Grass	1,021,415	1,013,807	<b>99%</b>	7,606	<b>1%</b>
	Planted	14,861	0	<b>0%</b>	14,861	<b>100%</b>
	Hard landscape	34,197	0	<b>0%</b>	34,197	<b>100%</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,069,491</b>	<b>1,013,807</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>56,667</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Forecast Tasks Annually</b>						
<b>Caveat:</b> Shows only forecast tasks, not completed. For a true measure of performance, both must be shown.		<b>Number</b>	<b>Contracted</b>		<b>In House</b>	
Grass	Growing Season	7,273	6,693	91%	680	9%
	Dormant Season	1,811	0	0%	1,811	100%
Planted	Growing Season	2,050	0	0%	2,050	100%
	Dormant Season	846	0	0%	846	100%
Hard landscape	Growing Season	3,124	0	0%	3,124	100%
	Dormant Season	2,266	0	0%	2,266	100%
<b>Total</b>		<b>17,370</b>	<b>6,693</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>10,677</b>	<b>61%</b>

## Appendix B - Grass Cutting Amenity Standards<sup>6</sup>

<b>Grass Type</b>	<b>Minimum Height of Grass (after cutting)</b>	<b>Maximum Height of Grass (prior to cutting)</b>	<b>Evident Clippings Acceptable</b>	<b>Action if Excessive Clippings</b>
<b>Lawn</b>	<b>15mm</b>	<b>25mm</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>N/A - Collected at Each Cut</b>
<b>High Amenity</b>	<b>25mm</b>	<b>60mm</b>	<b>Minimal</b>	<b>Remove</b>
<b>General Amenity</b>	<b>35mm</b>	<b>100mm</b>	<b>Some, Evenly Dispersed</b>	<b>Spread thinly or Remove</b>
<b>Low Amenity</b>	<b>75mm</b>	<b>150mm</b>	<b>Moderate, Dispersed</b>	<b>Spread</b>
<b>Rough or Verge</b>	<b>100mm</b>	<b>250mm</b>	<b>Significant, Scattered</b>	<b>N/A – Not an Amenity Grade</b>

## Appendix C – Performance Analysis

- The following tables show the individual area performances for contractor for amenity grass cutting.

<b>Amenity Grass Contract – Nairn and Badenoch and Strathspey – ISS (area 1,013,827m<sup>2</sup>)</b>					
<b>Month</b>	<b>Contract Monitoring</b>		<b>Breached Standards</b>		
	<b>Inspections</b>	<b>Pass Rate</b>	<b>Issued</b>	<b>Completed within 7 days</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
April	25	40%	15	15	100%
May	31	39%	19	17	89%
June	58	40%	32	23	72%
July	30	100%	4	1	25%
August	23	83%	6	4	67%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>79%</b>

<b>Amenity Grass Contract - Badenoch and Strathspey Lot 7 ISS (area 469,607m<sup>2</sup>)</b>					
<b>Month</b>	<b>Contract Monitoring</b>		<b>Breached Standards</b>		
	<b>Inspections</b>	<b>Pass Rate</b>	<b>Issued</b>	<b>Completed within 7 days</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
April	18	17%	15	15	100%
May	21	57%	9	9	100%
June	47	36%	31	22	71%
July	11	100%	2	0	0%
August	8	88%	2	1	50%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>80%</b>

<b>Amenity Grass Contract - Nairn Lot 8 ISS (area 544,220m<sup>2</sup>)</b>					
<b>Month</b>	<b>Inspections</b>	<b>Pass Rate</b>	<b>Issued</b>	<b>Completed within 7 days</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
April	7	100%	0		
May	10	0%	10	8	80%
June	11	55%	1	1	100%
July	19	100%	2	1	50%
August	15	80%	4	3	75%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>53%</b>



2. The following tables show the area performance of the in-house DLO for the retained areas of amenity grass excluded from the contracts and for the main non-grass areas of planting and hard landscape:

<b>Amenity Grass – Nairn and Badenoch and Strathspey - Retained DLO (area Nairn 4,550m<sup>2</sup>, Badenoch and Strathspey 2,056m<sup>2</sup>)</b>					
<b>Month</b>	<b>Contract Monitoring</b>		<b>Breached Standards</b>		
	<b>Inspections</b>	<b>Pass Rate</b>	<b>Issued</b>	<b>Completed within 7 days</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
April	0		0	NA	NA
May	1	100%	0	NA	NA
June	1	100%	0	NA	NA
July	1	100%	0	NA	NA
August	0	NA	0	NA	NA
<b>Totals</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>NA</b>

<b>DLO SLA Work excluding grass cutting - Nairn and Badenoch and Strathspey</b>					
<b>Month</b>	<b>Contract Monitoring</b>		<b>Breached Standards</b>		
	<b>Inspections</b>	<b>Pass Rate</b>	<b>Issued</b>	<b>Completed within 7 days</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
April	9	89%	1	1	100%
May	18	72%	1	0	0%
June	47	81%	0	0	NA
July	23	100%	0	0	NA
August	9	100%	0	0	NA
<b>Totals</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>50%</b>

<b>DLO SLA Work excluding grass cutting - Badenoch and Strathspey</b>					
April	7	86%	1	1	100%
May	14	79%	0	0	NA
June	34	76%	0	0	NA
July	13	100%	0	0	NA
August	5	100%	0	0	NA
<b>Totals</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>DLO SLA Work excluding grass cutting – Nairn</b>					
April	2	100%	0	0	NA
May	4	25%	1	0	0%
June	13	92%	0	0	NA
July	10	100%	0	0	NA
August	4	100%	0	0	NA
<b>Totals</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0%</b>