

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Planning, Development and Infrastructure Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness, on Wednesday, 3 June 2015, at 10.30 a.m.

Present

Mr T Prag	Mr B Lobban
Mrs H Carmichael	Mr D Mackay
Mr B Clark (Substitute)	Mr T MacLennan
Mr J Crawford	Mrs I McCallum
Mr G Farlow	Mr D Millar (Substitute)
Mr C Fraser	Mrs M Paterson (Substitute)
Mr J Gordon	Mr G Phillips
Mr J Gray	Mr G Rimell
Mr M Green	Mr R Saxon
Mr R Greene	Dr A Sinclair
Mr R Laird	Mr H Wood

Non-Members also present:

Mr A Baxter	Mr G MacKenzie
Mrs I Campbell	Mr B Murphy
Mrs M Davidson	Mr J Stone
Mrs L MacDonald	

Officials in attendance:

Mr S Black, Director of Development and Infrastructure
Mr M MacLeod, Head of Planning and Building Standards
Mr G Hamilton, Head of Environment and Development
Mr C Howell, Head of Infrastructure
Mr A Maguire, Head of Housing Development
Mr A McCann, Economy and Regeneration Manager
Mr S Dalgarno, Development Plans Manager
Mr G Robb, Trading Standards Manager
Mr M Smith, Principal Engineer and Team Leader - Flood Team
Mr D MacKenzie, Chief Structural Engineer
Mr I MacGillivray, Principal Civil Engineer
Mr D Mudie, Team Leader - Development Management
Ms N Drummond, Area Team Leader, Planning
Mr G Duff, Countryside Manager
Ms J Bromham, Biodiversity Officer
Mr E Boyd, Principal Engineer – Energy and Engineering
Mr G Smith, Principal Engineer
Mr J McHardy, Housing Development Manager
Miss J MacLennan, Democratic Services Manager
Ms L Lee, Committee Administrator
Mr S Taylor, Administration Assistant

Also in attendance:

Mr M Tate, Community Broadband Scotland (Item 3)

Ms M Mackintosh, Chief Executive, Highland Opportunity Limited (Item 8)

An asterisk in the margin denotes a recommendation to the Council. All decisions with no marking in the margin are delegated to the Committee.

Mr T Prag in the Chair

Preliminaries

Ro-fhiosrachadh

Award:

The Committee **NOTED** and welcomed that Ms Jackie Sayer, a Highland Council Engineer, had won the Judge's Award at the prestigious Scottish Renewables Young Professionals Award ceremony in Glasgow on 27 May.

Order of Items:

In accordance with Standing Order 18, the Committee **AGREED** that item 26 on the agenda, Shared Highland Apprenticeship Company Ltd, be taken immediately following item 20, Amendment to Transport Planning Team Structure.

1. Apologies for Absence Liesgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Dr D Alston, Mr M Rattray, Mr M Reiss and Mr I Renwick.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

The Committee **NOTED** the following declarations of interest:

- Item 4 – Mr B Murphy (non-financial)
- Item 8 – Mrs H Carmichael, Mr B Lobban, Mrs L MacDonald, Mr T MacLennan, Mr T Prag (all non-financial)
- Item 10 – Mr G Phillips (non-financial)
- Item 15 – Mr G Farlow and Mr H Wood (both non-financial)
- Item 16 – Mr G Farlow and Mr R Greene (both non-financial)
- Item 26 – Mr T Prag (non-financial)

3. Presentation - Community Broadband Scotland Taisbeanadh - Community Broadband Scotland

A presentation was given by Mr Mark Tate of Community Broadband Scotland (CBS) covering the work undertaken by CBS to help communities achieve improved broadband coverage in areas which were less likely to benefit from mainstream provision.

Mr Tate described the aims and drivers of the project, which was targeted at the 16% of premises (around 120,000 premises) not covered in the current national scheme. Community Broadband Scotland's role was to provide advice, guidance

and support, particularly for those communities where there were no skilled individuals able to take the lead; it could also assist with capital costs. Two advisors covered the Highland area. He explained the “aggregation approach”, where private companies, the public sector and communities worked together to generate sufficient demand and to find appropriate solutions. Referring to case studies, he illustrated the benefits of good broadband, including in terms of work and health. He also highlighted some of the challenges, which included: backhaul and power; community resilience; funding; and environmental considerations such as the need to obtain planning permission. Communities had also to demonstrate that the investment would be sustainable in coming years.

In discussion, Members related the experiences of their local communities, and were keen that the 84% provision target should be exceeded. Digital connectivity was as important as roads for social and economic reasons, and should be seen as a utility. Notwithstanding the support given to remote communities, and discounts provided by suppliers, some people were still unable to afford broadband. It was also highlighted that poor broadband was experienced in areas within a few miles of Inverness, not just in remote areas.

In response to questions raised, Mr Tate advised that:

- it was not until engineers were on site that an accurate estimate of connection costs could be made; if there were geological problems for example, this may mean that the works could not go ahead as the funding available had to be used to connect the maximum number of premises possible - it could therefore be difficult to be certain whether a community was in the 16% area, and so qualified for assistance from CBS
- it was hoped to improve all digital communications, not just broadband; however, talks with mobile phone companies were currently stalled; some communities had set up their own mast and negotiated direct with the phone companies
- it was hoped that using the aggregate approach would reach 10% of the 16%; thought was being given to the remaining 6%, including a voucher scheme to support very small communities.

The Committee thanked Mr Tate and **NOTED** his presentation.

4. Housing Development Investment Tasgadh ann an Leasachadh Taigheadais

Declaration of Interest:

As a director of Lochaber Housing Association, Mr B Murphy declared a non-financial interest in this item but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors’ Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No. PDI-25/15 dated 22 May 2015 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure seeking consent to offer a loan to Lochaber Housing Association which would allow a site in Lochaber to be secured for development of affordable homes.

The Committee **AGREED** that a loan of up to £300,000 be offered to Lochaber Housing Association to assist in funding an affordable housing project at Heathercroft Drive, Fort William, on terms and conditions to be agreed by the Director of Development and Infrastructure, to include a condition that the loan was repaid on or before completion of the housing project.

**5. Draft Service Plan 2015/17 – Development and Infrastructure Service
Dreachd Phlana Seirbheis 2015/17 – Seirbheis Leasachaidh is Bun-structair**

There had been circulated Report No. PDI-26/15 dated 14 May 2015 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure outlining how the Service would lead and support commitments which would deliver 'Working together for the Highlands', the Programme of the Highland Council. The draft Plan, circulated at Booklet A, also detailed how the Service would operate, its approach and priorities.

In discussion, Members welcomed the investment in harbours - this would help support tourism and trade. In response to questions raised, the Director explained some terminology and gave an assurance that Plain English would be used wherever possible. Following comment regarding the importance of promoting economic prosperity in the more remote areas, he drew Members' attention to a previous seminar on fragile areas and land reform, and emphasised that the Council's transport strategy, and the work of Highland Opportunity Ltd., covered the whole of the Highlands.

The Committee **APPROVED** the draft Plan subject to improved cross referencing of the text to the indexes, more consistent recording of risk, and the inclusion of lobbying actions with regard to: provision of broadband, 3G, 4G, mobile telephony and public wifi; and exploring with Abellio the development of transport hubs, cycling interchanges and community links.

The Committee **AGREED** that points raised with regard to harbours be brought to the attention of the Director of Community Services; and that an update on progress with the Skye airport would be brought to the Skye Ward Business Meeting.

**6. Trading Standards 2015-16 Operational Plan
Plana Obrachaidh Inbhean Malairt 2015/16**

There had circulated Report No. PDI-27/15 dated 17 April 2015 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure setting out the factors that had been taken into account in setting the priorities for Trading Standards in the year ahead and placing before Members for approval the Trading Standards Operational Plan for 2015/16.

The Trading Standards Manager summarised the main points of the report. Although not included in the Single Outcome Agreement, Trading Standards activities impacted on a number of Partnership areas including crime, health, the elderly and the economy. Local priorities also included tourism, private rented housing and rural filling stations. The team worked creatively to find solutions. National Audit recommendations from 2013 continued to be taken forward by COSLA.

In discussion, Members stressed the importance of the Service, and welcomed the 5p derogation on fuel duty for rural areas, which Trading Standards had been instrumental in procuring. The negative consequences of closure of rural filling stations were highlighted. Members also raised concerns with regard to cold calling, in particular in relation to home renewable energy technologies/the green deal, and telephone contracts. They were advised that such matters should be reported to Trading Standards, or via the Citizens' Advice Bureau. There was also a cold call toolkit available, which could be accessed from the Council's website, for communities to use.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Trading Standards 2015/16 Operational Plan.

7. Planning Performance Framework and Quarter 4 Performance Review Frèam Dèanadas Dealbhaidh agus Ath-bhreithneachadh Dèanadais Ràith 4

There had been circulated Report No. PDI-28/15 dated 20 May 2015 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure providing an update on performance against the actions set out within the Planning Service Improvement Plan. The report also advised Members on the delivery of the Development Management, Building Standards and the Development Plan services for the last Quarter of 2014/15.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the progress made against the Planning Service Improvement Plan actions, and the performance updates for the Development Management, Building Standards and the Development Plans teams; and
- ii. **AGREED** the service improvement priorities for the year ahead.

8. Business Gateway Annual Performance Report 2014/15 Aithisg Dèanadais Bhliadhnail na Slighe Gnothachais 2014/15

Declarations of Interest:

As directors of the Board of Highland Opportunity Limited, Mr B Lobban, Mrs L MacDonald, Mr T MacLennan and Mr T Prag each declared a non-financial interest in this item but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, each concluded that their interest did not preclude their involvement in the discussion.

As Chair of the Princes Trust Youth Business Scotland, Mrs H Carmichael declared a non-financial interest in this item but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that her interest did not preclude her involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No PDI-29/15 dated 12 May 2015 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure updating Members on performance with the Business Gateway contract for 2014/15, and for the preceding Quarter. It also provided an update on the progress of an application for ERDF support that aimed to add value to the Business Gateway service, and to the business support activity funded by the Council.

The Economy and Regeneration Manager summarised the main points of the report, drawing attention to increased start up rates over the past year, and that new business survival rates were above the national target. A range of work continued to develop and grow businesses, although it could still be difficult for businesses to be accepted on to Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE)'s pipeline. It was anticipated that EU funding would be in place in the near future – interim measures were in place in the meantime.

In response to Member questions, the Chief Executive, Highland Opportunity Ltd (HOL), advised that whilst higher numbers of business start-ups could be interpreted as indicating that there were fewer employment opportunities available, the Highland economy was in fact picking up. HOL was working hard on a variety of fronts to promote the availability of its loans, and also worked with others to help find the right package for businesses – this could include banks and crowd sourcing.

The Committee **NOTED**:

- i. performance for the financial year 2014/15;
- ii performance for the 4th Quarter of the Operational Year 2014/15; and
- ii. progress towards the securing of 2014-2020 ERDF Programme finance for the establishment of a Business Gateway Local Growth Accelerator Programme in the Highlands and Moray.

9. Scotland's 8th City - the Smart City – Implications for Inverness and the Highlands
8mh Cathair-bhaile na h-Alba – am Baile Smiorail – Buaidhean airson Inbhir Nis agus airson na Gàidhealtachd

There had been circulated Report No. PDI-30/15 dated 20 May 2015 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure highlighting the opportunities arising from a European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Strategic Intervention to invest in 'smart cities' projects.

Head of Environment and Development summarised the report. The initiative was being led by Glasgow Council, and could realise £1.8m for the Highlands. The Council would need to match fund any funding awarded. Details of the projects proposed for the Highlands included Energy Monitoring, Digital Health, and Transport. The scheme was expected to extend over five years.

Following discussion, the Committee:

- i. **NOTED** that an application for ERDF resources to support 'Scotland's 8th City – the Smart City' Strategic Intervention had been submitted on behalf of Scotland's cities by Glasgow City Council;
- ii. **APPROVED**, in principle, continued engagement with Scottish Cities Alliance and Highland partners to progress the projects outlined in the report and that a further report be prepared for a future meeting of this Committee; and
- iii. **NOTED** that a workshop was being planned, which would provide an opportunity for Member involvement in producing proposals for projects in the Highlands.

10. Capital Programme Allocation of Generic Lines – Roads, Bridges and Flooding

Riarachadh Prògram Calpa a thaobh Loidhnichean Coitcheann – Rathaidean, Drochaidean agus Tuiltean

Mr G Phillips declared a non-financial interest in relation to this item on the grounds of two forthcoming appointments as: Director of a development company set up under the group “Golspie Links” which was concerned with coastal flood protection; and as Director of a community action group in Golspie which was lobbying for protection of houses facing the sea, but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors’ Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No. PDI-31/15 dated 15 May 2015 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure making recommendations for the allocation of generic line funding, in relation to roads, bridges and flooding, forming part of the Development and Infrastructure element of the Council’s Capital Programme, and seeking approval of the proposed allocations.

The Head of Infrastructure drew attention to the main points in the report and emphasised the importance of bringing projects to a state of readiness for when finance for the works themselves became available – lead-in times were long. He also clarified that whilst roads and bridges were the responsibility of the Council, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) was the lead on flooding; SEPA had undertaken an evaluation of risk and was now developing a prioritised list.

During discussion of roads and bridges, Members welcomed the progress being made, but drew attention to a number of routes and structures which, in their view, were in urgent need of repair or improvement, including roads at Ardourly, Balnacra, Drynie Hill and Killimster Moss, and the Invercoe, Inveran and Naver bridges. The Head of Infrastructure accepted the concerns raised, but explained that there were a vast number of projects across the Highlands. The budget for the next 10 years was £29.293m, which would allow a start to be made on some projects and preparatory work to be undertaken on others. Estimated costs of the Naver and Invercoe bridges were £4.5m and £2.5m respectively – there was no allocation in the budget for at least the next three years.

He also responded to questions relating to the Portree Link Road, Skye Airport, progress with the contract for Slattadale, damage to rural roads by forestry and wind farm construction traffic, and how developer contributions were made best use of. He gave an assurance that the bridge at Foyers, whilst not attractive, was functional and safe, and advised that the term “life-line roads” related to previous European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funding – this was no longer available.

In relation to flooding, the following points were raised:-

- The collaboration between the Council and SEPA during the development of the Flood Risk Management Strategy was acknowledged;

- With regard to Golspie Links, it was highlighted that, whilst the Council's Coast Protection Policy did not provide protection, the site had been identified as a Potentially Vulnerable Area (PVA) and would be included in the Flood Protection Studies;
- Due to the differing viewpoints taken by organisations as to what constituted a PVA, it was suggested that a meeting between the Council, Scottish Natural Heritage and SEPA be organised as soon as possible;
- In welcoming the proposals for schemes in Nairn, it was highlighted that discussion at local level had indicated a need for temporary measures to be put in place in the interim and during construction to alleviate concerns raised regarding serious flooding problems in the area;
- Item 2.19 in the Report should be corrected to read A832 Slattadale to Kerrysdale;
- Flash flooding in the Wester Ross area could cut off the A832 between Slattadale and Kerrysdale, thereby creating a 120 mile round trip;
- Flooding problems in Thurso were highlighted as a major concern by local members and reassurance was sought that the River Thurso flood prevention scheme would be given priority. In response, the Principal Engineer and Team Leader (Flood Team) acknowledged the frustration expressed and advised that approval of the recommendations in the report would enable the flood prevention scheme in Thurso to be taken forward in the Capital Programme;
- Concern was also expressed as to why priority had been given to a number of Flood Protection Studies when evidence was still being sought from businesses and individuals as to what their experiences with flooding had been;
- A request was made for information regarding the process for allocating capital funding and the governance of capital projects. In response, the Director of Development and Infrastructure advised that regular reports on major projects over £5m would be brought back to Committee; and
- A request was made for a report on the Millburn Cycle Lane to be brought to Committee. In response, the Director of Development and Infrastructure advised that information on this would be included as part of the Capital Monitoring Report submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

The Committee **NOTED**

- i. the list of major bridges for which there was no current allocation;
- ii. the consultation exercise ongoing in relation to flooding issues; and
- iii. the major bridges needs which could not be met from current funding allocations up to 2023/24.

The Committee **APPROVED:**

- i. proposed allocation of the major road improvements budget for the next three years;
- ii. proposed allocation of the minor road improvements budget for the next three years;
- iii. proposals for capital expenditure, on bridges and road structures schemes; and
- iv. proposed allocation of the flood prevention schemes, minor flood works, and potentially vulnerable area mitigation budgets for the next three years.

11. Stromeferry Bypass Route Option Appraisal and External Funding Update Measadh Roghainnean Slighe Seach-rathad Port an t-Sròim agus Cunntas às Ùr mu Mhaoineachadh bhon Taobh A-muigh

There had been circulated Report No. PDI-32/15 dated 3 May 2015 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure summarising the progress since publication, in November 2014, of Part 2 of the STAG appraisal carried out for the Stromeferry Bypass.

Points raised in discussion included that:-

- the recommendation to withdraw the Online Option from further consideration due to safety concerns was welcomed;
- the work undertaken by the Head of Infrastructure and Principal Engineer to keep communities informed of progress with the project was acknowledged;
- a suggestion was made that the first recommendation in the report be amended to reflect a direct approach by removing the word “should”;
- the potential benefit to the Kishorn Yard development as a result of the north route option was highlighted.

The Committee **AGREED** that:

- i. officers continue their efforts to seek external funding;
- ii. the Online Option be rejected from further consideration; and
- iii. through consultation with the communities, consideration be given to modifications to the two remaining routes/phasing to aid funding issues.

12. Planning Enforcement Charter Cairt Cur-an-sàs Dealbhaidh

There had been circulated Report No. PDI-33/15 dated 24 April 2015 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure advising that under the terms of Section 27 of the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006, the Council was required to have in place a Planning Enforcement Charter, to advise its customers of the powers available to the Planning Service when dealing with planning enforcement matters, its service standards, contact points, and how to make a complaint. The Charter required to be regularly reviewed, at least every two years.

During discussion, concern was expressed that the Council could be open to action from developers and applicants by excluding long distance site visits from the 10 working day target and that the possibility of extending the deadline should be explored. In response, the Team Leader (Development Management) confirmed that the target for all site visits including those of long distance was 10 working days. The Vice-Chairman highlighted the importance of having this flexibility in the Charter as issues regarding the temporary availability of services could arise during inclement weather. Arising from the report, the Chairman expressed the view that it was important for complainants to be contacted within the service standard target of 28 days, even if the level of detail of any action proposed was still being worked on by officers. He also advised that in terms of resources, there was now a team of two officers dealing with enforcement matters and this had made a significant difference.

The Committee **AGREED**:

- i. to adopt the Charter as set out in Appendix 1 to the report as the Council's statement of planning enforcement policy and procedure; and
- ii. that any minor variations or amendments required be delegated to the Director of Development and Infrastructure in consultation with the Chairman of the Planning, Development and Infrastructure Committee.

13. Housing Extensions and Other Residential Alterations: Supplementary Guidance
Leudachaidhean Thraighean agus Atharrachaidhean Còmhnaidheach Eile: Stiùireadh Leasachail

There had been circulated Report No. PDI-34/15 dated 8 May 2015 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure seeking Committee approval of Supplementary Planning Guidance for housing extensions and small-scale householder developments. The Guidance was aimed at both applicants and agents, and was intended to help speed up dealing with householder applications by setting out clear advice on layout and design.

During discussion, a request was made for information on listed buildings and the consents required for owners when considering any material changes or extensions to be included within the guidance.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Supplementary Guidance for publication and use by the Council, subject to the inclusion of information on listed buildings and the consents required for owners when considering any material changes or extensions.

14. High Hedges (Scotland) Act 2013
Achd nan Callaidean Àrda (Alba) 2013

There had been circulated Report No. PDI-35/15 dated 12 May 2015 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure reminding Members that on 1 April 2014, the High Hedges (Scotland) Act 2013 came into force, introducing new powers for Councils in Scotland to take action against high hedges which formed a barrier to light and adversely affected the enjoyment of residential properties.

At its meeting in May 2014 the Planning, Development & Infrastructure Committee agreed the guidance and fees associated with high hedge notice applications subject to a review being undertaken within 12 months of implementation with any proposed changes reported back to the Committee.

The Committee **AGREED** that:

- i. the guidance be revised to include a pre-application stage that would determine whether a hedge was a high hedge and offer advice on making a valid application; and
- ii. the fee remain at £450 but that a staged payment be introduced as set out in Appendix A to the report.

15. Outdoor Access Strategy 2015-18
Ro-innleachd Cothruim air a' Bhlàr A-muigh 2015-18

Declarations of Interest:

As a member of Sutherland Local Access Forum and, as a member of Inverness and Nairn Local Access Forum, Mr G Farlow and Mr H Wood respectively declared non-financial interests in this item but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, both concluded that their interests did not preclude their involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No. PDI-36/15 dated 18 May 2015 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure summarising the process the Council had undertaken to produce the current Outdoor Access Strategy and highlighting some of its achievements. Work was currently underway to develop a new strategy and the attached paper represented a draft for consultation.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- The review of Local Access Forums was welcomed and the work undertaken by these forums was highlighted by Members;
- In response to concern that a number of Local Access Forums had not met in recent times in wards where access issues had arisen, the Countryside Manager acknowledged that there had been difficulties in getting people to attend and filling vacancies when people leave and that this would be taken into consideration in the review;
- Greater emphasis should be made on working with community trusts and community companies which had core paths across their land;
- In relation to core path degradation and responsibility for repairs, the possibility of implementing where possible a Land Ownership database should be looked at;
- Interest had been expressed locally to bring forward and deliver both the coastal path network and the inward paths network planned between Moray Council area and Inverness;
- Core Paths should be in a safe and useable state before the Council encourages people to use them;
- In response to a question regarding the type of support available for developing eco and wildlife tourism at the Black Isle Wildlife Trail, it was highlighted that LEADER funding might be the way forward;
- Responsible access and irresponsible blocking of the paths were two key issues raised by Local Access Forums;
- Uniformity of signposting in remote areas was highlighted as a key issue for visitors, particularly those using the Sutherland Trail as it did not have a designated route-way and was reliant on having as few sign posts as possible;
- Help was required for Community Councils struggling with maintenance costs of core paths, particularly in remote and rural areas with limited development benefit; and
- The following list of consultees should be added the list of agencies and main stakeholders at 3.2 in the Report:-
 - Conservation volunteers
 - Woodland Trust
 - Horticulture Society

- Bumblebee Conservation Trust
- Bats and lepidopterist societies

Following discussion, the Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the report and comment on its content; and
- ii. **APPROVED** the proposed limited consultation, subject to the inclusion of comments arising during discussion, following which an amended paper would be presented for approval at a future Committee.

16. Highland Biodiversity Action Plan: Progress Update and Launch of New Plan

Plana-gnìomh Bith-iomadachd na Gàidhealtachd: Cunntas às Ùr mu Adhartas agus Cur air Bhog a' Phlana Ùir

Declarations of Interest:

As a member of KIMO and director of Sutherland Partnership, and, as a member of KIMO, Mr G Farlow and Mr R Greene respectively declared non-financial interests in this item but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, both concluded that their interests did not preclude their involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No. PDI-37/15 dated 15 May 2015 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure advising that the Highland Environment Forum had reviewed and updated the Highland Biodiversity Action Plan. The Plan would be launched following the Planning, Development and Infrastructure Committee, and Community Planning Partnership Board meetings on 3 June.

The report provided an update on progress made by the partners to deliver the Highland Biodiversity Action Plan (2010-2013), and a summary of the new Highland BAP (2015-2020).

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- The inclusion of mapping of invasive and non-native species in the Biodiversity Action Table was emphasised;
- The introduction of wildlife crime reporting at the Skye, Ross and Cromarty Area Committee and the Caithness and Sutherland Area Committee was welcomed;
- Greater emphasis on the work KIMO, in particular its work on the Marine Litter Project should be included within the Action Plan;
- The introduction of farmed ballan wrasse to fish farms on the West Coast could provide a solution to problems regarding the control of lice in salmon farms and should be given more focus;
- Council guidance could enable construction of better quality road verges for the enhancement of smaller invertebrates;
- The link between geo-diversity and bio-diversity was crucial, particularly in areas of thin soils;

- The wealth of flora and fauna in the Highlands was highlighted and the importance of the work undertaken by the Biodiversity Officers to protect this was emphasised.

Following discussion, the Committee:

- NOTED** progress made by the Highland Environment Forum partners towards delivering the last Highland Biodiversity Action Plan (2010-2013) and in producing the next Highland BAP (2015-2020); and
- AGREED** priority projects contained within the new Highland BAP, with specific relevance to those projects where Highland Council was identified as a lead partner.

17. Home Energy Efficiency Programmes for Scotland – Area Based Scheme Prògraman Èifeachdais Lùtha Dachaigh airson Alba – Sgeama Steidhichte air Sgìre

There had circulated Report No. PDI-38/15 dated 14 May 2015 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure confirming the updated position on the Home Energy Efficiency Programme for Scotland – Area Based Scheme (HEEP-ABS) and the implications for the Council in its delivery and programming in Highland and details the programme of works.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Funding towards reducing fuel poverty, particularly in rural areas, was welcomed;
- Clarification was sought, and received, on the cost of undertaking the study on Highland housing recommended in the report, which would be in the region of £50k;
- Inclusion of notification of the scheme within council tax forms to target properties within council tax bands A, B and C should be explored;
- With regard to eligibility criteria, it was highlighted that there were many listed buildings in the Highlands within the council tax bands A, B and C, some of a certain age with stone walls which were difficult to heat. In response, the Principal Engineer (Energy and Engineering) advised that listed buildings had become more expensive as a solution and put a strain on making the sums work within the criteria; and
- Clarification was sought on whether the Scheme was means tested or grant aided. In response, the Principal Engineer (Energy and Engineering) advised that the current scheme was not means tested and was free to anyone; however, it was likely that this would change in any new offering from the Scottish Government whereby the home owner would have to make a contribution.

Following discussion, the Committee:

- NOTED** the progress and implications of the scheme and promote any suggested areas for inclusion in future years' planning; and
- APPROVED** a study on Highland housing that would inform the Scottish Government on opportunity for further programmes.

18. Highland LEADER Programme Prògram LEADER na Gàidhealtachd

There had been circulated Report No. PDI-39/15 dated 14 May 2015 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure providing an update on the emerging LEADER Programme 2014-2020, and outlining Member involvement in the Programme at a strategic and local level.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** progress with preparation for the 2014-2020 Highland LEADER Programme;
- ii. **AGREED** to appoint Councillor David Alston as named representative and Councillor George Farlow as substitute to represent Highland Council on the Highland strategic LAG; and
- iii. **NOTED** the process of establishing Local Area Partnerships (LAPs) and the potential for Member involvement in the Programme at a local level.

19. Nominations to Event Innovation Challenge Fund Assessment Panel Ainmeachaidhean do Phannal Measaidh na Maoin Dùbhlain Inleachdais Tachartais

At the meeting of the Planning, Development and Infrastructure Committee on 18 February 2015, Members had approved the setting up of an Event Innovation Challenge Fund at times when the full value of the Major Events fund had not been required for the major events that year. To consider applications it was agreed that an assessment panel be set up that included two Members drawn from this Committee and that these be nominated when a fund was established. A challenge fund round had been set up for the year 2015-16 and the Committee was therefore invited to nominate two Members to sit on the assessment panel.

The Committee **APPROVED** the appointment of Mr G Farlow and Mr M Green to sit on the Event Innovation Challenge Fund Assessment Panel.

20. Amendment to Transport Planning Team Structure Atharrachadh do Structar Sgioba Dealbhaidh na Còmhdhalach

There had been circulated Report No. PDI-40/15 dated 20 May 2015 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure setting out a proposal to carry out a small scale restructuring of the Transport Planning team as a result of a review of management structures and an assessment of the requirements of the Development & Infrastructure Service and Community Services.

The Committee **APPROVED** the restructuring proposals for the Transport Planning team contained in Appendix 2 to the report.

21. Shared Highland Apprenticeship Company Ltd

In terms of Standing Order 18, the Committee **AGREED** that this item be taken at this point in the proceedings

There had been circulated Report No. PDI-43/15 dated 29 May 2015 advising that Shared Highlands Apprenticeship Company Ltd had requested that the Chair of

the Planning, Development and Infrastructure Committee become a member of their Board.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Chair of Planning, Development and Infrastructure becoming a member of the SHAC board.

22. Minutes of Meetings Geàrr-chunntasan Choinneamhan

There following Minutes of the Meetings had been circulated and were **NOTED**:-

- i. Highland Economic Forum held on 25 September 2014;
- ii. Caithness and North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership Advisory Board held on 10 December 2014; and
- iii. Highland Environment Forum held on 17 March 2015.

23. Planning Applications Committee Minutes Geàrr-chunntas - Comataidh nan Iarrtasan Dealbhaidh

There had been circulated and were **NOTED** Minutes of the Planning Applications Committees (PAC) for:-

- i. North PAC, 16 December 2014
- ii. South PAC, 20 January 2015
- iii. North PAC, 17 February 2015
- iv. South PAC, 24 Feb 2015
- v. South PAC, 19 March 2015
- vi. North PAC, 23/24 March 2015
- vii. South PAC, 1 April 2015

24. Exclusion of the Public Às-dùnadh a' Phobail

The Committee **RESOLVED** that, under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act, the relevant Paragraphs being shown below.

25. Property Transactions Monitoring Report Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Ghnothachasan Seilbhe

Paragraphs 6 and 9

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. PDI-41/15 dated 19 May 2015 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure providing Members with details of the General Fund and Property Account transactions approved by the Head of Property Partnerships and Corporate Property Asset Manager under delegated authority. The report also advised Members on sales concluded in 2014/15, and sales targeted for completion within the financial year 2015/16 and future years.

The Committee **APPROVED** the recommendations set out in the report.

**26. Inverness Airport Business Park Ltd: Outstanding Loan Stock
Pàirc Gnothachais Port-adhair Inbhir Nis Eta: Stoc lasaid ri Phàigheadh**

Paragraph 6

Declaration of Interest:

As a Director of Inverness Airport Business Park Board, Mr T Prag declared a non-financial interest in this item but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. PDI-42/15 dated 25 May 2015 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure updating Members on the position of Inverness Airport Business Park Ltd. loan stock and the company.

Following discussion and scrutiny, the Committee **NOTED** the position as set out in the report and the options open to the Council, and that the outcome of further meetings between Inverness Airport Business Park and the Council would be reported to a future meeting.

The meeting ended at 2.55 p.m., having adjourned for lunch between 1.15 p.m. and 2.05 p.m.