

(viii) Mr D Macpherson

To the Chair of the Economy & Infrastructure Committee

What reassurance can you give to demonstrate that the Highland Council is currently on track with the publicly accessible electric vehicle infrastructure network across the Highlands and Islands, to ensure it will become Carbon Neutral across the entire region by 2025 (which is now only 42 months away)?

The Council recently recruited a Project Manager (Climate Change), whose focus will be the development of hydrogen and low carbon strategies, as well as project development, to ensure that we are in the best position to benefit from the systems change these new technologies will bring. This post will work closely and collaboratively with the new Climate Change Coordinator (Transport), who will be actively supporting the fleet decarbonisation strategy via the deployment of recharging and refuelling infrastructure and we will also be looking at how other areas are developing new experimental hydrogen technologies, such as Aberdeen City Council. These officers will ensure that we maximise opportunities for projects and funding to expedite this necessary shift and will be in a good place to move on this when it is appropriate to do so.

As you will be aware the Scottish Government has pledged to end Scotland's contribution to climate change no later than 2045. All public bodies have a duty to support and work towards this target under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, as amended by the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019. Both the Scottish and UK Government have pledged to phase out the need for new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2030.

A key project contributing positively towards the above targets is the Council's Local Authority Installation Programme (LAIP). Funded by Transport Scotland, this annual programme further develops the EV public charging network so that EV drivers can confidently travel throughout Scotland – in both urban and rural locations.

The Council has been awarded over £3m since the first EV charge point was installed in 2012 (~£2.1m of which has been awarded since 2018). Prior to 2020, the Highland Council public EV charging network consisted of 30 charge points. By the end of 2020 this had increased to 50. Once the current programme is complete the Highland Council public EV charging network will have close to 100 charge points connected, contributing to the Council ambition to be Carbon neutral by 2025