

Agenda Item	9.
Report No	EDU/13/23

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee:	Education Committee
Date:	1st June 2023
Report Title:	High Life Highland Progress Report
Report By:	Chief Executive, High Life Highland

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report is in three parts:

- **Part one** - presents information on the performance of High Life Highland (HLH) during the operating period to 31 March 2023, including information on HLH's contributions to the Council Corporate Plan 2022-27.
- **Part two** - provides general updates since the last report to the Council's Education Committee in November 2022.
- **Part three** - provides information on an aspect of the work of HLH, this time, customer recovery following the pandemic.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to note:

- i. The performance of High Life Highland (HLH) during the operating period to 31 March 2023, including HLH's contributions to the implementation of the Council Corporate Plan in **Appendix A**;
- ii. The general updates provided in section 2 of this report;
- iii. That HLH continues to deliver Public Service Obligations on behalf of the Council as set out in the Service Delivery Contract;
- iv. The success of HLH's work to recover customer numbers despite the challenges of the post pandemic operating environment; and
- v. That there has been correspondence between the Council Leader and HLH Chair to initiate the Service Delivery Contract Review as outlined in section seven of this report.

3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource - please see section 6, financial position, below.
- 3.2 Legal – There are no legal implications for the Council arising from the recommendations in this report. However, the HLH zero reserve position has implications in respect of HLH’s going concern status: in mitigation, a letter of comfort may be required from the Council. Legal advice on the SDC review will be required as it progresses.
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) - there are no community implications for the Council arising from the recommendations in this report.
- 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever - there are no climate change/carbon clever implications for the Council arising from the recommendations in this report.
- 3.5 Risk - there are no risk implications arising from the recommendations in this report. The HLH Board has its own Corporate Risk Register and associated management plans.
- 3.6 Gaelic - there are no Gaelic implications for the Council arising from the recommendations in this report.

4. Background

- 4.1 HLH was established as a charity by the Highland Council (THC) in October 2011. The Council has contracted with HLH to deliver its Public Services Obligations (PSO) through a Service Delivery Contract (SDC). The following areas of work are delivered by HLH on behalf of the Council: Adult Learning; Archives; Arts; Countryside Rangers; Leisure; Libraries; Museums; Music Tuition; Sports Development; and Youth Work.
- 4.2 HLH was set up to deliver services on behalf of the Council. Each year, Arm’s Length External Organisation (ALEO) status saves the Council c. £2m p.a. through non-domestic rates relief. As well as these savings, annually:
- There is annual adjustment to the Council’s funding to HLH, being the same percentage movement in the Scottish Government grant settlement with the Council. In years where the Council’s grant settlement has reduced, this has resulted in relative reduction to the funding to HLH and a saving to the Council; and
 - HLH meets the cost of inflationary increases for staff salaries, pensions, living wage and pension increases.
- 4.3 This arrangement has consistently returned revenue savings for the Council with recent (5 year) savings averaging £1,086,496 p.a. (7% of Services Fee). Prior to 2023/24 savings have been achieved through income and efficiencies, whilst minimising service reductions. Notably, HLH has continued to take on additional services at the request of the Council, with 43 new services and facilities having been added to HLH since it was established in 2011. During the first 10 years of operation, annual customer engagement numbers with services delivered by HLH have increased from 2.3 million per year to 9 million.

5. HLH Governance

- 5.1 HLH Directors are appointed by the Council (8 independent Directors and 4 Councillor Directors). The HLH Directors can be found on the HLH web site: <https://www.highlifehighland.com/about/board/directors/>
- 5.2 The HLH Trading Board Directors are appointed by the HLH Board (5 independent directors and 4 HLH Board Directors). The trading company Directors can be found on the HLH web site: <https://www.highlifehighland.com/about/trading-company- directors/>
- 5.3 The Highland Council's internal audit team carries out an audit for HLH each year. This provides both the HLH Board and the Council with a level of assurance that HLH is properly managed and governed. An audit of HLH's performance statistics was carried out during quarter 4 2022/23 and the audit opinion was "substantial assurance" in HLH's performance reporting against its business plan.

6. Financial Position

- 6.1 The funding provided by the Council to HLH as a Services Fee is £14.9m (2023/24). The post-pandemic operating environment (particularly staff pay inflation) has meant that the Council has had to provide additional funding to HLH from Council reserves to help protect services. This was included in the Council's budget when it was agreed at the Highland Council meeting held on 2 March 2023. The requirement for the use of reserves has emphasised the pressing need for a review of the contract with HLH, this has been included as an action in the Council's Corporate Plan 2022-2027 – Our Future Highland.
- 6.2 HLH has mitigated a forecast £4.9m budget gap in 2023/24. This mitigation from a combination of income, efficiencies and agreed service reductions plus agreed funding from Council reserves, will close the gap. Given this, and the Council's own financial position, it is likely that a review of the SDC will have to include a reduction in the public service levels as well as a review of the funding formula.
- 6.3 HLH is continuing to reduce costs and has implemented:
- Strict recruitment controls, and;
 - New ways of working and has reduced its office estate having vacated both of its offices: Dingwall; and Inverness. HLH continues to work with the Council on property rationalisation.
- 6.4 Recruitment controls are in place to minimise the amount of additional Council funding required during financial year 2023/24. They are being implemented in advance of the work on the review of the SDC and might help to provide some flexibility depending on future decision-making around the contract review.

7. **Service Delivery Contract Review**

- 7.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 2022-27, Our Future Highland, which was approved by the Highland Council at its meeting held on 8 December 2022, includes an action to review the Service Delivery Contract with HLH. To initiate it, there has been correspondence between the Council's Leader and HLH Chair on the purpose and scope of the review. The review will ensure that collaborative work continues between both organisations and that the service provided is affordable for the Council, is sustainable going forward and that services are developed, and buildings kept up to date so that they remain relevant to communities. The timescale for the review should ideally be made to fit with the Council's overall timescale for reviewing the use of reserves beyond financial year 2023/24 in its budgets when it does this in June. There are practical challenges associated with reviewing service levels by then, associated with Community Impact Assessment whereby services should ensure that any new or revised proposals (plans, policies, practices and decisions) are considered for impacts on communities at an early stage and meet the requirements of: Public Sector Equality Duty; Fairer Scotland Duty; and rural/island impacts.

8. **Part One - Service Delivery Contract Monitoring**

- 8.1 The Service Delivery Contract with HLH was originally made up of objectives from the Council's Education Service Plan. Subsequently, reporting has evolved to reflect Council Corporate Plans. A summary of HLH's contributions to the Council's Corporate Plan 2022-27 which was approved by the Highland Council at its meeting held on 8 December 2022 can be found at **Appendix A**.

9. **Part 2 – General Updates**

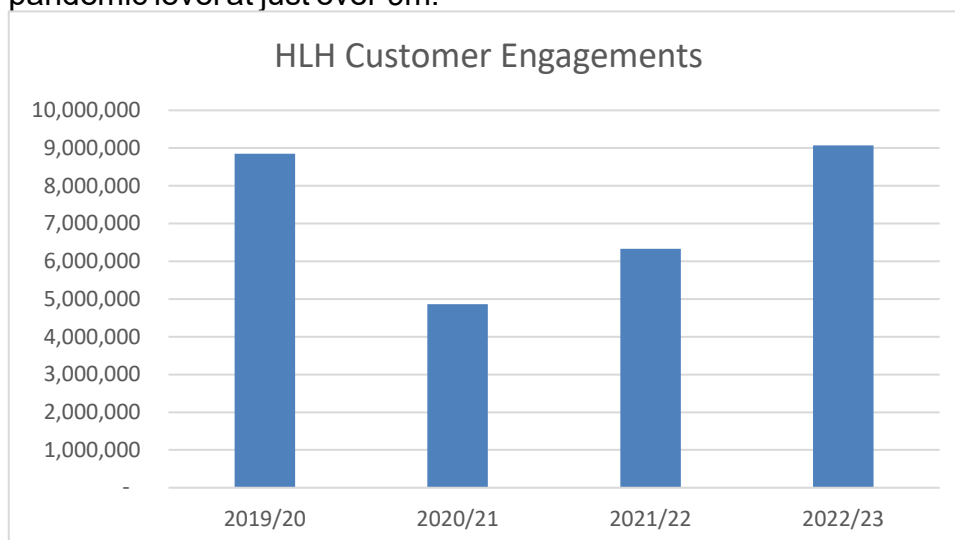
- 9.1 This section of the report contains a series of updates following the last update provided to the Education Committee in November 2022.
- 9.2 A new four-year partnership has been signed by **sportscotland**, the Council and HLH. Having an agreement which lasts the full four-year funding term is an indication of the strength of the partnership which secures funding for active school coordinators in every associated school group in Highland, support for community sports hubs, the athlete travel scheme and the HLH young person's leadership programme. The agreement is delivered by HLH on behalf of the Council.
- 9.3 The Highland Athlete Travel Award Scheme (HATAS) for 2023 was administered by High Life Highland (HLH) on behalf of **sportscotland**. It supports performance or development athletes from across the Highland region to overcome some of the challenges they face, such as access to training, and travel costs to competitions. The scheme also gives athletes access to High Life Highland's leisure facilities across Highlands. 17 athletes were supported and the programme promoted by the Council, and local MSP and MP at the athlete induction day held in May this year.
- 9.4 Residents of Dingwall and the surrounding area took up the invitation to visit Dingwall Leisure Centre during the open weekend on Saturday and Sunday 28 and 29 January 2023. The open weekend gave an opportunity for everyone to explore the facilities on offer, including the upgraded gym equipment.

- 9.5 People living in Culloden and the surrounding area were invited to get to know the facilities on offer at their local leisure centre when an open day was held there on Saturday 25 February 2023. The Centre benefited from recent work, as part of an ongoing programme to upgrade gyms and increase income.
- 9.6 High Life Highland hosted the Benedetti Foundation to schools in the area for a week of music residency sessions from 13 to 17 February 2023. A series of school visits over the first three days of the residency saw over 1,200 primary school pupils involved in the inspirational activities including exploring rhythm, pitch, listening, singing and having fun. Primary school teachers from around the Inverness area received their own training event entitled 'Building Confidence Teaching Primary Music', delivered by Lucy Drever, Head of Creative Learning at the Foundation. The final, and largest event of the week saw 400 young strings players descend on Inverness Leisure for an inspirational day of ensemble playing. These young players worked on two pieces with their HLH Music Instructors at weekly lessons. The event was designed for beginner string players, including many who had only just started to play, so that they can experience the joy of music-making in a group setting.
- 9.7 The first McRobert Cup since 2019 took place at Bught Park, Inverness on 22 March. It was clear that the school pupils were delighted to be back at Bught Park in Inverness and taking part in this competition. 39 primary schools entered with just under 1,000 pupils taking part. This was a record number for the event, which has become an annual date in many primary schools' calendars. Several partners including Inverness Harriers Athletics Club, JogScotland, UHI and members of Inverness Rotary Club provided volunteers on the day.
- 9.8 The Active Schools Winter Cross Country Series returned to the Highland area in late 2022 kicking off with Inver in November 2022, followed by meets in Alness, Dingwall and Invergordon. The final event in the series took place in Dornoch on 7 February 2023. A total of 15 schools from across Ross-Shire and East Sutherland attended the final meet. The Winter Series provided an excellent opportunity for pupils from 23 primary schools, aged from primary 4 to primary 7, to compete on a variety of routes and in a range of locations. This year was particularly special due to it being the return to in person events following the break in competitions during the pandemic.
- 9.9 A new programme called Live It Highland is being provided by High Life Highland in partnership with NHS Highland to support people affected by type 2 diabetes. The sessions are either face-to-face in various community locations or online. They provide helpful information about type 2 diabetes to help people to manage the condition to fit in with their lives. The sessions are free and open to anyone with pre-diabetes or with type 2 diabetes.
- 9.10 High Life Highland supported Time to Talk Day in partnership with the Highland Community Planning Partnership. Time to Talk Day, which took place on Thursday 2 February 2023, is the nation's biggest mental health conversation. The day was about encouraging friends, families, communities and workplaces to come together to talk, listen, and maybe even change lives.

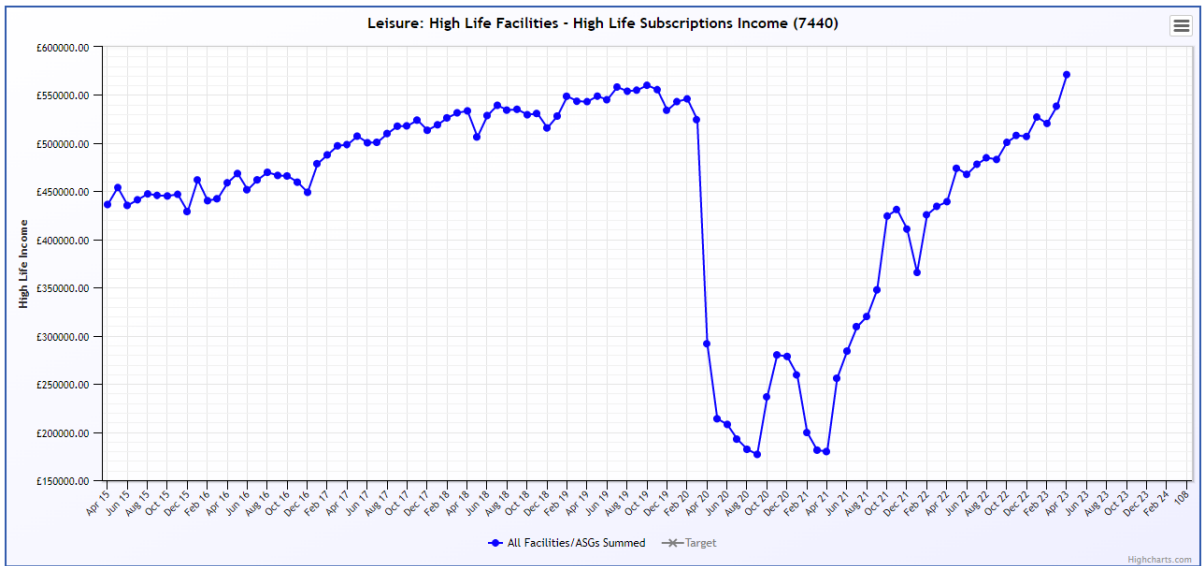
- 9.11 The Leisure Link Partnership allows High Life members to access gym, public swimming and fitness classes at leisure centres across Aberdeen, Argyll and Bute, the Borders, Highland, Moray, Orkney, Shetland and The Western Isles - all at no extra cost. As of 7 April 2023, ANGUSalive has joined the partnership adding seven new sites that can be utilised. The Leisure Link Partnership Scheme (administered by High Life Highland) is a culture and leisure trust partnership operating across the Scotland.
- 9.12 High Life Highland Countryside Rangers and local community volunteers from Caithness Environment Volunteers assisted NatureScot with conservation work within the River Thurso recently. The River Thurso is designated as a Special Site of Scientific Interest and alder saplings removed from the river to protect its environment were relocated to other suitable sites.
- 9.13 The High Life Highland Countryside Rangers helped teachers and pupils make space for nature by encouraging learning and creation of a very special and increasingly rare habitat: wildflowers. Classes in primary schools were able to book a local ranger to deliver outdoor sessions all about wildflowers and the benefits they bring to us and wildlife. A key part of the delivery will be encouraging planting of wildflowers in school grounds.

10. Part 3 – Customer Recovery in the Post Pandemic Operating Period

- 10.1 Part three of this report provides a focus on an area or aspect of HLH’s work. For this meeting the focus is on customer recovery and *highlife* subscription income recovery.
- 10.2 The graph below shows HLH’s total customer engagements. This is made up of physical attendances and on-line engagements (recorded in accordance with the Local Government Benchmarking Framework). Members are asked to note that customer engagements last financial year exceeded pre-pandemic level at just over 9m.



- 10.6 The *highlife* leisure subscriptions are the most important customer income source which HLH has. The graph below shows how steeply income has grown in 2022/23 compared with previous years and with the price increase in April 2023, monthly income is exceeding pre-pandemic levels. This income has been a key component of HLH, in partnership with Highland Council, being able to set a balanced budget in 2023/24.



Designation: Chief Executive, High Life Highland

Date: 15th May 2023

Author: Steve Walsh

Appendix A

HLH Contributions to the Council's Corporate Plan

1. Fair and Caring Highland Gàidhealtachd Chothromach agus Choibhneil	
Work together to improve quality of life and opportunities for Highland people	
1.1 Improve outcomes including attainment, achievement, positive destinations for all children and young people with a particular focus on literacy, numeracy, and our most vulnerable learners.	<p>HLH delivers a programme of adult literacy and numeracy and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Classes and 1:1 support.</p> <p>HLH runs a Young Persons' Leadership Programme and is now developing leadership opportunities across other parts of the organisation in addition to sports development. There were 372 young people who gained a leadership award during 2022/23.</p> <p>Youth work staff provide opportunities for young people to gain achievement awards (Saltire Awards, DofE etc.) which are of significant benefit for young people in gaining employment or higher and further education places.</p> <p>The active schools and youth work programmes provide a wide range of activities. A key focus of the Active Schools Programme is equality, diversity and inclusion and targeted programmes are being developed to barriers to participation specifically around disability, women and girls and areas of deprivation.</p> <p>HLH library staff deliver an extensive programme of activities to support early years literacy and numeracy, including Bookbug sessions and early years/family STEM activities. Libraries also support learning and teaching through the provision of the school library service.</p>
1.2 Tackle child poverty including promoting access to welfare support	<p>HLH participates in the work of the CHAMPS board and CEYP are provided with free memberships to leisure facilities. HLH continues to provide both specific youth work opportunities for looked after children and to encourage engagement in its wider youth work offer.</p> <p>HLH provides access to its leisure centres for fifty pence per visit for adults and children of families who are in receipt of income related benefits.</p>
1.3 Secure positive destinations including Modern Apprenticeships	<p>HLH provides modern apprenticeships through its leisure facilities which support young people who wish to remain in Highland and develop their careers at home.</p>
1.4 Work with partners on suicide prevention	<p>HLH is supporting the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) work to deliver the Suicide Intervention and Prevention Programme (SIPP) training. HLH colleagues have been trained as trainers and are delivering the SIPP programme, as part of the Highland wide training role out across the CPP. SIPP training aims to improve awareness of suicidal thinking, increase confidence to ask someone if they are feeling suicidal, and to support them to seek further help.</p>
1.5 Encourage a diverse range of traditional and emerging	<p>Through the partnership with sportscotland the Active Schools and Community Sports Hubs programmes supports local volunteers</p>

sporting activities and active lifestyles.	and clubs to deliver a diverse range of sporting and physical activity opportunities. There were 212,934 attendances at Active Schools programmes in the 2021/22 Academic Year.
1.6 Promote fair access through co-located services across the Highlands.	There are a number of joint school and community leisure centres and libraries across the Highlands and the experience of them is that the co-location increases footfall to all of the services delivered. Larger examples include Portree, Wick and Aviemore with there being similar but smaller scale provision in smaller communities such as Ardnamurchan and Kinlochleven.
1.7 Work with partners to improve the levels of mental health and wellbeing experienced by people in our communities.	<p>All of the services delivered by HLH contribute towards mental health and wellbeing. The links between mental health and wellbeing and physical activity have been well established and it is widely recognised that activities which engage people and reduce social isolation and loneliness make a positive contribution to the mental health and wellbeing of individuals and communities. The High Life membership scheme is premised upon accessibility at an affordable price; the budget membership scheme provides a safety net for hard-pressed families to enjoy access to facilities at an affordable price.</p> <p>Targeted projects which HLH are delivering which contribute to health and wellbeing include: falls prevention; cardiac rehabilitation; cancer rehabilitation; older adults health and wellbeing; type II diabetes and physical activity; physiotherapy in leisure centres; and dementia friendly initiatives including “House of Memories”.</p> <p>In collaboration with THC, HLH has piloted the delivery of “Managing Mental Health Training” to promote positive mental health in the workplace, encourage conversations on mental health, support employees through a mental health crisis, understand the responsibilities of a manager regarding mental health issues in the workplace and signpost to appropriate support. Additionally HLH offers a Mental Health Representatives programme whereby trained HLH colleagues can offer support and comfort to any employee experiencing mental health difficulties.</p>
1.8 Develop whole family support approach to ensure families stay together and thrive in their local communities.	<p>HLH seeks to support families by offering an all-inclusive leisure subscription which covers a whole household (two adults and children under 18). Children’s activities and swimming lessons are included in the subscription. In addition, there is a specific scheme for families in receipt of income related benefits whereby the adults and children can access activities for fifty pence per visit.</p> <p>Family friendly sessions are being delivered and developed through Active Schools with an emphasis on recruiting and supporting parent volunteers to deliver activities to young people.</p>
1.9 Work with partners to develop early intervention for drug and alcohol reduction.	HLH Youth, Sport and Leisure services are working jointly with NHS Highland and the Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership on the Planet Youth Initiative. The pilot project based around Tain, Dornoch, Golspie and Caithness will focus on early intervention and using sport and physical activity as a preventative measure.

1.10 Facilitate strategic sports and cultural planning across the Highlands	A new four year partnership agreement with sportsotland commenced in April 2023 which secured over £1m investment in the Highlands and delivers an active schools programme in every Associated School Group (ASG) in Highland as well as a community sports hub programme. In addition to that the Council, HLH and sportsotland are working together on a sports facilities strategy for Highland which is a key aspect of the Active Highland Strategy, a community planning partnership imitative led by NHS Highland.
1.11 Continue to promote Gaelic language and cultural development	<p>HLH collaborates with THC’s Gaelic Team to deliver specific targets within GLP3 and supports the promotion of Gaelic language and culture primarily through its Archives, Museums and Music Tuition services.</p> <p>Am Baile, a bi-lingual cultural heritage website managed by the HLH Highland Archive Service has seen increasing customer engagement and in 2022/23 had 147,258 visits. The site has bilingual descriptions of content and new Gaelic content is added on a regular basis using skilled Gaelic translators. A third of all social media posts are now bi-lingual and customer feedback illustrates that these posts are proving useful for Gaelic learners to improve their language skills. Community heritage groups are increasingly seeking to use Am Baile as a digital place of deposit for their digital heritage collections and they are supported to create Gaelic content as part of their projects.</p> <p>HLH libraries has a Gaelic book collection and delivers Gaelic Bookbug (0-4 age rhyme, song and storytelling sessions with parents/carers).</p> <p>Gaelic Sports Leadership Courses are available to young people and resources available for primary school leadership training.</p>
1.12 Promote and enhance the Highland’s rich heritage and culture.	<p>HLH operates the two regional Museums, the Highland Folk Museum and Inverness Museum and Art Gallery and is supporting the on-going work of the Council to develop the Inverness Castle Spirit of the Highlands project.</p> <p>Countryside ranger programmes and activities also contribute to this outcome.</p>
2. Resilient and Sustainable Communities Coimhearsnachdan Fulangach agus Seasmhach	
Help our communities to be prosperous, sustainable and resilient, making a positive difference to the lives of people.	
2.1 Develop affordable and reliable public transport.	HLH has played a supporting role with the Council and other partners in providing locations at sits facilities for sustainable transport including cycle racks, e-bike storage/charging and car charging points.
2.2 Continue to work with partners to develop and promote Road Safety and Water Safety	<p>Support for Bike ability training is provided through Active Schools programmes, upskilling local volunteers to deliver and developing afterschool and club cycling opportunities.</p> <p>High Life Highland runs a learn to swim programme which had an average of 3,208 individual participants per month during</p>

	2022/23. This number has increased during the current year to 4,700.
2.4 Develop place-based plans that focus on quality neighbourhoods and direct local funding opportunities towards local priorities	High Life Highland contributes to local community planning and other partnerships with partnership development areas in youth work, literacy and numeracy, access to services, refugee resettlement, health and wellbeing and mental health and wellbeing.
2.5 Support communities to help each other live well and independently	HLH provides: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a falls prevention programme in care homes and leisure facilities to support older people to remain active. • the “You Time” programme is delivered across Highland and includes activities delivered by archives; leisure facilities; libraries; countryside rangers; and is supporting older people to sustain and improve their physical and mental health and wellbeing and reduces social isolation and loneliness. • HLH created, and working with third sector partners, embedded in communities Highland’s “House of Memories”, an App based resource which benefits people living with dementia and their carers. • HLH offers supported and personally rewarding volunteering opportunities throughout the Highlands.
2.6 Work with partners to promote visitor management	HLH operates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 70 libraries on behalf of THC. • the two regional Museums, the Highland Folk Museum and Inverness Museum and Art Gallery, and their associated engagement programmes and is supporting the ongoing work of the Council to develop the Inverness Castle/Spirit of the Highlands programme. • The former Caithness Horizons facility has been re-launched as the North Coast Visitor Centre, operated by HLH on behalf of THC. • four Archive Centres, in Caithness, Skye, Lochaber and Inverness and provides Am Baile, the extensive, web-based heritage resource. • 22 stand-alone and joint school/ community leisure centres.
2.7 Work with communities and partners to keep public spaces clean and safe	The Countryside Ranger team continues to carry out site checks on behalf of the Council and facilitate safe and responsible access to the outdoors through its schools and community programme of activities.
2.8 Support Scottish and UK Government initiatives to ensure maximum digital connectivity across the area	Libraries provide free public access computers in sixty locations across the highlands which is a significant contribution to social inclusion. In addition there is free Wi-Fi in all libraries.
2.9 Work with the Scottish Government on the delivery of improved transport infrastructure throughout the Highlands.	Some of the HLH Community Centres, Leisure Centres and Libraries in Inverness and Fort William are partner facilities in the HI-BIKE electric bike share system in Inverness and Fort William. This contributes to the Council and its partners objectives relating to travel carbon reduction.
2.10 Encourage private sector and public sector economic development partners in ensuring that Highland	HLH has recently engaged with a number of Highland businesses to offer them a corporate <i>highlife</i> subscription package for their staff. 45 businesses have taken up the programme and 2,748 of their staff have engaged with it.

remains a top destination for inward investment	
2.11 Work with partners to develop a community wealth building strategy	HLH actively promotes volunteering and has a volunteering policy which includes recruitment, induction, training and review for volunteers (Annual volunteer figure over 1000).
3 Accessible and Sustainable Highland Homes Dachaighean Gàidhealach So-ruigsinn agus Seasmhach	
Build houses to support communities and economic growth	
3.4 Support the needs of veterans through the Armed Forces Covenant.	<p>HLH has achieved the Armed Forces Covenant, Employer Recognition Scheme, Gold Award and offers a discount on its leisure subscriptions and advertises posts to armed forces leavers as part of its support under the covenant. There are 458 Armed Forces subscriptions.</p> <p>In addition, HLH has designated an officer to represent the Charity on the local Military Liaison Group (MLG), contributing updates to its quarterly newsletter. HLH's Leadership Programme Officer has been working closely with the Army Welfare Officer to create a leadership training programme specifically for Army families.</p>
3.5 Develop housing options that help vulnerable and elderly adults to be cared for close to home and community	<p>HLH provides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a falls prevention programme in care homes and leisure facilities to support older people to remain active. • the "You Time" programme is delivered across Highland and includes activities delivered by archives; leisure facilities; libraries; countryside rangers; and is supporting older people to sustain and improve their physical and mental health and wellbeing and reduces social isolation and loneliness. • HLH created, and working with third sector partners, embedded in communities Highland's "House of Memories", an App based resource which benefits people living with dementia and their carers. • HLH offers supported and personally rewarding volunteering opportunities throughout the Highlands.
4. A Sustainable Highland Environment and Global Centre for Renewable Energy Àrainneachd Ghàidhealach Sheasmhach agus Ionad Cruinneil airson Lùth So-ùrachaid	
Accelerate our response to the climate and ecological emergency. Make the most of the financial and environmental opportunities arising from the huge renewable energy potential in the Highlands.	
4.1 Promote active travel infrastructure across Highland	HLH promotes active travel through the provision of cycle facilities at many of its sites. Some of the HLH Community Centres, Leisure Centres and Libraries in Inverness and Fort William are partner facilities in the HI-BIKE electric bike share system in Inverness and Fort William. This contributes to the Council and its partners objectives relating to travel carbon reduction.
4.2 Promote greener transport including low carbon public transport and the development of hydrogen hubs throughout the area.	The Council has installed electric charging points for cars at some HLH facilities.
4.3 Work with communities to find local solutions and lever funding	The provision of local facilities minimises the requirement to travel and HLH provides facilities in communities throughout the

	<p>Highlands on behalf of the Council. HLH provides mobile libraries which operate throughout the Highland area.</p> <p>Online and virtual developments, many as a result of the need to pivot due to the pandemic, are further opening up opportunities to access services that did not previously exist for all ages pre pandemic e.g. music tuition, archives and libraries sessions. In addition to online leisure classes for all age groups, cardiac recovery, Macmillan and Parkinson exercise classes are all available online.</p> <p>The Active Schools team aims to offer volunteer led activity in all Highland Schools, this work is focused on equalities and teams are working hard re-establish this now that restrictions have ceased.</p> <p>On behalf of THC, HLH provides five community minibuses which can be hired by local groups.</p>
4.4 Value and protect Highland's natural environment	HLH provides a range of activities through archives and library services that protect and enhance the environment as well as encouraging people to enjoy environmental activities and participate in environmental education projects. Countryside ranger programmes further contribute to this outcome.
4.5 Encourage greater use of land and seas being well managed for nature and adaptation including blue economy, carbon sequestration, and peatland restoration	<p>The Countryside Rangers worked with 247 community volunteers in 2022/23 to ensure habitats are well managed and monitored. Some highlights included:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Farr Glebe Reserve - Habitat management for the Great Yellow Bumblebee 2. Ardersier Commons – Butterfly monitoring in particular small blue butterfly and habitat management 3. Thrift/Sea Pinks translocation from Ullapool Harbour 4. Barnacle Goose Count (monitoring) at Balnakeil in Durness 5. Removal of invasive gorse at Cromarty SSSI 6. Habitat Management of Machir for wildflowers at Achmelvich/Clachtoll <p>In addition the 2022 mammal project was a project designed to help raise awareness of the wide range of the special mammal species within the highlands. Engagement was working with schools and the public to find out more about the varied Highland species, their distribution both historic and at present and to teach the importance to highland ecology. The rangers engaged widely across Highlands on the project and further afield via online talks.</p>
4.7 Achieve our Net Zero targets	Inverness Botanic Gardens is fully committed to 100% recycling and is a sector leader the sector in terms of carbon reduction and biodiversity. The Council and HLH work in partnership to install energy efficient systems such as LED lighting, biomass, solar panels with funding available to the Council – e.g. Salix funding.
4.9 Identify and commit to renewable energy investments to reduce the overall energy costs for the Council	The Council has installed Hydro Ness which provides power for Inverness Leisure.

<p>4.11 Promote a “Just Transition” by moving to a more environmentally sustainable economy in a way that’s fair to everyone.</p>	<p>HLH contributes to this outcome through the provision of its services and facilities throughout the Highland Council area. Its approach to low cost access to leisure facilities has achieved and sustained high participation rates as well as an improved financial provision. Archives, museums and visitor attractions also form part of what the Highlands has to offer and they improve the quality of life for residents and improve the visitor experience.</p>
<p>5. A Resilient and Sustainable Council Comhairle Fhulangach agus Sheasmhach</p>	
<p>Work with partners to address service delivery challenges with a positive approach to change.</p>	
<p>5.1 Grow and retain our own talent within the Council</p>	<p>HLH provides modern apprenticeships, trainee archivist positions and works with UHI on student placements and training through its Memorandum of Understanding with UHI.</p>
<p>5.2 Work with public and private sector partners to coordinate employment opportunities</p>	<p>The Council and HLH have a redeployment agreement to protect staff and jobs in the context of both organisations being committed to exploring service delivery redesign in response to constrained budgets to ensure the sustainability of the Council. HLH attends Developing Young Workforce career fairs as part of the work which schools are doing with their pupils to support them into positive destinations.</p> <p>HLH also provides My Future My Success mentors to support young people in work.</p>
<p>5.4 Actively redesign service delivery in response to constrained budgets to ensure the sustainability of the Council</p>	<p>The Council and HLH are working together on a review of the Service Delivery Contract to ensure that HLH is sustainable and that service delivery is affordable for the Council.</p>
<p>5.5 Work together with communities and partners to produce local plans which meet communities’ needs</p>	<p>HLH staff work with local community partnerships along with Ward managers on local service and community plans.</p>
<p>5.6 Develop place-based partnership strategies to coordinate investment and rural repopulation</p>	<p>HLH delivers services right across the Highlands and employs local staff, thereby supporting local communities and their economies.</p>
<p>5.7 Continue the Council’s success in attracting rural tourism infrastructure funding to provide improvements to local infrastructure</p>	<p>HLH delivers a number of services which support tourism including visitor attractions; museums; countryside rangers; libraries; and leisure centres.</p>
<p>5.8 Accelerate the delivery of our Asset Management approach to increase efficiency and reduce overheads and carbon impact</p>	<p>HLH has vacated its two offices (Dingwall and Inverness). Planning is at an advance stage to move out of an office in Thurso. This office rationalisation has been possible through the new ways of working and has been done in support of the Council’s asset rationalisation plan. There are further opportunities to rationalise buildings from which services are delivered which will be explored through the sports facilities strategy.</p>