

Agenda Item	10.
Report No	CPPB/5/24



Highland
Community
Planning
Partnership

Com-pàirteachas
Dealbhadh
Coimhearsnachd

na Gàidhealtachd

Highland Community Planning Partnership Board – 1 March 2024

Highland Adapts Project Update

Report by: Highland Adapts

Summary

As requested at the last board meeting (5 December 2023), this report provides additional information about climate resilience (also known as climate-proofing, climate readiness, and climate adaptation); ongoing climate resilience work in Highland, including the development of the first Highland Climate Risk and Opportunity Assessment; and how the Highland CPP can incorporate climate resilience into its work.

Highland Adapts recommends that the Highland CPP Board consider climate-related risks and opportunities when developing Community Partnership Plans and other plans and strategies related to delivering Highland Outcome Improvement Plan (HOIP) core outcomes. Additional information about this recommendation is included below.

1. Background

- 1.1 *About Highland Adapts:* Highland Adapts was established in 2021 and is equally governed by nine founding partner organisations: The Highland Council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Zero Waste Scotland, Sniffer/Adaptation Scotland, NatureScot, Forestry and Land Scotland, The Highlands and Islands Climate Hub, Changeworks, and NHS Highland. Highland Adapts' wider network extends throughout the region and to key partners in greater Scotland and abroad. Highland Adapts' mission is to bring communities, businesses, land managers, and the public sector together to facilitate transformational action towards a prosperous, climate-ready Highland.
- 1.2 *Our region's changing climate:* Climate change is already impacting Highland. This includes changes in the frequency and severity of storms, dry periods, extreme temperatures, and intense rainfall events. This will lead to more frequent flooding, wildfires, and landslips. These changes will intensify in the coming years, impacting people, infrastructure, services, and the natural environment.
- 1.3 *Key language:* Climate change adaptation, climate readiness, and climate-proofing all refer to the process of making adjustments in response to or in preparation for climate-

related impacts, which in turn leads to climate resilience. This includes managing climate-related risks and taking advantage of climate-related opportunities.

- 1.4 *Previous updates to the Highland CPP board:* The most recent update to the board (5 December 2023) focused on Highland Adapts' progress across 2023. Building on that update, this report focuses on our recommendation that the Highland CPP Board consider climate-related risks when developing Community Partnership Plans and other plans and strategies related to delivering HOIP Core Outcomes.

2. Highland Adapts' Role in Building Regional Climate Resilience

- 2.1 Highland Adapts' work includes convening thematic groups to promote knowledge exchange about climate resilience and organising key information about climate risks and opportunities. One of our main workstreams for 2023 and 2024 is the first Highland Climate Risk and Opportunity Assessment. The assessment will be published later this year.

3. The First Highland Climate Risk and Opportunity Assessment

- 3.1 The UK Government publishes a Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA) every five years. The Highland Climate Risk and Opportunity Assessment builds on the UK-wide assessment for the Highland region's specific context.
- 3.2 The assessment's key outcomes include:
- Identifying risks and opportunities from climate change to Highland's society, economy, and environment between now and 2080;
 - Empowering decision-makers at all levels with the key climate data and science needed to understand local impacts;
 - Enabling partners to identify priorities for further actions within their area or organisation;
 - Laying the foundation for a transformational approach to climate adaptation and resilience for the region;
 - Supporting a just transition to a net zero and climate resilient economy, in a way that delivers fairness and tackles inequality and injustice.
- 3.4 For example, the Highland Climate Risk and Opportunity Assessment considers:
- Risks to mental health and wellbeing from extreme weather events;
 - Risks to people and communities from wildfires;
 - Risks to service provision from extreme weather;
 - Risks to the Highland economy from impacts on key industries;
 - Risks to people and communities from flooding;
 - Risks and opportunities to social justice and inequalities from climate change and adaptation responses.
- 3.5 The assessment will not prescribe specific adaptation actions for stakeholders to address the risks and opportunities that are identified. Additional work will be required to generate and prioritise these actions at community, sector, and organisational levels.

This may include developing community, sector, and organisation-specific adaptation plans.

The assessment also will not provide a complete picture of how climate change will impact the Highland region. This is for two main reasons:

(1) By nature of being a region-wide assessment, the assessment must focus on macro-level themes and data, while pointing to sources of more specific information.

(2) There is always a level of uncertainty in preparing for the future climate. Sometimes the level of uncertainty is uncomfortably high. Information is a key part of developing climate resilience, but we cannot put off acting until we have perfect predictions of the future. This is not possible.

3.6 By collating, organising, and providing additional perspectives on regional climate risks and opportunities, the Highland Climate Risk and Opportunity Assessment will be a valuable resource for the region. Importantly, however, there is already a wealth of information about climate-related risks at the UK and Scotland levels. Many organisations are already prioritising this work. Organisations that are ready to act now can use resources like those available on the Highland Adapts and Adaptation Scotland's websites to start their resilience work.

4. Highland Adapts' Recommendation to the Highland Community Planning Partnership

4.1 Highland Adapts recommends that the Highland CPP consider climate-related risks and opportunities when developing Community Partnership Plans and other relevant plans or strategies related to delivering the HOIP Core Outcomes

4.2 *Why should the Highland CPP address climate-related risks and opportunities?*

4.21 As noted above (1.2), climate change is already impacting the Highland region. These changes will intensify in the coming years, impacting people, infrastructure, services, and the natural environment. Climate change disproportionately impacts those already experiencing inequalities by compounding and amplifying disadvantages. This makes climate change resilience especially important to the Highland CPP's work to reduce inequalities in Highland.

4.22 The risks posed by climate change will impact the HCPP's ability to deliver the outcomes identified in the Highland Outcomes Improvement Plan. For example:

4.23 Poverty reduction

- Extreme weather events and changes in climate patterns disrupt key sectors of the economy, leading to loss of livelihoods and reduced income opportunities.
- Climate impacts drive up the costs of necessities such as food, water, and energy, particularly affecting vulnerable households.
- Climate-related health issues lead to higher healthcare costs and financial burdens on communities, especially those with limited access to healthcare services.
- Climate risks restrict access to financial resources, credit, and insurance, hindering economic development and poverty reduction efforts.

4.24 Community Participation & Dialogue

- Climate change-related impacts disrupt community engagement efforts by displacing populations, damaging infrastructure, and diverting resources away from participatory processes.
- Communities facing immediate climate-related challenges prioritize short-term survival over long-term planning and engagement activities.

4.25 Infrastructure

- Climate change damages critical infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and digital connectivity through extreme weather events like storms and flooding.
- Increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events strains infrastructure systems beyond their design capacities, leading to costly repairs and interruptions in service delivery.

4.26 Community safety and resilience

- Climate change-related hazards such as storms, wildfires, and heatwaves threaten community safety and resilience.
- Vulnerable populations, such as the elderly, face increased health and safety risks during extreme weather events.

4.27 Mental health and wellbeing

- Climate change impacts, such as loss of livelihoods, displacement, extreme weather events, and uncertainty about the future contribute to stress, anxiety, and depression, among individuals and communities.
- Disruptions to community cohesion and support networks due to climate-related impacts further exacerbate mental health issues.

4.28 Case Study: Golspie

Golspie is one settlement in Highland particularly vulnerable to the changing climate with a need to adopt adaptation and resilience measures. As identified in [Dynamic Coast](#) assessments, current climate change estimates of 1.5 degrees of warming project an increase in sea levels of one metre in Golspie. The village is subject to flooding and has experienced flooding twice in the last six months due to severe weather events.

Golspie falls into SIMD statistics of experiencing inequality. Climate impacts on health, economy, and resilience may widen these inequalities and cause further detriment to the community. Recent engagement by the Highlands & Islands Climate Hub has identified potentially significant impacts to mental health and wellbeing in Golspie because of recent and projected flooding events. The Climate Hub is now working with the Scottish Flood Forum to explore additional support for the village.

The short video excerpt in Appendix A demonstrates the ongoing community efforts to overcome the impacts which threaten Golspie.

4.3 *How can the Highland CPP consider climate-related risks and opportunities?*

4.31 Highland Adapts recognizes that the responsibility for determining specific actions rests with the Highland CPP. The Highland CPP is best positioned to identify solutions that work within its existing framework. Below are our suggestions for key aspects to consider:

4.32 Contribute to the Highland Climate Risk and Opportunity Assessment

As explained above, the Highland Climate Risk and Opportunity Assessment will be a valuable resource for Highland CPP's work to reduce these impacts. The Highland CPP and partner organisations are encouraged to contribute to the assessment before it is published this year. Contributing to the assessment will enable Highland Adapts to build a comprehensive regional perspective.

Many organisations across the region have already contributed important data to the assessment. We are also encouraging organisations to contribute directly to producing the report, either through authoring, researching, or assessing specific sections. This can involve as little as 3 hours of staff time.

The following organisations are currently contributing staff time to co-authoring sections of the report: The Highlands and Islands Climate Hub, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Forestry and Land Scotland, Changeworks, and Zero Waste Scotland.

Please contact Harper Loonsk (harper.loonsk@highland.gov.uk) to discuss how your organisation can contribute.

4.33 Education

Individuals involved in developing and implementing plans should be equipped to incorporate climate change risks and opportunities. This may include a basic understanding of the key vocabulary to discuss climate change mitigation, resilience, vulnerabilities, and potential impacts.

These skills are crucial for effective decision-making and prioritization of adaptation strategies. By ensuring everyone has a basic understanding of climate concepts, the planning process becomes more inclusive and responsive to the challenges posed by climate change. This may be achieved through internal and external training and resources, as appropriate for each organisation.

4.34 Incorporate climate-related risks and opportunities in the development of Community Partnership Plans and other plans and strategies related to delivering Highland Outcome Improvement Plan (HOIP) core outcomes.

The HCPP can integrate climate-related risks and opportunities through various approaches. For example, this could include:

- Identifying the most pressing climate impacts on each HOIP outcome, priority, and cross-cutting theme;
- Incorporating monitoring and reporting on climate resilience education, planning, and action into quarterly and annual reports to the CPP Board;
- Establishing a working group (like those established through the Community Planning Partnerships in the [Outer Hebrides](#) and [Argyll and Bute](#)) to specifically address resilience to climate change impacts, supported by Highland Adapts and the Highlands and Islands Climate Hub;

- Incorporating climate-related challenges within any future stakeholder consultations or community engagement activities;
- Integrating climate resilience criteria and considerations into the evaluation and selection of projects and initiatives to ensure they consider climate-related inequalities and contribute to the development of a more climate-resilient Highland.

Recommendations

The Board is asked to:

- i) Consider climate-related risks and opportunities when developing Community Partnership Plans and other plans and strategies related to delivering Highland Outcome Improvement Plan (HOIP) core outcomes.
- ii) In the first instance, contribute to the Highland Climate Risk and Opportunity Assessment, which will be a valuable resource for the Highland CPP's work to reduce climate-related inequalities across Highland.

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Appendix A: Golspie Community Climate Action



[Click here](#) to watch a 1-minute video about community climate action in Golspie.

This video is part of the film “Climate Action Highlands & Islands,” which was filmed over the Summer of 2023 by filmmaker Cameron Mackay in close association with the Highlands & Islands Climate Hub. The film tells the stories of the Highlands and Islands Climate Hub members taking positive action in their communities to combat climate change.