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July 2021

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Pupils from Rainbow Family Centre, Kieran Simpson and Jaxx Gillespie inspecting their new nursery.

Thumbs-up for £2.4m nursery project

Children in Port Glasgow have given the thumbs-up to an extension to their nursery as work continues on the £2.4 million project.

Youngsters from Rainbow Family Centre made the short trip next door to see how construction on a new wing for their pre-school is progressing.

The extension will increase capacity at Rainbow, which will become Park Farm Early Learning Centre, by 64.

It is being built by contractors CCG Scotland and Inverclyde Council's development partners, hub West Scotland in tandem with a £2.9m new-build for Larkfield Children's Centre in Greenock.

Both projects, designed by architects Holmes Miller, are expected to be completed this summer.

Councillor Jim Clocherty, deputy leader of Inverclyde Council and convener of education and communities, said:

"You can see from the faces of the young people that they are really excited about the expansion to their nursery and us adults can't wait to see the end product too."

"The expanded Rainbow Family Centre and new Larkfield Early Learning Centre will be welcome additions to our already enviable school and nursery estate here in Inverclyde."



Pictured is Andrew Wilson from CCG with nursery staff member Jessie Friel and children Kieran and Jaxx.

"These developments will increase capacity for the number of young people we can accommodate in each location to support the efforts to give all our children and young people the best possible start to their lives and their education."

The expanded Rainbow Family Centre and new Larkfield Early Learning Centre are being created to support Inverclyde Council's doubling of early years provision to 1,140 hours per eligible child annually.

The local authority managed to implement the policy in August 2020 as originally planned despite the expansion being delayed by 12 months to August 2021 because of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

Among the Rainbow children and staff surveying the new wing of their nursery were acting head of centre, Sonia McKay, staff member Jessie Friel and children Kieran Simpson and Jaxx Gillespie, who were shown around

by site manager Andrew Wilson, from CCG.

Ms McKay said:

"The visit went extremely well and everyone is very excited about seeing the finished product."

"The extension itself is coming along fantastically and is blending in beautifully with the existing building."

"The children just wanted to know where the toys were, and Jaxx actually counted the pipes in the toilets and said there would be six toilets in the new nursery."

"Andrew and his team have been a pleasure to be working alongside."



Sonia McKay with pupils Kieran and Jaxx.

"The parents and local residents have all been very patient and tolerant and have also been asking about the progress and when will it be ready."

"Once completed it will enable us to continue providing the highest quality of flexible early learning and childcare within upper Port Glasgow in line with the already successful 1,140 hours expansion."

"This extension will be an invaluable and integral part of the local community."

The new wing is being built in the nursery's car park which will then be connected to the existing building.

The car park has been relocated to the site of the neighbouring former Park Farm Community Hall, which was demolished.

The extension will feature a new main entrance, staff and meeting area, playroom and an outdoor learning space.



Construction work underway at Ness Castle Primary School

Work has started on the new primary school to serve the housing developments at Ness Castle and Ness-Side in Inverness. The school will have 12 classrooms and nursery accommodation when it opens in August 2022.

Chair of the Education Committee, Cllr John Finlayson said:



“This is an exciting development for the area and for members of the community who I am sure are eagerly awaiting its completion. The new school will not only meet the needs of the school community but is also prepared to deliver against any future accommodation demands that may arise. Hopefully we will see

the building grow and evolve alongside the local community.”

The building has been designed to allow it to be extended in a phased manner to provide up to 24 classrooms to meet the future demand from housebuilding in the catchment area.

Provost and Chair of Inverness Area Committee, Cllr Helen Carmichael said:



“This is fantastic news for Ness Castle and Ness-Side in Inverness. The new school building will serve the housing developments in the area and will continue to accommodate and be a great asset to the community for years to come.”

Kier Construction are the Principal Contractor for the project which is being delivered in conjunction with the Council’s in-house Property Teams.

Philip McDowell, Regional Director at Kier Regional Building North & Scotland said:

“We are delighted to have started work at Ness Castle Primary School.

“This project award continues our long-standing relationship with The Highland Council and we are looking forward to delivering this new school which will provide first-class educational facilities for families within this new housing development in Inverness.”

The total cost of the project is £14.8 million and is funded from the Council’s capital programme.

Exciting milestones for new South Ayrshire school campuses

Pupils and staff from schools in Maybole and Prestwick joined councillors and the Hub South West construction team to celebrate the start of building works on the town’s new campuses this week.

Maybole Community Campus, set to open in 2023, will incorporate Carrick Academy; St Cuthbert’s Primary School, and a new non-denominational primary school. This will bring together Cairn and Gardenrose Primary Schools and their associated Early Years Centres, and will create an inspiring learning environment for up to 1,370 pupils.

The campus will also benefit the local community, with a brand-new swimming pool to replace the existing Maybole pool; a meeting space; enhanced sporting facilities and a changing pavilion.

Prestwick Educational Campus is set to provide a first-class learning environment for over 800 children from Glenburn and St Ninian’s Primary Schools, and their associated nursery provision when it opens in 2022.

Work on the new shared campus, being built on the existing Glenburn Primary site, is progressing well with foundations already nearing completion. The schools will continue to operate individually on the site but will benefit from the improved shared facilities. The combined Early Years Centre will operate separately within the new shared campus 52 weeks of the year.

Both campuses were designed by BDP and will be highly sustainable, with no use of fossil fuels, demonstrating our commitment to reducing Council emissions to net zero by 2045.

Councillor William Grant, South Ayrshire Council’s Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People said:



“I’m delighted that work has begun on both campuses. It’s our priority to ensure our children and young people get the best possible start in life and thrive throughout their years at school.

“This investment in our school estate will bring fantastic learning facilities to Maybole and Prestwick, helping us to close the attainment gap in South Ayrshire.

“The new campuses will not only provide modern and engaging environments for our young people, but they will also become central hubs for the surrounding communities, and I look forward to seeing the buildings take shape.”



Next phase of consultation on Galashiels Community Campus to be launched



An early design concept of the proposed Galashiels Community Campus shows how it would sit in the landscape. Image Source © Scottish Borders Council.

Members of the public will be given another opportunity to give their feedback on the plans for Galashiels Community Campus this summer.

A Proposal of Application Notice (PAN) has been submitted to the Council this week triggering a 12-week statutory consultation including a public meeting during July.

This phase of the consultation will focus on the Council's preferred option to build the Community Campus within the existing school boundary and a portion of the town's Scott Park.



January 2021 Plans. Image Source © Scottish Borders Council.

Updated designs of the Campus will provide greater detail on the Council's vision for the project which continues to be developed and refined.

The Council will also be staging a public meeting in July with the local community, providing another opportunity to go through the updated designs for the Campus in detail. The new consultation will be available online in advance of the session.

As part of the Council's commitment to consulting with the public throughout the development of this project, Councillors agreed earlier this month that a visioning working group is created in response to the high level of feedback received in relation to the changes and improvements proposed to Scott Park.

The working group will work in collaboration with the local community as the project progresses, with a broad range of community representatives being brought together to help shape and influence the final design of the reimagined and expanded park.

Following the conclusion of this next phase, a full planning application for

the Campus will be submitted during the summer, after which another period of public consultation will commence to allow members of the community to feedback their views on final plans.

In addition, a statutory education consultation, focused on the educational benefits of the Campus, will also take place with the aim of gathering feedback from the school community.

The initial informal consultation which included videos outlining the vision for the proposed campus, animated fly-throughs of what the facility may look like and interviews with pupils and members of the community can still be viewed in full at:

www.scotborders.gov.uk/galacampus

Councillor Carol Hamilton, Executive Member for Children and Young People, said:



"The building of a new Galashiels Community Campus is a major development for the town and surrounding area.

"In the period since the informal consultation closed, a significant amount of work has been undertaken to further develop plans and graphics for the campus to present a more detailed overview of the proposals.

"As a Council we are extremely aware of the importance of providing timely updates to the community as the designs are developed and refined. This new consultation phase will provide the perfect opportunity for members of the public to find out what progress has been made and contribute their feedback."



Highland Council's bilingual HQ sign. Image Source © Gary Anthony, www.northern-times.co.uk

Gaelic 'set in stone and skin' by Council's translation service

The work of The Highland Council's Gaelic Translation service over the past year was commended by Highland Councillors recently in an online meeting of the Gaelic Committee.

Members were updated on the range and output of the Council's translation service and future developments being planned within the Council.

Over 900 requests for translation were administered varying from short phrases to projects running to thousands of words. Most of the translation requests were received from the Council's Education Service, Gaelic Development Team, and Corporate services for committees and news releases and corporate documents. Public correspondence (emails and letters), job adverts; street, road and building signage and interpretation panels were also among the many items translated through the service which works very closely with Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba (AÀA) the Gaelic place names organisation.

A key aspect for the future development of Gaelic within the Highland Council

includes plans to recruit a Gaelic Graduate Intern to help improve the level of Gaelic on the Council's website and to provide public engagement in Gaelic on the Council's social media.

Members were also informed that training will be provided to customer services staff to help reinforce a Gaelic welcome when customers contact the Council. These staff will continue to ensure that if customers wish to speak to frontline services in Gaelic that they will be provided access to Gaelic speakers to enable this.

Councillor Calum Munro, Chair of the Gaelic Committee said:



"Committee members are very impressed by the level of output and quality of the Translation Service provided to the Council. This high demand-led service

is commendable and provides a vital service in the Council's delivery of its Gaelic Language Plan."

He added: "While the Council's translator mainly responds to requests for translating educational materials, corporate documents, and street and building signage it was fascinating to hear from her that: '... a few requests were from the public for the translation of house names and tattoos – so not only has Gaelic been set in stone but also in skin.'...!"

The Council's 'Guidelines on bilingual signage for Highland Council staff and additional Guidance for the use of Gaelic' were produced in 2010 and require review. They will be updated and aligned with the current Highland Council Gaelic Language Plan and National Gaelic Language Plan.

"...a few requests were from the public for the translation of house names and tattoos – so not only has Gaelic been set in stone but also in skin...!"

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Work begins on new nursery for Bun-sgoil Shlèite

Work has started recently to build a new nursery for Bun-Sgoil Shlèite in Skye. The Highland Council has awarded the contract to Skye based James MacQueen Building Contractors Ltd.

This will see the former nursery building replaced with a new two classroom nursery unit to accommodate both English and Gaelic Medium pupils along with additional parking and drop-off areas. This will also enable the expanded Early Learning and Childcare service to be delivered in modern, fit for purpose accommodation.

Works began on site on Monday 22 March and are expected to be completed in September 2021.

Katie Wight, Head Teacher for the setting said:

"The whole school community is delighted and excited that work on the new sgoil-araich/nursery building is underway. We look forward to developing the space and making it our own over the months and years to come. High quality, dynamic learning spaces are so important, and we

know that the space will support us in providing the highest quality of care and education to our youngest pupils".

Chair of the Council's Education Committee, Councillor John Finlayson was delighted:



"Great news in challenging times is always welcome. This addition to Bun-Sgoil Shlèite will be a fantastic asset to Skye and the local community. The new setting will provide a modern learning space for all children for years to come and will further support the Council's Early Learning and Childcare expansion plans".

Chair of the Gaelic Committee, Councillor Calum Munro, commented:



"I'm delighted that children of Bun-Sgoil Shlèite will have a new modern setting later this year. The new nursery building will be a great space for English and Gaelic Medium pupils to begin their education journey."

Chair of the Housing and Property Committee, Councillor Ben Thompson, said:



"It is great to hear that construction has started this week at Bun-Sgoil Shlèite. The new building will be fit for purpose for pupils in Skye. I am looking forward to hearing of the works progression."

James MacQueen Building Contractors together with R.HOUSE are gifting an additional building to Bun-Sgoil Shlèite, designed by Rural Design, which will allow the nursery and primary children to play and learn outside in all weathers. James MacQueen Building Contractors are the main contractor for the Highland Council on an important local project in Sleat, building a new nursery.

"We are delighted to be working with the Highland Council on this important local project and we are proud to be able to work in our local community and help build a new nursery for the children and families of Skye." explained James MacQueen, Managing Director of JMQB.

"This is such an important project for the community and we'd like to gift an additional building to Bun-Sgoil Shlèite, designed by R.HOUSE, which will be an outdoor learning structure for the children to play, learn and shelter together, in all weathers. We feel this is really important as it's a national priority for schools post Covid to provide outdoor learning spaces where children can connect to their environment and have a space to gather and play outdoors in all weathers, which is pretty essential in Skye with our weather!"



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CATERING FOR THE FUTURE! Tayside Contracts Revolutionises School Meals

In an uncertain world, one thing we can be sure of is that there will be ongoing pressure to deliver more for less and **Tayside Contracts** has stepped up to the plate once again with an exciting vision for the future of school, nursery, and community meals.

Tayside Contracts is the commercial trading arm of the three constituent Councils of Tayside. Since 1996 we have been exemplar model of shared services. Our latest venture which demonstrates the benefits of collaborative working is the

development of a state-of-the-art cook-freeze Central Production Unit (CPU) to deliver school and nursery meals in Angus and Dundee and community meals in Dundee.

“A key factor in our thinking was how to best protect the quality of frontline services in a world of budget cuts and most importantly how to protect jobs.”

The challenge that was the catalyst for the CPU was the Scottish Government’s

Early Learning Childcare (ELC) initiative which required Tayside Contracts to deliver an additional 1.2 million meals per year on behalf of the Tayside Councils from August 2020.

A key factor in our thinking was how to best protect the quality of frontline services in a world of budget cuts and most importantly how to protect jobs. An options appraisal exercise identified that the cook-freeze CPU model would provide the innovative solution required which would deliver significant year on year cost savings. To ensure consistent high quality was maintained, exhaustive work was undertaken on recipe development, cooking methods and identification of meals which could be

frozen and successfully regenerated whilst maintaining quality which was validated through feedback at numerous blind tasting sessions.

The broad principles of the cook freeze CPU service delivery model are that elements of the meal are produced at the CPU in large production runs, creating economies of scale. Menu items are frozen before distribution to hubs across Tayside in temperature-controlled vehicles. The frozen meals are then regenerated for service on site, or for delivery to their final location.

From the pupils’ perspective at point of service, these freshly cooked meals are indistinguishable from the previous

cook-fresh menu and are mainly served by the same familiar, welcoming faces.

The CPU was designed and built with considerable spare capacity to future proof against the anticipated further growth and the Scottish Government’s commitment for expansion of Free School Meal entitlement to all primary pupils, by 2022. This subsequently has been borne out which means that Tayside Contracts’ constituent Councils are in a very strong position to deal with the demands of Universal Free School Meals. By sweating the CPU asset further, Tayside Contracts now has capacity to supply frozen meals to other council customers and beyond.



For further information:

E: enquiries@tayside-contracts.co.uk

T: 01382 812721

Address: Tayside Contracts, Contracts House, 1 Soutar Street, Dundee, DD3 8SS.

www.tayside-contracts.co.uk



Partners launch plan for Highland Nature action

The recent launch of Highland Nature, the biodiversity action plan for 2021 to 2026, shows the commitment to positive work for nature all across the region.

Creating the plan has been coordinated by the Highland Environment Forum and funded by NatureScot and The Highland Council, but the actions for nature will be carried out by the 43 partners who represent land managers, local conservation groups, nature conservation membership organisations and government agencies.

The priorities in Highland Nature take their lead from international and national strategies and focus on what can be contributed at a regional level.

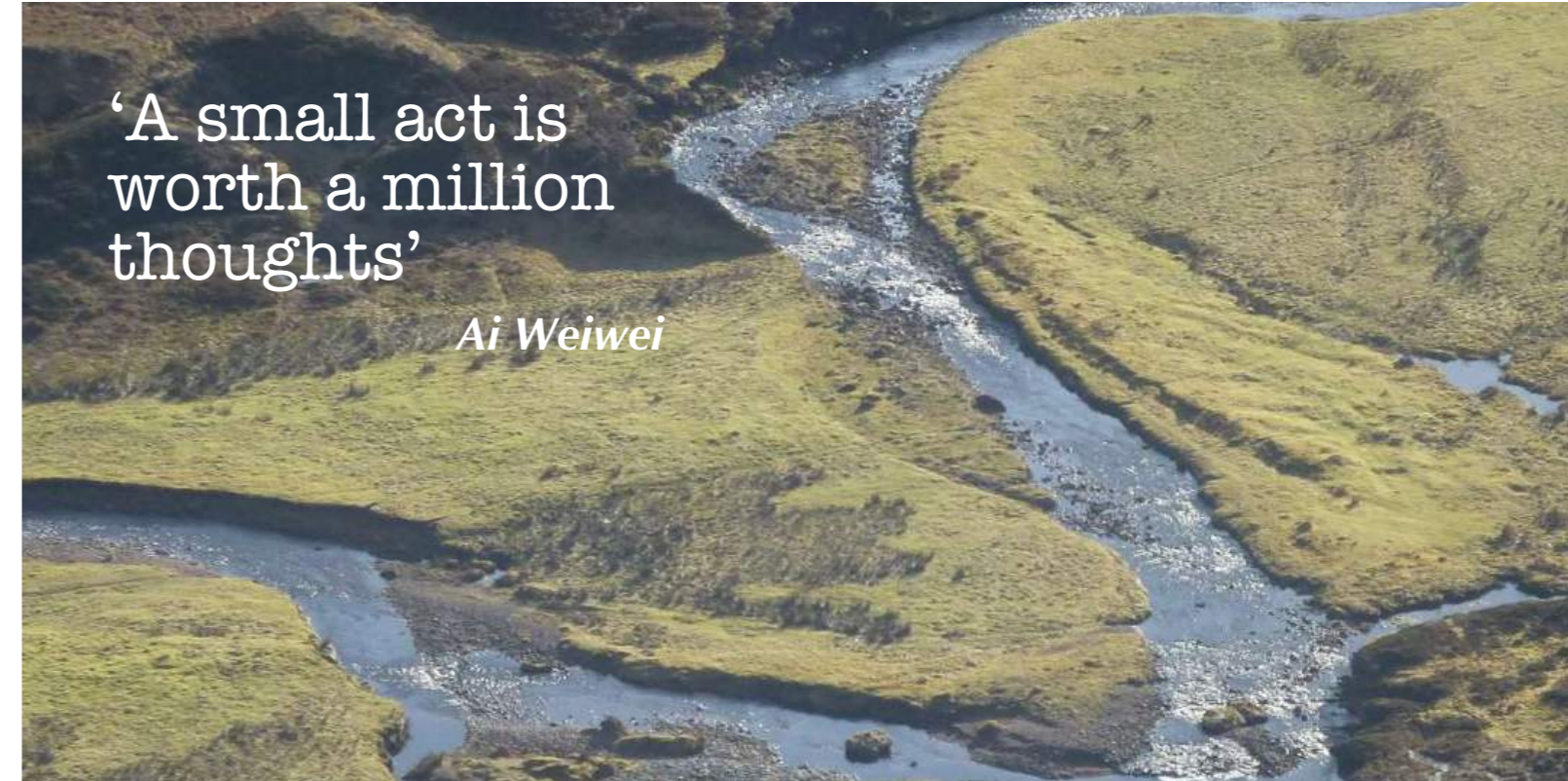
Caroline Vawdrey of the Highland Environment Forum said:

“2021 is a year of international significance for making agreements to tackle climate change and biodiversity

loss, with the UN Biodiversity Conference being held in Kunming in China in October, and the UN Climate Conference in Glasgow in November.

“Working to protect and benefit nature is a vital undertaking at all levels – from international agreements to individual land managers. We are indebted to members of the Highland Environment Forum for helping to identify priorities for the Highlands. It is remarkable that forty-three partners have come together to share their ambitions for Highland biodiversity. We also know that this is just some of the work being undertaken in the region, and that there are many other people undertaking positive actions for nature. We’d love them to be involved.”

Welcoming the new biodiversity action plan Chair of the Highland Council’s Economy and Infrastructure Committee and the Council’s Climate Change Working Group, Cllr Trish Robertson said:



‘A small act is worth a million thoughts’

Ai Weiwei

Image © Caroline Vawdrey, Highland Nature Biodiversity Action Plan 2021-2026



“Highland Nature is a highly ambitious plan and Highland Council are looking forward to playing its part to protect nature and secure improvements for biodiversity. We

will be developing existing partnerships and building new relationships across the Highlands to realise the actions and commitments of Highland Nature and help deliver positive outcomes to mitigate the current ecological emergency.”

The actions range from landscape-scale work, such as peatland restoration and woodland expansion to the smaller-scale activity so vital for individual species, like the work by the Caithness Biodiversity Group, growing and planting out kidney vetch to feed the rare small blue butterfly and help it to thrive.

There are many inspiring commitments in the plan, from mapping curlew hotspots which will help to protect

important places for a species in worrying decline; to continuing to tackle invasive non-native species..

“Highland Nature is a highly ambitious plan and Highland Council are looking forward to playing its part to protect nature and secure improvements for biodiversity.”

There are also ambitious plans for Highland rivers, including expanding deciduous woodland to create shade in order to protect salmon spawn and other species from rising water temperatures. Tackling and reducing the impact of climate change is recognised as key to the work to protect Highland nature, and this

plan links with Highland Community Planning Partners’ plans to address these issues by working alongside communities through their ‘Highland Adapts’ programme.

Commenting on the launch of Highland Nature, NatureScot South Highland Area Manager Chris Donald said:

“As funding partners we’re delighted to welcome the launch of Highland Nature – a plan which sets out the ambitions of the 43 partners involved to protect and enhance nature across the region. Now the real work begins and we’re calling on as many interested people as possible to get involved in helping deliver positive actions for biodiversity in a way that is both inclusive and just.

“Highland Environment Forum will be setting up working groups to drive biodiversity projects forward and help turn these ideas and ambitions into reality. We know there are many more organisations and individuals out there doing fantastic work for nature and we’d love them to join us.”



Council introduce additional measures to keep Kilpatrick Hills safe and clean

A number of new measures have been put in place at the Kilpatrick Hills to ensure the beauty spot remains safe and enjoyable for all despite increased visitor numbers.

Action is being taken after lockdown saw a vast increase in visitors – with some weeks recording six times the amount of people attending compared to 2019.

The heightened interest in the area led to increased waste and littering, inappropriate road-side parking, increased traffic, negative effects on the environment, anti-social behaviour and disruption to local residents.

Now West Dunbartonshire Council is working with partners including Police Scotland and Forestry & Land Scotland to implement measures which

will ensure the rural area is properly protected.

Two additional rangers will patrol the area seven days a week over the summer season to ensure visitors have a positive experience at the hills.

In addition, a temporary car park at Gavinburn in Old Kilpatrick, which is the main access point to the Kilpatrick Hills, will be put in place from mid May to ensure there is more space for vehicles and discourage road-side parking.

The Council's Greenspace team will also carry out additional litter patrols around all of the access points and car parks that serve the Kilpatrick Hills, and large bins will be installed at the entrance to Cochno Hill to assist with increased levels of littering.

To ensure all visitors are aware of their responsibilities when enjoying green spaces around Scotland, information will be shared on Council channels and new signage has been placed at access points detailing the key points of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

It is also expected that Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders (TTRO) will be introduced to impose restrictions on a number of locations close to the Kilpatrick hills.

These will include:

- **A878 Station Road, Old Kilpatrick, from the railway overbridge adjacent to Old Kilpatrick Station to the westbound carriageway of Great Western Road with restriction on both sides of carriageway for a distance of 460 metres**



- **A878 Station Road, Old Kilpatrick, from the A82 westbound slip road to the Erskine Bridge slip road to the A82 eastbound carriageway with restriction on both sides of carriageway for a distance of 505 metres**
- **Mount Pleasant Drive, Old Kilpatrick, from Station Road to No.22 Mount Pleasant Road with restriction on both sides of carriageway for a distance of 105 metres**
- **Cochno Road, Hardgate & Faifley, from Duncombe Avenue to the boundary with East Dunbartonshire Council adjacent to Loansdean access. Restriction on both sides of carriageway for a distance of 2130 metres.**

Monitoring of these restrictions will be carried out in partnership with Police Scotland and the Council's Roads team will also programme traffic counts and monitor vehicle movements to determine whether traffic calming measures are required.



Council Leader, Councillor Jonathan McColl, said:

"We are lucky that we live in an area which has so much natural

beauty to offer and I am delighted that our residents have been making the most of these green spaces.

"These actions are not intended to discourage people from visiting and enjoying the Kilpatrick Hills, but rather are preventative measures to ensure the area is properly protected and can be enjoyed for many more years to come."



Councillor Iain McLaren, Convener of Infrastructure, Regeneration and Economic Development, added:

"It is vitally important that we take good care of our natural environment and ensure that when we visit these beauty

spots that we leave no trace behind. The additional bins and litter patrol will mean these sites will not be scarred by discarded waste, and the signage will encourage all visitors to treat the area with respect.

"The traffic orders are necessary to ensure that visitors are parking safely in designated areas and minimising any danger to other road users. I would ask that all visitors adhere to these."

A supplementary report will be brought to a future meeting to allow members to reflect on the effectiveness of the measures.

"We are lucky that we live in an area which has so much natural beauty to offer and I am delighted that our residents have been making the most of these green spaces."



Prestigious award for South Ayrshire Council beaches

Girvan, Maidens, Prestwick and Troon beaches have just received a prestigious Scotland's Beach Award for 2021!

The four beaches have been recognised by Keep Scotland Beautiful for their amenities, maintenance, biodiversity and cleanliness.

The awards are a benchmark for quality, celebrating clean, well-managed and sustainable beaches. All four beaches have demonstrated excellent management, environmental best practice, and maintenance of a high standard.

This is Girvan's first Beach Award in several years and underlines recent improvements. Not only is the beach well maintained with an array of facilities, the southern end is an important habitat for breeding birds.

Maidens offers breath-taking scenery and unique geology and wildlife. There are three Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within walking distance of the beach.

Prestwick is popular with families and for sailing, windsurfing and fishing. To the north, the Pow Burn estuary and sand dune system are a haven for wildlife.

Troon amenity beach is easily accessible, with crazy golf, play park, toilets and refreshments all close at hand. Most of the beach is backed by sand dunes, which protect the town from coastal flooding.

Councillor Ian Cochrane, Environment Portfolio Holder for South Ayrshire Council said:



"It's fantastic to have been recognised with these awards, they highlight the huge effort required to maintain large stretches of heavily used land.

"With more and more people looking to staycation this year, our beaches are set to attract thousands of visitors, so we will regularly remind people to dispose of their rubbish responsibly.

"We are extremely grateful to all the community groups and individuals who go out of their way to help keep our beaches looking their best."

More than 6,000 new trees branch out across Stirling

The Council has helped plant 6000 new trees across Stirling during 2021 with more to come when planting season resumes.

The major tree planting programme is a key element of the Council's Climate & Nature Emergency Plan with projects being undertaken throughout the Stirling Council area as part of wider plans to tackle climate change and make the area a greener, healthier place for all.

A number of native species have been planted which suit a wide range of ground conditions, including goat willow, alder and birch that grow well in wetter ground.

Crab apple, rowan and bird cherry trees that provide berries for wildlife, and hawthorn and blackthorn trees for berry bearing hedgerows have also been planted.

Volunteers across the community, including residents and community organisations, have worked alongside the Council at various planting sessions, which have taken place at:

- **Kildean** – Council staff planted 3500 trees.
- **Thornhill** – Members of the community planted 600 trees.
- **Callander** – Council staff planted 500 trees at Balvalachlan Cemetery.
- **Fintry and the surrounding area** – Fintry community and the Loch Lomond Fisheries Trust planted 1300 trees.

Convener of the Environment and Housing Committee, Councillor Jim Thomson, said:



"We have worked with local communities across Stirling to increase the number of trees being planted.

"Trees are a cornerstone of our landscape and countryside, crucial not only as a home for wildlife and nature, but also forming an essential and cherished part of our cultural identity.

"This latest planting programme can make a real difference to our local environments and be enjoyed by generations to come."

Vice Convener, Councillor Danny Gibson, said:



"Trees are a hugely important part of our plans to address the climate emergency. They can help by reducing carbon dioxide levels, flood risk and improve air quality. They can also provide habitat for many different species, supporting biodiversity throughout Stirling.



"The latest planting work can only enhance our beautiful outdoor spaces whose value has become even more apparent during recent lockdowns when we have not been able to travel far."



Wildflowers and promoting biodiversity

Scottish Borders Council is seeking the public's help in promoting and protecting areas of wildflowers across the region.

This is part of the Council's plan to promote more biodiversity across Borders greenspaces and provide solutions to the challenges presented by climate change.

A number of designated wildflower sites have since been developed as a result of this increased focus on protecting the environment and in response to the public's changing attitudes towards the local environment.

A Friends of the Earth study commissioned in 2017 found that 81% of British people would support more wildflower areas in parks and roadside verges.

With a view to increasing the amount of wildflower areas across the region, the Council is working closely with local In Bloom and community groups to undertake trials of wildflower cultivation.

Various trial sites have produced encouraging results in helping produce a diverse range of wildlife to date. One such site, near the Council's HQ in Newtown, has seen a native colony of Northern Marsh orchids flourish.

The Council is eager to receive feedback from the public and get input to identify more potential sites that could be turned into grassland or wildflower meadows.

This is a result of a wider review of the Council's services aiming to adopt more sustainable ways of working as outlined in the forthcoming Climate Change Route Map.

Since 2019, particular SBC services have been changed to reduce their overall environmental impact. This has included reducing the frequency that grass is cut across certain locations.

These designated naturalised spaces are left to grow long and will only be cut once or twice a year to provide a more suitable habitat for insects, plants and other wildlife to thrive.

Promotion of these spaces is vital in helping key pollinators including bees and butterflies thrive and supports their ability to create and maintain ecosystems fundamental to everyday life.



Councillor Robin Tattler, Executive Member for Community Development and Localities, said:

"When left to grow, wildflowers help sustain a diverse range of insects, wildlife and plants.

"Not only do they brighten up our villages and towns with a colourful array of flora and fauna, but they have a really significant biodiversity impact as well.

"As a Council we are committed to looking at how we can become more sustainable and environmentally friendly. By cutting grass in certain areas less often we are helping promote a wider range of wildlife across the Borders and make positive steps towards tackling climate change."

Members of the public can get in touch by filling out an online form

www.scotborders.gov.uk/neighbourhoodservices

A full list of sites across the Borders where wildflower mixes are being trialled can be found at:

www.scotborders.gov.uk/info/20013/environment/849/grasscutting_and_bedding_plant_provision_faqs/2



Robert Watson / East Ayrshire Community Hospital / CC BY-SA 2.0

Council Leader welcomes news of East Ayrshire Community Hospital acquisition

Councillor Douglas Reid, Leader of East Ayrshire Council, has welcomed the recent announcement by NHS Ayrshire & Arran that it has acquired ownership of the company that owns and operates East Ayrshire Community Hospital.

The hospital, which opened in 2000, had originally been procured through one of the first PFI health contracts in Scotland and the recent acquisition has been fully funded by the Scottish Government.

The acquisition will allow the site to become the hub for the development of future health and social care services in line with the Caring for Ayrshire programme. It will also provide the flexibility and opportunity to embed new models of service delivery which will be designed alongside communities, those who use hospital services and their families.



Councillor Reid, who is also a member of the Integration Joint Board (IJB), the decision making body of the Health and Social Care Partnership, said:

"This is greatly welcomed news as it provides an excellent opportunity to further develop strong partnership-based health and care services for East Ayrshire residents.

"Through my involvement with the IJB, I'm very aware of the strong focus that is placed on community-based health and social care services and have seen the care and dedication of the teams who work at East Ayrshire Community Hospital. It's a real part of the community and I know how much the hospital means to local residents, many of whom appreciate being able to receive the care they need close to home. I'm therefore delighted to see that the long-term future of the facility is now secure."

"This is greatly welcomed news as it provides an excellent opportunity to further develop strong partnership-based health and care services for East Ayrshire residents."



Housing provision to support independent living



Good quality housing plays a vital role in ensuring that people with support and care needs can live healthy, independent and happy lives, a report to Councillors says.

People who experience ill health, or have support and care needs due to mental health, homelessness, learning disability or age, often need specific accommodation and support to live independently in the community.

The report to the Housing and Communities Committee sets out how Perth & Kinross Council is working with the local Health and Social Care Partnership and other partners to ensure that people with health or support needs have the right kind of housing.

An updated Housing Contribution Statement (HCS) has been developed in partnership with housing and health, and social care practitioners. The Statement, which supports the outcomes of the Perth and Kinross Strategic Commissioning Plan 2020-2025, aims to enable people to lead as independent, healthy, and active lives as possible in their own homes.

The Statement sets out how the Local Housing Strategy can support the delivery of suitable housing and support to enable people to live independently.

It also meets the aim of the Perth and Kinross Offer, providing partners with a platform for people and communities to work together to take the decisions that affect them locally.



The report to councillors says that over the last 12 months some notable successes have been achieved:

- The Council exceeded its annual new build target of 550 new homes by delivering a total of 861. 215 households moved into new housing, designed to meet changing needs, including those with temporary or permanent physical disabilities.
- Working with its partners the Council ensured residents and tenants had access to services to adapt their homes to meet changing medical needs. 159 major adaptations were carried out on private homes. 95 major adaptations and 257 minor adaptations were undertaken on Council tenants' homes
- During 2019/20 a new multi-agency Independent Living Panel was set up. The Panel reviews and authorises allocation of specialist housing provision for individuals with independent living needs.
- An Accommodation Guide to Independent Living was developed to support people to understand the types of supported accommodation available and how they can be supported to live independently.
- A checklist of Independent Living Needs was also developed, outlining the accommodation standards and build features required for people with specific support requirements. This ensures accommodation will be built to meet people's individual needs.

We have also carried out various refurbishment programmes within our Sheltered Housing services, responding to issues affecting older people such as dementia, social isolation, and loneliness. A focus on inclusive living ensures accommodation and support can be accessed and used by as many residents as possible.

Housing and Communities Committee Convener, Councillor Bob Brawn, said:



"A good house to live in is one of the foundations of a healthy life, and housing plays a vital role in driving down health inequalities.

High-quality, appropriate housing enables people with health or support needs to be empowered to live independent lives at home, which is what people have told us they want.

"As a result of our hard work over the last 12 months many people have been able to access housing of a type and in an area that is suitable for their current and future household needs. We are enabling them to live independently at home for longer, which has had a hugely positive impact on their health and wellbeing."

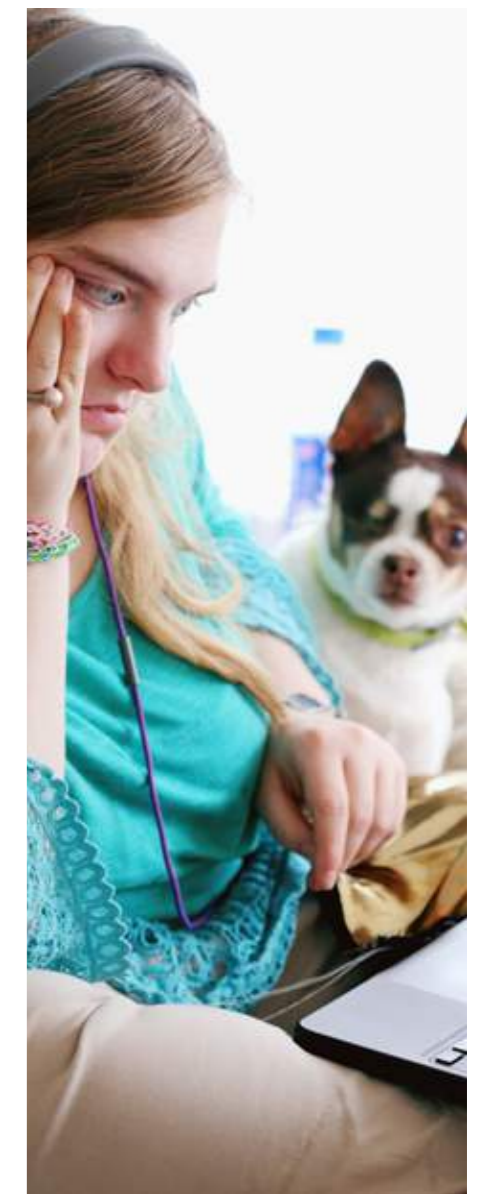
Vice Convener, Councillor Chris Ahern, added:



"We already have a good range of adapted accommodation and support options for people when they need help. Our second Housing

Contributions Statement supports the development of future supported accommodation for people who need help to live independently.

"The ageing population of Perth and Kinross along with increasing demands for complex adaptations to existing homes, and for specialist housing and support, means there will be challenges ahead. We have a plan that will ensure that our services and delivery models are in place to enable us to meet these challenges, so that everyone in Perth and Kinross can have the housing they need to live independent and healthy lives."





Corporate Resources Committee approves £250k funding for The Haven Centre

The Highland Council's Corporate Resources Committee has approved £250,000 of capital funding towards a dedicated, multi-purpose facility in Inverness called The Haven Centre which will support children and young people, up to the age of 30, with multiple disabilities and complex needs.

Chair of the Corporate Resources Committee, Cllr Jimmy Gray said:



"The Council is delighted to support The Elsie Normington Foundation in their proposals to build this much needed facility in Inverness which will provide support to children and young people with multiple complex needs across the Highlands."

He continued: "We anticipate that the project will create 52 jobs during construction phase, and 19 full time and 11 part time through the day-to-day work of the Centre once it's operational. In addition, I am thrilled that further volunteering, training and work placement opportunities are also expected."

Images sourced from www.havenappeal.org



The project, developed by The Elsie Normington Foundation (ENF) will comprise three two-bedroom respite flats, a Community Café, outdoor/indoor play centre with childcare facilities and several meeting spaces. The new facility will be located on land owned by the Council in Murray Road, Smithton.

The Scottish Government has confirmed funding of up to £1.7m for the project, alongside other funding secured by the project including £1.1m from The National Lottery, the project has now secured full funding towards the estimated £4.1m capital project cost.

Capital allocation for strategic road schemes to be £7.4m

Members at the recent meeting of the Council's Economy and Infrastructure Committee have agreed the distribution of the £7.4M allocation from the £20M capital budget during years 2021/22 and 2022/23.

In February of this year, Members of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee agreed the distribution of an additional £20M of capital funding for road maintenance. The Committee split the funding into five categories, agreeing to allocate £7.4M for strategic assets and structural maintenance.

The Committee agreed the following:

- Road improvement projects for the A832 Slattadale (0.6km) and A890 Strathcarron (0.65km) which will include widening and a bridge replacement. The designs for these projects are almost complete, at a cost of £2.2M;
- Infirmary Bridge in Inverness to be allocated £550,000 for maintenance works;
- Portree link Road to be allocated £200,000;
- Renewable Energy Developer Match Funding to be allocated £500k;
- Match funding of £330,000 for additional Strategic Timber Transport Schemes (STTS) on the A897 (Sutherland) and B9176 (Ross and Cromarty);
- Three schemes in Caithness and Sutherland identified as requiring major maintenance from the Scottish Road Maintenance

Condition Survey (SRMCS) results to be allocated £553,000 as future Area budgets were unlikely to be able to cope with this work; and

- The remainder of the budget (£3.067M) to be allocated to surface treatments such as resurfacing and surface dressing, to improve the road condition of the strategic network.

It is expected that underspends in any project will be used for further carriageway and footway surface treatment works and ancillary items such as minor structures, cattle grids, vehicle restraint systems (safety fencing), signs, drainage, etc.

Chair of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee, Cllr Trish Robertson said:



"The £7.4m for roads is to be welcomed. Many of our roads are suffering from lack of attention due to limited resources over a number of years. This allocation will allow us to address the poor condition on some of our roads and assets across the region. The extra equipment will aid our programmes going forward"

The Highland Council has the longest road network in the UK with 4,000 miles of local roads, 1,000 miles of footpaths and 1,400 bridges spanning a region covering one third of Scotland.



Turnberry Drive, Newton Mearns

East Renfrewshire road maintenance investment given the green light

In an ongoing effort to maintain and improve roads, East Renfrewshire Council has approved an additional investment of £3million for roads and pavement resurfacing across the local authority.

This programme, which will see improvements at 73 sites across East Renfrewshire, will be carried out over and above the existing annual roads resurfacing works which were approved by the Council in March 2021.

All of East Renfrewshire's roads are assessed and reported on nationally each year. The Council is currently ranked second in Scotland for the

condition of its A class roads, which are classed as the most important routes for residents and visitors. B and C class roads are better than the Scottish average for both categories.

In its 2019/20 budget, the Council committed an additional £15m capital investment for roads infrastructure over the following 5 years. The 2021/22 roads maintenance programme will use the additional £3million of resources to improve the condition of roads throughout East Renfrewshire.

The Council's A and B class road network is classed as in a relatively good condition so the majority of the

additional £3m allocation for 2021/22 has been directed towards residential roads.

A number of factors are taken into consideration to prioritise which roads are chosen for the programme each year. This includes the structural condition of the road or pavement, usage, maintenance costs for previous years, public feedback and geographic spread.

Roads and pavements in this year's additional works programme cover a wide area across the whole authority including: Robertson Street in Barrhead, Hillside Road in Neilston,

Evan Drive in Giffnock, The Oval in Stamperland, Overlee Road in Clarkston, Humbie Road in Eaglesham and Broom Road in Newton Mearns.



Councillor Tony Buchanan, Leader of East Renfrewshire Council, said:

"It's great to hear our A class roads are continuing to rank high in Scotland, and our B and C class roads are performing better than the Scottish average. We want to continue to improve on our ranking so I am delighted my fellow Councillors today agreed to further

invest in roads in East Renfrewshire. We listened to the public's views and feedback when choosing the roads and pavements for this year's works, and the improvements will make a significant difference to our transport network. Despite the difficulties that Covid-19 has presented, we were still able to complete 35 road resurfacing projects in 2020/21. The additional investment for this year will not only be beneficial to our residents but vital to our local economic recovery as businesses re-open following Covid-19 and we see an increase in footfall as more people return to East Renfrewshire to work and visit."

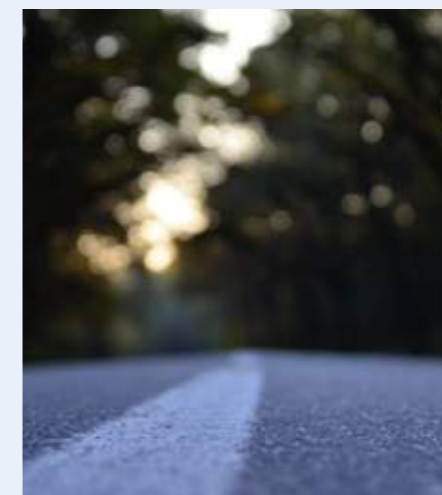


Kilpatrick Gardens, Clarkston

Councillors approve £1.6m Area Roads Programme

Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee members have approved the area's roads programme for 2021/22.

The £1.6m budget has been made up of the revenue budget of £840,565 (for labour, plant and materials including salt for roads) and a capital budget of £765,310 (to undertake surface dressing and surfacing).



A large portion of this year's revenue budget is being targeted towards cyclic maintenance, which includes drainage, footpath maintenance, gully cleansing, temporary patching, renewal of road markings, maintenance of signs, verge maintenance and other routine annual work.

Capital works scheduled for this year include £88,000 of patching at bell-mouths and junctions in various villages in the area, £80,325 on 5100m of surface dressing on the B9102 Lettoch - Craigvarren - Advice Junction - Tulchan.

South Street in Grantown on Spey is also set to see £35,000 investment in structural drainage and £63,000 is planned to be spent on the A939 Dava road, phase one.

There are also a number of roads that will see new surface dressing, including 1200m on the B970 Culreach (Balliefurth), 500m on the B970 sub-station to Loch Garten road and 600m

on the B970 Loch Garten Junction to Mains of Garten.

Overlay works are also planned on section one of the C1137 Glentrium and the U2264 at Balnagowan. There are also surface dressing works planned for the A938 Balnacruie to Tullochgribban road, the A938 Foregin to Baddengorm road and the Station Road junction in Newtonmore.

Chair of the Badenoch and Strathspey Committee, Cllr Bill Lobban, said:



"This year sees a substantial increase in the Roads Maintenance budget and that will, at least, prevent our roads from deteriorating even further but further substantial investment will be required in the forthcoming years."

"Road Maintenance is not just about tar and potholes, it's also about drainage, white lining and a host of other functions."



Photo above and below by Ewen Wetherspoon, photographer EW Photo

A final piece of Inverness's West Link swings into place



A vital stage of the city's ambitious West Link project has swung into place with the opening of the new Torvean Bridge in Inverness.

The swing bridge opening represents a core element of the transformational West Link Project which is now drawing towards its conclusion.

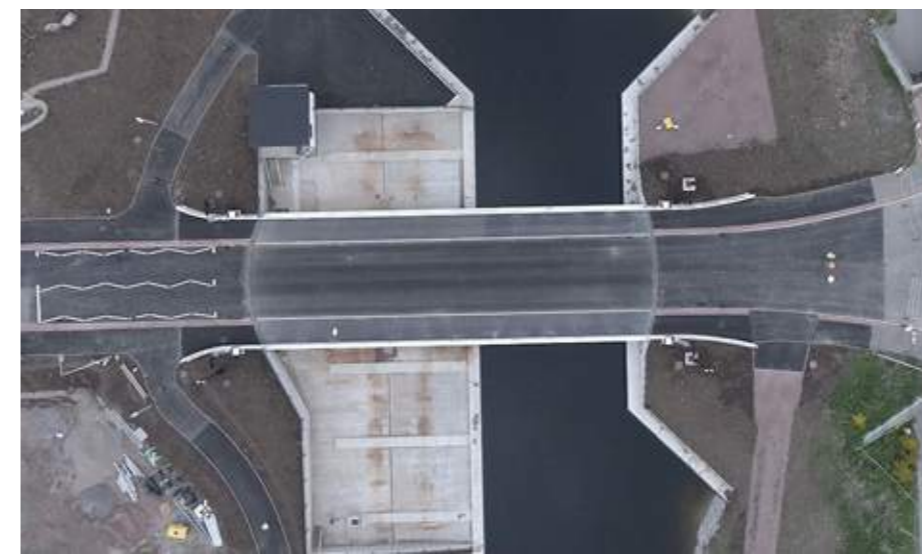
Cllr Trish Robertson, Chair of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee, was the first person to cross the new swing bridge last week, ahead of today's official opening to the public.

The West Link Project was made possible through investment by Highland Council and the £315m

Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal. The City-Region Deal included £135m from the Scottish Government, supported by £127m from Highland Council and its partners and another £53m from the UK Government.

The project has seen the completion of the link from the Southern Distributor Road at Dores Road to the A82 including crossing the River Ness on the new Holm Mills Bridge; new sports facilities at Canal Parks including synthetic pitch and clubhouse; and a relocated golf course.

A core element of Stage 2 was the inclusion of the second swing bridge over the Caledonian Canal to the south of the existing Tomnahurich



Photos from drone footage shot by HCVF, Inverness

"The West Link will allow the peripheral growth of Inverness and reduce traffic congestion in Inverness City centre. It will also reduce existing canal bridge delays and waiting times. The associated developments enabled by the West Link will expand the active travel network removing bottlenecks and barriers to cycling and walking and will release land for development identified in the local plan."

The Highland Council also acknowledged the enthusiastic public support for the project and would like to thank the Community Liaison Group for its valuable input during the consultation phases.

swing bridge. This tandem bridge arrangement will allow the free flow of vehicle traffic on the A82 to continue, while boats pass through one or other of the open swing bridges.

There will normally be two routes available for vehicles to cross the canal and vehicles will be diverted over one or other bridge, only while the other is open to allow boat passage.

Chair of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee at Highland Council, Cllr Trish Robertson, said:

"This is a landmark day for the city of Inverness which sees the new swing bridge come into operation. The West Link project will deliver a



greatly improved infrastructure to support the future development, growth and prosperity of Inverness and the Highlands.

"Despite the halt in works caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns we are delighted to have been able to deliver this project with such minimal delay and on budget."

She added: "The project also forms part of the Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal which is aimed at stimulating sustainable, regional economic growth.

Chair of the Community Liaison Group, former Cllr Graham Ross said:



"The group's input has been extremely valuable throughout the whole project and has ensured that there has been excellent communication between the Council, the contractors and the community."

A short aerial video has been uploaded to YouTube (Inverness West Link and Torvean Swing Bridge Opening - 31.5.21), highlighting the West Link and the Torvean Bridge, from a bird's eye view has been made to mark the completion of the West Link Project.

Stage 1 of the West Link Project was completed in December 2017 and Stage 2 began in 2018. This phase of the project was originally planned for completion by the end of 2020, however the site was forced to close due to COVID-19 restrictions for a number of months. This inevitably meant a delay in completion, with the project then projected to finish near the end of May 2021.



The benefits of the West Link project include:

- Reduced congestion at key junctions for both public transport and private cars within Inverness City Centre.
- Encouragement of cycling and walking within the city centre by reducing congestion thereby making for a safer and more pleasant environment.
- Improved journey times for movements to/from the west of the City.
- Torvean Bridge is opened to canal traffic. It will also improve response times for emergency vehicles and bus journey time reliability.
- Enable the development of significant areas for housing and other economic development at Ness-side and Torvean. To date 1,500 houses have been enabled.
- Enable the development of a City Gateway at the Caledonian Canal entrance to the city, working with partners such as Scottish Canals.
- Provides a new facility at Canal Parks, managed by Highlife Highland, for Highland Rugby Club and the wider community.
- Provides a reconfiguration of Torvean Golf Course, with enhanced facilities, golf development potential and a centralised location.

Photo above and below by Ewen Wetherspoon, photographer EW Photo



Highland secures major funding for sustainable transport future

The Highland Council has secured £2.76M in a first round of funding to transform public transport in the region.

Following a successful bid to the Scottish Government's Bus Partnership Fund, the Council and its partners will now deliver quick wins and develop options for ambitious bus priority schemes that aim to tackle the negative impacts of congestion on bus services. This work will provide the step change necessary to modernise the transport network by cutting congestion and car usage by car by offering more reliable public travel choices that help to tackle the climate and ecological emergency.

The Phase 1 funding secured will allow the Council to deliver projects at Raigmore Hospital and Rose Street in Inverness as well as bus-only links at Blar Mhor and Upper Achintore in Fort William. The rest of the Phase 1 funding is allocated to prepare outline business cases, appraisals and other feasibility work to support a second

funding bid that has the potential to unlock further funding of up to £21.7M.

Councillor Trish Robertson, Chair of The Highland Council's Economy and Infrastructure Committee said:



"One of the best ways for us to reduce our carbon footprint is to change how we make everyday journeys. This bid demonstrates the Council's commitment to working with our partners and the Scottish Government to reduce congestion and cut back the number of journeys made by cars.

"The Bus Partnership Fund centres on tackling congestion, which is most pronounced in our biggest urban areas, Inverness and Fort William. We look forward to developing options and engaging on these exciting projects that will help to create a healthy, sustainable transport network that is

fit for an age of Climate and Ecological Emergency."

David Beaton, Managing Director of Stagecoach Highland said:

"We are delighted to hear the news that the Phase 1 Bus Partnership Fund bid has been successful. This result demonstrates the strength of our partnership working and our commitment to continuing to deliver a high quality public transport service across the region. Getting our buses through congestion hot spots is one of the best ways to reduce bus journey times, improve reliability and therefore make travelling by bus the best way to move around. We look forward to continuing this essential work with Highland Council and our other partners."

A bid for funding projects in Skye was not successful, and officers are exploring other potential opportunities for the projects proposed in this bid.



Image © Glen Wallace, Flickr. (CC BY 2.0)



Image © Mike McBey, Inverness, Capital of the Highlands, Flickr. (CC BY 2.0)



Digital Place - built by Local Government for Local Government

With Dr Gavin Beckett, Chief Product Officer at Placecube



After 21 years working inside Local Government, latterly as the Chief Digital Officer for Bristol City Council, my move to a private sector supplier was a big change. I wanted to find a company that understood the public sector, and somewhere I could help shape to become the supplier that I'd always wished I could buy from. A business that is open and collaborative, and where 'digital transformation' includes how technology is created and consumed.

benefits of digitally re-usable, great public services. Re-using high quality design patterns, code, and services, already paid for, and which have been extensively tested and proven across the sector. We are passionate about open source and doing the right thing. To us, it's not enough to just be non-proprietary; as the public sector moves towards open standards, so too should suppliers. We've done just that, and Digital Place is changing the way digital services are built and consumed by the public sector, because our product disrupts both the traditional technology and the traditional commercial approach

Digital Place is the product of multiple co-creation projects between Placecube and the public sector. Work with councils, including Brentwood,

Camden, Dorset, Greenwich and Rugby has contributed to a well-designed, open-source ecosystem, boasting reusable components, immediately available to others through a single annual subscription. Digital Place has been built with local government, for local government. It uses the globally respected Liferay Digital Experience Platform (DXP), ranked by Gartner as the leading open source DXP for eleven consecutive years. It provides councils with a strategic alternative to digital projects that all too often start from scratch and cost far more than they need to.



We launched Placecube to provide the public sector with affordable, accessible, and transformational

Digital Place provides five distinct advantages:

- **Confidence** - in an open digital platform specifically co-created with and already proven in local authorities.
- **Simplicity** - all functionality in one platform, under one subscription, from one supplier.
- **Affordability** - the well-designed, reusable features that we continually co-create with other Councils and automatically share with all Digital Place subscribers, helps you to avoid the time pressures, resource costs and compatibility concerns that would otherwise be a continuous burden for your team to manage.
- **Acceleration** - of your digital capability, with far more functionality than other solutions at this level of affordability.

- **Control** - of your Digital Platform, with full access to make changes and freedom to build out new digital solutions.

All of this is designed to make Digital Place a universally sustainable platform for Public Services. It provides a direct fit today, with the flexibility to adapt to your future requirements tomorrow.

Digital Place provides access to re-usable (Lego-like) digital components which we call 'Cubes'. We recognise that although every organisation might build a different Digital Place, the components (Cubes) that make up that build are common. Quite literally, the common building blocks that the Digital Service Standard and Local Digital Declaration promotes. The value in re-use is huge as it immediately benefits new councils through the re-use of designs that have been commissioned and tested by other councils, at no additional cost. This might mean no need for user research, design services or development, or it provides an opportunity to present pre-tested

services to users for configuration and refinement and to focus user research and design on new services.

This not only helps to meet the ethos of the Digital Service Standard and Local Digital Declaration, but it also means subscribing customers will continue to enjoy a conveyor belt of new digital developments as other councils create new services, without changing your platform subscription. Subscribing councils accumulate increasing value and efficiencies, whilst your team focuses on your priorities. Recent projects include the co-creation of a Customer Contact Management application with Rugby Borough Council, replacing the incumbent CRM system, and the ongoing collaboration on a Case Management application with Camden Council.

It's thrilling to see how our platform is shaping and being shaped by the way that local authorities digitally deliver their services. We're eager to demonstrate further reusability beyond our existing customers.

Cube List

Save time and money, right from the start.

Experience Cubes	Feature Cubes	Service Cubes	Community Cubes	Integration Cubes
Local Experience (Brunel) Local Experience (Vibrant) Intranet Experience Online Communities Experience	Web CMS (content management) User segmentation Forms builder Workflow Casemanagement CustomerContactManagement Document management User management & security MultiLanguage support Data protection Search External website search Give us supporting evidence Social media sharing Address lookup form field type Business account Citizen account User transaction history Apps builder Analytics Advanced analytics e-Commerce Chatbot Live Web Chat Items marked are provided at additional cost	Allotments & gardens Bins & recycling Births, deaths, marriages & citizenship Business rates Council & democracy Council tax Crime & emergencies Data protection & FOI Elections Housing Libraries Licences & permits Complaints & feedback Customer services Parking Parks, pollution, noise & food Pests, pollution, noise & food Planning & building regulations Schools, learning & early years Social care & health Streets & travel HR & finance Facilities management	Project group pages Department group pages Community group pages Networks Group membership & security User profile pages User registration Social login Social connections People finder & group finder Activity streams Activity subscriptions & email notifications Recommendations Direct messaging Document library Knowledge base Blogs & microblogs Wikis, forums & polls Ideas factory User privacy controls User profile management Group management User engagement reports Events calendar	Various integrations including: Active Directory SharePoint connector Salesforce connector Slack activity stream push Eventbrite sync BookingBug connector BookingLive connector GOV.UK Notify Ordnance Survey Places API Capita Pay360 connector CivicaCX connector ArcGIS connector Northgate R&B connector ECHO connector OHMS connector Uniform connector Colony connector

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One platform subscription, access everything. No extra code, no extra charge.



Oban depot redevelopment provides contract for local firm

The re-development of the council's Jackson's Quarry Depot, Oban, is close to completion.

As the council moves into the new fleet workshop and office, completed by Luddon Construction Ltd, Oban building firm, Gregor Morawski, has secured the contract to refurbish the existing building to provide new staff welfare, storage and a horticultural workshop.

This is the final stage that will bring all essential operational services for Oban and into one single, main site, reducing from three depots to one.

The site comprises:

- a brand new four-bay fleet workshop to keep the council's vehicles (bin lorries, roads equipment, gritters etc.) on the road;
- a modern office and meeting room facility for all Oban-based operational services staff; and
- an expansion of the overall site, with new hard-standing, drainage etc, to create a parking area for all vehicles.

The project, which faced some delay because of Covid-19, provided a significant boost to the Oban economy.

The main contractor, Luddon Construction Ltd, employed local subcontractors throughout the project, as well as using the Oban accommodation market.

Councillor Rory Colville, Policy Lead for Roads and Infrastructure Services, said:



"Pulling together all the council's operations into one site will not only join up services, but also free up the Mill Park and Appin depot sites for development. It's a fantastic opportunity for Oban.

"As the main phase of the project ends, I'd like to thank Luddon Construction Ltd for delivering a depot for the 21st century. I'd also like to welcome Gregor Morawski on board – there's never been a better time to be working with a local firm delivering its first council contract."

Regeneration of Muir of Ord village square begins

The regeneration of Muir of Ord village has begun in earnest as the square undergoes a transformative makeover.

A phased approach to the works began on 31 May 2021, and required the closure of the car park with pedestrian and emergency access maintained throughout.

The contractors, Strath Civil Engineering, are committed to liaising with the school, local businesses and neighbouring properties on its phased approach, to ensure as smooth a transition as possible.

The face-lift will include the creation of a large public area, safely situated at the back of the car park. The public area will allow access from both sides of the village.

Removable bollards will also be installed to keep the area safe and there will be seating and flower containers

to add a dash of colour. The additional area can also be used by clubs and groups to provide an opportunity to create safe space events in the village centre.

The Community Council survey revealed that people would like the area to be used for street markets, pipe band displays, Christmas carol concerts, gala events and school project use.

Part of the project will include the installation of a new CCTV camera system, to cover both the square and the Great North Road. The bus bay will be removed, creating an additional 81 square metres.

A smaller bus shelter will be installed which will feature a real time, digital

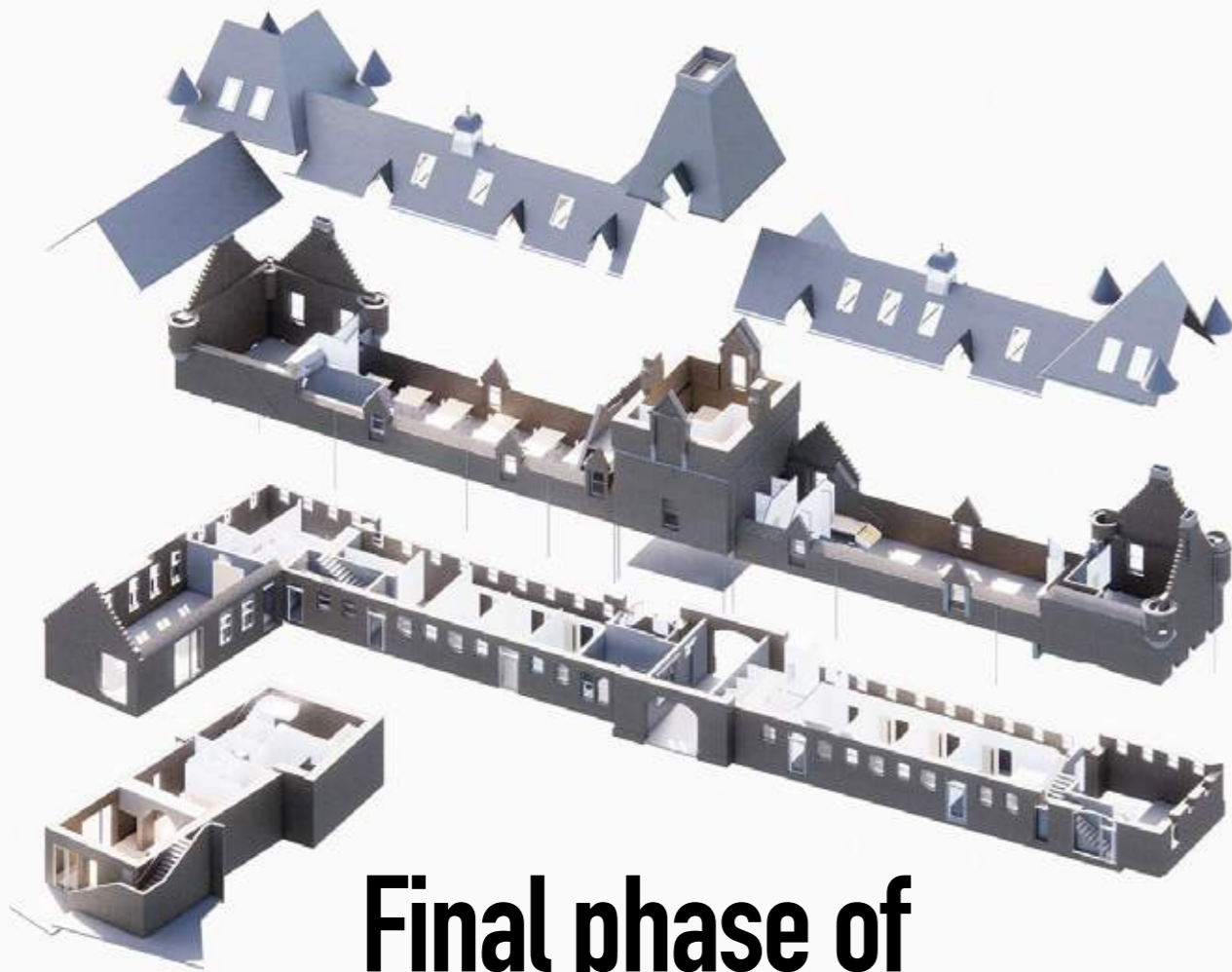
bus timetable. New pavement and kerbing will also be laid, with minor alterations to the car park. Bus stop markings will also be added to the road. An area of paving which has been lifted by tree roots and is causing drainage issues will be taken up, fixed and re-laid. The works will provide 166 square metres of space, compared to the previous 122 square metres. The raised bed in front of the library will also be removed and repurposed in two future village projects.

The large concrete base for the village's Christmas tree will also be removed and replaced with a flush socket for this purpose.

Dingwall and Seaforth Councillors recognise that Muir of Ord Community Council have worked extremely hard to secure funding to take forward a long standing ambition of regenerating the Square.



Image: Muir of Ord Village Square. © Richard Dorrell / Geograph (CC BY-SA 2.0)



Final phase of Powderhall Stables transformation underway

The final phase of the City of Edinburgh Council's Powderhall Stables refurbishment, which will transform a historic 1890s former stable block in the Broughton neighbourhood of Edinburgh into work and events spaces, is now underway.

As part of the redevelopment of the wider site Powderhall Stables will deliver a mix of individual studios and co-working spaces aimed at microbusinesses, supporting dozens of jobs. The building will also feature two flexible function spaces with kitchen facilities suitable for hosting a wide variety of events. The former stabling yard to the rear of the building will be turned into a new plaza. The facility

is set to open in early 2022, with the Council preparing to seek expressions of interest from potential operators.

The refurbishment of the building has been designed by the award-winning practice Collective Architecture, supported by a design team including Currie & Brown, David Narro Associates, and RSP Consulting Engineers.



Following completion of a package of enabling works by Chamic Industrial Services, the main contract will be delivered by the construction services provider Sharkey, which has a strong track record of delivering heritage projects in Edinburgh including the overhaul of the historic Dalry Swim Centre.

The refurbishment of Powderhall Stables has been made possible by support from the Scottish Government's Regeneration Capital Grant Fund along with Miller Homes' Bonnington Micro Business Fund.

Powderhall Stables forms part of the Council-led regeneration of the old Powderhall Waste Transfer Station and adjoining former bowling greens. The wider development will deliver over 200 homes and an Early Learning and Childcare Centre, along with new green spaces and enhanced public realm, including improvements to St. Mark's Path and two new squares.

Councillor Kate Campbell, the Council's Housing, Homelessness, and Fair Work Convener, said:



We've been talking about the potential of the stables block at Powderhall for a long time – it's so good that work is now starting, and we'll see it back in use as a cornerstone of the whole development.

The community were very involved in shaping these plans and telling us what



they needed from the development. So, it's fantastic that this amazing building will be available next year, supporting jobs by providing affordable work space for small businesses and local people, alongside creating a flexible space for the community to use.

"It's part of our wider regeneration of this site, delivering new affordable homes and facilities that will benefit the whole community."



Councillor Mandy Watt, the Council's Housing, Homelessness, and Fair Work Vice Convener, said:

I'm looking forward to seeing the development start to take shape over the course of next year, restoring the lovely stable blocks, bringing them back into use and giving local residents back this area that has been unused for so long.

Earlier this year we also saw planning permission submitted for the former Bowling Green site as part of the wider Powderhall development. This will see one of the first intergenerational facilities built in Scotland and will offer health and wellbeing benefits for the older residents and new learning and social opportunities for children attending the nursery.

The Scottish Government's Community Wealth Minister, Tom Arthur, said:

This is a great project which will restore the previously abandoned category B-listed former stable block, transform it into a modern work and events space and provide the local community with new places to work, learn and socialise. This project has been made possible by £1.4 million investment from the Regeneration Capital Grant Fund, with local community involvement in progressing the plans.

The fund is playing a vital role, helping reinvigorate local communities and town centres by investing in projects that provide jobs and support local businesses. We are committed to seizing Scotland's economic potential, creating secure, sustainable and satisfying jobs and supporting businesses recover from the Coronavirus pandemic. As part of that work, we are continuing to empower local people to invest in their communities' future.

Mark Halliday, Contracts Director for Sharkey, said:

We are delighted to be involved in delivering a restoration project that will repair, protect and enhance the heritage of one of Edinburgh's valued public buildings. We very much look forward to working in collaboration with the rest of the project team and to sharing our skills and experience on this exciting regeneration project.

For more information, please visit www.edinburgh.gov.uk/powderhall.



“Avenues” play crucial part in city centre regeneration



Glasgow City Council has recently appointed John McAslan + Partners as architects for a major public realm scheme focused on George Square. The commission is for Block C of Glasgow City Council’s ambitious Avenues Programme - funded by the Glasgow City Region City Deal - comprising George Square and approximately 2.5km of the surrounding streetscape.

First laid out in 1781, named after King George III and developed in earnest 20 years later, George Square is Glasgow’s principal civic, ceremonial and cultural space, featuring several of the city’s best-known landmark buildings. On

its east side is the Beaux-Arts style City Chambers (1889) - headquarters to Glasgow City Council since 1996 - designed by William Young.

On the corner of the square with West George Street, the Merchant’s House (1874/1909), designed by John Burnet and extended upwards by his son JJ Burnet, is crowned with a dome bearing a ship symbolising Glasgow’s historic role as one of the great global trading cities. At the heart of George Square, a tall Doric column (1837) bears a statue by John Greenfields of the renowned Scottish Romantic era novelist and poet, Sir Walter Scott.

John McAslan + Partners’ have been commissioned to reconsider the synergy and balance between George Square and the surrounding streets in relation to contemporary life. This involves clarifying the architectural and spatial qualities of the Square and its relationship to the surrounding urban context. The scope of the improvements will include George Street and St Vincent Street as well as John Street and Dundas Street.

The scheme is part of the wider £115m Avenues initiative aimed at improving pedestrian connectivity and priority throughout the city, amid new tree



planting, rain gardens, cycleways and improved public transport. Sustainability and community are at the heart of the brief with the aim of substantially enhancing the urban environment and opportunities for residents and visitors.



Councillor Susan Aitken, Leader of Glasgow City Council, said:

“The redesign of George Square and the creation of Avenues and other new public realm on neighbouring streets is a crucial part of the regeneration of the city centre. It is so important as not only will the redesign play a crucial role in the transformation of what is undoubtedly Glasgow’s foremost civic space, but it is also a symbol of our vision for the city centre – a place that will be far more attractive to Glaswegians and our visitors, and somewhere that illustrates the economic, environmental and social gains to be made from this project.”

Andy Harris, Leader of John McAslan + Partners’ Landscape Team said:

“Located precisely at the point where the original Georgian urban grid meets its Victorian extension, George Square has for centuries been a natural centre

of gravity for Glaswegians who come to celebrate, play, relax, meet and when necessary protest. We are thrilled to help deliver the next phase of its evolution as Glasgow’s most important civic space.”

Economy Secretary Kate Forbes said:

“It’s great to see further progress in delivering the Avenues Programme, with the appointment of John McAslan + Partners as architects tasked with developing George Square and the surrounding area to the benefit of residents and visitors alike. The Scottish Government is a full partner in the Glasgow City Region City Deal, contributing £500 million over 20 years. Investment in the City Region Deal will contribute to the region’s economic recovery by creating jobs, and providing the commercial infrastructure to support and attract businesses to Glasgow and the surrounding area. The Avenues project also encourages active travel by supporting walking and cycling infrastructure in the area.”

UK Government Minister for Scotland, Iain Stewart, said:

“George Square is one of Glasgow’s most iconic civic spaces, embodying the city’s grandeur, heritage and cultural vibrancy. I look forward to seeing John

McAslan + Partners plans for improving and preserving the square and its surrounding streets for everyone to enjoy. The UK Government is investing more than £1.5 billion into city region and growth deals across Scotland, helping communities everywhere to build back better from the pandemic.” The Department of Architecture at the University of Strathclyde and the Mackintosh School of Architecture at The Glasgow School of Art are collaborating with John McAslan + Partners through a range of socially and environmentally-led educational initiatives that will embed both students and staff in the design process.

The transformation of George Square and the adjacent streets will be funded through the Glasgow City Region City Deal as part of Glasgow City Council’s ambitious Avenues Project. Construction work for Block C (George Square and surrounding streets) will commence in the Summer of 2023.

Founded by Glasgow-born John McAslan in 1993, John McAslan + Partners has considerable experience in working in Scotland. The practice’s current Scottish projects include the refurbishment of the Burrell Renaissance in Glasgow and the National Galleries of Scotland’s new Collection Facility in Edinburgh.

The Avenues will be a network of new, attractive, accessible, safe, sustainable and easily-maintained routes throughout the city centre that are people-focused, encourage active travel and are more attractive to residents, workers, visitors and investors.

More information on the Avenues programme - the biggest of its kind in the UK - is available at: www.glasgowcitycentrestrategy.com/project/city-centre-avenues.



The Masterplan and Borders Innovation Park Plans, Image courtesy of Proctor and Matthews Architects

Guidance on future Tweedbank expansion to be presented

Guidance detailing how the future expansion of Tweedbank should take place is to be presented to Councillors.

Finalised Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) will outline the vision and overall direction for the development, which will provide high quality residential and business space.

Included in the finalised SPG is a comprehensive design guide outlining the expected standards in terms of sustainability and design that any potential developers will be required to meet.

The SPG and associated Design Guide will be used to influence planning applications for the development of the site.

A draft version of the SPG was initially presented to and approved by the Council in January 2020 and was followed by a 12-week public consultation. This included a public exhibition in the Tweedbank Community Centre and offered members of the public an opportunity to provide feedback on the proposals.

The SPG is a key component of the Tweedbank Masterplan, a transformational prospectus which will encourage people to live, learn, visit and work in the local community. Land adjacent to the existing Tweedbank village was initially earmarked as part of the Council's Local Development Plan (LDP), via Housing Planning Guidance, in 2017 to address a shortfall of housing land in the region due to its strong rail links, high-quality landscape setting and already established housing market.

It's estimated that the Tweedbank development could create 350 jobs and generate £150million of Gross Value Added (GVA) to the Borders economy, whilst also making a significant contribution to meeting local housing need and associated Scottish Government requirements.

The SPG also supports the Council's commitment to the Edinburgh and South East City Region Deal, and the Borders Railway Blueprint programme.

Both the finalised SPG and Design Guide were discussed at the Council's Planning and Building Standards

Committee on Monday 31 May, before being presented to full Council in July.

Councillor Simon Mountford, Executive Member for Enhancing the Built Environment and Natural Heritage, said:



"The creation of the Supplementary Planning Guidance for Tweedbank is key to supporting the Council's overall vision for future development in this area, whilst also making extremely clear our expectations in terms of standards that any potential developers will need to meet.

"The scale of the development opportunities here represents a considerable investment into the Tweedbank area, creating hundreds of jobs and significantly increasing the amount of housing in the area. Therefore it is vitally important we as a Council make the right decisions and support future development that will help create a successful, integrated community that the people of Tweedbank and the wider Borders can be proud of.

"I am confident that this high quality guidance will help us to deliver a much-needed range of high-quality homes, commercial premises and recreational opportunities which will deliver significant benefits for the whole of the Scottish Borders."

Creative Funding scheme launched for organisations and individual artists

A new Creative Funding scheme from Aberdeen City Council was launched recently that that will help cultural organisations, community groups, charities and individual artists deliver creative activity in the city.

The fund will also help Aberdeen recover from Covid-19 by facilitating new work to enrich the lives of people living in and safely visiting the city, supporting a sector that was hit hard by restrictions.

A range of projects can be considered for a share of the £185,000 fund such as performances, exhibitions, networking events or even something completely new and innovative. Previous years have seen awards for festivals, community groups, brand new arts organisations and support for projects run by individual artists and established organisations.

The Council's culture spokesperson Councillor Marie Boulton said:



"As we recover from the devastating effects of the pandemic, more than ever Aberdeen City Council recognises the importance of investing in the arts, and this latest funding makes it easier than ever to access vital funds to enable cultural projects to happen in the city.

"We've seen over the last few years how important this funding is for allowing artists and organisations to create work in the city and increasing the quality of life for everyone in Aberdeen.

"We hope the funding will be just as popular as in previous years, showcasing the immense creative talent to be found here in Aberdeen and supporting culture to continue developing despite the impact of the previous year."

In 2019/20, the Council's Creative Funding programme supported 49 different projects across the city involving 567 volunteers, 3,100 participants and more than 41,000 audience members.

It supported activities such as local company Ten Feet Tall's secretly staged theatre project in community venues, which removed financial barriers by adopting a pay what you can model; events celebrating the work and life of Scottish traveller Stanley Robertson; and music being brought to some of the city's most at risk residents in care homes.

Organisations, charities and community groups can apply for up to £10,000 while individuals are able to apply for up to £2,000 for the delivery of activity, projects or artistic development, and 10 individual awards are available to be allocated this year.

Application forms and guidelines for Creative Funding:

<https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/leisure-culture-and-parks/creative-funding-awards>.

Support for the return of the Royal National Mòd to Inverness and the Highlands this year

The Highland Council's Resources Committee has agreed to a one-off investment of up to £80,000 to support the return of the Royal National Mòd to the City of Inverness and the Highlands this year.

The Royal National Mòd was due to be held in Inverness in 2020, but due to the restrictions imposed by COVID, the festival was held online.

As the Inverness Mòd did not take place in its traditional form last year, An Comunn Gàidhealach has proposed altering the schedule to host the Royal National Mòd in Inverness this year and in Perth in 2022. Perth was the original scheduled location for 2021.

An Comunn Gàidhealach has indicated a strong desire to return to Inverness this coming Autumn, rather than wait until 2024, which is the next time that the festival is due to come back to the Highlands.

Perth and Kinross Council has accepted a postponement of their event, due to take place this year in Perth.

The Inverness Mòd 2021 will be a hybrid event model using a mix of

traditional and virtual approaches whilst still providing economic and social benefits for the City of Inverness and the Highlands.

The proposed physical events within the programme will cater for anticipated limited live audience capacities, which would increase should there be an easing of COVID restrictions.

The funding from The Highland Council will enable the event to proceed in Inverness this year whilst supporting economic development and social and cultural interaction to recover from the impacts of COVID.

Chair of the Resources Committee, Cllr Jimmy Gray said:



"With the Inverness Mòd falling victim to the COVID pandemic last year, The Highland Council are delighted to support the return of the Mòd to Inverness and the Highlands this year.

"It is an important celebration of the Gaelic language, music and culture

whilst showcasing the City of Inverness and the Highlands."

Councillor Calum Munro, Chair of the Gaelic Committee said:



"I'm delighted to confirm that the 2021 Royal National Mòd will take place in the Capital of the Highlands and the support of the

Highland Council is crucial to its success. The linguistic, cultural and economic input of the Mòd is important to the Inverness and surrounding area particularly during the pandemic. We are adhering to the Government guidelines in relation to the pandemic, therefore the Mòd will continue to develop both in a virtual and face to face format. The Mòd will be a great platform for people of all ages to participate in events whether online or in the traditional manner.

He continued, "I wish to take this opportunity to thank An Comunn Gàidhealach, the Local Committee and all the participants as it is a challenging time for organisations who are striving to organise quality key cultural events during these unprecedented times. On behalf of the Highland Council I wish An Comunn Gàidhealach every success."

The Royal National Mòd celebrates the unique language, culture and spirit of the Gaels, promoting its relevance and value in modern Scotland and is a showcase and focal point for all Gaelic users and supporters, and it is particularly relevant to new generations of confident young Gaels emerging from schools and universities, and who are the lifeblood and future of the Gaelic language.



Image: © Ewen Weatherspoon / An Comunn Gàidhealach, The Highland Council, Flickr.



Spirit of the Highlands lives on



Spirit:360, a commissioning programme for emerging and established creative professionals, is now open for applications, it was announced by High Life Highland and Creative Scotland today.

Open to writers, musicians, filmmakers, visual artists, and others, the programme will support the creation of new work inspired by stories that reflect the theme of the 'Spirit of the Highlands'.

Spirit:360 is a partnership with the Highland Place Partnership and £150,000 has been made available through Creative Scotland Place Partnership funding to support the new commissioning programme.

Spirit:360 will support and promote artists, with the completed commissions being showcased on a new online platform alongside the original story which has inspired the work. It is anticipated that some of the works may inspire larger-scale commissions for consideration within the new visitor attraction in the transformed Inverness Castle when it opens to the public.

Spirit:360 is open to creative professionals based within, or originally from, The Highland Council area. Commissions are available up to a maximum of £1,000 and applications are encouraged from those practising

professionally across all art forms, including textiles, visual art, crafts, jewellery, music, film, photography, dance, written word and theatre. Working with the creative and cultural sector in the Highlands, Spirit:360 will celebrate the creativity rooted within the communities of the area. It will also offer funding for the creative sector during this period of recovery from the impact of the pandemic while further developing the Spirit of the Highlands project.

Spirit:360 is supported by the Creative Scotland Place Partnership programme and is administered by High Life Highland, as part of the Spirit of the Highlands project. To find out more, contact: spirit.360@highlifehighland.com

Fiona Hampton, Director of the Inverness Castle – Spirit of the Highlands project, said:

"We are delighted to be working with Creative Scotland through the Highland Place Partnership to deliver this unique opportunity for creative professionals in the Highlands. This commissioning fund is open to people practising professionally in any creative medium and it offers support for new work at this challenging time. I'm very much looking forward to seeing the creative ideas from applicants inspired by the 'Spirit of the Highlands' theme."

Creative Scotland's Karen Dick said:

"Spirit:360 is a great opportunity to showcase and develop the vibrancy and breadth of creativity which exists in communities across the Highlands. We are very pleased to be able to support the programme through the Highland Place Partnership and look forward to seeing the creative work produced through Spirit:360."

The transformation of Inverness Castle is supported by £15 million Scottish Government and £3 million UK Government investment through the Inverness and Highland City Region Deal. It will create a gateway for Highland tourism, contributing to reinvigoration of tourism across the area and providing much needed investment for the industry to aid the recovery from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. The project will support economic growth throughout the Highland area, creating a sustainable, viable and "must-see" attraction that will celebrate the spirit of the Highlands.

The Inverness and Highland City Region deal is a joint initiative supported by up to £315m investment from the UK and Scottish governments, The Highland Council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and University of the Highlands and Islands, aimed at stimulating sustainable regional economic growth.

Beach Masterplan to be undertaken to improve connectivity to city centre

A Beach Masterplan is to be developed including public consultation and technical feasibility studies after councillors agreed to the move at committee.

The members of Aberdeen City Council's city growth and resources committee approved a report outlining the project which would improve connectivity between the beach area and the city centre.

The masterplan would capitalise on the built and natural assets of the area which is a tourism priority in its own right and is likely to be more in demand in a post-Covid-19 and recovery phase as people seek safe, outdoor, wildlife, and active experiences. The beach area is also an intrinsic component of the Aberdeen Coastal Trail, and the wide variety of tourism offer that includes nature, golf, maritime history, and dolphin watching.

Aberdeen City Council City Centre Masterplan spokesperson Councillor Marie Boulton said:



"The beach area is one of the best resources we have in Aberdeen in terms of leisure, tourism, and future potential so it is great we are embarking on a Masterplan.

"We look forward to the next stages to find out what the public would like from the area, and what is feasible."

The one-mile long Aberdeen beach is in the heart of the city running from Fittie to Donmouth Nature Reserve,

and also acts as a gateway to other beaches to the north.

The area received the Resort Seaside Award in 2013 and given its location a short distance from Aberdeen city centre, it provides an opportunity to attract new footfall to the city. It is actively promoted by both VisitScotland and VisitAberdeenshire for its popular recreational and sports area, and the Beach Leisure Centre, Linx Ice Area, a range of cafes, restaurants, and a family funfair. It is therefore a component of the VisitAberdeenshire destination planning and contributes to wider development work on the North East of Scotland adventure tourism.

"In terms of wider economic recovery of cities, the beach area is an opportunity and tourism asset. As it is located almost in the city centre, it provides Aberdeen with a distinct and unique advantage to generate new visits and spend over other UK destinations."

The in-scope amenities and assets within this beach area review would include, but are not limited to, the Beach Boulevard, a grand procession to the beach encouraging pedestrian friendly active travel and developing activity along the route, connectivity between the beach and city centre, Queens Links, Beach Ballroom with a condition survey, Beach Leisure Centre/Ice rink condition survey, Broad Hill, the cricket pitch, coastal defence, and ground conditions.

Preliminary discussions with Sport Aberdeen and Aberdeen Football Club have been undertaken to understand the possible land that could be in scope. As part of further consultation with the public, this will also include engagement with appropriate stakeholders in the area.

Several work packages will be developed as part of the Masterplan and these include public consultation and assessment of demand, an outline design option, economic impact assessment, detailed site appraisal including planning considerations, ground investigation

and site constraints, land ownership, connectivity and accessibility assessment, landscape character assessment, environmental impact assessment, and financial appraisal. The estimated costs for these work packages including contingency is £1.2million.



An update on the output of the technical feasibility studies, public consultation and proposed Beach Masterplan will be reported to the city, growth and resources committee on 10 August 2021.

"The beach area is one of the best resources we have in Aberdeen in terms of leisure, tourism, and future potential so it is great we are embarking on a Masterplan."

Summer opening for new public park



The new public park being created at Ravenscraig is on schedule to open in time for the school summer holidays.

The £3.7 million park is being built by the council, as part of its plans to regenerate the former steelworks site.

It will include a play area, sensory garden, visitor hub with a disabled toilet

and a cafe, events area, a network of walking and cycling routes, a multi sports pitch and an outdoor gym. A feature path will be created along the line of the historic steel strip mill, and seating areas will be located throughout the park.

The play area will have climbing walls, swings, trampolines, bouncing discs, a climbing tower, zip slide, talk tubes, balance beams and posts, incorporating accessible facilities for children and young people with mobility issues.

Councillor Paul Kelly, Depute Leader of the Council said:

"The new park is really taking shape now, and it will be a fantastic green space for residents and visitors,"

"With play areas, walking and cycling paths, an outdoor gym, seating and accessible facilities, there will be something for everyone to enjoy. Active travel links from the park will also connect it to other communities beyond Ravenscraig.

"As more houses are built, and the overall masterplan for the site comes to life, the park will be a key element of its ongoing regeneration."

Local school pupils and community groups have been invited to choose the name of the new park and the play area within it, and this will be announced before the park opens in July.

Funding for the park project has come from the Scottish Government's Vacant and Derelict Land Fund and the council.

Funding boost for Pentland Hills Regional Park

Additional car parking, entrance paths, cycle parking and toilet facilities are to be created in the Pentland Hills Regional Park after two separate funding bids to Visit Scotland were successful.

The tourism organisation announced recently that the park had been successful in its bids for funding from the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund (RTIF) with £421,520 being provided towards the costs of the two projects. The fund was created by the Scottish Government in 2018 and is managed by Visit Scotland on their behalf.

The funding will see an extra 140 car parking spaces created, including more for blue badge holders, and electric vehicle charging points installed in the four main car parks at Harlaw, Threipmuir, Bonaly and Flotterstone. Cyclists will also benefit with additional

bike stands and public bike pump and repair stations.

Three new unisex and accessible toilet facilities will be built at Bonaly, Threipmuir and Harlaw car parks and an extra set of toilets near Harlaw reservoir. Work on both the parking and toilet facilities is expected to be completed by April 2022.

Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust (ELGT) are currently working on a visitor plan to identify what car parking and path improvements can be made to help make access to the park more sustainable. The work will also involve looking at what facilities could be provided including an eco-campsite and public conveniences to help manage the increase in use of the park.

The recent announcement has been welcomed by the Convener of the City of Edinburgh Council's Pentland Hills Regional Park Joint Committee, Councillor Neil Gardiner. He said:



"This funding boost is great news for the hundreds of thousands of visitors who flock to the park every year. Many of them travel by car and with visitor numbers increasing every year it's been putting increased pressure on the limited parking facilities available. I'm sure everyone will be delighted to hear we're going to put in an extra 140 spaces, especially local residents affected by vehicles being parked outside their homes. Cyclists will benefit too as we're increasing the number of bike stands and bike pump and repair stations in

the arrival car parks as well. There will also be welcome improvements to the approach pathways.

"In addition to the 12 temporary toilets installed for this summer following another successful funding bid with NatureScot, through the Better Places Green Recovery Fund, we currently have only two permanent public toilets for park visitors which is not enough considering how many people visit the park. Building these four new unisex and accessible toilet facilities is really welcome and much-needed. Lastly thanks must go to our hard-working Pentland Hills Regional Park team and also our partners including ELGT who helped put together such strong bids to get this funding."

Charlie Cumming, Chief Executive, Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust said:

"We were delighted to receive funding from the NatureScot Better Places Green Recovery fund to develop sustainable solutions to address some of the issues that have arisen over the last year in the Pentland Hills Regional Park. ELGT look forward to working with the different stakeholders to contribute towards enabling the Regional Park to

be more accessible and a great place for locals and visitors now and in the future."

The Pentland Hills Regional park was also successful in three further bids through NatureScot, securing:

- **£63,992 for the addition of six seasonal park rangers in the Pentland Hills between July and October.**
- **£72,720 for the provision of temporary toilets at the four hot spots in Pentland Hills between June and October 2021.**
- **£29,995 for the provision of four Estate workers and 1 supervisor to deliver rapid response and maintenance work at visitor hot spots in Pentland Hills and Edinburgh city parks between July and October.**

The Pentland Hills Regional Park covers approximately 10,000 hectares of land and straddles the local authority

boundaries of the City of Edinburgh Council, Midlothian Council and West Lothian Council. The City of Edinburgh Council is the managing authority of the Pentland Hills Regional Park under the terms of a Minute of Agreement between the three local authorities.

Outdoor recreation has grown in popularity year on year, and with Scotland's capital city Edinburgh on the doorstep, along with growing urban settlements in Mid and West Lothian, the Pentlands have become an important outdoor resource for residents and visitors to the region.

The Regional Park is used for a variety of recreational activities including hillwalking, dog walking, mountain biking, angling, horse riding, orienteering, camping and wild swimming. There is also a golf course and an artificial ski slope within the park boundary.

Visitors to the Pentlands can access information on routes on the Pentland Hills Regional Parks website or popular websites including Walk Highlands, Visit Scotland, and Scotland Starts Here.





Highland Council backs Scotland is Stunning Campaign

The Highland Council is supporting the second phase of the national award-winning Scotland is Stunning – Let’s Keep It That Way litter prevention campaign.

First launched last year to coincide with tourism re-opening in Scotland, the campaign by Zero Waste Scotland, in partnership with the Scottish Government and Keep Scotland Beautiful, aims to raise awareness of the harm done by littering, encouraging Scots to change their habits by taking their litter home or binning it.

Scotland is Stunning – Let’s Keep It That Way aims to encourage people in the Highlands who are eager to go out and enjoy Scotland’s natural beauty and wildlife to bin their litter or take it home with them.

The Leader of the Highland Council, Councillor Margaret Davidson said:



“Scotland really is stunning and this such a fantastic and worthwhile campaign to be a part of, we’re so passionate about preserving our beautiful Scottish countryside. We are looking forward to getting everyone involved and raising awareness. It’s all about reminding everyone out and about enjoying themselves to leave wherever they go exactly the way you found it.”

The Chair of the Council’s Communities and Place Committee, Councillor Allan Henderson added:



“Litter isn’t just an eye sore – it harms our wildlife, contributes to the climate crisis and impacts on our health and wellbeing. Each year the Council spends over £2 million on cleaning up litter, money that could be much better spent investing in our local communities and improving the road network. The campaign message is simple - to make sure everyone

can enjoy our parks, beaches, hills, woodlands and countryside, after you leave, please put your rubbish in the bin, recycling it if you can.”

As the country takes another step back to normality, rural and green spaces and urban parks are expected to see a flurry of visitors in the coming months, raising concerns about littering. In fact, most people in Scotland are concerned about litter levels in their local area, with research carried out by Zero Waste Scotland indicating that a majority (89%) see it as a problem in their area. Recently, a third (34%) of the population have seen an increase in litter since the pandemic.

Barry Fisher, CEO, Keep Scotland Beautiful said:

“We know from our work with communities across Scotland that

most people want to do the right thing and take action to make all of Scotland stunning again. Our evidence shows that we’re facing a looming litter emergency across Scotland, so we’re delighted to support this campaign. We all can, and should, do more to tackle litter. And while some people need to change their behaviour, thousands of people have pledged to litter pick as part of our Summer Clean this month, helping them turn their anger into action.”

To support the campaign and encourage others to do the same, please download the campaign toolkit, or visit www.managingourwaste.scot/litter for further details.





Image source: © Hamza Yassin Photography

Works Underway at Ardnamurchan Lighthouse

Major improvements have commenced at the community-owned Ardnamurchan Lighthouse Complex which received support from the Highland Coastal Communities Fund (HCCF).

The site remains closed to the public (with no pedestrian or vehicle access) while TSL Contractors Ltd deliver the most disruptive groundworks.

The full programme includes improvements to the condition of the site's much-loved heritage foghorn and viewing platform, the resurfacing of parking areas, better provisions for EV drivers and cyclists, more accessible footpaths and a new scenic seating area designed by landscape architect David Graham of Craignish Design Ltd. All actions are intended to make the site's infrastructure more resilient and more accessible. An overhaul of the signage and interpretation offer will follow later this summer, in conjunction with Archaeology Scotland's community-led 'Ardnamurchan: The Real Wild West' Adopt-a-Monument initiative.

Chairman of Highland Council's Community and Place Committee, Cllr Allan Henderson, said:



"We are delighted to have been able to support this excellent community-owned visitor attraction by supporting the Highland Coastal Communities Fund (HCCF) application and easing the Economic Development Burden to allow funding from Scottish Land Fund (SLF).

"This is the type of attraction that helps spread tourists across the area and they get a chance to visit one of our most fragile rural areas."

Project Manager Stephanie Cope said: "After a tricky first year under community ownership, I'm unbelievably excited to watch plans for outdoor areas of this site unfold. The lighthouse complex is rightly beloved by local people, and our proposals were mandated by them. We have a lot of

work still to do - but I can't wait to see this site looking its best, delivering maximum benefit to our remote rural community and welcoming guests of all abilities for a terrific west-coast experience."

A partial reopening of the lighthouse complex is expected in June 2021 - but guests are strongly advised to check the Trust's website and Facebook page for updates before planning a visit. Due to restricted turning space and the presence of construction traffic, people should avoid walking or driving out to the site until the access advice is updated.

Funding to deliver these essential improvements was secured from Archaeology Scotland, the Highland Coastal Communities Fund, the Highland Council, the Scottish Land Fund and VisitScotland's Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund.



Council agrees £2m anti-poverty fund

Inverclyde Council has agreed a new series of spending projects to help tackle poverty in the area.

and aim to help to focus on issues including employment, business, food and fuel insecurity and in supporting local organisations offering financial help to residents."

The £2m anti-poverty fund aims to tackle issues raised before covid as part of the outcomes of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) which identified places across Scotland suffering from deprivation.

Inverclyde Council Leader, Councillor Stephen McCabe, said:



"Inverclyde was identified as the area with the largest local share of deprived areas and the past year has only compounded how exposed some residents in the area have been.

"While there is a wider debate to be had about areas like ours becoming national priorities for investment, the council is putting its resources to work to support our communities through our covid recovery fund, through our Inverclyde Works jobs recovery programme and through the anti-poverty fund.

"The range of initiatives identified respond to the priorities set out by the community through local engagement

The investment of £2m includes spending on:

- Local Employment pilots £1,037,000
- Dedicated business development officer £167,000
- School linked Social Workers £202,000
- Food Insecurity Year 2 Pantry and Fare Share Membership £124,000
- Fuel Insecurity £200,000
- Financial Fitness £60,000
- Starter Pack £74,000
- Early Intervention Support and Mentoring for Families £104,000
- Credit Union £8,000

Local businesses get ready for over £150 million of City Deal infrastructure contracts

Glasgow City Region has formally launched the latest contract pipeline for its £1 billion City Deal infrastructure programme, including details of over £150 million worth of tier one infrastructure contracts due to go to open tender in the coming three years.

A free online business event, held in partnership with the Supplier Development Programme, will provide a virtual platform to showcase details of the Region's upcoming contract opportunities, with three Talking Tender workshops also taking place where business can hear more about specific upcoming City Deal projects and their contracts.

Representatives from the eight City Region councils will be on hand at virtual exhibition stands throughout the day to talk through their City Deal programmes and projects, as well as wider council capital investment programmes, outlining what contracts are coming up to award and when.

Councillor Susan Aitken, Chair of the Glasgow City Region Cabinet and Leader of Glasgow City Council, said:



"Our City Deal is helping to protect the Region's jobs and businesses from the impacts of Covid-19. In fact, to date local companies have benefitted from over £110 million worth of City Deal contracts. This event will give our partner councils the chance to engage with the business community at different stages of project timelines to tell them about upcoming contract opportunities. "I'd urge local businesses in these industries to register for this free online event to find out more and to hear what support is available."

The contract pipeline is being issued before the event so that relevant businesses get advance notice of contracts coming up that they could either bid for or which they are already

on a framework for – and then register to attend the event to find out more.

UK Government Minister for Scotland Iain Stewart said:

"The UK Government is investing £500 million into infrastructure projects in the region and I welcome this latest contract pipeline launch as these schemes will bring many jobs to the area. Communities should benefit from start to finish from government projects, so I encourage the region's businesses to take full advantage of this latest round of contracts. Across Scotland we are investing more than £1.5 billion into Growth Deal projects that will help us to build back better from the pandemic."

Economy Secretary Kate Forbes said:

"I'm very pleased that the latest contract pipeline for the Glasgow City Region Deal will be launched in the coming weeks. This is a great

opportunity for local businesses and I would encourage participation in the online event. The Scottish Government is a full partner in the Glasgow City Region Deal, contributing £500 million over 20 years. Contracts awarded through the Deal will contribute to the region's economic recovery by creating jobs, and providing the commercial infrastructure to support and attract businesses to Glasgow and the surrounding areas."

A new Regional strategy for Sustainable Procurement and Community Benefits will also be formally launched at the event.

With procurement spend across the eight Regional councils in the realm of £2 billion per annum, there is an enormous opportunity for local companies and SMEs of all sizes to bid for and win not only tier one contracts but all of the ensuing sub

contracts coming through from those. The strategy sets out an intention to bring on board other key Regional public sector partners as part of the collaborative approach and also to go beyond the City Deal to include the wider capital infrastructure procurement programmes of all eight councils in the Region. Work is already underway to map out an overall Capital Investment Plan which will show planned capital investment for public sector agencies across the whole City Region area for the next three years.

Councillor Aitken continued:

"We are determined that decisions we make in procurement will address inequalities and climate change, benefit local communities and, vitally provide opportunities for local businesses. As the Region prepares to host COP26, we are fully committed to exploring how procurement can support our net

zero carbon ambitions and mitigate the impacts of climate change. We have big asks too of businesses who win our contracts to support all of these ambitions; to work more closely with us to open up supply chains to support local SMEs; to deliver community benefits that really make a difference – that help local young people, communities and those that need it most; and to support work in climate change and reducing emissions."



Inverclyde in £4m recovery investment

The council is set to invest £4m to boost recovery across Inverclyde.

The fund, approved by councillors recently, includes extra support for business and town centres, extra funding for the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, increased place marketing for Inverclyde, boosting access to sports and fitness and earlier implementation of Universal P4-7 School Meals.

Inverclyde Council Leader and convenor of the council's Policy and Resources Committee, Councillor Stephen McCabe said:

"We have already launched a significant phase of our recovery interventions with the Inverclyde Works £6m jobs and employability programme.



"The next level of investment includes a range of practical areas where we can support wider recovery from covid including supporting people to get better access to sport and fitness to encourage our area to be more resilient.

"The recovery programme also focusses on support for business, especially our towns and villages. Throughout the pandemic even when national restrictions allowed it was our local high streets that were there to support local people including businesses doing more business online or delivering differently to keep customers safe.

"Our recovery programme includes measures to support our towns and villages and other businesses."

The interventions also bring universal free school meals for children in primaries four to seven across Inverclyde.

"The recovery plan also includes supporting our young people of all ages including extra investment in the Duke of Edinburgh Awards Scheme to further boost Inverclyde's position as one of the most successful areas in the country. Universal free school meals for primary pupils will also be introduced earlier than planned to support young people and families right across our school estate," added Councillor McCabe.





Edinburgh Economic Strategy takes “Refreshed Approach”

As Edinburgh’s economy faces the biggest challenge for more than a generation, the City of Edinburgh Council looks to forge a strong and sustainable recovery for Scotland’s Capital by developing a new strategy that focuses on the city’s strengths, continued investment and collaboration.

The Council has brought together key partners, stakeholders and business leaders to review the Edinburgh Economic Strategy to develop a refreshed approach that responds to new pressures arising from both the pandemic and Brexit, in addition to the long-term challenges identified in the 2018 Edinburgh Economy Strategy.

Agreed at the Policy & Sustainability committee the report outlines key priorities, while also highlighting

the importance of the city centre to Edinburgh’s long-term economic success – as a magnet for visitors, cultural activity, investment and innovation.

As part of the initial work that’s been done so far with key partners a series of actions have been proposed that the Council and other city stakeholder need to undertake to support the delivery of a strong economic recovery for Edinburgh.



These actions fall under five priorities which are:

1. helping businesses to manage, adapt and innovate
2. promote access to fair work and opportunities for progression
3. lead a just transition to a net carbon zero economy
4. create vibrant places for businesses and people; and
5. maintain Edinburgh’s place as a global economy.

Focusing on specific actions needed to revive the economy of the city’s historic centre, The City Centre Recovery Plan has been developed as an accompaniment to the refresh of the city-wide Edinburgh Economy Strategy.

This plan proposes two core priorities for the Council and its partners over the next few years:

- **‘support the city centre to adapt and thrive’** by taking action to provide high impact support to businesses of all sectors, as well as tailored, targeted support to businesses in areas or in sectors under specific pressure.
- **‘build momentum for long term recovery’** by delivering strong programmes of promotion and marketing the city centre, as well as taking the steps needed to help people safely return to work in the area. Meanwhile look to enhance and repurpose the city centre to make sure it meets the post-pandemic needs of residents, businesses and visitors.

This will be underpinned by some of the largest and most significant retail, commercial, and tourism developments seen in any UK city centre.

It is hoped that these major investments will provide a catalyst for recovery of Edinburgh’s city centre, creating new job opportunities and building momentum needed to drive up footfall and turnover to the benefit of all businesses in the area.

These include:

- the £1 billion St James Quarter development opening in July;
- Diageo’s investment in whisky tourism culminating in Johnnie Walker Princes Street opening later this summer;
- a £40 million repair of North Bridge;

- the National Galleries of Scotland £22 million refurbishment project;
- new uses on the way for key buildings such as the former BHS, Debenham’s shops, and the iconic Jenner’s department store
- and in the west end of the city, the Edinburgh’s Haymarket project delivering a £350m development transforming the long-neglected brownfield site.

The new frameworks proposed for both the Economic Strategy and the City Centre Recovery Plan will now go through a consultation period with our citizen’s and partners from this month. Following this the final documents will be published in November this year.

Both reports will also look to deliver on the Council’s broader approach to recovery from the pandemic and meet its core priorities to end poverty, become a net zero city, and ensure wellbeing and equalities are enhanced for all.

Welcoming the update on the new frameworks, Council Leader, Adam McVey, said:



“Recent indicators like City centre footfall and investments bringing opportunities for people in the Capital show Edinburgh

in a strong position for a successful recovery. Oxford Economics suggested that Edinburgh is the most resilient economy in Scotland, driven by our digital connectivity and the diversity of our economy. But the challenges for businesses of Covid and Brexit can’t be underestimated.

“By channelling our strengths, we can overcome the challenges and continue to make our City a greener and fairer place to live, work and do business. Key growth sectors like data-driven

innovation and strong sectors like technology, finance and business tourism are all collectively working together as a city to build a bright future for Edinburgh with opportunities for all our residents.”

I’d like to thank our partners and stakeholders for their support and insights in getting our next Economic Strategy to this stage. Through this next phase of wider engagement with the City we will have a robust plan of actions to support businesses, protect and create jobs and continue to make progress.

Depute Leader, Cammy Day, said:

“A strong recovery for Edinburgh’s economy as a whole requires a strong and vibrant city centre and by developing The City Centre Recovery Plan, in tandem with the refreshed Economic Strategy, we’re making sure that this vital area of our city continues to thrive.

“In parallel with the development of the priorities we’ve set out, we have also committed to delivering many innovative and regenerative schemes across the city that are at the heart of our communities. Yesterday we agreed on six key projects to be put forward for UK Government Levelling Up Funding including the Granton Waterfront, the North Edinburgh Art’s MacMillan Hub in Pennywell, Wester Hailes and other key priority programme for the city. I’m hopeful that we’ll be successful in our bids for this funding and look forward to seeing these projects benefiting our citizens in future years.”

Funding regeneration

Alongside this, as part of the city’s wider ambitions for the economy, the need to help fund and deliver key regeneration and infrastructure projects was also on the agenda at yesterday’s Policy & Sustainability Committee. Six projects were agreed and will now be put forward for the 2021/22 funding round of the new UK Levelling Up Fund.

The Levelling Up Fund was announced by UK Government at the 2020 Spending Review as a £4.8bn package of funding to provide capital investment in local infrastructure projects over four years, from 2021-22 to 2024-25.

All Scottish Local Authorities will receive a flat amount of £125,000 in capacity funding to support bid development. This funding is expected to be made available in late June 2021.

The six projects are:

- North Edinburgh Arts - a proposed new creative and community hub at MacMillan Square in Pennywell;
- Granton Gas Holder - restoring the gas holder structure and remediating the wider site, forming a key catalyst to delivering phase one of the wider waterfront regeneration programme;
- Wester Hailes Regeneration - a comprehensive, phased regeneration plan for the

next 10 to 15 years and will incorporate the aspirations as set out by the community in the Local Place Plan;

- Inch Park Regeneration - a proposed project for the development of a sports and community hub in Inch Park;
- Craigmillar Town Centre Regenerations - a regeneration plan for the area to complete years of housing led investment to deliver wide ranging community led improvements;
- City-wide active travel - building on the vision and objectives set out in the City Mobility Plan, the active travel investment programme will deliver on of the UK's most ambitious safe, attractive and coherent walking, cycling and wheeling networks.

Building international partnerships

Taking an international perspective and continuing to build relationships across the globe to attract investment and strategic links will be an important part in growing Edinburgh's economy.

How Edinburgh maximises its global connections and partnerships was set out in an updated Edinburgh International Framework, developed in collaboration with members of the Edinburgh International Group.

Refreshed in response to changing context and challenges arising from the Covid-19 pandemic and the UK's withdrawal from the EU, as well as new developments in city wide priorities, the approach ensures international activity promotes the Capital's equality and diversity objectives.

As part of the new framework, Councillors also agreed that the Council will support the University of Edinburgh in joining the World Innovative Cities Co-operation Organisation to develop civic links and support innovative collaborations with partner cities.



Improved finances at Dundee Health and Social Care Partnership

The financial situation at the Dundee Health and Social Care Partnership has improved significantly in the past year.

Chair of the Dundee Health and Social Care Partnership Integration Joint Board Ken Lynn said:



"Throughout the pandemic the partnership has continued to provide vital services to the citizens of Dundee.

A report submitted to the Integration Joint Board will update the financial year end position. It reveals that the partnership ended the financial year to 31st March 2021 with an operational underspend of around £2.1m, which is a significantly improved position from the net overspend of £4m incurred during 2019/20.

In the past year the Scottish Government has provided additional funding to the partnership to cover additional spending for items such as PPE, additional staff costs, and to support third and independent social care providers during the ongoing Covid-19 crisis.

In addition, a further £2.8 million has been allocated to the partnership by the Scottish Government to fund the Primary Care Improvement Fund, Mental Health Strategy Action 15 Workforce and Alcohol and Drugs Partnerships. This and other additional resources have helped boost the IJB's financial reserves position.

"It's good news to see the financial position improving which allows us much greater flexibility to respond to challenges and create and adopt new ways to deliver services.

"The additional funding from the Scottish Government has made a huge difference to some of the most vulnerable people of Dundee during the pandemic.

"Ringfenced money for mental health services will enable us to increase access to dedicated mental health professionals in a number of settings across the city and I know this will be very welcome news."

Councillor Lynn continued:
"I have no doubt though that we have a major challenge ahead of us, we are

still seeing big demand and subsequent financial pressures in our community and home-based service and we are already seeing a spike in demand for care as a result of the pandemic.

"More people need support to live independently at home and this will be a big focus for the partnership in the year ahead, but I am confident we will meet the demand.

"Having available financial reserves allows us a greater deal of flexibility to tackle some of the demand the partnership faces and lets us take a more creative approach to the challenges."



Local Economic Recovery Plan worth a look

Businesses, organisations and residents are being encouraged to check out the Economic Recovery Plan for East Dunbartonshire as efforts continue to help the area emerge from the shadow of the pandemic.

The vital document includes work being undertaken by Council services and community planning partners - as well as a wealth of information and potential resources - to help mitigate the devastating effects of the coronavirus emergency.

More than £26.5 million has been processed by the Council to help support businesses during the pandemic - over 5,700 grants.

For more information, visit:

www.eastdunbarton.gov.uk/economic-recovery and www.eastdunbarton.gov.uk/circular-economy-strategy

The Economic Recovery Plan (ERP) identifies key issues and actions within four priority areas:

Business

The Council is continuing to work with Business Gateway East Dunbartonshire and other community partners to help businesses reopen and recover, access support and grants, and secure advice and training resources. As of 30 April 2021, more than £26.5 million had been processed by the Council for businesses during the pandemic - over 5,700 grants. Provisional HMRC figures (as of 28 February 2021) show 6,500 jobs were furloughed in East Dunbartonshire as part of the Job Retention Scheme.

People

The Council is working alongside Skills Development Scotland and other partners to: support residents facing unemployment or changed employment; address inequality; help people access job and training opportunities; and provide benefits and debt advice.

Community

The Council is prioritising capital projects to help our communities and economy to recover, for example Allander Leisure and Day Care Centre, local parks, early years facilities in Bearsden, Kirkintilloch and Milngavie, and more. The Council will continue to support town centres, local Business Improvement Districts, and the delivery of Place Plans in Auchinairn, Hillhead and Harestanes, Lennoxton and Twechar. It is also working with East Dunbartonshire Voluntary Association to aid the development of social enterprises and community organisations.

Environment

Promoting environmental sustainability alongside economic resilience is vital - helping to ensure that progress continues to be made towards a net-zero economy. Work is taking place to prepare a Climate Action Plan - www.eastdunbarton.gov.uk/CAP - for East Dunbartonshire, and a new Active Travel Strategy and Circular Economy Strategy are on the way.



The ERP has been informed by a survey, held in November 2020, which found:

- The pandemic had a clear impact on local trade and turnover, with 90% reporting lower customer numbers than normal and 51% ceasing all trade during lockdown
- 43% of businesses responding to the survey had furloughed employees, while 5% had made employees redundant
- All residents surveyed said their use of local businesses and facilities had changed since the pandemic and 75% said their online shopping had increased. However, many residents vowed to shop local in future.
- 56% of businesses said they were 'very worried' about the continued impact of COVID-19 on their finances, while 79% were 'very worried' about the local economy.

Councillor Andrew Polson, Joint Leader of the Council, said,



"The pandemic has had a devastating impact across East Dunbartonshire and beyond, with unprecedented challenges for us all

- personally, socially and economically. The ERP provides information and support to aid economic recovery locally as we finally begin to emerge from the long shadow cast by this worldwide crisis."

Councillor Vaughan Moody, Joint Leader of the Council, added,



"Council teams have been liaising with partners throughout the pandemic to help businesses and residents weather the storm,

and that good work will continue as we hopefully look forward to brighter days ahead. Over £26.5 million has been processed by the Council to

help support businesses during the pandemic - more than 5,700 grants - which is an incredible effort by all."

For more information visit

www.eastdunbarton.gov.uk/economic-recovery,

www.eastdunbarton.gov.uk/circular-economy-strategy

and www.eastdunbarton.gov.uk/covid-19-business-support



Protect your consumers and sustain small business growth

17 Scottish councils now operate an approved or trusted trader scheme.

ASSOCIATION PROFILE



Professional Organisation:
SCOTSS

Sector:
Trading Standards

Formed:
1996

Scottish Contact:
Ken Daly
T: 07720 538 349

Website:
www.scotss.org.uk

Some of the main initiatives that SCOTSS is currently involved in are:

Approved Trader: Highlighted opposite, SCOTSS strongly supports the growth of local authority 'assured' trader schemes, which provide consumer and community protection against rogue and itinerant traders and help support and sustain local small businesses in the service sector. The number of councils running their own scheme, after the launch of the Dundee Trusted Trader scheme in 2005, has grown rapidly with more than half of Scotland's councils operating one. The launch of the SCOTSS Approved Trader Portal www.approvedtrader.scot three years ago joins up all these schemes within one consumer focussed portal, where consumers can search freely across all schemes by postcode, safe in the knowledge that the traders listed have been vetted and approved by Trading Standards and can be trusted to do a good job around the home. In most cases, consumers can also view feedback from previous customers to check for quality and satisfaction with work. Schemes are usually self-funding, contact coordinator@scotss.org.uk for further details if you are interested in starting one in your council area.

In common with many Scottish local authority services, senior managers in trading standards services have a long-established professional association to provide leadership and consistency across Scotland.

The Society of Chief Officers of Trading Standards in Scotland (SCOTSS), was formed in 1996 carrying on the work of its predecessor the Society of Directors of Trading Standards in the regional councils and has members from each of Scotland's 31 council services, with Stirling and Clackmannan councils operating a joint Trading Standards service. SCOTSS is a charitable organisation and provides support to local authority members, for example with training and development of staff, with interpretation of legislation through SCOTSS' expert groups, and with sharing of good practice between councils.

The Society liaises with local council colleagues across the UK as most Trading Standards duties are reserved and engages with Scottish and UK governments and others around the operation of the consumer protection landscape.

Covid-19 pandemic: SCOTSS, along with colleagues in environmental health, set up an expert group in March 2020 to advise local authorities on the new Scottish Government restrictions and liaise with officials from government and other regulators. To date local services have dealt with over 20,000 requests for advice from business, 75,000 interventions by officers, and 20,000 complaints, and the group has won several awards for its innovative approach.

Workforce Strategy: An aging workforce is at the root of a real viability issue for trading standards services and SCOTSS is working with COSLA and others to try and ensure that resource levels are maintained or improved. We are also working to ensure there is a fit for purpose qualification route so that

new officers can be brought into the profession more easily to safeguard succession planning.

Tobacco Control: SCOTSS has worked for over ten years with Scottish Government and councils, to ensure a high priority is given to tobacco and NVP enforcement in Scotland, to safeguard young people from the dangers of smoking and vaping, and working with HMRC, to crack down on the illicit supply of tobacco within Scotland.

Brexit and borders: SCOTSS work with the Ports and Borders team at OPSS and with Scottish councils at ports such as Grangemouth and Glasgow and Edinburgh airports, to make sure that consumer products imported into the UK via Scotland post-Brexit are safe and cannot cause harm to consumers. We provide additional resource to these councils to make additional checks and work with other agencies like Border Force and HMRC to make sure Scotland is safer.

More details on any of these areas can be gained by contacting:

Ken Daly
SCOTSS National Coordinator
www.scotss.org.uk
[@socotss](https://twitter.com/socotss)
07720538349



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New homes in Dingwall named after local stalwart

The Highland Council is looking forward to welcoming tenants to their new homes in the heart of Dingwall at the recently completed Joe Yates Court development, named after one of the town's greatest characters.

The six, one-bedroom flats have been designed by Trail Architects and local developer Ark Estates along with O'Brien Properties, Torrance Partnership, Ramsay & Chalmers and CDMM.

After delayed starts due to COVID-19, the team are delighted to complete this development and bring much needed affordable housing into Dingwall town centre.

Local Councillors Margaret Paterson and Angela Maclean visited the site for a sneak peek prior to handover.

CLLr Margaret Paterson said:



"Joe Yates was a dearly loved resident of Dingwall. He was involved in various groups in the Town over many years. The Dingwall Fireman's Club, Dingwall Highland Games,

Dingwall Gala week and other groups. He was very popular as Compere of The Highland Fling which was a Ceilidh that was loved by Local folk as well as many visitors to the Town. Everybody loved Joe – he was a real character – a legend and one of Dingwall's beloved sons.

"I was absolutely delighted to see rounds the flats and I was very impressed with the quality of the workmanship. Six people will be so happy to be moving into their new home especially when they see how bright and modern they are."

The Highland Council has launched a new campaign called **#BuildingOurFutureHighland** which is dedicated to keeping the public updated on the progress of works for the re-profiled capital programme's education, housing, and property projects across the region. Search for the hashtag on social media to keep updated on the latest developments across the region or visit:

<https://www.highland.gov.uk/buildingourfuturehighland>

Scottish Borders joins the fight against empty homes

Scottish Borders Council is appointing a dedicated Empty Homes Officer as part of plans to help owners bring long-term empty properties back into use and reduce the impact that neglected empty homes can have on communities in the Borders area.

Supported by the Scottish Empty Homes Partnership (SEHP) the officer will provide a range of services, advice and assistance tailored to the individual needs of each owner who engages with the service. They will also lead on the development and implementation of an Empty Homes Strategy that will aim to ensure that empty properties in the private sector are brought back into use wherever possible.

Scottish Government figures show that an increase in empty homes is being experienced across Scotland, with 1,542 properties being listed as long-term empty in Scottish Borders in 2020. 61% of these properties had been empty for a year or longer. SEHP have noted that the increase in numbers of empty homes across the country is part of the economic legacy of the pandemic and that the full impact of Covid-19 on long-term empty homes may not be known for some time following the second lockdown.

Homes become empty through normal life events; a death, people moving away for work, marriage or divorce. They typically become empty for an extended period of time when people

don't have the money, knowledge or motivation to know what to do next.

By investing in a dedicated empty homes service and helping to bring empty homes back into use, councils can provide a vital income stream to businesses and the local economy as well as improving local communities and making more homes available for those who need them.

The Empty Homes Officer will initially be appointed on a two-year contract to enable the council to assess the value of both the dedicated empty homes staff and the sharing of best practice to address empty homes issues.

Shaheena Din, National Project Manager for Scottish Empty Homes Partnership said:

"We are delighted that Scottish Borders Council has decided to appoint an Empty Homes Officer. We know that having a specialist member of staff dedicated to supporting owners and neighbours in tackling empty homes and developing an empty homes strategy can make a real difference to local communities across the country. We are proud to be partnering with Scottish Borders on this project."

Councillor Mark Rowley, Scottish Borders Council's Executive Member for Economic Regeneration and Finance, said:



"Empty homes have a negative impact on the local community and economy. They can lead to a reduction in property values and increases in anti-social behaviour and vandalism, all of which can result in increased levels of stress and anxiety for both property owners and neighbours, and a loss of community pride.

"By employing an Empty Homes Officer and increasing the help and support we can offer to people by bringing these properties back into use, we will help to reverse these negative effects, increase the supply of housing, and support communities across the Scottish Borders.

"The evidence nationally is that Empty Homes Officers can make a huge difference in reviving homes through their expansive skills and knowledge in the process. We are looking forward to finding the right person for the position and witnessing the good work they will do for our communities."

Further information about the post, and how to apply, can be found via www.scotborders.gov.uk/jobs

Scottish Government Figures



First new council homes in Newton Mearns complete

Tenants have begun moving into brand new council houses in the Maidenhill area of Newton Mearns as construction on the first phase of the development is completed.

Built for East Renfrewshire Council by Taylor Wimpey West Scotland, these new affordable homes are the first new council houses to be built in Newton Mearns in a generation. The development, which received £2.3million funding from the Scottish Government, comprises of 12 one-bed cottage flats, eight two-bedroom cottage flats, two two-bedroom houses, 16 three-bedroom houses and one four-bed house.

Following last year's COVID-19 lockdown, construction on site safely began in July and the team successfully completed these first builds on time, allowing tenants and families to begin moving into their new homes from mid-April this year. It is expected that all homes will be handed over by the end of September.

As well as providing these high quality affordable homes for social rent and contributions towards the provision of land and funding for the new Maidenhill Primary School, by the end of 2020, Taylor Wimpey paid over £930,000 in developer contributions for completions of new homes. Further contributions are due in May for the first quarter of this year.

The Council and developer have already confirmed an additional 30 affordable homes for social rent, which are targeted for delivery by mid-2022, and discussions are also continuing for a further 13 properties for 2022/23.

Sue Gray, who moved into her new home earlier this month, said:

"I feel very happy and appreciative of this new home I have moved into. It is lovely up here in Maidenhill and I feel settled already. There are many new homes around me and with the new school in place nearby, I look forward to the seeing the community and area develop over the coming months and years. It is comforting to feel safe here and I very much see this as my forever home."

East Renfrewshire Council Housing and Maintenance Convener, Councillor Danny Devlin, who visited the site, said:



"I am absolutely delighted that through Taylor Wimpey we are able to provide people with such great flats and houses here. There is a strong community growing in Maidenhill, with a state of the art new school, so I know that these tenants will be very happy in their new homes."

"East Renfrewshire continues to be an extremely popular place to live and this is why we began our ambitious house



build project back in 2018; the results of which continue to provide families and individuals with high-quality, affordable homes in our communities. This development reflects our aspirations and I would like to thank Taylor Wimpey for the work they have done."

Alison Henderson, Special Projects Manager for Taylor Wimpey West Scotland said:

"The completion and handover of the first affordable homes for social rent at Maidenhill signals a key milestone for this flagship development and is the result of true partnership working and delivery between ourselves and the local authority. These first handovers are part of our wider agreement to deliver a total of 82 affordable homes for social rent, as well as 20 homes across the development which will be provided at a reduced market value as part of our affordable home obligation. Furthermore, these homes contribute to the wider masterplan vision and framework for the new community that is now emerging at Maidenhill, Newton Mearns."

"In overall terms the Maidenhill development is bringing significant investment and creating local jobs across the area, including some exciting opportunities for young apprentices, and we'll continue to work closely with East Renfrewshire Council and the local community to ensure Newton Mearns reaps the benefits of our long-term investment in the area."

This development comes following two years of ambitious house building in Barrhead by the Council, with further construction continuing across East Renfrewshire.



Perth & Kinross Council building

Development delivers new Council flats in Perth city centre

A new £1.65m development of affordable Council homes has been completed in Perth city centre.

The four-storey block at 6 Milne Street is made up of eight new flats, including accommodation specifically designed for wheelchair users and people with specific needs.

The block, which consists of four 1-bed flats and four 2-bed properties, was formerly the site of a disused church.

The ground floor flats are wheelchair accessible, with wet rooms, an open plan layout and general supported living adaptations.

One of the main aims of the Perth and Kinross Local Housing Strategy is to support people to live independently in their own homes, which is what people have told us they want. People who have a disability or other specific needs often need suitable accommodation and support to live independently. These new high-quality flats will empower tenants to live healthy and active lives.

The block also has a bike store, drying area and bin stores to the rear, as well as controlled door entry off the street.

The development was funded in partnership by Perth & Kinross Council and the Scottish Government, and delivered by our construction partner CCG Scotland Ltd.

Milne Street is the latest development delivered through Perth & Kinross Council's multi-million-pound building programme, which has seen well over 300 new Council homes built for tenants since 2012. Our work supporting new builds through our local Housing Association partners has seen a total of almost 1,400 new affordable homes delivered across Perth and Kinross, all built to the highest standards in areas where there is a shortage of affordable housing.

Housing and Communities Convener, Councillor Bob Brawn, visited the block today and said:



"These new flats will provide affordable one and two-bed accommodation for people right in the heart of Perth. I'm particularly delighted that the ground-floor flats are suitable for people with a disability. It's

important that we consider the needs of everyone when we are making plans for new housing."

Vice Convener, Councillor Chris Ahern added:



"The new block looks fantastic and will be a welcome addition to this conservation area in the centre of our city, and to our affordable housing stock. I'm sure the tenants who are moving in will enjoy living in these high-quality homes."

CCG Director, John Baggley, said:

"Milne Street was a small yet challenging development. It is not easy to minimise the impact of construction in such a busy town centre. However, our site team have to be commended as they operated with the utmost professionalism for the duration of the programme despite the unprecedented circumstances of the last year. The quality of workmanship is of the highest standard."

"On behalf of CCG, I thank Perth & Kinross Council for their continued support throughout the programme. We will soon be handing over the remaining properties on a second development - the former Glebe Primary School in Scone - within the coming weeks and we look forward to working with Perth & Kinross Council again in the future."

Since 2012 Perth & Kinross Council's house building programme has delivered new homes in the towns and settlements right across the region, including Methven, Scone, Alyth, Inchtute, Stanley, Blairgowrie, Meikle, Auchterarder, Balbeggie, Rattray and in many sites in Perth.

More new builds are in the pipeline including at Glebe in Scone. Due for completion soon, Glebe will be the biggest single build of Council homes Perth and Kinross has seen in 40 years.



Councillor Jenny Laing with Edyta and Lukasz Kranz and their family who recently moved into the development.

Phase One of Wellheads development complete

Work has finished and tenants moved into phase one in a development of new council flats/houses which are part of a huge programme building 2,000 new council houses across Aberdeen.

The 67 flats at Wellheads in Dyce are phase one in a mixture of 2 to 8 people flats houses for varying needs with 283 new properties in this development being built by Aberdeen City Council.

The major project which is providing council homes across the city is one of several sites across Aberdeen which form part of the wider Aberdeen City Council Housing Programme aiming to address a long-term shortage of affordable social rented housing in the city.

The homes at Wellheads, with Ogilvie Construction as main contractor and Faithful and Gould as project managers, are also designed to have a high level of energy efficiency throughout and low maintenance external amenity spaces as well as support more walking, cycling and wheeling through Active Travel. The Wellheads site includes a

playground, plenty of green outdoor space, and cycle storage. These homes are heated by Aberdeen Heat and Powers combined heat and power plant which utilises waste heat from the production of electricity to heat the homes.

Aberdeen City Council Leader Councillor Jenny Laing said:



"I was absolutely delighted to get the opportunity to meet some of the residents who have recently moved into the new council homes

which have been completed in phase one of the Wellheads development. These new homes provide top quality accommodation for a variety of tenants including single people, families, and those with additional housing needs. They have been expertly designed to be energy efficient throughout and the new residents are also enjoying access to quality external amenity space.

"These new homes in Dyce form part of the biggest council house building programme Aberdeen has seen in the last 50 years. This programme has been brought forward to address the long-term shortage of affordable social rental properties in Aberdeen and will see more than 2,000 council homes built across the city. The residents at Wellheads are clearly extremely pleased with their new homes and we look forward to making many more properties available for rent in the coming months."

Aberdeen City Council city growth and resources convener Councillor Ryan Houghton said:



"It has been great watching the build progress for these new council flats and I'm sure our tenants who have moved in are settling in and exploring their new surroundings.

"These new homes in Dyce are part of the exciting 2,000 new council houses project which will provide not only energy efficient buildings but they are also low maintenance and built to an extremely high quality.

"We are proud of the work we are undertaking building high quality

homes of differing sizes suitable for a range of tenants in community settings around the city."

The other sites due to be built include Auchmill, Craighill in Kincorth, the former Kincorth Academy site at Kincorth, Tillydrone, and Kaimhill.

Planning applications for the 99 homes at Craighill, 72 new council homes in Tillydrone and the 213-home development in Kincorth have been submitted to the Planning Authority in recent weeks.

As part of the 2,000 homes project, 99 council homes were built in Smithfield in 2017 and 80 in Manor Walk in 2018. Construction has also started on 369 units at the former Summerhill Academy site at Lang Stracht.

The vision of the Aberdeen City Council's Housing Programme is to create

sustainable integrated communities and places by delivering affordable homes designed for life which meet residents' current and changing needs, while supporting the wellbeing and resilience of tenants.

They will meet the most demand for council properties including flats for

single people, flats for families, semi-detached family homes, terraced houses, wheelchair-friendly properties, and a small number of amenity bungalows. They are being designed for exacting standards including housing for various needs, dementia friendly, low carbon, low maintenance, and to meet the Gold Standard.





Professional Organisation:
ALACHO

Sector:
Local Authority Housing

Formed:
-

Scottish Contact:
Tony Cain
T: 07908 460989

Website:
www.alacho.org

ALACHO is the representative organisation for senior housing and homelessness professionals working in Scotland's Councils and Health & Social Care Partnerships. Their purpose is to provide impartial advice and comment to support the development of legislation, policy and practice in housing and homelessness nationally and locally, and to promote best practice and improved outcomes relating to housing at all levels.

To achieve this, ALACHO works in partnership with its members, tenants and service users, COSLA, the Scottish Government, the CIH, Scottish Women's Aid, registered social landlords and others. Over the past year this partnership based work has been extended to include a number of "master classes" on current issues including fire suppression, energy efficiency and the national planning framework. In June this year they also

published a ground breaking report on implementing the human right to adequate housing: <http://alacho.org/what-we-do/reports/> ALACHO members have also appeared regularly before Scottish Parliamentary committees.

These aims and ambitions include:

- Supporting the development of a human rights based approach to housing policy and practice;
- Improving housing options for the Gypsy/Traveller community;
- Ensuring a "just transition" to net zero carbon and ensuring that tenants in social housing aren't left behind by these changes;



- Ending homelessness through the roll out of rapid rehousing and housing first for those who need it;
- Improving standards in the private rented sector through a combination of supporting improved, regulation and enforcement;
- Working with owners, particularly those in tenements, to ensure that their homes are safe and well maintained;
- Improving the supply of social housing through the new build programme; and
- Improving housing outcomes for this with disabilities or other particular needs.

As an integral part of their work, ALACHO members meet online every 2 weeks to discuss key housing issues affecting local authorities. The key issues discussed and debated are then generally set out in a "Work Plan", but are also influenced by new or emerging issues. They invite a range of relevant guests to these meetings, to hear the views of policy developers, experts and academics; so that ALACHO members have the fullest possible understanding of all the issues which affect local authority housing.

For further information please contact Tony Cain, Policy Manager: tony.cain@alacho.org

"ALACHO works in partnership with its members, tenants and service users, COSLA, the Scottish Government, the CIH, Scottish Women's Aid, registered social landlords and others, to support their stated aims and ambitions for the housing and homelessness sector."



East Whitlawburn Regeneration Project. Images © Anne-Janine Nugent, South Lanarkshire Council

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Provost Simpson attends ceremony to mark 100 years of Legion Scotland

Stirling Provost Christine Simpson attended a wreath laying ceremony to mark the 100th anniversary of the Royal British Legion Scotland.

with services covering remembrance, comradeship and befriending, whilst supporting the welfare services and fundraising initiatives of Poppyscotland.

Friday 18th June marked the centenary of the founding of the Royal British Legion Scotland in 1921, and Provost Simpson joined the City of Stirling Branch at Stirling City Cenotaph to commemorate the occasion.

Stirling Provost Christine Simpson said:

"The Royal British Legion Scotland works at the heart of our communities, supporting veterans of all ages and from all conflicts, providing much needed support for the armed forces and veterans and their families.

At the conclusion of the First World War there were millions of service personnel seeking to re-establish themselves in civilian life, and many hundreds of thousands of women and children were left widowed and fatherless.

"This historic organisation helps provide Stirling veterans with comradeship and befriending, whilst raising much needed funds every year through its Poppyscotland appeal. Established in the aftermath of World War I, its work remains as vital as ever for the services community.

On 18th June 1921 four ex-service organisations came together at St Cuthbert's Church in Edinburgh to unite for the greater good of the nation and the British Legion was born.

"Those who serve, past and present, are strengthened by the presence of Royal British Legion Scotland and I offer my thanks to all those who have helped build this essential institution, and to all those who will be part of its future."

Now, the Royal British Legion Scotland is the largest ex-Service membership charity in Scotland with more than 142 branches, 60 clubs and 20,000 members.

The historic institution, working in partnership with other organisations, provides veterans in the community

Former church bell rings for first time in decades

The bell of a former Perth city centre church rang for the first time in more than three decades today recently.

St Paul's Church has undergone a stunning transformation into a unique, outdoor performance space.

Perth & Kinross Council stepped into to rescue the building in 2017 after it had fallen into disrepair and previous schemes to bring it back into public use had fallen by the wayside.

Situated in a prime spot on Perth's Old High Street, the new performance space retains the 1807 building's octagonal shape.

The steeple of the church has been retained but its roof has been removed, creating a new public space.

The church's bell mechanism has been replaced and the original bell restored.

It chimed at noon on Wednesday as the completed building was handed back to Perth & Kinross Council by contractors.

Perth & Kinross Council leader Murray Lyle said:

"Hearing the bell sound was quite an emotional moment.

"This building has been out of use for so long it had become forgotten and unloved.

"Now it has a new future and you can hear from the comments people make as they pass by how excited they are to see it brought back to life. It offers something completely new for Perth and will give this part of the High Street a real lift.



"It looks absolutely stunning when lit up at night and I am sure there will be many memorable performances here in future."

"This complements the cultural and events spaces in Mill Street and Perth Theatre. Together with our plans for Perth City Hall, we are investing making Perth an even more exciting place to live and work."

The £2.2 million project has seen the restoration of features such as the crenelated wall head and bartizans – the corner turrets – that had previously been removed because of safety

concerns. These now give the building a more castle-like appearance.

St Paul's Church was built in 1807 and was one of the first churches built in Perth after the reformation.

To transform the church, the roof was removed and work carried out to stabilise the walls and the steeple.

While working on the steeple, rotting oak beams were discovered. These had to be removed and replaced with concrete.

All stonework and rendered panelling infills required the use of lime mortar in accordance with Historic Environment Scotland guidelines.

The open-air venue will be available for public use and can host events during the day and evening, with the space suitable for everything from concerts and performances to markets. St Paul's can also be lit up dramatically at night for performances and special occasions.

Perthshire based Hadden Group provided the construction services for the project.

Managing Director Steven Brady said:

"As a local contractor we're extremely proud to have worked in partnership with Council, their design team and our skilled construction team to bring this historic Perth landmark back into use to ensure it remains an integral part of our historic city centre."



Cowan Park Gate Lodge project gets underway

East Renfrewshire Council is set to bring the Cowan Park Gate Lodge in Barrhead back into community use.

Following a successful public consultation, the Council is proposing that local charity, Include Me 2 Club, create a social enterprise hub, café, bike workshop and public toilets which will be used by the local community and visitors to the park.

The project is part-funded by the Scottish Government's Regeneration Capital Grant Fund and renovation works, led by Procast, began recently with contractors aiming to complete the handover to Include Me 2 Club in October. During this time, the Gate Lodge building will be fenced off to the public.

In 2019 East Renfrewshire residents and visitors had an opportunity to have their say on the facilities they'd like to see in the Park and the overwhelming majority felt the priorities should be toilets, food provision and CCTV. This project will provide both toilets and a cafe, creating a valuable community hub for Barrhead. The park is also set to have CCTV installed later this year.

East Renfrewshire Council Leader, Tony Buchanan said:



"East Renfrewshire Council is committed to upgrading the facilities within Cowan Park, so I am delighted to see that works

to bring the Gate Lodge back to life are getting started. Cowan Park is a fantastic public space which already provides the local community and beyond with opportunities for sport, exercise and play – this project will not only provide additional, much-needed facilities, but it will also provide job and training opportunities through the work of Include Me 2 Club. I very much look forward to seeing the public enjoy this wonderful building."

Paul McIlvenny, Include Me 2 Club SCIO chairperson, said:

"We are delighted to be working on this project with East Renfrewshire Council to bring about the changes to a fantastic community asset that will benefit so many people within the organisation, and have a wider

community impact. We can't wait to bring this building back to life, with a coffee shop, bike hub, meeting spaces, public toilets and creating new jobs, alongside training and employability opportunities."

Procast Managing Director Frank McManus said:

"We as a business are absolutely delighted to have been appointed to deliver this fantastic restoration project for East Renfrewshire Council. The existing Edwardian single storey sandstone building was originally constructed circa 1830 so all restoration works will be carried out in a sympathetic manner respecting the great history of this beautiful building.

"The lodge is located within Cowan Park grounds and directly at the existing main entrance from Darnley Road. The site team and our supply chain partners will share this access with members of the public and the parks maintenance team with both vehicular and foot traffic so stringent traffic management and public protection protocols will be followed at all times."

Caol & Lochyside Flood Prevention Scheme starts

A new £11m flood prevention scheme got underway recently to help protect residents and homes in the Caol and Lochyside areas of Fort William.

The works, being carried out by contractor R.J. MacLeod, are projected to last 104 weeks and are in response to severe flooding in the area in the past.

Pupils from Caol Primary School attended the site last week to cut the first piece of turf signalling the start of the works.

The flood in 2005 caused damage to around 20 homes and the sewerage works. The 2005 flood was significant in that it was caused by a large tidal surge in Loch Linnhe.

Caol and Lochyside is one of 42 prioritised flood protection schemes identified in the National Flood Risk Management Strategy for Scotland. It will increase flood protection to over 300 properties in the Caol and Lochyside area.

The scheme has been designed to protect against a 1:200 year storm surge event from Loch Linnhe. The scheme is being funded by the Scottish Government (80%) and Highland Council (20%).

The scheme was published in April 2018 and received five comments and only one objection during the notification period. An independent hearing was held in March 2019 to consider the objection. The reporter published his findings in July 2019 and it was decided the scheme should be confirmed

without modification. Highland Council confirmed the scheme on 15 August 2019.

The 2km long flood protection scheme consists of 1200 metres of embankment and 800 metres of flood wall with two flood gates and associated drainage. The flood defence will be constructed between the Caledonian Canal and Soldier's Bridge in the River Lochy, as well as providing environmental benefits to the wider community.

There will be improved access to the towpath at the Caledonian Canal and improved walking and cycling routes along the length of the scheme.

Caol and Mallaig Councillor and Chair of the Housing and Property Committee, Ben Thompson, said:



"It is fantastic to see that works are now underway on the Caol and Lochyside Flood Prevention Scheme.

"This crucial work will provide peace of mind to residents and ensure they are protected from the damaging effects of flooding in the future. The project will also bring extra benefits to the area, such as an increase in cycling and footpath provision, landscaping, planting, seating areas and play facilities which will be a welcome addition to the Caol foreshore."

The works will have an impact locally and the public is being urged to be patient and follow directions in the area, where necessary.





Image sourced from www.glasgow.gov.uk

Council to sell Maryhill site for £1 to Barnardo's Scotland for accommodation project

Glasgow City Council is to sell a site at Shiskine Drive in the city's Maryhill to Barnardo's Scotland for the nominal sum of £1, and the charity will develop accommodation there in a pilot project for Glasgow which will help young people transition from being in care to being independent tenants.

The site - located at the corner of Shiskine Drive / Duart Drive - is owned by the council and sits on the vacant and derelict land register. It is currently a grassed area around a quarter of an acre in size.

The accommodation to be developed there will feature five one-storey

homes, of which four will be one-bedroomed and one larger home will be staffed full-time with one staff member on waking night-shift and another sleeping over.

This is a pilot project for the city, offering the chance for young people to live semi-independently, has

been developed through Barnardo's Scotland's Gap Home initiative, which aims to provide manageable, affordable accommodation and time and space for young people which will help them transition into independent living. In the past, many young people leaving care have become homeless.

No other charity provides such a service between care and sole tenancies for young people, providing the care they need to become independent. The support on-site will be tailored to the needs of each individual young person.

Barnardo's Scotland had approached the Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership about potential opportunities in the city for this project, and both the latter and Glasgow City Council's housing & regeneration and community asset management teams were supportive of the proposal.

The nominal cost of this land sale will allow the charity to offer the service to the council's Children's Services at a more economical rate.

Bailie Malcolm Balfour, Chair of the Contracts and Property Committee at Glasgow City Council, said:

"The sale of this site will allow the development of a project to support young people as they move from care to independent living, giving the chance to make a positive start to their adult lives. The building of these homes will offer the opportunity for this important transition to take place for the first time in Glasgow, and at the same time regenerate a vacant site in the city."

Negotiations on the conclusion of the sale will now follow between City Property (Glasgow) LLP and Barnardo's Scotland.



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Mill O'Mains Community Work Begins

Work has started on new community facilities for a Dundee neighbourhood in a £3 million building project.

The community extension at Mill O'Mains Primary School will offer out of hours access to amenities including a refurbished gym hall, stage and changing facilities.

The project is being carried out by Robertson Construction Tayside for Dundee City Council and was procured through Procurement Hub Major Projects framework.

Two senior councillors have visited the site to see work starting along with Kevin Dickson, Regional Managing Director at Robertson.

Councillor Steven Rome, deputy convener of Dundee City Council's city development committee said:



"Many communities across the city have already benefitted from similar arrangements with their local primary or secondary school.

"This project extends the same opportunity to people in Mill O'Mains to access up to date facilities in their

community and for us to bring forward planned improvements to the school building itself."

Work totalling £3,264,506 includes the building of a 380 square metre community extension with two linked multi-purpose rooms, alterations to form a new entrance and multi-purpose space, new toilets, out of hours access to the refurbished assembly/gym, stage and changing facilities.

For economies of scale the council has also included the upgrading works of the kitchen/dining area, renewal of roof coverings to various areas, and renewal of boilers, ventilation plant and other services to the school and the public is being urged to be patient and follow directions in the area, where necessary.

Work is expected to complete early next year.



Councillor Stewart Hunter children and families convener said:

"We have undertaken major investment in our school buildings over the years, also giving communities a chance to use first-class facilities on their doorstep.

"This project is a boost for both the school and the wider neighbourhood and I am sure people are excited to see this work now underway."

Kevin Dickson, regional managing director, Robertson Construction Tayside, said:

"We are pleased to continue our ongoing relationship with Dundee City Council as the construction partner of choice to deliver another quality facility within the region.

"Mill O'Mains plays an integral role in the community and we look forward to delivering facilities that will be enjoyed by the entire community for years to come."

Louise Dodds, client relationship manager, Procurement Hub, said:

"At Procurement Hub we love that our clients can benefit from the flexibility of our direct award Major Projects Framework. Dundee City Council are working closely with Robertson to deliver the new community facilities, which once complete will benefit all in the community."



Image: © Kirsty Foster. Sourced from the Depute Chief Executive Candidate Information Pack

Council recruitment for Depute Chief Executive

The Highland Council is currently recruiting for the post of Depute Chief Executive.

Depute Leader, Councillor Alasdair Christie added:

An ambitious individual is being sought to provide strategic leadership and direction on major initiatives linked to the Council's recovery and transformation.

The successful candidate will work as part of the Council's Executive Leadership Team, nurturing and growing Highland Council's vision of creating a strong and expanding sustainable economy built on fairness of opportunity for all.

Cllr Margaret Davidson, Highland Council Leader said:



"This is a unique opportunity to work with us in the Highlands. We are looking for the right person to contribute, lead and help make public services in

the region the very best they can be. We have ambition to take Highland into a low carbon future with our people supported and with good work opportunities."

"This is an extremely important post which will play a key role in taking the Council forward at this crucial time as we all start to exit from the impacts of the pandemic. It is

an exciting time for a senior leader to join the Highland Council, providing strategic vision and with a focus on transformation and embedding a culture of continuous improvement."

The post will support the Chief Executive, providing strategic leadership and direction on major initiatives and strategies linked to recovery, transformation, commercialisation, organisational change, and redesign, including strategic workforce planning, innovation, and research.

Recruitment for a Depute Chief Executive follows Councillors' agreement on a slimmer top tier in a revised senior management structure.

Council to consult on disposal of Invergordon Town Hall

The Highland Council is launching a Common Good consultation giving the Invergordon community until 17 September 2021 to respond to the proposal to dispose of Invergordon Town Hall by sale or long lease.

Due to ongoing COVID-19 restrictions - the consultation time frame given is longer than the statutory 8 week period and will help alleviate any community concerns about the inability to hold public meetings and will provide sufficient response time.

A previous consultation in respect of this matter was held in early 2019. The proposal was not proceeded with at that time to allow a community group time to explore the viability of taking on the

Town Hall. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to progress these plans. The position remains that Invergordon Town Hall requires significant refurbishment and the viability of its continued use is at risk. All attempts to source funding have proved unsuccessful with maintenance and running costs continuing to outstrip income. As a result, the proposal to dispose of the Town Hall is being considered again and a fresh consultation has commenced.

Any funds received in the event of the proposal proceeding will be credited to Invergordon Common Good Fund.

The Council is keen to hear the community's views on the proposal and all submissions will be given full regard

before a decision on whether, and how, to proceed is made. All consultation representations, responses and any final decision will be published on the Council's website.

The consultation runs for longer than the usual 8 weeks as detailed above closing on 17 September 2021.



The full consultation document is called **Invergordon Town Hall consultation document (number 2)** and is available: https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/23707/invergordon_town_hall_consultation_document_number_2

New Economy and Culture Portfolio Holder appointed



Councillor Chris Cullen has become South Ayrshire Council's new Economy and Culture Portfolio Holder. He takes over from Councillor Siobhian Brown, who gave up the portfolio when she was voted in as the new MSP for Ayr Constituency.

The Economy and Culture portfolio is one of the Council's key positions and is crucial to help encourage and promote economic regeneration as well as tourism and leisure. Councillor Cullen will oversee policy in Rural Development; Economic Development and Regeneration; culture, libraries and museums; sport and leisure facilities.

Councillor Cullen, who has lived in South Ayrshire since 2012, is looking forward to the challenge he said:

"I'm delighted to be appointed Economy and Culture Portfolio Holder. During my travels I have seen first-hand how towns can be regenerated through the Council working closely with our communities and local businesses.

"This is an important portfolio and with less than a year to the Council elections, I appreciate that it will be a real challenge to achieve our ambitious plans.

"However, I am fully committed to the task and I will do everything I can to bring positive change for the people of South Ayrshire. I look forward to working with officers, stakeholders, and most importantly our communities, to ensure that together we make South Ayrshire a better place to live for generations to come."



New Chief Executive at Inverclyde

Inverclyde Council has appointed Louise Long as its new Chief Executive.

Louise replaces current Chief Executive Aubrey Fawcett who is set to retire from the council in September after five years in the job.

Now, after interviews, councillors have agreed the appointment.

Louise Long is currently Chief Officer for Inverclyde Integration Joint Board (IJB) and Corporate Director of Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) at Inverclyde Council.

Inverclyde Council Leader, Councillor Stephen McCabe, said:



"Louise has been corporate director with the council for four years and has consistently shown both her leadership skills and compassion in the Health and Social Care Partnership. During the pandemic she has led from the front in ensuring that Inverclyde's health and care response has helped to protect and support our community.

"Louise becomes the first woman to hold the job of Chief Executive in the council breaking another barrier and I

hope inspiring women and girls across Inverclyde."

"The role of Chief Executive will allow Louise to take all of the skills and experience she has built throughout her career and to use those to lead the corporate management team through covid recovery and beyond.

"Covid presents public services with some unique challenges but looking ahead Scotland's councils face a huge number of challenges including how they are supported financially to deliver what is best for our communities. I have no doubt that Louise will be ready for those challenges from day one.

"I would like to take time to thank the other candidates including those interviewed and the ones who applied who were unsuccessful. While the news will for them be one of disappointment, I can say that it is heartening to see that there are so many committed, caring and talented public servants out there who will support local government in our country through the challenges ahead."

Louise, said:

"I am delighted to be appointed Chief Executive of Inverclyde Council. My time with Inverclyde since joining has been inspiring seeing how public service

staff have responded to supporting the community especially during the pandemic. I aim to build on the work that has been done and ensure that Inverclyde continues to nurture our communities, deliver excellent public services and be a force for good for each and every part of our area."

Louise has been Chief Officer for Inverclyde Integration Joint Board and Corporate Director of Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) at Inverclyde Council since May 2017. Prior to that she was Head of Children and Families and Justice and Chief Social Work Officer at Argyll and Bute Council from 2015 starting at that council in 2012 as Head of Children's Services.

Louise started her career at Glasgow City Council as a social worker, held social work management roles with East Renfrewshire Council, head of service at South Ayrshire and also worked for five years with Aberlour Childcare trust.

Aubrey Fawcett, the current Chief Executive of Inverclyde Council, retires on 19 September 2021 and Louise is expected to take up post immediately after.



Image: © mike138, Flickr. (CC BY-ND 2.0)

Best in the country?

Inverclyde Council is officially one of the best performing councils in the country according to a national benchmarking scheme which measures performance across all of Scotland's councils.



"The benchmark is an indicator that shows how councils cross Scotland are performing. It is hugely positive that Inverclyde is currently sitting at the top in the country."

country.

"In many areas such as our schools performance we are already shown to be sector leading and in recent years the external reports into the council from the Care Inspectorate and the Accounts Commission has confirmed that success."

"The challenge is in making sure that we do not rest on our laurels and that

we are able to focus also on the areas where we need to make improvements to ensure that residents continue to get the best value possible from their local services."

"In many areas such as our schools performance we are already shown to be sector leading and in recent years the external reports into the council from the Care Inspectorate and the Accounts Commission has confirmed that success."

Inverclyde Council Leader, Councillor Stephen McCabe, said:



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