

Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey



The multi-million pound Centre for Health Science in Inverness has been one of the biggest projects undertaken by the HIE network. The centre will fulfil several of HIE's strategic aims by attracting highly skilled jobs to a centre of excellence that builds on the Highland capital's reputation as a good place to work and live. Work on the first of three eventual phases began in August 2005. The centre is profiled in more detail on page 17.

Other major strategic projects that progressed in our area included the Eden Court Theatre redevelopment and the Inverness Airport Business Park. See page 21.

We began 2005-06 as Inverness and Nairn Enterprise, but our title changed in July when Badenoch and Strathspey were transferred from Moray.

We assisted 79 new business start-ups, and helped many small businesses with issues ranging from research and development projects to information technology and developing market opportunities. We also assisted community projects, including Nairn Dunbar Golf Club's new irrigation system, Boat of Garten Village Hall, Grantown Community Sports facility and Badguish Outdoor Centre.

In Inverness, through the EU's Community Economic Development programme we helped establish the Merkinch Partnership, which aims to develop local projects.

We piloted an innovative Training for Work programme to assist the construction industry. We also provided a grant to Cantraybridge College to help fund new equipment for their rural skills course, which benefits young adults with disabilities.

2005-06 highlights

Centre for Health Science: construction started in August 2005. The project is currently on time and on budget.

Eden Court Theatre: construction started after a short delay and is scheduled for completion during the Highland Year of Culture 2007.

Inverness Airport Business Park: access road opened and new company formed to manage the business park initiative.

Destination management organisation (DMO): destination development in Badenoch and Strathspey under the umbrella of ABSC Marketing, with a view to establishing a DMO during 2006.

Construction operatives training course: delivered a training course to unemployed people, in conjunction with a range of partners. All participants were offered employment at the end of the course.

A96: the Minister for Transport agreed to commence design studies on the A96 between the city and the airport following meetings with the local economic forum and a fast-track assessment by the Scottish Executive.

Area profile



Population: 91,000

Area: 600,000 hectares

Key sectors: tourism, construction, financial and real estate services

Emerging sectors: healthcare

2005-06 targets and out-turns

	Target	Out-turn	Performance %	Target 2006-07 for HIE Inverness and East Highland
Strengthening communities				
New/enhanced community assets	40	66	165	70
Community groups with increased capacity	10	7	70	25
Developing skills and learning				
People supported to move towards and into sustainable work	375	379	101	484
Businesses supported to engage in developing the skills of those in work	100	207	207	150
Growing businesses				
New business starts	60	79	132	130
Business growth projects	35	22	63	80
Making global connections				
Private sector earnings index* (%)	108	95	87	109
Businesses engaging in international business development	10	23	230	35

* This expresses wages in assisted projects relative to average wages in the local area. A value of over 100 indicates higher than average wages.
From April 2006, Easter Ross was linked with Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey to form the new local enterprise company HIE Inverness and East Highland.

Priorities for 2006-07

Develop Centre for Health Science and promote life sciences.

Work with partners to tackle infrastructure constraints – for example roads, including the A96 corridor – to economic development.

Develop Inverness Airport Business Park, including maintenance, repair and overhaul activities and new flights.

Develop projects around Loch Ness and Merkinch Social Inclusion Partnership.

Improve the supply of skilled labour, including measures to reduce long-term and youth unemployment.

Develop a university campus in Inverness.

Develop a supply chain for renewable energy and oil rig inspection, repair and maintenance centred on the Cromarty Firth.



Freda Rapson, chairman

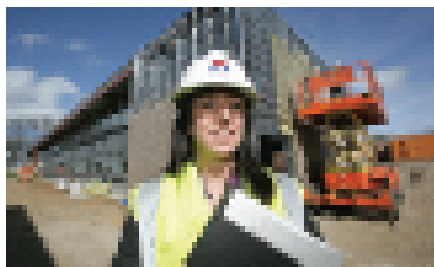


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Case studies



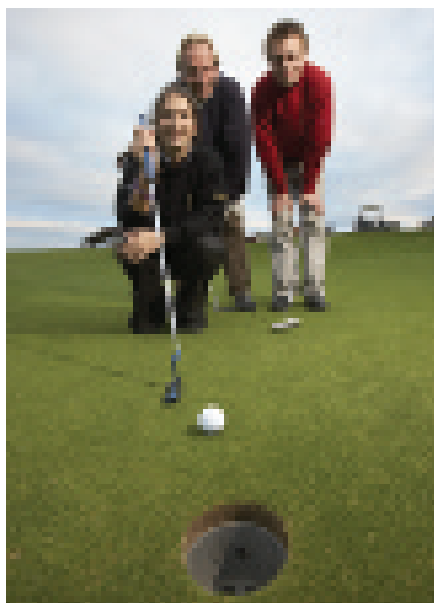
Centre for Health Science

Sheena Devlin was appointed project development manager of the multi million pound Centre for Health Science in January 2006. The centre aims to be a beacon for life sciences developments in the Highlands and will deliver world class research alongside clinics for dentistry and diabetes.



Construction skills

We worked with Jobcentre Plus and CITB Construction Skills to develop a pilot training scheme to tackle the area's shortage of construction skills, and to help unemployed people back into work. Eight trainees took part.



Nairn Dunbar Golf Course

Installing a new irrigation system has improved Nairn Dunbar Golf Club's attractiveness to visitors. It also led to the club being appointed one of the Scottish Golf Union's regional coaching facilities. We granted £42,000 towards the project.



Ness Foundation

The Ness Foundation carries out research into methods of early diagnosis of mental health disorders such as schizophrenia, Huntington's disease, autism, ME and depression. The foundation is extending its work in this area to include genetics research and tissue culture within UHI. The total cost of this new project is £1.5 million and HIE Inverness and East Highlands is contributing £455,000 toward this total cost. Dr Jun Wei is senior researcher with the Ness Foundation and is a reader in genetics with UHI.