

BOARD MINUTE

26 AUGUST 2025

Highlands and Islands Enterprise

APPROVED



BOARD MEETING COINNEAMH BÙIRD

**MINUTE OF THE HIE BOARD MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 26 AUGUST 2025, STARTING AT 09:00
IN AN LÒCHRAN, INVERNESS CAMPUS**

PRESENT (INVERNESS) Angus Campbell (*Interim Chair*)
Stuart Black (*Chief Executive*)
Allan Clow
Simon Cotton
Freda Newton
Ailsa Raeburn
Calum Ross
Anna Salgado
David Wilson

PRESENT (ONLINE) Keith Nicholson

IN ATTENDANCE (INVERNESS)

Mary Bowman	Shadow Board member
Sandra Dunbar	Director of Corporate Services
Martin Johnson	Director of Strategy and Regional Economy
Karen Moncrieff	Director of Human Resources
David Oxley	Director of Strategic Projects
Joanna Peteranna	Director of Area Operations
Chris Roberts	Head of Communications
Anne-Marie Martin	Deputy Director, Regional Economic Development, Scottish Government
Andrew Carton	Team Leader (HIE), Enterprise Agency Sponsorship, Scottish Government
Charlie Lawrence	Head of Property and Infrastructure, item 2.1
Graeme Adair	Construction Frameworks Manager, item 2.1
Elain MacRae	Head of Energy, item 3.1
James Gibbs	Director of Freeport Delivery, item 2.2
[Name redacted for data protection]	Senior Project Manager, Cairngorm, item 3.2
Peter Dennis	Project Manager, Cairngorm, item 3.2
[Named redacted for data protection]	Senior Research Manager, item 3.4
[Name redacted for data protection]	Senior Research Officer, item 3.4
Anna Allan	Head of Marketing, item 3.7
Lorna Gregson-MacLeod	Head of Planning and Partnerships, item 4.1
[Name redacted for data protection]	Management Accountant, item 4.2
[Name redacted for data protection]	Business Improvement Manager, item 4.3

IN ATTENDANCE (ONLINE)

Margaret McSporran	Head of Community Wealth Building, item 3.4
Tim Cullen	Director, Business Development & Partnerships, Great British Energy, item 3.6

1 **STANDING ITEMS** **CUSPAIREAN COTHROMACH**

1.1 **Welcome and apologies**

The Interim Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies had been received from Melanie Collett and Rachel Hunter. Keith Nicholson had advised that he would need to leave the meeting between 10.00am and 11.00am.

1.2 **Declarations of interest**

Ailsa Raeburn declared an interest in items 2.2 and 3.1 due to her role as a Board member of Crown Estate Scotland and would leave the meeting when these items were discussed.

Mary Bowman declared an interest in items 2.2 and 3.1 due to her involvement with Highland Deephaven Ltd and would leave the meeting when these items were discussed.

The following transparency statements were given:

Item	Board member	Transparency statement
1.5	Simon Cotton	Involvement in business that may apply to HIE grant scheme
1.5	Anna Salgado	Involvement in business that may apply to HIE grant scheme
2.1	Allan Clow	Related party interest in Scottish Children's Reporter Administration, which is in discussion with HIE over a potential property transaction.

1.3 **Draft minute of the Board meeting held on 1 July 2025**

The minute was approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

1.4 **Matters arising from the minutes and action grid**

It was noted that a new Chair for Rothesay Pavilion had not yet been appointed.

There were no other matters arising.

1.5 **Chair and Chief Executive's update**

The Board noted a summary of significant activities and issues that were currently being dealt with by HIE employees and were not covered elsewhere on the agenda. There was discussion on the following items:

- **Legal matters**

[Paragraph removed in the interests of the effective conduct of public affairs, and due to commercial sensitivity].

- **Islands Business Resilience Fund**

[Paragraph removed in the interests of the effective conduct of public affairs].

- **HIE funds**

[Paragraph removed in the interests of the effective conduct of public affairs, and due to commercial sensitivity]. Other programmes, including Young Business Capital Grants and AI readiness, were performing well and work was under way to deliver Pathways to Start, a pilot initiative funded by the Scottish Government to support underrepresented groups to develop business ideas.

- **Machrihanish**

HIE was progressing plans to demolish the paint and blast facility and administration building and had submitted an application to the Scottish Government for 'spend to save' funding to pay for this.

- **Arnish**

Offshore Wind Investment Programme funding had been confirmed for the Arnish Road upgrade, which was expected to start soon.

[Paragraph removed due to commercial sensitivity].

- **SGL**

SGL, which operates the UK's only carbon fibre factory, was restructuring. *[Paragraph removed due to commercial sensitivity].* HIE staff were maintaining close contact with SGL and had held meetings with senior management as well as representatives of the UK and Scottish Governments.

- **Global Energy Group**

Global Energy Group (GEG) had agreed the sale of three of its group companies including Port of Nigg to long term investor, Mitsui & Co Europe Ltd, a subsidiary of Mitsui & Co Ltd., together with, Mitsui O.S.K. Lines Ltd (MOL). HIE consent was required for this change and had been granted after due diligence, including Russian sanctions checks, and engagement with the Scottish Government.

In discussion, it was confirmed that GEG's obligations to HIE in relation to recent investment in the Nigg Inner East Quay project would transfer to the new company.

- *[Item removed due to commercial sensitivity].*

- **Scottish Government / policy update**

HIE had received its Letter of Strategic Guidance from the Deputy First Minister and was content that its new operating plan was well aligned.

It was noted that the UK Government had published its industrial strategy following a multi-year funding review and that a summary had been provided to the Board.

- **Organisational development**

As part of its commitment to leadership development and succession planning, HIE had joined the Henley Partnership Programme, a provider of leadership development programmes and events. HIE's membership would start in September.

HIE's mentoring programme for 2025/26 would open for applications in autumn for colleagues interested in both mentor and mentee roles.

The Director of HR confirmed that HIE was likely to follow the Scottish Government's current two-year pay deal offer. HR and Finance were working together and would consult the sponsorship team in government before submitting a formal business case.

- **Chair and Chief Executive engagement**

[Paragraph removed in the interests of the effective conduct of public affairs].

A meeting with GB Energy had been very positive and valuable in heightening awareness of the scale of opportunity present in the Highlands and Islands. The Board welcomed the new Memorandum of Understanding between HIE and GB Energy, which was seen as a positive development to build a positive relationship and attract future investment into the region.

2 DECISIONS **CO-DHÙNAIDHEAN**

The following item was taken out of sequence to provide context for item 2.1.

2.1 Programme of property and infrastructure: Capex projects 2025-30

Charlie Lawrence and Graeme Adair joined the meeting.

The Head of Property and Infrastructure and the Construction Frameworks Manager delivered an update on progress with delivering HIE's 2024 programme of property investment that had been approved by the Board in August 2024 *[part of sentence removed in the interests of the effective conduct of public affairs]* This showed that the majority of works that were proposed at that time had been progressed.

They then set out an ambitious programme to establish a new pipeline of further property and infrastructure projects over the next three to five years in support of HIE's strategic objectives and Scottish Government policies, including net zero transition. Overall, *[part of sentence removed in the interests of the effective conduct of public affairs]*, although it was recognised that delivery would depend on future budget availability among other factors.

At this time, the Board was not being asked to make an investment decision, but to endorse the overall approach of a forward-looking programme, noting that this was expected to evolve over time and that each project would be re-assessed to determine whether it remained a priority before progressing with due diligence. The majority of the projects currently in scope were expected to be able to be funded through capital expenditure, although some might require revenue funding.

Board members welcomed the forward looking approach that was being taken. Discussion highlighted a range of issues, including affordability and uncertainty over utilities capacity and provision across the region, including electricity supply, which was vital for both small and large scale projects. It was noted that property investments could create opportunities to generate revenue, however it was also important to consider exit strategies at the outset.

Members observed that discussions with HIE staff on property strategy had been very helpful and welcomed plans to explore mixed use developments, housing opportunities and collaboration with community organisations. The prospect of investment benefiting smaller construction firms in the region, either as contractors or sub-contractors, was also welcomed.

Keith Nicholson left the meeting.

In response to a comment, HIE staff provided assurance that images portraying small business units at Inverness Campus were purely indicative and did not represent actual designs. Staff also emphasised that the current list reflected known opportunities and priorities and would be reviewed regularly in consultation with HIE area and sectoral teams and external partners. It was agreed that future iterations of the programme will be brought back to the Board.

The Board endorsed the programme, which will be managed by the HIE Business Infrastructure Team and delivered where appropriate through the use of existing frameworks. They also agreed that a master programme would be developed to show when projects could be delivered and including a corresponding cashflow. It was agreed that all projects included in the paper could progress to due diligence, with appraisal papers being brought back to the appropriate delegated authority, and that robust procurement methodology would be applied, in line with HIE's usual procedures.

Charlie Lawrence and Graeme Adair left the meeting.

3.1 Offshore Wind Investment Programme

(This item was taken out of sequence to provide context for the item 2.1).

Ailsa Raeburn and Mary Bowman left the meeting.

Elain MacRae joined the meeting.

The Head of Energy presented a paper updating the Board on the scale of investment and spread of activity in offshore wind in the Highlands and Islands, along with a short-term forecast of how the sector is expected to develop. This followed on from an overview given to the Board in July 2025 and focused on

investments in transformational infrastructure projects that HIE was supporting through the Scottish Government's Offshore Wind Investment Programme (OWIP).

Offshore wind presented the biggest economic opportunity for the Highlands and Islands in generations, with recent research showing it represented around 40% of the £100bn potential of over 250 regional transformational opportunities. HIE had a major role to play in realising benefits for the region's businesses and communities and the wider Scottish economy.

HIE was currently responsible for *[part of sentence removed in the interests of the effective conduct of public affairs]* of OWIP investment in the region and good progress was being made on major projects including the Sumitomo cable factory at Nigg and Kishorn fabrication yard in Lochaber. Benefits realisation was a key area of focus, with work in hand to generate supply chain opportunities for businesses across the region and a positive relationship was being developed with GB Energy.

The Board welcomed the update, which provided valuable context to support investment decisions. Noting that the paper emphasised the importance of the region's natural and built resources and other assets, members added that HIE's leadership role in the sector was another vital element driving growth. Members also agreed with the Chief Executive that, while the large amount of additional investment being attracted to the region through OWIP was a great opportunity, it also presented HIE with significant challenges in terms of cashflow management that should not be overlooked.

Elain MacRae left the meeting.

2.2 *[Item removed in the interests of the effective conduct of public affairs, and due to commercial sensitivity].*

Anna Salgado left the meeting.

James Gibbs left the meeting.

3 **UPDATES** **CUNNTASAN AS ÙR**

3.3 Space

For timing reasons, this item was taken out of sequence before item 3.2

Ailsa Raeburn and Mary Bowman rejoined the meeting.

The Director of Strategic Projects presented a report on activity in the space sector, focusing primarily on the current status of the Sutherland Spaceport project and including updates on SaxaVord Spaceport in Shetland, Spaceport 1 in the Outer Hebrides and Machrihanish.

Orbex had paused construction at Sutherland Spaceport in December 2024 when the company decided to focus resources on developing its vehicles and move first launch to SaxaVord Spaceport. Orbex subsidiary Sutherland Spaceport Ltd continued to hold the lease for the site, thereby preserving the company's option to resume development at a future date.

[Paragraph removed in the interests of the effective conduct of public affairs, and due to commercial sensitivity].

[Paragraph removed in the interests of the effective conduct of public affairs, and due to commercial sensitivity].

[Paragraph removed in the interests of the effective conduct of public affairs, and due to commercial sensitivity].

Keith Nicholson rejoined the meeting.

[Paragraph removed in the interests of the effective conduct of public affairs, and due to commercial sensitivity].

[Paragraph removed in the interests of the effective conduct of public affairs, and due to commercial sensitivity].

Members welcomed the update.

3.2 Cairngorm

Anna Salgado rejoined the meeting.

Peter Dennis and *[Name redacted for data protection]* joined the meeting.

The Cairngorm project team delivered an update on matters relating to Cairngorm.

[Paragraph removed in the interests of the effective conduct of public affairs].

The Board was asked to endorse plans for HIE to recruit new members and a new Chair to the Board of CMSL, and to adjust CMSL Board remuneration rates to align with those of the HIE Board. Preparations were also in hand for HIE's upcoming appearance before the Public Audit Committee of the Scottish Parliament on 17 September. It was also noted that the arrival in post of CMSL's new Chief Executive in June had prompted largely positive media coverage.

Turning to the funicular, the Project Manager confirmed that contractors had been back on site during May and June to resolve a number of defects *[part of sentence removed in the interests of the effective conduct of public affairs]*. A further short period of work was planned for September, which would cause the funicular to come out of service for three days *[part of sentence removed in the interests of the effective conduct of public affairs]*. *[Sentence removed in the interests of the effective conduct of public affairs]*.

Board members raised questions concerning budget figures in the Board paper and it was agreed that staff would provide clarification after the meeting. Members also noted that work was ongoing to agree a three-year business plan and key performance indicators with the new Chief Executive of CMSL, who was actively reviewing ways to improve efficiency and income generation.

[Paragraph removed in the interests of the effective conduct of public affairs].

[Paragraph removed in the interests of the effective conduct of public affairs].

Peter Dennis and *[Name redacted for data protection]* left the meeting.

3.4 Community wealth building in the Highlands and Islands research

Margaret McSparran, *[Name redacted for data protection]* and *[Name redacted for data protection]* joined the meeting.

HIE's Senior Research Manager opened this session by outlining findings from an in-depth study of community wealth building (CWB), published under the title, 'Our Place, Our Prosperity'.

Some 284 community groups had participated in the study, with a high proportion from island and remote rural areas. The findings emphasised the integral role such groups play in rural economies, including providing essential services and safeguarding assets and amenities, often with an entrepreneurial spirit.

However, it also found there was a cost to them for doing so and capacity issues and uncertain or declining grant funding were key concerns.

Asset ownership was more evident in remote rural and island areas, most commonly buildings and land. Though typically revenue-generating, these were not always profit-making. Ongoing management and maintenance of assets was another area of concern. Asset-owning groups with trading subsidiaries were making disproportionate contributions in supporting the flow of wealth back to communities but facing challenges and constraints.

Engagement in public sector procurement was low. Service level agreements (SLAs) were more prevalent, particularly in island communities, but some groups were struggling with negotiating appropriate contracts sometimes running important services at a loss. Groups were taking a range of actions to support transition to net zero, but required support, including help to carry out effective baselining and measurement.

There was strong interest in future asset ownership, although challenges included the need for skills, advice and expertise and the risk of volunteer fatigue. Obtaining grant funding and meeting grant conditions were also among the challenges identified. There was also considerable interest in strategic opportunities such as community benefit funds and renewable energy generation, although the benefits of these were not perceived as equitable. A strong appetite for collaboration, including with the public sector, was evident in realising opportunities.

The Head of Community Wealth Building noted that the Scottish Parliament was expected to consider the new Community Wealth Building Bill in the in spring 2026. In a changing landscape, it was important for HIE to analyse the findings from the study and determine next steps and a further paper outlining proposed actions would be brought to the Board later this year.

The Board welcomed the timeliness and thoroughness of the research and underlined the need for a strategic approach going forward. This should include identifying opportunities and responsibilities for other organisations and not only HIE itself. Members expressed the view that there was a need for an equitable, region-wide approach to community benefit funds.

It was important for HIE to use the research findings to influence debate and decision-making around community wealth building, including within the Scottish Government. Staff confirmed that HIE had been engaged with Scottish Government working groups preparing the Community Wealth Building Bill and noted that the next step would be to take the study findings to the Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership (HIREP).

Regarding the upcoming Bill, the Board stressed the need for flexibility to ensure that implementation would be adapted to meet the distinct needs and opportunities of individual regions and not a blanket approach that was the same for all parts of the country.

The Board thanked HIE staff for their work to date and looked forward to further discussion on this important issue.

Margaret McSporran, [Name redacted for data protection] and [Name redacted for data protection] left the meeting.

3.5 Regional transformational opportunities research

The Director of Strategy and Regional Economy presented a paper to update the Board on progress with a range of matters following publication in May 2025 of research into regional transformational opportunities (RTOs), which had been commissioned by HIE on behalf of the Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership (HIREP).

A two-year delivery plan was being developed, setting out collaborative actions around strategic themes including: advocacy; attracting investment; housing; transport; economic and community benefits, and workforce and skills. HIE was leading on several working groups. The delivery plan would be reviewed at the HIREP Board meeting in September, following which HIE planned to engage with local, regional and national stakeholders to set out a vision of success in each local authority area in the region, along with specific actions, timescales and owners.

Staff were also working to identify the key benefits that HIE would have a direct role in supporting or influencing, such as investment, population/jobs, skills, housing and transport, and these were reflected in the organisation's 2025/26 Operating Plan. A report describing the approach being taken to ensure effective planning and prioritisation would be brought to HIE Board later this financial year.

The Board welcomed the update and discussed a range of issues. With regard to constraints affecting infrastructure and utilities, the Board was given assurance that HIE was liaising with providers, as were local authorities and the Scottish Government. The RTO research had gained a high profile following publication, which HIE was using to exert influence on decision makers, including feeding into the next Scottish infrastructure investment plan, due for publication in the autumn. The agency was also in continual dialogue with the Scottish Government to underscore the scale of opportunity in the region, and the need for investment to achieve benefits realisation.

The Board welcomed the update and thanked the Director and his team for work carried out to date.

3.7 Marketing and Communications

For timing reasons, this item was taken out of sequence before item 3.6

Anna Allan joined the meeting

The Head of Marketing and Communications presented an update on delivery of HIE's Marketing and Communications strategy, outlining progress against objectives during 2024/25 and priorities for 2025/26. These updates are delivered to the Board twice a year.

The team had performed well against targets and priorities and had adapted to reduced budgets for marketing and communications across the organisation, which had limited external agency support and increased demand on the in-house resource. A flexible approach to marketing and communications services had been maintained, working closely with Leadership Team and colleagues across HIE to prioritise efforts where they were most needed and would achieve greatest impact.

It was proposed to extend the current marketing and communications strategy to June 2026, with an updated action plan and targets, with further updates delivered to the HIE Board in December 2025 and June 2026.

Discussion focused on targeting, with the Board interested in learning how the team ensured that the right marketing and communications were reaching and engaging with the right audiences. Members welcomed steps that were being taken to increase and enhance in-house delivery of services, including media training for area and sectoral team leaders.

Local newsletters that were compiled by some area teams were informative, although it was recognised that these were not currently produced consistently across the organisation. Members also noted the improved range and quality of video case studies that were an increasingly powerful medium. The team's commitment to producing a greater proportion of content in Gaelic was also noted.

The Board thanked the Head of Marketing and Communications for the update and discussion.

Anna Allan left the meeting

3.6 Great British Energy

Tim Cullen and Frank Mitchell joined the meeting.

The Board welcomed the Non-Executive Director and the Director of Business Development and Partnerships of Great British Energy (GBE) who presented an overview of the publicly-owned energy company.

GBE was based in Aberdeen and had been set up by the UK Government in 2024 to invest in, develop, build and operate technology to increase the UK's energy independence and give communities a direct stake in the clean energy revolution. HIE was the first public body in Scotland to sign a partnership agreement with GBE, committing the two organisations to work together to identify common priorities, share information and maximise economic and community benefits of activities in the Highlands and Islands.

The organisation was still in its early stages but had already established a pipeline *[part of sentence removed due to commercial sensitivity]*. It operated three integrated delivery arms, each of which aligned well with HIE objectives. These were: clean energy; investing in local communities, and creating jobs and strengthening supply chains.

Board members engaged in discussion with the GB Energy representatives, asking questions on a range of subjects including GBE's criteria for prioritisation, which focus on areas of opportunity for the UK. In response, it was noted that floating offshore wind, for example, was a higher priority than fixed offshore wind, which GBE believed could have greater impact. Social value was emphasised as another theme that was high on the agenda and was a condition of GBE equity investment, along with supply chain engagement. Other key areas of focus included strengthening market confidence and working as an arm of government to influence regulation and policy.

The speakers acknowledged HIE's track record with community ownership and benefits, noting that GBE was taking steps to learn from HIE's expertise as it shaped its own approach. The new partnership would enable GBE to benefit from HIE's knowledge and experience in energy, which it considered unparalleled. HIE's Chief Executive welcomed this and agreed to work closely with GBE on social value in particular.

The Interim Chair thanked the GBE representatives for their attendance online and input to a valuable discussion and offered to meet in person at the earliest opportunity.

Tim Cullen and Frank Mitchell left the meeting.

4 RESOURCES AND GOVERNANCE **GOIREASAN IS RIAGHLACHAS**

4.1 Performance update

Lorna Gregson-MacLeod joined the meeting.

The Head of Planning and Partnerships reported on HIE's performance against targets for the five months from 1 April to 1 August 2025.

The picture was positive across the majority of targets and showed a stronger performance at this point in the year when compared with 2024/25, with a broad geographical spread. Points to note included measures for green capital assets and external green investment, both of which had significantly exceeded their targets and were recommended for review at the half-year point.

Performance from interventions in Inclusive Growth Focus Areas (IGFAs) was very strong overall and these were the most significant contributors to several measures. Although the figure for Jobs Supported was currently low, the report noted significant output in relation to other employment opportunities facilitated by HIE's investment.

Average wages were above target, however much of this was driven by two sectors – Energy and Life Sciences – and almost half of jobs supported by HIE overall were paying below the target level. More positively, the average wage in IGFAAs was higher than the regional average.

Areas where performance was behind straight line indicated a need for HIE to focus on support to enable clients to innovate and improve productivity. Capital asset investment in supported community organisations and social enterprises was also proving challenging, with issues identified in HIE's Community Wealth Building research (see item 3.4) impacting on outturns.

In discussion, Board members noted the impact of certain well-paid sectors, including Energy, on average wage levels and highlighted the risk of a 'two-tier economy' with jobs supported in other sectors often paying less than the regional average. The Head of Planning and Partnerships confirmed that this issue was recognised and would feature in a 10-year analysis that was being prepared for a future Board meeting and would include more detailed information on sources of salary data. It was also noted that, although innovation and productivity measures were below straight line at present, a healthy pipeline of activity gave confidence that performance in these areas would improve over the course of the year.

Low performance against the target for community capital asset investment was an area of concern and would be the subject of further analysis that would be presented to the Board in October. It was noted that many projects were in development, but funding packages were often complex and progress would depend on decisions made by other organisations, as well as HIE.

The Board thanked the Head of Planning and Partnerships for a clear and important report.

4.2 Financial statement to 31 July 2025

[Name redacted for data protection] joined the meeting.

The Director of Corporate Services and the Management Accountant presented HIE's financial statement for the period from 1 April to 31 July 2025.

This showed that HIE's *[part of sentence removed in the interests of the effective conduct of public affairs]*.
[Sentence removed in the interests of the effective conduct of public affairs].

[Paragraph removed in the interests of the effective conduct of public affairs].

Achieving a balanced budget by the year-end would require a flexible approach and agile reprofiling of budgets across HIE as project activity and cashflow requirements inevitably changed. HIE was working to achieve 75% spend by the end of December for discretionary budgets. Information was being provided to the Scottish Government on an ongoing basis to inform future budget allocations and, following the publication of the Scottish Government's medium-term financial strategy, HIE was responding to a number of new SG commissions.

[Sentence removed in the interests of the effective conduct of public affairs]. Allocations from OWIP to projects in the HIE region now exceeded *[part of sentence removed in the interests of the effective conduct of public affairs]* out of the £500m total fund. This additional funding was welcome but did bring additional risk and would require good programme management by HIE and shared risk and flexibility from the Scottish Government to accommodate project cashflow changes. HIE had discussed these risks with the Scottish Government and highlighted the requirement for appropriate ongoing revenue budget to support business case development and benefits realisation activity related to this programme.

HIE had been successful in an application to the Scottish Government Invest to Save fund, *[part of sentence removed in the interests of the effective conduct of public affairs]* towards demolition costs at Machrihanish. The Board noted, however, that the terms of this funding included repayment plus 20% and potential reduction in future budgets. It was noted that HIE had asked Scottish Government for further

clarity on these terms and held discussions with the Invest to Save Team in July. A decision on whether to accept the offer would be taken by the end of August.

Key risks and pressures included Cairngorm Mountain costs and Cairngorm Mountain (Scotland) Limited (CMSL) final operating loss, the final outturn for which would be outwith HIE's control. *[Sentence removed in the interests of the effective conduct of public affairs, and due to commercial sensitivity].*

The Board welcomed confirmation of Scottish Government funding for both Delivery Resource – Community Development Officers, via a revenue budget transfer, and for Scottish Land Fund activity, in the form of a revenue grant. It was also noted that actions driven by HIE's Best Value plan would continue to realise cost savings and identify additional sources of other income.

[Name redacted for data protection] left the meeting.

4.3 Corporate risk register

[Name redacted for data protection] joined the meeting.

The Board welcomed the most recent version of HIE's corporate risk register, which had been refreshed following the Board meeting on 1 July 2025.

The Business Improvement Manager highlighted that a risk relating to electricity grid capacity constraints had been reduced. While this remained an important topic affecting businesses and communities across the region, there were strong indications that the electricity industry was taking steps to address the issue. The Board noted this point but expressed the view that it may be premature to reduce the risk before progress had been made. It was agreed that the scoring of this risk would be reconsidered.

[Paragraph removed in the interests of the effective conduct of public affairs, and due to commercial sensitivity].

The Board welcomed the refreshed register, noting that an audit was under way to ensure that all projects with an approval greater than £1m had dedicated risk registers in place and that engagement was taking place with teams across HIE to ensure that risk registers remained up-to-date and reflected best practice.

[Name redacted for data protection] left the meeting.

5 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION **CUSPAIREAN AIRSON FIOSRACHADH**

5.1 All-staff conference 2025

The Board endorsed proposals for HIE's 2025 all-staff conference, scheduled to take place on 26 September, noting that Board members were invited to participate.

5.2 Any other business

There was no other business.

5.3 Forthcoming meeting dates

The next meeting of the Risk and Assurance Committee will take place on 18 September.

The next meeting of the HIE Board will be in Inverness on 28 October as part of a two-day visit to the Inner Moray Firth Area (27-28 October). This will include a series of visits to projects and a stakeholder engagement meeting.

The Chief Executive noted that HIE would be appearing before both the Public Audit Committee and the Economy and Fair work Committee in the Scottish Parliament on 17 September.

Chris Roberts
Head of Communications
26 August 2025

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