

BOARD MINUTE

29 APRIL 2025

Highlands and Islands Enterprise

APPROVED



BOARD MEETING COINNEAMH BÙIRD

**MINUTE OF THE HIE BOARD MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 29 APRIL 2025, STARTING AT 08:30
IN JANS CONFERENCE AND TRAINING CENTRE, PORTREE**

PRESENT (PORTREE)

Alistair Dodds (*Chair*)
Angus Campbell (*Deputy 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 (PORTREE)

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
Joanna Peteranna	Director of Area Operations
Alastair Nicolson	Area Manager, Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross, item 2.1

IN ATTENDANCE (ONLINE)

Rachel Hunter	Director of Enterprise and Community Support
David Oxley	Director of Strategic Projects (items 1-1 – 2.6)
Chris Roberts	Head of Communications
Anne-Marie Martin	Deputy Director, Regional Economic Development, Scottish Government (items 1.7 – 3.1)
Andrew Carton	Team Leader (HIE), Enterprise Agency Sponsorship, Scottish Government
Graeme Adair	Construction Frameworks Manager, items 2.1, 2.2
James Gibbs	Director of Freeport Delivery, item 2.3
Charlie Lawrence	Head of Property and Infrastructure, item 2.4
Kathleen Stewart	Area Team Leader, Innse Gall, item 2.4
Elaine Hanton	Cairngorm Project Lead, items 2.5, 2.6, 3.1
James Palmer	Project Manager, Construction, items 2.5, 2.6, 3.1
Stephanie Andrew	Area Team Leader, Inner Moray Firth, items 2.5, 2.6, 3.1
Andrea Rutherford	Head of Digital Policy and Delivery, items 2.7, 3.2
[Name removed for data protection]	Senior Development Manager, Enterprise and Community Support, item 2.7
Iain Hamilton	Head of Creative Industries, item 3.3
[Name removed for data protection]	Head of Gaelic, Innse Gall, item 3.4
[Name removed for data protection]	Development Manager, Gaelic, item 3.4

1 **STANDING ITEMS**

CUSPAIREAN COTHROMACH

1.1 Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies had been received from Melanie Collett.

1.2 Declarations of interest

Calum Ross declared a related party interest in Elevator, which had been contracted to deliver the Cruthachadh Chothroman / Shaping Opportunities programme, as noted in the update paper on Gaelic, item 3.4.

Simon Cotton and Anna Salgado declared an interest in item 2.7, as there was potential for their businesses to become future applicants to the proposed Digital and Technology Adoption programme.

The following transparency statements were given:

Item	Board member	Transparency statement
3.3	Alistair Dodds Simon Cotton	Board member, Highland Print Studio Professional involvement in creative industries sector

1.3 Draft minute of the Board meeting held on 25 February 2025

An error in the date on the cover sheet was noted and would be corrected. Apart from this, the minute was approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

1.4 Matters arising from the minute and action grid

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

In relation to a proposed investment in Kishorn Port, the Area Manager, Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross, informed the Board that the Competition and Markets Authority was expected to publish a report that HIE had requested from the Subsidy Advice Unit on 9 May. It was agreed that the Board would be updated on the outcome.

Other matters arising from the minute would be covered in the Chair and Chief Executive's update and under agenda items at today's meeting.

1.7 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**

Representatives of HIE and Cairngorm Mountain (Scotland) Ltd had been invited to appear before the Public Audit Committee of the Scottish Parliament in June to discuss matters relating to Cairngorm. As there were likely to be outstanding contractual issues between HIE and its main contractor at that time, which would inhibit open discussion, HIE was seeking a deferral.

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

Anne-Marie Martin joined the meeting.

- **Ferries resilience fund**

The Board welcomed news that a £4.4m Scottish Government fund to support the resilience of west coast island businesses that had been impacted by recent disruption to ferry services had been announced by the Transport Secretary at an event in South Uist. HIE had made representations to the Government for such a fund to be established and would be the administering body. Eligibility criteria were current being discussed, as was the list of islands to be included, with HIE favouring a targeted approach to benefit those that had been impacted most strongly.

The Chair observed that there was a potential for reputational risk if the scheme did not meet the needs of affected islands. It was agreed that the Board would be kept informed of progress, including any difficulties that might arise in reaching agreement with the Scottish Government regarding the scope of the fund and criteria for applicants.

In response to a question, the Director of Corporate Services confirmed that HIE would seek to be able to recover additional revenue costs that the organisation may incur from administering the fund.

- **Offshore wind**

The Scottish Government's Offshore Wind Investment Programme (OWIP) board had confirmed willingness to proceed with several major projects that HIE had put forward, although formal approval would be subject to the Accountable Officer template. *[Sentence removed in the interests of the effective conduct of public affairs, and due to commercial sensitivity]*. Appraisal papers would be considered at future meetings of the HIE Board and Leadership Team.

The Board welcomed the update, noting that HIE's success in achieving positive outcomes from OWIP would attract significant additional capital to benefit local areas across the region.

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

- **Inverness Campus**

[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].

The Board also noted that a compulsory purchase order for land required by Transport Scotland for the Inverness East Link Road was progressing.

- **Arnish**

The Board welcomed progress, *[part of sentence removed in the interests of the effective conduct of public affairs, and due to commercial sensitivity]*.

- **Policy update / Scottish Government**

It was anticipated that a call for board members for the new skills agency would be made in the summer. HIE would seek to ensure regional representation by encouraging applications from the Highlands and Islands.

- **Scottish Government-funded posts**

A grant offer had been received in relation to HIE's role in administering the Scottish Land Fund. Scottish Government funding for local delivery resource in the region had not yet been confirmed, however, and the Chair and Chief Executive had written to the Minister for Employment and Investment, seeking urgent resolution. The Team Leader (HIE), Enterprise Agency Sponsorship, was able to provide a verbal update, indicating that a recommendation for approval had progressed to the Minister for Public Finance, whose decision was expected imminently.

- **Organisational development**

The Director of Human Resources confirmed that, following market testing, it had been decided not to fill the post of Head of Finance. HR will work with the Director of Corporate Services to review the structure of the Finance team, identifying development opportunities and future resource requirements. Opportunities to integrate Finance more fully with other teams were being examined.

- **Chair and Chief Executive engagement**

The process of recruiting a new Chair for HIE was under way, led by the Scottish Government Public Appointments team. An interview panel had been formed and was due to hold its first meetings during May.

The Chair and Chief Executive had their quarterly meeting with the Deputy First Minister on 24 April. Matters discussed included the Accountable Officer template, the Scottish Government's annual letter of Guidance to HIE, the Offshore Wind Investment Programme, regional transformational opportunities, inward investment and HIE's performance in 2024/25. Scottish Government funding for the Scottish Land Fund and local delivery resource, as noted above, was also raised.

The Chair reported that the First Minister had commented very favourably on the present levels of performance achieved by Scotland's enterprise agencies and expressed his thanks to HIE's Leadership Team and colleagues, and to the Board.

The Director of Strategy and Regional Economy reported on a recent skills summit, organised in Inverness by Skills Development Scotland and Prosper, that he and the Chair had attended. A key theme was the need for collaboration between SDS, UHI and industry, and HIE's research into regional transformational opportunities had been previewed prior to its upcoming presentation at the next Convention of the Highlands and Islands.

The Chair announced changes to the Risk and Assurance Committee, with Ailsa Raeburn joining and Calum Ross stepping down. The change was being made to enhance continuity and would be introduced following the next Committee meeting in June. The Chair expressed his appreciation to Calum Ross for his contributions to the work of the Committee and thanked Ailsa Raeburn for taking on the additional responsibility.

The day before the Board meeting, members had benefited from a well-organised and insightful visit to Kishorn Port and were grateful to Ferguson Transport and Leiths, the partners behind the joint venture. The same day had seen a well-attended engagement session with local business and community representatives. This had generated valuable discussion on a range of issues, including community benefit, and it would be important for HIE to continue dialogue with local authorities on this issue in particular. Questions from local businesses were noted and would be followed up by HIE staff.

2 DECISIONS

CO-DHÙNAIDHEAN

2.1 Contract award for the SBU Golspie development

Graeme Adair joined the meeting.

The Construction Frameworks Manager presented a paper requesting approval to award a contract for the construction of small business units (SBUs) at Golspie Business Park *[part of sentence removed in the interests of the effective conduct of public affairs, and due to commercial sensitivity]*.

The Golspie development had been included in a programme of capital projects that the Board had approved in August 2024. It was designed to address market failure in an inclusive growth focus area and would provide modern premises that were well-suited for a range of uses, including supply chains for the green freeport and onshore electricity network and for the wider offshore wind sector. The design and build contract had been tendered by HIE's prime contractor, attracting three tenders. The preferred supplier was Morrison Construction (the trading name in Scotland for Galliford Try Construction), whose bid came to just under £3.46m.

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

The Board approved the project. It was also agreed that a briefing paper on HIE's approach to procurement, including price / quality weighting, would be prepared and submitted for discussion at a future meeting of the Risk and Assurance Committee.

2.2 Inverness Campus – sale of land to Transport Scotland (compulsory purchase)

The Construction Frameworks Manager updated the Board on progress with a compulsory purchase order to enable Transport Scotland to acquire almost 46 acres of land owned by HIE at Inverness Campus for the planned Inverness East Link trunk road.

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

HIE staff were recommending that the development agency should work collaboratively with Transport Scotland and agree to the appointment of the District Valuation Surveyor to make an impartial assessment of compensation. *[Sentence removed in the interests of the effective conduct of public affairs].*

In discussion, the Board expressed strong support for the East Link Road being delivered as quickly as possible. *[Sentence removed in the interests of the effective conduct of public affairs].*

The Board approved the recommendations and delegated authority to the Chief Executive to reach agreement *[part of sentence removed in the interests of the effective conduct of public affairs].*

Graeme Adair left the meeting.

2.3 Sale of plot on Phase 2 of Inverness Campus to GE Capital

James Gibbs and Charlie Lawrence joined the meeting.

The Director of Freeport Delivery requested the Board's approval to proceed with the sale of plot 20B on Inverness Campus to GE Capital Ltd (GEC).

The company intended to build new office premises within the Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport (ICFGF) tax site, creating 50 new jobs. ICFGF had agreed that the proposed land sale would meet its objectives and align with key sectors. *[Sentences 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].

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

The Board approved the sale of the plot to GEC at the recommended sale price.

James Gibbs left the meeting.

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

3.1 Cairngorm update

Note: *This update was taken out of sequence to provide context for items 2.5 and 2.6.*

Elaine Hanton, James Palmer and Stephanie Andrew joined the meeting.

HIE's Cairngorm Project Lead, Project Manager, Construction, and Area Team Leader, Inner Moray Firth provided an update on matters relating to Cairngorm Mountain.

The Board had been advised at its previous meeting on 25 February that the funicular railway was expected to return to service imminently, following completion of all safety-critical matters in the remediation programme. This had been achieved on 27 February and the service had operated daily since then. It was known, however, that a further suspension of service would be required to deal with defects and snagging items that did not affect safety but could prove detrimental to structural durability over the long term. Inspections and other work to agree a complete list of these items was currently ongoing.

Operator Cairngorm Mountain (Scotland) Ltd (CMSL) had scheduled a two-week shutdown from 12 May, which was traditionally a quiet time for the business, to carry out annual maintenance works. HIE's contractor Balfour Beatty would be able to return to site during that period for the snagging programme, which HIE expected would take a minimum of one further week to complete. Following this, it was planned that the funicular would again return to service and Balfour Beatty would address the remainder of the snagging list through evening work.

In total, HIE expected conclusion of the remediation programme would take six weeks. *[Sentence 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].

CMSL's new Chief Executive had been announced and would take up the position on 16 June. The return of the funicular had had a positive impact on customer numbers, however this had been limited by very poor snowfall during February, March and April.

It was also noted that HIE and CMSL had been invited to appear before the Public Audit Committee in the Scottish Parliament *[part of sentence removed in the interests of the effective conduct of public affairs, and due to commercial sensitivity].*

It was also noted that, with HIE's Project Manager, Construction due to leave the organisation this week, an engineer from Wave Energy Scotland had been appointed to take on his Cairngorm role, working two days a week.

Anne-Marie Martin left 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].

The Board noted the update report and the actions that were being taken. Noting James Palmer's upcoming departure, the Chair expressed the Board's best wishes for his future and appreciation for his hard work and clear reporting on Cairngorm over several years, which had provided much-needed assurance.

James Palmer left the meeting.

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

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

3.2 Digital update

Note: *This update was taken out of sequence to provide context for item 2.7*

Andrea Rutherford joined the meeting.

The Head of Digital Policy and Delivery provided an update on HIE's digital infrastructure activities. This covered the conclusion of clawback arrangements under the Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband project, research completed, and proposed activity going forward.

The paper outlined progress during 2024/25 of the Scottish Government R100 broadband programme and Scottish Broadband Voucher Scheme, the UK Government Project Gigabit initiative, and the Shared Rural Network to deliver mobile connectivity. It also covered progress made with HIE workstreams, funded via the Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband (DSSB) clawback that HIE has received, to deliver three digital themes. These were:

- identification of digital issues and opportunities;
- support innovation to reduce the digital divide, and
- influencing to maximise digital investments by others.

All the funding partners of DSSB had endorsed this activity as an appropriate use of these clawback funds and agreed that they would not request their share. Funding partners had also agreed that HIE's internal Digital Advisory Group would provide oversight and input into digital projects.

The Board welcomed the update, noting progress on digital themes and activity that HIE planned to undertake in 2025/26.

2.7 Digital and Technology Adoption (DaTA) programme 2025-30

Simon Cotton and Anna Salgado left the meeting.

[Named removed for data protection] joined the meeting.

The Senior Development Manager, Enterprise and Community Support, presented a paper seeking approval for a proposed £3.84m HIE Digital and Technology Adoption (DaTA) programme 2025-2030 that had been designed to support businesses, social enterprises, and community and voluntary organisations throughout the Highlands and Islands with digital transformation.

The programme was expected to support at least 400 organisations with awareness-raising activities; up to 70 organisations with digital capital grants, and a further 10 organisations per annum with specialist advice grants. Spread over five years, funding from the programme would comprise *[part of sentence removed in the interests of the effective conduct of public affairs, and due to commercial sensitivity]* capital from gainshare funding that HIE had received from Openreach following conclusion of the Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband (DSSB) project (see item 3.2) and *[part of sentence removed in the interests of the*

effective conduct of public affairs, and due to commercial sensitivity] revenue from HIE's Enterprise and Community Support directorate, which would pay for the specialist advice element.

Board members welcomed the proposal, noting the potential for the programme to reach a broad range of business and community organisations across the region, including many in inclusive growth focus areas.

Clarification was sought as to why HIE did not propose to issue an open call for applications and staff explained that the recommended approach was based on experience showing that open calls for previous programmes had tended to attract a high proportion of ineligible applications. It was considered that a more targeted approach would hold out a stronger prospect of being efficient and effective.

The Board were also given an assurance that the DaTA programme would be well promoted across the region by area teams and with support from HIE Marketing and Communications, including the creation of compelling case studies. In addition, it was confirmed that the programme would be subject to review and the Board agreed that staff should use this as an opportunity to reconsider whether an open call approach would be appropriate.

In further discussion, members highlighted the potential of other schemes, including the forthcoming resilience fund for islands affected by ferry disruption, to help identify organisations that might not currently be known to HIE and would be able to benefit from the DaTA programme. In response to a question on criteria, the Senior Development Manager explained that cases would be considered on their merits by project officers, with decisions based on individual business needs. Consistency of decision making would be assessed as part of the programme review process.

The Board approved the recommendations and thanked all HIE staff who were involved in creating the new programme.

*Andrea Rutherford and [Name removed for data protection] left the meeting.
Simon Cotton and Anna Salgado rejoined the meeting.*

3 **UPDATES** **CUNNTASAN AS ÙR**

3.3 Creative industries update

Iain Hamilton joined the meeting.

The Head of Creative Industries provided an update on how HIE was proposing to reconfigure its support for the sector.

A new approach was proposed, driven by challenges in the current fiscal environment and the conclusion of the Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal XPO North Digital programme in January 2025, as well as post-Covid changes in market opportunities and consumption patterns and the needs of the sector itself.

The Creative Industries team was now part of the Innovation team and future priorities would focus on:

- enhancing digital skills and capacity among young people;
- developing direct-to-consumer (DTC) opportunities and specialist advice to support business growth through global platforms;
- leveraging digital innovation to unlock new markets and revenue streams, and
- working in partnership to attract investment into creative industries organisations and infrastructure across the region.

The Creative Industries team would continue to engage with clients and be a strong advocate for the sector while working to maintain existing networks and partnerships and develop new ones. It would also

encourage the adoption of direct-to-consumer digital business models that enable creators to sell directly to audiences and reduce reliance on intermediaries. In parallel, area teams would support creative industries through client engagement, including providing direct funding or supporting businesses to attract additional investment to help them grow.

The Board welcomed the update and thanked the Head of Creative Industries for a helpful and revealing paper. In discussion, members commented positively on the value of creative industries' contribution to the economy in their own right as well as areas of overlap with cultural activities including Gaelic and with other sectors including tourism, universities and manufacturing. The new approach was endorsed.

Iain Hamilton left the meeting.

3.4 HIE and Gaelic – Ar canan, ar cothrom / Our language, our Opportunity

[Names removed for data protection] joined the meeting.

HIE's Head of Gaelic, Innse Gall, and Development Manager, Gaelic presented a bilingual report to update the Board on the agency's work related to Gaelic, noting that Gaelic language and culture are both an economic asset for Scotland and an intrinsic part of regional and national identity. The report focused on delivery of HIE's Gaelic Language Plan, highlighting five specific actions from 2024/25:

- launch of internal HIE Gaelic awareness training and online learning course;
- launch of two pilot programmes – *Cruthachadh Chothroman: A' Cur ri Fàs san àm ri Teachd / Shaping Opportunities: Fuelling Future Growth**, and *Maoin Dùbhlain Dhidseatach Gàidhlig / Gaelic Digital Challenge Fund*;
- *Seachdain na Gàidhlig / World Gaelic Week* – Internal and external communications campaign
- HIE support for FilmG, an annual short film competition, and
- two significant capital projects moving to delivery phase – Cnoc Soilleir and the Calanais Visitor Centre.

Looking forward, the paper described HIE's ambition to maintain progress with all of these activities, while also doing more to enhance client engagement and partnership working in relation to Gaelic. Consideration was also being given to extending HIE's approach to reflect the scope of the Scottish Languages Bill, which was currently going through parliament.

In discussion, the Board highlighted the important role played by Gaelic teachers to promote learning, noting that support for the language played a central role in driving economic and cultural impacts. HIE's commitment to partnership working was also endorsed. In response to comments, the Director of Area Operations provided assurance that, while support for language was prominent in HIE's plan, the agency also had strong ambitions for cultural development and was engaged with the Scottish Government Gaelic and Economy teams to maximise the full range of opportunities presented by Gaelic language and culture.

HIE staff confirmed that consideration was currently being given to Gaelic conditionality, as appropriate, for clients receiving HIE support, and a paper would be presented to HIE's Leadership Team.

The Board welcomed the significant work being undertaken in support of Gaelic and noted the benefits this would have on the economy and culture of the Highlands and Islands.

[Names removed for data protection] left the meeting.

4 RESOURCES AND GOVERNANCE **GOIREASAN IS RIAGHLACHAS**

4.1 Draft financial outturn

The Director of Corporate Services presented HIE's 2024/25 draft financial outturn statement, noting that it would be subject to final adjustments and audit by Audit Scotland.

The draft statement showed that HIE had achieved a balanced outturn at the financial year-end. The capital outturn of £42.5m compared to an opening budget of £39.6m and included additional BT clawback and disposal of share income of £1.9m as well as slippage in spend on the new Offshore Wind Investment Programme (OWIP) of £1.5m. The draft outturn for revenue was £32.2m compared to an opening budget of £31.3m.

The Board commented favourably on several aspects of the statement, noting in particular HIE's success in securing significant additional capital income of £19.3m during the financial year, which represented an 83% increase over the baseline capital budget of £23.2m. In addition, best value and efficiency activity had enabled HIE to deliver within a tight revenue budget. As pressure on the revenue budget is set to increase further in future years, it was agreed that work in this area would be increasingly important.

The Director reported that staff were undertaking a lessons learned exercise and would implement actions including introducing spend targets and activity relating to management of external funds alongside HIE's core budget. In discussion, while welcoming the additional investment, members voiced concern that the need for HIE to draw down OWIP funding on an annual basis added to the risk of budget slippage when managing high-value and complex projects, each of which was expected to be delivered over several years.

The Board welcomed the statement and thanked the Director and HIE staff for their work in achieving a balanced outturn, attracting additional investment funding and continuing efforts to improve efficiency.

4.2 Corporate risk register

The Board welcomed the latest HIE corporate risk register. *[Sentence removed in the interests of the effective conduct of public affairs]*. Actions relating to Cairngorm had also been updated and the register also reflected wider economic changes, including the recent introduction of US trade tariffs.

Members were pleased to see that all of HIE's risk registers were going through an annual refresh to ensure they remain current and relevant, and endorsed the approach being taken to understand and implement lessons that could benefit the whole organisation.

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

The Board otherwise noted the report.

4.3 Draft operating plan and targets

The Director of Strategy and Regional Economy presented HIE's draft operating plan for 2025/26. The draft plan set out HIE's actions, targets and delivery approach in the context of its strategic framework and was aligned with key points contained in the draft guidance letter from the Scottish Government.

The Director highlighted that large-scale 'outlier' projects, including a range of anticipated regional transformational opportunities (RTOs), had been excluded from targets that were set in the draft plan. However, the Board received an assurance that outcomes from all projects supported by HIE, including RTOs, would be measured and reported at the end of the financial year.

The Board stressed the importance of HIE's support for inclusive growth focus areas across the region and its commitment to effective partnership working, both of which should be highlighted in the introduction to the operating plan. The impact of non-financial interventions should also be clearly identified in the document, as should HIE's approach to community benefits.

It was agreed that the current draft targets relating to productivity, innovation and the average wage of jobs supported required further consideration and would be reviewed for consideration at an extra Board meeting in May, which would also receive a report on HIE's 2024/25 outturns. Targets would also be reviewed at the half-year stage and the Director confirmed that, if any changes were made, the original target would continue to be noted for transparency.

The Board thanked the Director and HIE's Planning and Partnerships team for the considerable amount of work that had gone into preparing the draft.

4.4 HIE pension valuation

The Director of Corporate Services provided a verbal update, describing a proposed change to the management of HIE's pension budget deficit that was being recommended as part of the pension fund triennial evaluation.

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

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

4.5 Draft minute of the Risk and Assurance Committee, 18 March 2025

The Board welcomed the draft minute of the Risk and Assurance Committee meeting that had been held on 18 March 2025. The minute will be reviewed for formal approval at the next meeting of the Committee, scheduled for 4 June 2025.

5 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION **CUSPAIREAN AIRSON FIOSRACHADH**

5.1 Community benefits from net zero energy developments consultation

The Board welcomed HIE's submission to the Scottish Government's consultation on community benefits from net zero energy developments. An earlier draft of the document had been presented at a previous Board meeting and it had been finalised following in-depth discussion at a special Board sub-group.

5.2 Gender pay gap report

The Board noted HIE's latest gender pay gap report, covering the period from 1 April 2022 until 31 March 2024. The report, which HIE will publish, showed that the mean gender pay gap had reduced to 11.85% (2022: 12.2%).

5.3 Sexual harassment risk assessment

The Board welcomed a new Sexual Harassment Risk Assessment that had been developed by HIE's Human Resources team. Designed to prevent sexual harassment, the assessment will be attached to HIE's Dignity at Work policy and reviewed every two years.

5.4 Any other business

There was no other business.

5.5 Forthcoming meeting dates

The following meetings had been scheduled:

- HIE end-year reporting (extra Board meeting) – 26 May 2025
- HIE Risk and Assurance Committee – 4 June 2025
- HIE Board meeting (An Lòchran) – 1 July 2025 (date change)

Chris Roberts
Head of Communications
29 April 2025

APPROVED