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BOARD MINUTE

26 MAY 2026

Highlands and Islands Enterprise

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Iomairt na Gàidhealtachd 's nan Eilean

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BOARD MEETING
COINNEAMH BÙIRD

MINUTE OF EXTRA HIE BOARD MEETING HELD ONLINE ON TUESDAY 26 MAY 2026

PRESENT	Angus Campbell *(Chair)*
	Stuart Black *(Chief Executive)*
	Simon Cotton
	Keith Nicholson
	Anna Salgado
	Calum Ross
	David Wilson

IN ATTENDANCE

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
Jessie Laurie	Head of Enterprise Agency Sponsorship, Scottish Government
Lorna Gregson-MacLeod	Head of Planning and Partnerships
[Name redacted for data protection]	Corporate Planner
[Name redacted for data protection]	Senior Analyst
Janie Sheridan	Head of Business Transformation
Chris Roberts	Head of Communications

1.1 Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies had been received from Allan Clow, Melanie Collett, Freda Newton and Ailsa Raeburn.

1.2 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

1.3 HIE end-year performance report 2025/26

The Head of Planning and Partnerships presented a summary and analysis of HIE's performance against targets during financial year 2025/26.

The report showed that HIE had met or exceeded 21 of its 24 targets, including supporting 642 full-time equivalent (FTE) posts, 260 green jobs and 348 jobs in inclusive growth focus areas. While three targets relating to productivity, innovation and community assets had not been met, the report concluded that HIE had made a positive impact in these areas.

Activity aligned well with HIE's four strategic pillars of people, place, planet and prosperity, and with the cross-cutting themes of embedding net zero, fair and inclusive growth, and regional transformational opportunities. Some £81.4m investment had been approved, up from £78.5m in 2024-25, including £38.3m that HIE had secured from the Scottish Government's Offshore Wind Investment Programme (OWIP).

Investment had been well distributed, particularly benefiting Argyll and Islands; Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross; Orkney and Shetland, and the Outer Hebrides. Financial approvals in inclusive growth focus areas reached historic highs, aided by OWIP and the Islands Business Resilience Fund.

A total of 1,263 third party projects had been supported, compared with 538 the previous year, while major own-hand investments included a £4.1m project to create small business units in Golspie. The sector awarded the greatest share of investment was energy, followed by food and drink and tourism.

It was noted that OWIP investment had been vital to achieve the target of £34k per annum for average wage of jobs supported. The Board discussed challenges around setting and measuring this target, with the Head of Planning and Partnerships observing that, although the Office for National Statistics' median figure for FTE wages in the UK was around £39k per annum, there were challenges in obtaining accurate data at a regional level. Members noted that a further complication was that wage levels could vary considerably across sectors.

Discussion also highlighted the importance of HIE maintaining its commitment to support businesses and communities in inclusive growth focus areas, including benefits realisation from major strategic investments.

The Board welcomed the end-year performance report.

1.4 Best value 2025/26 annual report

The Head of Business Improvement presented HIE's best value annual report for 2025/26, which examined HIE's commitment to continuous improvement, financial efficiency, digital transformation and strategic collaboration.

Overall, the report found that HIE was showing a credible and increasingly mature approach to best value that was aligned to public service reform and strong governance, and focused on efficiency, digital delivery and outcomes.

Key achievements during 2025/26 had included:

- strong in-year budget management, with significant additional income secured and a more systematic approach to savings and efficiencies
- well embedded digital adoption, with online channels and digital processes well used across major parts of the client journey
- a significant amount of work to refresh project appraisal guidance and training modules, culminating in a refreshed Project Appraisal manual published in May 2026.
- well established operational governance
- expanded client reach with activity levels, approvals, and engagement demonstrating positive impact, enhanced by delivery of programmes such as the Islands Business Resilience fund and Pathways to Start.

Six of the plan's eight key performance indicators had been met, the exceptions being those relating to client engagement activity and recording. It was noted that these outcomes could have been affected by changes to MyHIE and a need to divert resources to other organisational priorities, however further investigation would be carried out.

Looking ahead, the 2026/27 plan would focus on client management, data capture and ensuring consistent, streamlined and user-friendly delivery for HIE's programme activity. Other areas included driving benefits from the Copilot AI tool; obtaining system assurance and cyber testing, and a more defined approach to other income and wider project monitoring and management.

In discussion, the Board noted that information was being gathered on HIE’s use of Copilot to gauge its effect on business efficiency. A report would be delivered to the Leadership Team.

It was also agreed that HIE staff would produce a short and accessible summary of key 2025/26 achievements as recorded in both reports – including HIE’s near-doubling of its core budget by the year-end through attracting additional funding from OWIP and other sources. This summary could assist broader discussion on public sector reform, noting that HIE had already established a strong track record over several years of achieving savings through a carefully targeted approach to delivering best value.

The Board noted these points and welcomed the Best Value annual report.

1.5 Any other business

There was no other business.

Chris Roberts
Head of Communications

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