

## **BUSINESS PLAN DEVELOPMENT - Report by Chief Executive**

### **Summary**

The purpose of this report is detailing a process for the development of the next business plan including consideration of a brief for a business planning workshop.

It is recommended that Directors:

- i. agree to the development of a new business plan;
- ii. agree to the appointment of an external facilitator to support the development of the plan;
- iii. consider and approve the facilitator brief in **Appendix A**; and
- iv. agree to consider draft and final business plan reports at the December and March HLH Board meetings respectively.

## **1. Business Plan Contribution**

1.1 High Life Highland's (HLH) purpose is Making Life Better. The HLH Business Plan contains eleven Business Outcomes which support the delivery of this purpose, and this report supports all the outcomes from the Business Plan:

- 1. Seek to continuously improve standards of health and safety.**
- 2. Commit to the Scottish Government's zero carbon targets and maintain the highest standards in environmental compliance.**
- 3. Use research and market analysis to develop and improve services to meet customer needs.**
- 4. Increase employee satisfaction, engagement and development to improve staff recruitment and retention.**
- 5. Improve the financial sustainability of the company.**
- 6. Value and strengthen the relationship with THC.**
- 7. Develop and deliver the HLH Corporate Programme and seek to attract capital investment.**
- 8. Use research and market analysis to develop and deliver proactive marketing and promotion of HLH and its services.**
- 9. Initiate and implement an ICT digital transformation strategy across the charity.**
- 10. Develop and strengthen relationships with customers, key stakeholders and partners.**
- 11. Deliver targeted programmes which support and enhance the physical and mental health and wellbeing of the population and which contribute to the prevention agenda.**

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 The current business plan covers the period 2022 to 2027. At the time it was developed it was recognised that it would be likely that it would have to be reviewed prior to the end of the five years because of the pace of external change influencing HLH's service delivery. The subsequent changes to HLH's purpose and people values, changes in the Highland Council's (THC) approach to service delivery, coupled to a review of the Service Delivery Contract with THC, all point to a requirement to develop a new business plan.

### **3. Proposed Process/Timescale**

- 3.1 The proposed process and timescale for the development of a new business plan following this meeting is as follows:

- i. October 2024: facilitated business planning workshop (Date TBC).
- ii. First draft business plan: 11 December 2024 HLH Board meeting.
- iii. Final draft business plan: March 2024 HLH Board meeting.

- 3.2 This timescale would allow consideration of any changes which might be required to the management/staff structure and resource requirements associated with the new plan before the start of financial year 25/26.

### **4. Joint Boards Workshop**

- 4.1 It is proposed that a joint workshop including the HLH Board, HLH (Trading) C.I.C. and the executive team be held on a date to be confirmed in September 2024 and that an external facilitator be used to develop and run the workshop. A draft brief for this can be seen in **Appendix A**. The brief is intended to provide:

- i. background information on HLH;
- ii. performance information which will help inform a new plan;
- iii. matters identified in the risk register which could be taken account of in a new plan; and
- iv. topics from Board Director discussion and feedback from Board meetings.

- 4.2 It is recommended that Directors consider and approve the brief in **Appendix A**.

### **5. HLH (Trading) C.I.C**

- 5.1 HLH (Trading) CIC protects HLH's charitable status by delivering non-charitable activity linked to the charitable activities and gift-aids over £0.5m in profit to the parent charity. This adds to HLH's c£38m turnover and thereby allows HLH to deliver more services at less of a cost to the public purse. The trading company has not previously had a business plan and the brief suggests consideration of the trading company being asked to develop one for trading activity. If this is agreed, it is suggested that planning for this be initiated following the first draft of the HLH Board's plan to allow the plans to work together.

### **6. Implications**

- 6.1 Resource Implications – The business plan can be developed within existing resources.

- 6.2 Legal Implications – There are no legal implications associated with the development of a business plan.

- 6.3 Risk Implications – There are no new risks associated with the development of a new business plan.
- 6.4 Equality Implications – there are no new equality implications associated with the development of a business plan.

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that Directors:

- i. agree to the development of a new business plan;
- ii. agree to the appointment of an external facilitator to support the development of the plan;
- iii. consider and approve the facilitator brief in **Appendix A**; and
- iv. agree to consider draft and final business plan reports at the December and March HLH Board meetings respectively.

Designation: Chief Executive

Date: 20 August 2024

Author: Steve Walsh



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## Facilitator Brief

# Business Planning Workshop

This document provides a brief for an external facilitator to plan, deliver and report on a business planning workshop in support of the development of the next HLH Business Plan.

# Business Plan Workshop: Facilitator Brief

## Summary

High Life Highland (HLH) is developing its next business plan to guide the operation and development of the Charity from 1 April 2025. This document provides a brief for an external facilitator to plan, deliver and report on a workshop with its non-executive Board of Directors and its executive team.

This task will comprise three elements:

## Preparation

The facilitator will meet with the Executive team to agree an outline structure for the workshop which takes account of the information contained in this brief.

## Workshop Delivery

The facilitator will deliver a one-day workshop to assist with the development of the business plan which seeks to engage the workshop participants in discussion, reaching conclusions on the structure, format and content of the business plan.

## Workshop Report

The facilitator will provide a report on the workshop which supports the development of the structure, format and content of the business plan.

## Table of Contents

Business Plan Workshop: Facilitator Brief .....	0
Summary.....	0
Preparation .....	0
Workshop Delivery .....	0
Workshop Report.....	0
Background to High Life Highland .....	2
Governance .....	2
Purpose and People Values .....	2
Current Business Plan .....	2
Services .....	3
Financial Summary .....	3
Situation Analysis .....	3
Internal .....	3
The Highland Council .....	4
External .....	4
Information from Current Business Plan and Management Information .....	5
Customer Information .....	5
Other Performance Information .....	5
New Services/Amalgamations .....	6
Areas for Improvement/Development.....	6
Inverness Castle Experience .....	7
Levelling Up Projects .....	7
Wider partnerships .....	7
Tools and Process.....	7
Consultation and Engagement .....	7
Performance Management and Reporting.....	7
Appendix A: Purpose and i-care People Values .....	8
Appendix B – Customer and Income Growth .....	9
Effectiveness.....	9
Efficiency .....	9
Reach into the Highland population .....	10
<i>highlife</i> leisure subscriptions .....	11
Other leisure income .....	12
Grants.....	12

Trading income.....	13
Health and Wellbeing Income .....	13
Appendix C .....	14
Summary of main risks for consideration in busuiness planing process .....	14
Capital planning .....	14
ALEO relationship between THC and HLH.....	14
Appendix D .....	15
Summary of partnership work by each of the HLH areas of work as reported to the HLH Board in December 2023. ....	15

## Background to High Life Highland

High Life Highland (HLH) is a charity registered in Scotland, formed on 1 October 2011 by The Highland Council (THC) to develop and promote opportunities in culture, learning, sport, leisure, health and wellbeing across nine services throughout the whole of the Highlands for both residents and visitors.

## Governance

HLH is an Arm's Length External Organisation (ALEO) of the Highland Council and has 12 non-executive Directors, all appointed by THC (8 independent Directors and 4 Councillor Directors). The HLH Directors can be found on the HLH web site: <https://www.highlifehighland.com/about/board-directors/>.

To protect its charitable status and allow it to generate income which is then gift-aided to the Charity, HLH has a wholly owned trading subsidiary, HLH (Trading) C.I.C. The Trading Board Directors are appointed by the HLH Board (5 independent directors and 4 HLH Board Directors). The trading company Directors can be found on the HLH web site: <https://www.highlifehighland.com/about/trading-company-directors/>.

## Purpose and People Values

HLH's purpose is Making Life Better and its people values are: integrity; community; accountability; respect; and example. The purpose and values can be seen in **Appendix A**. They have been agreed by the HLH Board within the life of the current business plan and should be considered foundational for the next plan.

## Current Business Plan

The current business plan was developed in 2021 to run from April 2022 to April 2027. At the time it was developed it was recognised that it would be likely that it would have to be reviewed prior to the end of the five-year period because of the pace of external change influencing HLH's service delivery. Consideration of the timescale for this plan will have to be given during its development.

The current business plan can be seen at this link: [Business Plan 2022-27](#)

The need to review the plan is explained in the situation analysis below. It is recognised that a change of approach in business planning is needed in line with the change in the external environment, HLH's new purpose, simplifying it compared with its current structure to ensure that the plan communicates well to staff and stakeholders. The current business plan is provided for information only, the intention is to develop a new plan rather than refresh the previous one.



## Services

HLH Delivers the following Services:

1. Adult Learning
2. Archives
3. Countryside Rangers
4. Leisure
5. Libraries
6. Museums and Galleries
7. Music Tuition (Schools Instrumental Music Tuition Service)
8. Sports Development
9. Youth Work

## Financial Summary

HLH's Annual Report to 31 March 2024 can be seen at this link: [Annual Report](#).

The following information is provided by way of summary:

- Turnover: £35,953,959
- Service Fee: £18,494,992
- Non-Service Fee Income: £11,495,656
- Expenditure: £36,190,445
- Staff Costs: £29,319,355
- Other Operating Costs: £6,871,090

## Situation Analysis

There has been significant internal and external change since the last plan was written.

### Internal

The HLH Board has agreed a new purpose and people values.

A Service Delivery Contract (SDC) review which is programmed to be concluded by the end of the current calendar year has been initiated by THC.

The context for the discussion with the Council on the SDC review has changed with less of a focus on reducing services to achieve a balanced budget and a greater level of discussion on efficiency savings through the Council's investment programme in property to give a context for protecting services while rationalising property.

It is likely that THC will ask HLH to transfer two of the nine services which it delivers for it to THC: Adult Learning and Youth Work as part of the SDC review.

HLH has been able to make a significant contribution towards closing the budget gap, which led to the need for the SDC review through income and efficiencies. There is also a commitment with THC to continue the budget process to bring the organisation into a surplus position with reserves ensuring financial resilience.

THC has agreed to fund pay inflation with HLH being required to mirror the national terms and conditions for local government to ensure pay parity (recognising that HLH is delivering services on the Council's behalf).

There has been a recognition of the need for change and discussions at board meetings on topics such as: approach to commercial opportunity; net zero; and staff training/development.

THC has asked HLH to manage Inverness Castle Experience on its behalf which is different from other services HLH operates in terms of its operation and profile.

## The Highland Council

There has been significant change in the way which the THC has structured itself, including the development of a greater focus on service delivery and capital development which is leading to significantly improved opportunities for joint working which will support HLH's purpose.

The SDC review could change the makeup of services which THC requires HLH to deliver on its behalf.

In developing its business plans HLH is mindful of the fact that the services that it delivers are Council services which it would otherwise have to deliver directly. The importance of strategic alignment with THC will be a key consideration of the business plan (similar organisations which have faced financial difficulties and been perceived to have drifted from their Councils have been in-sourced which creates financial challenges for service delivery).

THC's Key plans can be seen as follows:

- [Corporate Plan: Our Future Highland](#)
- [Delivery Plan](#)
- [Performance Plan 2022-27](#)

## External

At the same time as the changes in the Council, the Highland Community Planning Partnership has reviewed the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan which further clarifies how highland partners work together with further opportunities to think more widely about how HLH can make life better for everyone in the Highlands. This link contains the draft [Revised 2024-2027 Highland Outcome Improvement Plan](#).

The external/business context has changed at the same time as the changes outlined above. The wider economic situation, which is arguably still difficult, is improving with inflation reducing and, for HLH, costs becoming more affordable.

There have been examples of a small number of ALEOs in the UK/Scotland being in-sourced. Part of this context is service delivery in a challenging post-pandemic context and Councils seeking to ensure alignment between services delivered by ALEOs and Council objectives. This further highlights the importance of ALEOs recognising that they exist to deliver Council services and the importance locally of the partnership and alignment with THC and a focus on delivering social objectives as a charity.

# Information from Current Business Plan and Management Information

There is information which is useful for consideration in the development of a new business plan and planning approach and this includes performance information, risk management, customer and staff feedback as well as areas where improved information would further support business development.

## Customer Information

There are areas where HLH has historically performed well and consideration should be given to how this can be further developed to support HLH's long-term sustainability:

- Customer growth – customer engagements increasing from 2.3m at startup in 2011 to 9.9m in financial year 2023/24.
- Efficiency - reliance on THC funding reducing from 79% of expenditure at startup to 47% now.
- Relevance – HLH has an estimated 30% reach into the Highland population (count based on leisure/library card holders).
- Earned income – earned income has enabled HLH to protect services with this increasing from £6.9m in HLH's first full year of operation and in 2023/24 is projected to reach its highest ever level at £16.7m.

Included in the income sources is trading income which cannot (legally) be generated by the Charity. The trading company has not, in the past, had its own business plan and there is a case to be explored for the development of a separate trading business plan, particularly given the scale of Inverness Castle which will be operated by HLH from the summer of 2025. The non-charitable areas which would have to be included in the plan are: catering, retail, vending and other non-charitable income such as that generated by car parking and the two bunk houses.

Since the current business plan was written, corporate *highlife* leisure subscriptions have become more important in the mix of income sources which has meant that business to business relationships and marketing has become more important.

**Appendix B** contains further information on customer and income growth.

## Other Performance Information

There are other areas where performance data suggests that HLH does well and are to be maintained and developed and these are:

- Health and safety management and support (external audit).
- Customer feedback (although this area could be further developed following the Council having ceased its citizen's panel). Customers regularly rate their experience of HLH, its staff and services with a 95% approval rating (good or excellent).
- Delivery of the contract with the Council (consistent positive feedback from THC's Education Committee).
- Media/social media coverage.
- Partnerships.
- Health and wellbeing strategy.

## New Services/Amalgamations

HLH's success has been demonstrated beyond the original services that it was set up with the 44 services and buildings that it has adopted all growing. The biggest of these was Inverness Leisure where customer numbers and *highlife* subscriptions grew following the amalgamation. The largest non-building based service which transferred also grew in effectiveness with customer numbers growing from 2,600 individual pupils pre-transfer to 3,700 within a year.

## Areas for Improvement/Development

On reviewing other performance reporting over the life of the current business plan there are areas which have not been able to be prioritised or where improved performance could support the effectiveness of the organisation. These are:

- Carbon reduction/net zero - there has been work in this area over a number of years, particularly in partnership with THC which owns and maintains HLH's buildings and there is a recognised need to develop this in a structured way both in partnership with THC and for HLH to deliver. A report on how HLH develops this priority is being considered at its August 2024 meeting.
- Financial reserves – HLH has been operating out-with its 3% reserves policy and financial planning needs to include a plan for meeting the policy.
- Corporate programme/capital investment – this has been a challenging area given the situation facing public sector funding and in particularly capital investment. HLH developed a set of principles for co-location and the development of vibrant community hubs which has been adopted by THC. Further partnership work with THC will be required following it having agreed a new approach which can be seen at this link: [Highland Investment Plan – Next Steps](#).
- Digital transformation – the development of a stand-alone plan for Board consideration in March is being developed and in the interim there are projects underway for the procurement of a new Leisure Management System and a new web site because of their business critical nature and contribution to increasing income generation.

Work has been initiated on all of these areas and it will be important to consider how they are best incorporated into the business planning process including:

- Whether there is a need for a stand-alone plan for carbon reduction in partnership with the Council because of the property and other structural links with the Council (currently under development with THC).
- Building a workforce planning approach into the business plan which includes an analysis of staffing requirements, skills, skills gaps, training and longer-term HR planning.
- The identification of a stand-alone digital plan which takes advantage of the expertise and scale of the Council's ICT services and seeks to achieve the balance of HLH being able to take a flexible approach to digital investment particularly where this can maximise customer/income growth and satisfaction and deliver efficiency.
- The development of a joint plan with THC for capital, capital investment and asset rationalisation which focuses on the development of HLH facilities in communities which are well-used and meaningful to those communities which makes life better.

## Inverness Castle Experience

THC has agreed to ask HLH to operate Inverness Castle. The attraction has its own business plan. Work is underway to ensure that the support structure is built in as an integral part of the overall HLH structure into the wider HLH structure (e.g. HR, marketing, ICT).

## Levelling Up Projects

While lesser in scale than the Castle Experience, there are two new facilities: the Northern Meeting Park; and Bught Park Pavilion to be embedded into HLH operations.

## Wider partnerships

In addition to the primary partnership with THC, there are others which are important to HLH with the key ones being with the Highland Community Planning Partnership; sportscotland; Creative Scotland; and the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority. Each of HLH's areas of work have partnerships with many different organisations and they are, therefore, important to Highland communities. Partnership working is reported annually to the HLH Board and **Appendix D** contains the information which was submitted to the HLH Board in December 2023.

## Tools and Process

Previous business plans have included internal and external analysis using tools such as strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) and political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal (PESTEL) analyses. Appropriate business planning tools will be required as part of the business planning workshop.

Previous business plans have included operational plans which have helped to focus the individual areas of work on delivering the business planning. While this has worked, it has led to a feeling on the plan having constrained some services or made it difficult for some to find an organisational fit within the context of the business plan. Making Life Better and the people values have provided a powerful but simple framework for all services and the workshop should be structured to allow consideration of the best approach including the option to develop a framework which will allow the development of service plans for each of HLH's services within the context of the business plan.

## Consultation and Engagement

The workshop should include consideration of any consultation and engagement which might be required as part of the development of the business plan.

## Performance Management and Reporting

Performance reporting has developed over the years and there is potential for this to be simplified or clarified to make it more easily understood. The workshop should allow consideration of the development of a smaller number of key performance indicators to be used to monitor the implementation of the business plan with. These could be structured around HLH's purpose.

## Appendix A: Purpose and i-care People Values

### High Life Highland's i-care Values

High Life Highland is charity and our purpose is **Making Life Better**. We are a fun, friendly, kind, caring, supportive, inclusive and proud organisation with strong people values based around integrity, community, accountability, respect and example.

We believe if all our employees strive to embrace our people values then, collectively, we give ourselves the best chance of fulfilling our purpose of Making Life Better.



#### integrity

To always be honest, transparent, and have strong moral principles, consistently demonstrating and building the trust that is essential to a high-performing organisation.

#### community

To always reflect the Charity's purpose to make life better for everyone, acknowledging and respecting community feedback to ensure that change and development reflects the needs of the internal and external communities served by High Life Highland.

#### accountability

To always take responsibility for our own actions and admit when we make mistakes; be honest and have strong guiding principles, which builds the trust that is essential for High Life Highland to operate effectively.

#### respect

To always show respect in their role by finding the opportunities to listen, be kind and support others and have zero tolerance for prejudice or discrimination.

#### example

To set a good example that positively reflects on the Charity and to act as a proud ambassador for the Charity, embracing the 'Making Life Better' principle in everything that High Life Highland does for the communities and people it serves.



## Appendix B – Customer and Income Growth

This appendix provides further information on the effectiveness of HLH as an organisation for consideration during the business planning process so that this success can be built on as the next business plan is developed.

HLH has been a successful organisation in its:

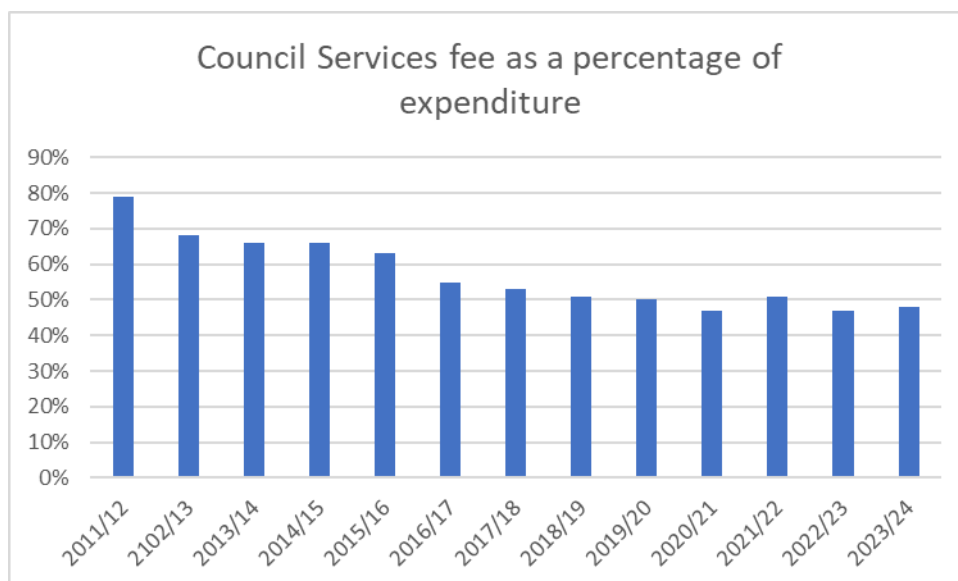
- Effectiveness - growth of customer numbers.
- Efficiency – reduced reliance on public funding.
- Relevance – reach into the Highland Population.

It has also protected and developed services through growing income as an alternative to service cuts. This appendix provides information on this as background for business planning to support the development of appropriate priorities for the next business plan.

**Effectiveness** – customer engagements are used as an indicator of HLH’s effectiveness. In financial year 2023/24 customer engagements were higher than they have ever been at 9,979,193. The graph below shows annual customer engagements since HLH was established.



**Efficiency** – The percentage of the services fee provided by THC to HLH provides an efficiency measure. HLH has delivered year on year efficiency as can be seen in the graph below.



**Reach into the Highland population** – the percentage of the Highland population with an HLH card is used as a measure of reach into the Highland population because leisure and library membership data allows that analysis. It is an indicator rather than an absolute count because it only captures two of the nine services HLH delivers and cannot record customers who access those two services without having a card. The table below shows the data used to calculate the reach into the population figure. It shows that:

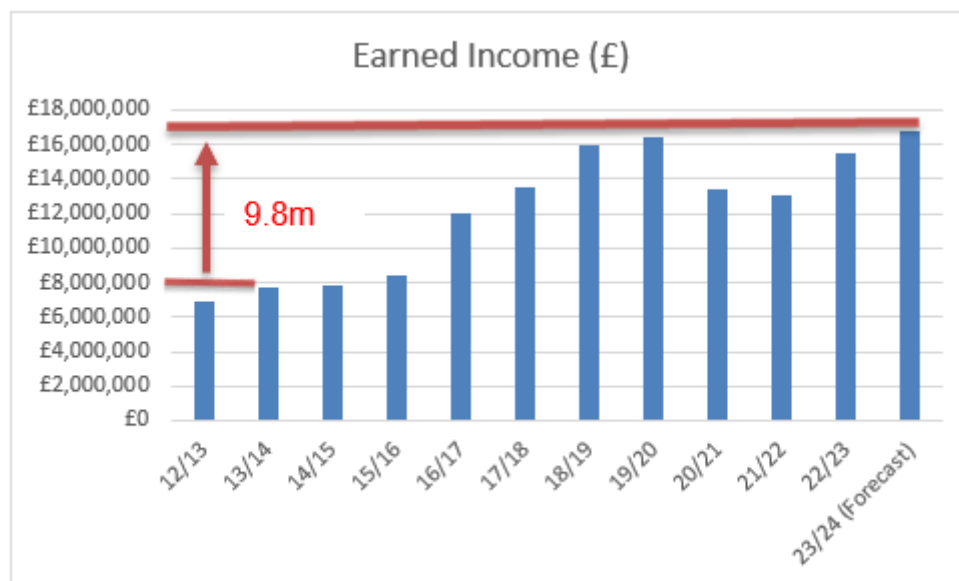
- The number of people with a leisure card increased by 1,838 (4%).
- The number of people with a library card increased by 1,801 (6%).
- A large percentage of the people who took out a new leisure or library membership were already customers of the other service.
- 69,315 citizens out of The Highland Council population using a leisure or library card or both would be regarded as a good reach into the population for any organisation (29.4%).

Year	Population (NRS mid-year 2022)	People with a Leisure Card	People with a Library Card	Combined (Leis/Lib/Both) with THC postcode	Percentage of Highland Population with an HLH Card
2023	235,710	42,579	29,352	68,911	29.24%
2024	235,710	44,417	31,153	69,315	29.41%
Increase		1,838 (4%)	1,801 (6%)	404 (1%)	

One of HLH’s key priorities which supports the sustainability of the services it delivers is increasing income. It does this through earned income through the charity, grants, donations and commercial activity via its Trading C.I.C (all Trading Company margin is donated back to the main Charity via Gift Aid). This section covers income growth, and the graph below shows income from all sources other than the services fee. This started



at £6.9m in HLH’s first full year of operation in 2012/13 and in 2023/24 is projected to reach its highest ever level at £16.7m<sup>1</sup>.



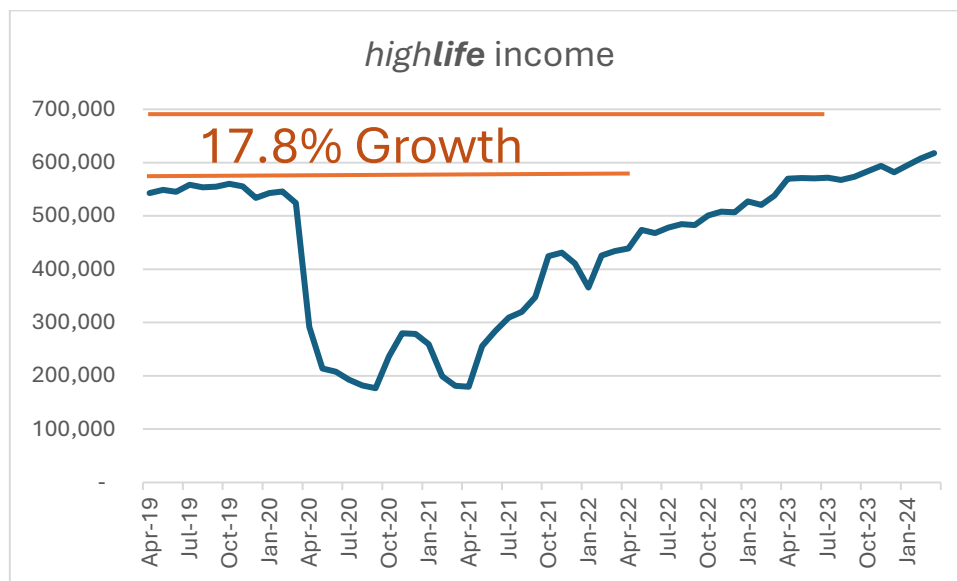
The table below shows a breakdown of some of HLH’s main income sources for the first full year of operation and over the past five years.

Income (£,000)	12/13	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24 (Forecast)	% Increase From 12/13
<i>highlife</i> leisure subscriptions	2,786	6,764	2,698	4,196	5,922	7,019	152%
Other leisure income	1,095	2,501	173	1,355	2,284	2,403	119%
Grants	2,002	2,971	2,862	3,439	3,904	3,952	97%
Donations	73	333	61	197	341	448	512%
Trading Income	364	1,922	526	1,416	2,130	2,143	489%

*highlife* leisure subscriptions income has grown from £2.8m when HLH started and now exceeds £7m p.a. There has been a considerable focus on increasing subscriptions since the pandemic and the graph below shows the pace of this over the past two years. Of note, HLH has developed a subscriptions package for businesses where they are offered a 10% discount for their staff and there are currently 70 businesses in the scheme with 3,401 individuals and families having signed up. To further support staff health and wellbeing, most employers make a contribution to the subscriptions for their staff, thereby further reducing the cost for them. In supporting HLH to increase its income levels and protect THC services, THC has signed up as a corporate partner and 907 Council staff are part of the scheme. The growth in

<sup>1</sup> Final position subject to year-end audit.

subscriptions income can be seen in the graph below and when calculated over a year, income is 17% higher now compared with the previous high which immediately preceded the pandemic.



At the time that it was introduced in 2001, the *highlife* leisure subscription scheme was innovative in its value for money and all-inclusive nature. It resulted in a 90% increase in income and participation levels. This has been continued and developed by HLH and has been critical in increasing income over the years. It is now a valued part of Highland life for many people with a reciprocal arrangement in place with other local authority areas in Scotland (Aberdeen, Angus, Argyll and Bute, Moray, Orkney, the Scottish Borders, Shetland and the Western Isles). To add value to the card, HLH has set up a benefits scheme with businesses in highland where discounts are provided for customers who present a card. The list of benefits can be seen at this link on HLH’s web site: <https://www.highlifehighland.com/benefits/category/displayasimagecardonfeed/atest-offers/>

**Other leisure income** is mainly from lets by sports clubs and pay as you go (non-*highlife* subscription) income. This has more than doubled since HLH was established to £2.4m this year. It continues to be important in funding services delivered by HLH for THC.

**Grants** were £2m when HLH was established and are now almost £4m. The two main grants are from **sportscotland** for the sports development team and the Youth Music Initiative which is Scottish Government funding distributed by Creative Scotland. Between them they total c. £1.5m. The remaining £2.5m in grants are obtained through all of HLH’s services and include youth work programmes, adult learning programmes, environmental projects and equipment such as sports equipment.

In percentage terms, **donations** income has grown the most with it having started, unsurprisingly, from a low base at the point which HLH was established as a charity. Of the (current) £448k donations income the majority, £310k, is from Museums. The £100k

growth over financial year 2023/24 has been achieved through a focus by all HLH services (including Museums) on increasing donations.

**Trading income** has grown by the largest amount after *highlife* subscriptions, increasing from £364k during HLH's first year of operation to £2.1m in the last financial year. Over the past year this has been achieved by HLH (Trading) C.I.C. maximising income, particularly through catering and retail. The main trading income sources are:

- retail in leisure centres, museums and visitor attractions (£660k); and
- cafes in leisure centres and museums (£660k).

**Health and Wellbeing Income** has been developed since HLH was established through a joint funded post with NHS Highland. The programme has grown to a stage where earned income through *highlife* subscriptions is estimated at £750k p.a. which makes it important to the financial sustainability organisation as well as it being key to the delivery of HLH's purpose, Making Life Better.

## Appendix C

### Summary of main risks for consideration in busuiness planing process

The risk Register can be seen at this link: [Add link to current Risk Register](#). The following risks are suggested for inclusion in the new business plan because of their importance/structural nature.

**Capital planning** – this was identified as a risk because investment in facilities and services is needed to ensure that they continue to remain relevant to communities. This HLH developed a policy framework for investment in vibrant community buildings where services are co-located and this was adopted by THC’s Education Committee and has been significantly developed by THC since.

**ALEO relationship between THC and HLH** – HLH was established by THC to deliver services on its behalf to make rates savings. This is c £2m p.a. and the rates saving is less significant than the other income and efficiency savings (**appendix B**) which are also being delivered on an on-going basis. To be effective there needs to be clear separation between THC and HLH while at the same time, HLH delivering the social objectives that it exists for. In this regard, it is important for HLH to adapt to plans made by THC and the Highland Community Planning Partnership and it is recommended that the new business plan take account of the new community planning themes: of People; Place; and Prosperity as well as continuing to support the development and implementation of the Active Highland strategy.

Adapting to the Council’s new delivery plan will also be important with its focus being on delivering its corporate plan through the following six portfolios:

- Person centred solutions
- Workforce for the future
- Reconfiguring our asset base
- Corporate solutions
- Income generation
- Net zero, energy investment and innovation

Financial planning is key to the success of the organisation and finance has been highlighted as a risk with the context for this having been the pandemic/post pandemic inflation being challenging while having to operate within the context of the previous funding formula.

## Appendix D

### Summary of partnership work by each of the HLH areas of work as reported to the HLH Board in December 2023.

There are a number of partnerships that High Life Highland is involved in to deliver services and make life better for the people of the Highlands. HLH's role varies from being the lead organisation, the main supporting partner or working as one of a number of partners in a group. Some partnerships exist because of funding arrangements, with the most significant ones being with **sportscotland**; NHS Highland; and the Council (for funding for projects which are in addition to the services specified in the Service Delivery Contract).

**Adult Learning** – The adult learning team continues to deliver much of its work in partnership with other organisations, focusing on the literacy and numeracy aspects of support which people require, including English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) provision. The following represents the more formal and pan Highland partnerships. LEAD Scotland (Learning organisation focus on people with disabilities); Workers Education Association (WEA); University of the Highland and Islands (UHI); Highland Third Sector Interface (HTSI); The Highland Council (THC) (for refugee resettlement projects); Education Scotland (policy and development); Northern Alliance Regional collaborative; Learn North Community Learning and Development; Highland Adult Learning and Development Group, (HLH co-chair with third sector representative).

**Archives** – In Caithness, the Archives service is a formal subcontractor of Restore Digital, the information management company contracted by the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority to run Nucleus in Wick, the national archive of the British civil nuclear industry and the archive for the County. HLH is currently contracted to deliver all of Nucleus' customer facing service, both in Nucleus and out and about in community settings. The current contract, value £132k pa, comes to an end this year and Restore has submitted a retender application, again with HLH as its subcontractor.

Linked to the Memorandum of Understanding with UHI, Archives collaborates with several sections and individual colleges of UHI on a wide range of activities. The Skye and Lochalsh Archive Centre is currently hosting a UHI internship.

Am Baile continues to work closely with the Inverness Caledonian Thistle Community Trust to consolidate and grow the Inverness Football Memories project and related activities.

All four archive centres also work in informal partnerships with a wide variety of third sector and community groups. These include Eden Court Theatre, Dounreay Heritage Group, HMP Inverness, many schools and residential care homes, museums and heritage societies and many more. The Highland Family History Society has a permanent base in the Highland Archive Centre

**Arts** - In a partnership with Creative Scotland the Visual Arts Unit manages the Visual Artist and Craft Makers Awards (VACMA) scheme in the Highland, Moray and Western Isles area. VACMA offers small grants to visual artists and craft makers for their creative development at all stages of their career. Each year, approximately thirty artists and makers receive support from the scheme.

The Visual Arts Unit also has a longstanding partnership with the National Galleries of Scotland (NGS). This has resulted in a number of NGS curated exhibitions of the highest quality being shown at Inverness Museum and Art Gallery (IMAG). It also, from time to time, partners with other art institutions to bring high quality art exhibitions to the Highlands, most recently with The Fleming Collection, which resulted in a Glasgow Boys and Girls exhibition at IMAG.

Related to the Memorandum of Understanding with UHI the Unit provides an annual placement for a final year Fine Art undergraduate.

**Digital & Technology** – The Digital & Technology Team continue to support a number of partnerships including supply and management of the complete IT infrastructure for the Hydro Ness building on behalf of The Highland Council. Work is also carried out on a regular basis to support both Highlands & Islands Enterprise (STEM – Scottish Skills Academy programme) and NHS Highland (Diabetes programme) by way of providing a platform to centrally manage more than 100 iPads.

The team also support the LeisureLink partnership by looking after the system behind the initiative covering 10 Local Authority areas of Scotland and are currently in the process of setting up the tenth new partner: Live Life Aberdeenshire.

**Countryside Rangers** – The countryside ranger team is involved in a range of project and standing partnerships as follows:

The Green Health Partnership: operates under the branding "Think Health Think Nature" and is one of four area-wide partnerships developed and funded by NatureScot. It aims to encourage more use of the outdoors to tackle physical inactivity, mental health issues and health inequalities. The partnership is made of representatives from High Life Highland (HLH), NHS Highland; NatureScot; The Highland Council; The Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA); The University of the Highland and Islands (UHI), The Highland Environment Forum; The Highland Third Sector Interface (HTSI); Paths for All; Forest and Land Scotland and practitioners in the environment, health and social care sectors.

Highland Adapts: is a Highland Council partnership initiative to work with statutory agencies such as NHS Highland, Forestry & Land Scotland and SEPA as well as representatives from communities, businesses, land managers and public sector to facilitate transformational action towards a prosperous, climate ready Highland to look at how the Highlands adapt to climate change.

Highland Environment Forum & Highland biodiversity action plan 2021 - 2026: The Edinburgh Declaration (2021) sets out the aspirations and commitments of the members of the international community, the Scottish Government, its partners, and the wider sub-national community working in biodiversity in delivering for nature over the coming decade. Highland Council signed the Edinburgh Declaration in December 2022. The Highland Nature: Biodiversity action plan 2021 - 2026 is the call to action. This plan was created through surveys and meetings with Highland Environment Forum members and the wider public, and through the commitments undertaken

by partners. This work is overseen and coordinated by the Highland Environment Forum's Biodiversity Working Group.

There is a range of current partner funded projects where the HLH Ranger service is the lead delivery partner:

HTSI - Mental Health in communities fund- Healthy Minds delivery in Badenoch and Strathspey (lead Saranne Bish)- targeted work with clients who have diagnosed mental illness. Both direct NHS and self-referrals. Partners: NHS; HTSI; CNPA; Forest and Land Scotland.

Highland Climate Hub – Community funding running Climate Festival activities as a partner across Highland.

North West Geo-Park – Community Ambassador for the NW Geo-Park and collaboration with Historic Assynt on running small scale interpretation in the area from “Ranger Huts” at key pressure points to raise ecological awareness.

THC/NatureScot Nature Restoration Fund Project Grant: Highland Wildflower Meadow Mosaic. HLH Ranger service have undertaken the creation of 30-40 wildflower meadow sites across Highland Council Area– just awarded £7,500 towards a further community engagement project in freshwater restoration across Highland for 2024.

**Health and Wellbeing** – there are a number of partnerships connected to the health and wellbeing work in HLH. These are summarised in bullet format below with more details provided in the text below:

- NHS Highland
- Health Improvement/Public Health
- Allied Health Professionals
- Primary Care (inc. Numerous GP Practices)
- Operational Units
- Specialist Health Professionals (e.g. in cardiac rehab, cancer etc)
- Communications Team
- Redesign Team
- University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI (University of the Highland and Islands)
- Researchers (Biomedical Sciences Division and Rural Health and Wellbeing Division);
- Teaching staff (Inverness UHI)
- Community Leisure UK (CLUK)
- Chair CLUK Health Group for Scotland
- Community Planning Partnership (locality and thematic groups)
- Highlands and Islands Enterprise
- Parkinsons' UK
- Samaritans
- Home Energy Scotland
- Versus Arthritis
- Chest Heart and Stroke Scotland
- Change Mental Health
- Velocity
- Diabetes Scotland
- Ability Net

- My Self Management

The key partnership being with NHS Highland, specifically the Health Improvement Team within Public Health as well as Allied Health Professionals, Primary Care and Realistic Medicine teams. There are also strong partnerships with NHS Highland operational units which function across the localities in which HLH delivers services.

Other partnerships include the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) including collaborations with both research and teaching staff across the university portfolio such as the Rural Health and Wellbeing Division; the Biomedical Science Division; and the teaching staff at Inverness UHI. Further partnerships are strong with colleagues across the Community Leisure UK Network, HLH currently Chairs the CLUK Scotland Health Group which includes representatives from a large number of culture and leisure trusts from across the country.

HLH is also working in partnership with Highlands and Islands Enterprise to complete a piece of work to identify the social return on investment from some of HLH's services, it is hoped this work will grow and link across all services following an initial pilot.

Our work in health and wellbeing also involves partnerships with a range of third and charitable sector organisation regarding the support offered to people with a range of long-term health conditions, these partnerships include: Parkinson's UK, Change Mental Health, Chest Heart and Stroke Scotland and Diabetes Scotland.

HLH also recently worked in partnership with Samaritans to offer our own people support for their personal health and wellbeing through a series of webinars looking at topics including emotional wellbeing, how to listen well and suicide awareness.

**Inverness Castle Experience** – HLH acts as The Highland Council's Managing Agent and partner in the design and development of the new visitor attraction which is due to open in 2025.

**Leisure** – some of the facilities operated by the leisure team are in partnership with community groups who own/manage local facilities. The partnerships include: Tongue and Farr Sports Association; Ullaspool Board; Poolewe Board; Puffin Pool Board; Highland Rugby Club; Leanaig Advisory Forum; Strathpeffer Pavilion Community Trust; MacPhail Centre Board. In addition, there are wider partnerships such as with UHI (University of the Highland and Islands) for training with students for the National Pool Lifeguard Qualification and as sports and group exercise instructors. The team also works in partnership with Sportscotland as part of their elite athlete programme and Fitness Training Scotland to upskill our staff in group fitness, strength and conditioning.

**Levelling Up Fund Projects** – HLH also acts as the Council's Managing Agent in the delivery of the three Levelling Up Fund projects at Castle Street Energy Centre, Bught Park and the Northern Meeting Park.

**Libraries** – There are a range of projects ranging from local, area wide and national partnerships including work with UHI to support opportunities for PHD collaborations - libraries are working with a PHD student who is researching how young people and other age groups interact with nature and the environment through the reading of a selection of environmental literature. Work is also underway with an Icelandic PHD student who is spending time engaging with mobile library customers. She is researching how rural communities interact and engage with public services.



‘Meet The Books’ workshops continue at Inverness Library, in collaboration with UHI. This is a series of interactive workshops that introduce students and the wider community to High Life Highland’s special collections, including the Fraser-Mackintosh Library.

In collaboration with UHI a ‘High Life Highland Poetry Award’ was trialled this year and was open to all UHI students. Due to the success of the award, this will now become an annual competition, to encourage a love of literature and to recognise new writing talent.

Work with the Scottish Libraries and Information Council (SLIC) to participate in expansion of the “one card” initiative with other Scottish Library services. This is a national initiative that forms part of the National Libraries Strategy. The initiative allows anyone living in Scotland that is in receipt of a library membership to use it anywhere throughout the country, offering the customer improved convenience and ease of access.

Work with NHS Highland to support the Near-Me initiative. Near-Me is a national project supporting those without digital connectivity at home to access devices that will enable them to attend online medical appointments. Customers can book a private area within a library where they have free access to an iPad to attend their online appointments. The initiative is currently being delivered at Thurso Library and will shortly be rolled out to other locations including Inverness, Lochcarron, Kinlochleven and Brora.

**Museums** - Along with four other Highland Museums, Inverness Museum and Art Gallery (IMAG) is participating in a year-long collaboration with Smartify, the sector leading digital platform for museums. This opportunity became available through collaboration with Museums & Heritage Highland and XPO North Digital (support organisation for creative and heritage groups).

Through a formal partnership with Historic Environment Scotland (HES) the Highland Folk Museum (HFM) hosts an HES Trainee Fellowship. This is a full time, craft worker member of staff based at HFM for a period of one year. The Fellow is an HES employee but managed and trained on a day-to-day basis by HFM staff.

HFM also works in informal partnerships with variety of community groups, including providing an outdoor classroom facility for Newtonmore Primary School and collaborates on events and activities for the Badenoch Shinty Memories group. It has recently entered into a new partnership with the Cairngorm Curling Heritage group.

IMAG also has several longstanding and productive collaborative working partnerships with a number of third sector and community groups, including Alzheimer’s Scotland, local Brownie groups, Connecting Carers, WASPS Inverness Creative Academy and many more. A recently established, new partnership is with the Care and Learning Alliance (CALA), which will result in an exhibition and a programme of related activities.

North Coast Visitor Centre (NCVC) has established a partnership with the Society of Caithness Artists, which has brought about a programme of art exhibitions at the museum. It also enjoys ongoing collaboration with the Doureay Heritage Group.

**Music Tuition** – The team is gradually rebuilding relationships with all the main national professional orchestras and other organisations offering opportunities for young people following Covid disruption and staff changes in many of these organisations. It continues to work via Youth Music initiative funding the primary schools’ projects with Fèisean nan Gàidheal & Drake Music Scotland

**Safeguarding** – HLH is a member of the Highland Child Protection Committee (HCPC), Highland Violence Against Women Partnership (HVAWP) and the CHAMPS Board for care experienced young people. These partnerships ensure that HLH is involved and participating in conversations and agendas to support many of the most vulnerable individuals and families in Highland communities.

**Sports Development** – The main partnership in sport is the partnership with the Highland Council and **sportscotland**. A new four-year Partnership Agreement has been agreed with **sportscotland** which runs from April 2023 – April 2027. The £1.12 million pa investment in the partnership from sportscotland is based on 6 priority areas:

- Planning for Sport
- Active Schools
- Community Sport Hubs
- Inclusion
- Places
- Performance

Formal partnerships are also in place with two Sports Governing Bodies. The partnership in place with both the Camanachd Association and Scottish Rugby Union look to support growth in participation across the Highlands. A new formal partnership has also been developed with the Highland Disability Sports organisation to support our inclusion priority.

The Active Highland Partnership has also been further developed with a refresh of the Active Highland Strategy taking place. Working alongside The Highland Council, NHS Highland, sportscotland and Public Health Scotland the refreshed strategy will coordinate a multi-agency response to promoting physical activity in Highland with a focus on those currently facing barriers to being active.

The partnership with the Highland Council (Home to Highland Care Experienced Education Team) supporting care experienced young people is continuing to develop. Working with the Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership, with a focus on the Planet Youth initiatives in Dornoch, Golspie and Caithness has seen a £48k investment into the service to deliver against the partnership agreement.

The team also continues to partner with the Scottish Action for Mental Health (SAMH) to support our staff's wellbeing but to also enable our service to support individuals and communities around mental health issues.

**Youth Work** – the HLH youth service works closely in many partnerships, increasingly those where additional funding and projects are involved. The following are the more formal ones: Ecologia Trust; THC - My Future My Success; Highland Coastal Communities fund; Young Scot; Youth Scotland; Youth Link Scotland; DofE; Local Authority Youth Work Managers Scotland; Highland Science Skills Academy and Leadership Programme partners.