TO REPLACE PAGE 35 OF THE DRAFT LOCAL PLACE PLAN - DRAFT 23.3.24

### Governance & accountability

The local community can deliver elements of this Plan, but implementation of the Plan as a whole will require collaborative action by the public and private sectors too.

For the Plan to lead to meaningful action, there needs to be a mechanism for the community to champion and advocate implementation of the Plan. Although not a legal requirement of a Local Place Plan, without it there is a significant risk that implementation of the Plan will falter.

During preparation of this Plan, discussions took place about the most appropriate form of governance, culminating in a series of community workshops in early 2024. This section of the Plan reflects those discussions.

### Principles

Whatever governance mechanism is put in the place, it should reflect these principles:

1. Overall ownership of this Plan should rest with the local community, as should leadership of the Plan’s delivery. As the first page of the Plan says, this is the community’s plan. We need to own, support and champion it. To do that, we need to organise ourselves: it won’t just happen by chance.

2. The Plan should have primacy. The Plan has emerged from what has been described as the biggest engagement exercise that the Black Isle has ever experienced. Whatever governance

 arrangements are put in place, for example a group of individuals acting on behalf of the community, they must treat the Plan as paramount. It is their role to deliver the Plan on behalf of the community, not to change or interpret the Plan. Any changes to the Plan must be agreed by the community.

3. Implementation of the Plan should focus on outcomes for the Black Isle as a whole, as described in the Plan’s vision and four calls for action. Specific initiatives & projects to deliver those Black Isle-wide outcomes will change over time according to opportunities and circumstances.

### Function

Following the concept “form follows function”, the governance mechanism’s form should be determined by its purpose and objectives - its function. So, before thinking about its form, let’s think about function first.

From the governance discussions that took place during preparation of this Plan, general consensus emerged of the need to:

1. Advocate and champion action to deliver the Plan with relevant partners in the public and private sectors.

2. Support community organisations to implement the Plan.

3. Be accountable to local communities: updating them on delivery progress, and enabling them to review and update the Plan when appropriate.

A fourth function could potentially be to deliver elements of the Plan itself, for example through delivering projects or acquiring assets. It is not certain yet whether this function will be necessary or indeed desirable, so it need not be an immediate requirement.

### Form

Based on those functions, what might the ‘governance mechanism’ look like?

Without a dedicated body whose remit is focused on delivery of the Plan, fulfilling the functions described above is likely to be a challenge. A body of some description would bring the necessary focus.

The three functions described above could be vested in a single body focussing on an advocacy role. Extending that body’s role to include the optional fourth function (the body delivering elements of the Plan itself) would need care to avoid tensions between advocacy and delivery, and is likely to require more detailed constitutional arrangements than might otherwise be needed initially.

To be effective, the body needs ‘heft’. In other words, it needs to command the respect of the local community and potential public and private delivery partners. That means the members of the body need to have appropriate experience and expertise.

General consensus emerged from the governance workshops in early 2024 that a ‘core group’ would be required with the following characteristics:

 • Membership and chairing: Members should be drawn from local elected members, Community Councils and other local residents/organisations across the Black Isle. The group should have an independent chair who does not have a conflict of interest as, for example, an elected Highland Councillor, a Community Council chair, or a senior position in another local organisation.

• Size: In terms of size, a core group of between approximately 8 and 12 members would balance the need for, on the one hand, representation across those different types of member and the whole Black Isle; and, on the other, the group not being too unwieldy. The core group could begin with elected members and Council Council representatives, whose initial task would be to invite and appoint others.

• Behaviour: Members of the core group should abide by the [Nolan Principles of Public Life](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Committee_on_Standards_in_Public_Life).

• Reference groups: The core group could be complemented by ‘reference groups’ for each of the four calls for action in the Plan, which would enable anyone with expertise or experience to deliver all or part of the Plan to contribute whatever they can.

• Communications and accountability: To discharge the third of the functions described on the previous page, the core group needs to communicate effectively with the Black Isle community (for example, through a website, annual report and/or annual public gathering).

• Capacity: it is unrealistic to expect the core group of volunteers to be effective without some administrative support. This could be by employing staff itself or secondments from partner organisations.

Although not immediately necessary, the body may in the future wish to constitute itself in order to deliver projects, hold assets, or use the powers available to “community- controlled bodies”**1**. In the spirit of ‘form follows function’, this need not be determined until the specific functional needs are clearer.

### First steps

Governance arrangements need to be established quickly. An immediate action on finalisation of this Plan should therefore be to establish a body as described above.

That core group should then be tasked with discharging the three functions described on the previous page. They will need to:

• Establish collaborative working relationships with key delivery partners in the public, private and third sectors.

• Consider how best to facilitate delivery of this Plan’s four Calls for Action (for example, working with delivery partners to create delivery plans).

• Develop communications and accountability arrangements with the Black Isle community (see above).

To support this activity, this Plan should be endorsed by The Highland Council, the Community Planning Partnership and Black Isle Community Councils,

### Monitoring & review

The Plan’s focus on outcomes rather than specific projects should give it greater flexibility and longevity than a project focus might have. That is because it will enable different ways of achieving the Plan’s outcomes to emerge.

Nonetheless, the will need to be updated as circumstances change. The governance body described above should be responsible for facilitating its review. At the least, a review of the Plan is likely to be required after 5 years.

### Planning policy

This plan is in part a [Local Place Plan](https://www.ourplace.scot/home/local-place-plans) and therefore contains suggestions that the local community would like to see supported in the next Local Development Plan.

Appendix 7 summarises suggestions for planning policy as required by Schedule 19 of the Planning (Scotland) Action 2019 and in line with Scottish Government Circular 1/2022.

1 *As defined in Section 19 of the Community Empowerment Act (Scotland) 2015.*