Our vision is to have a sustainable population and socially and economically thriving communities with a focus on our quality of life, natural heritage, and Gàidhlig language and culture.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

SERVICE BUSINESS PLAN

For the Period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

1.1. I am pleased to introduce the Service Business Plan for 2024/25 which sets out our outcomes and priorities for the coming year. This is the main annual business planning document for the service. It reflects the Comhairle's key priorities as set out in the Corporate Strategy 2024-2027 and provides an overview of the service's principal areas of activity.

1.2. The Economic Development and Planning Service provide a range of support both internally to the Comhairle and externally to the community. The mission of the Economic Development and Planning service is to facilitate and support the economic, environmental, and social development of the Outer Hebrides through business, community and social enterprise support, maximising external funding from all available sources, and developing and delivering key innovative projects across the creative, cultural, tourism, and traditional sectors underpinned by forward thinking, professional and efficient Planning and Building Standards services.

1.3. The five service areas within Economic Development and Planning help to ensure that the Comhairle operates successfully in an increasingly complex and challenging environment, and although diverse, each service is essential to the running of the council and the delivery of its vision, values, and priorities.

1.4. **Building Standards** is responsible for determining Building Warrants and Certificates of Completion; ensuring the making safe or removal of dangerous buildings; providing a Building Standards advisory service to customers; supporting the Comhairle's Private Sector Housing Scheme of Assistance; and, promoting improvements to sustainable building techniques and access for the disabled.

1.5. **Business and Regeneration Support** Business and Regeneration Support consists of the Outer Hebrides Business Gateway service; the Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) Programme; Fisheries and Marine Resources Sectoral Support; Crofting & Land Resources Sectoral Support; and Economic Development sites and properties.

Business Gateway is a publicly funded service providing access to free business support/ impartial advice to start-up and existing businesses in Scotland. The service aims to provide personalised, accessible, and timesaving business support to businesses, so that they can improve at their own pace through actionable solutions and tools. A range of workshops and webinars are delivered with a focus on digital enablement and skills. The Comhairle's Business Gateway services also administers a range of grant and loan initiatives aimed at supporting young entrepreneurs, fishery investment, business start-up and general business development.

A new Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) Programme which captured the learning from testing new approaches in 2021-22 - and the former LEADER Programme legacy - was launched in 2022/23 and continued in 2023/24. In addition, the Scottish Government allocated funding to Local Action Groups (LAGs) from its December 2023 budget for the delivery of CLLD in 2024/25.

The Business and Regeneration Support function also delivers support to the Primary Industries (Fisheries & Marine Resources and the Crofting & Land Resources) sectors - in addition to managing and maintaining the Comhairle's portfolio of sites and properties for Economic Development purposes.

1.6. **Planning Services** - Comhairle nan Eilean Siar as the Planning Authority for the administrative area of the Western Isles has a statutory duty to deliver the planning functions enacted under the Town & Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (The Act) (as amended), and its related and subordinate legislation.

The Act requires that every Planning Authority prepares and adopts a Local Development Plan; make Planning Decisions in accordance with its Development Plan (unless material considerations indicate

otherwise); and enforces the law of Planning, at its discretion, where it determines that it is in the public interest to do so.

The Planning Service is responsible for Development Planning, Development Management (Planning and related applications) and Enforcement. Tasks include preparing, monitoring, and reviewing the Local Development Plan and associated Supplementary Guidance, The Service provides pre planning advice, determines planning and related applications and takes planning enforcement action as required.

Conservation and enhancement of built heritage resources is supported through advice, grant support and other measures. Staff provide advice and information on socio economic matters, have technical expertise in mapping and GIS, and undertake specific projects. The service participates in pre application advice, meets customers, and conducts site visits for the purposes of the assessment and determination of approximately 550 planning and related applications per annum.

The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, the most recent amendment Act, has introduced a number of new and unfunded duties for Planning Authorities which require to be resourced and delivered.

1.7. **Renewable Energy** - Scottish Government targets managing climate change and the transition to net zero are challenging. The service will concentrate on the Comhairle's internal strategy and actions and contribute to the wider Outer Hebrides Net Zero Routemapping. Development of technical and financial business cases for sustainable energy infrastructure projects; securing funding packages for project implementation; managing delivery of sustainable energy projects (capital and revenue); supporting actions to deliver a Net Zero Outer Hebrides.

1.8. **Sectoral and Project Support** - the Service develops and delivers economic strategy to stimulate growth and open new opportunities to drive long term development and manages a range of programmes and projects which support innovation within key economic sectors, including tourism, cultural and creative industries (including Arts development), and Space and traditional sectors.

The Service provides direct support for land resources (crofting, countryside access and biodiversity) and marine resources (fishing); disburses generic development funds to support economic regeneration and to maximise leverage of external funding; develops strategic relations with business, external funding partners and agencies and the community; undertakes lobbying activity and responds to consultations and policy proposals on issues affecting the local economy.

The service also works closely with a range of community organisations and sectoral interest groupings covering a broad spectrum of economic activity encompassing land owning interests, tourism sector, crofting interests and the Voluntary sector, to the benefit of the local economy.

Calum Iain MacIver
Depute Chief Executive

KEY AREAS OF RISK FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

2.1   The Comhairle currently recognises three levels of risk: Strategic risk aligned to the Comhairle's Corporate Strategy; Operational risk aligned to Service Business Plans; and Project risk concerned with specific projects.

2.2   Operational risks represent threats that may affect the achievement of service business plan actions, and Economic Development and Planning has identified significant risks for the coming year and these shall be reviewed periodically.

2.3   The Initial Risk Matrix at Figure 1 represents the current risk profile of the Service, and the Revised Risk Matrix represents the target risk profile once risk actions have been successfully implemented. 2.4 contains a list of identified risks, categorised by risk treatment.

Figure 1: Economic Development and Planning Operational Risks
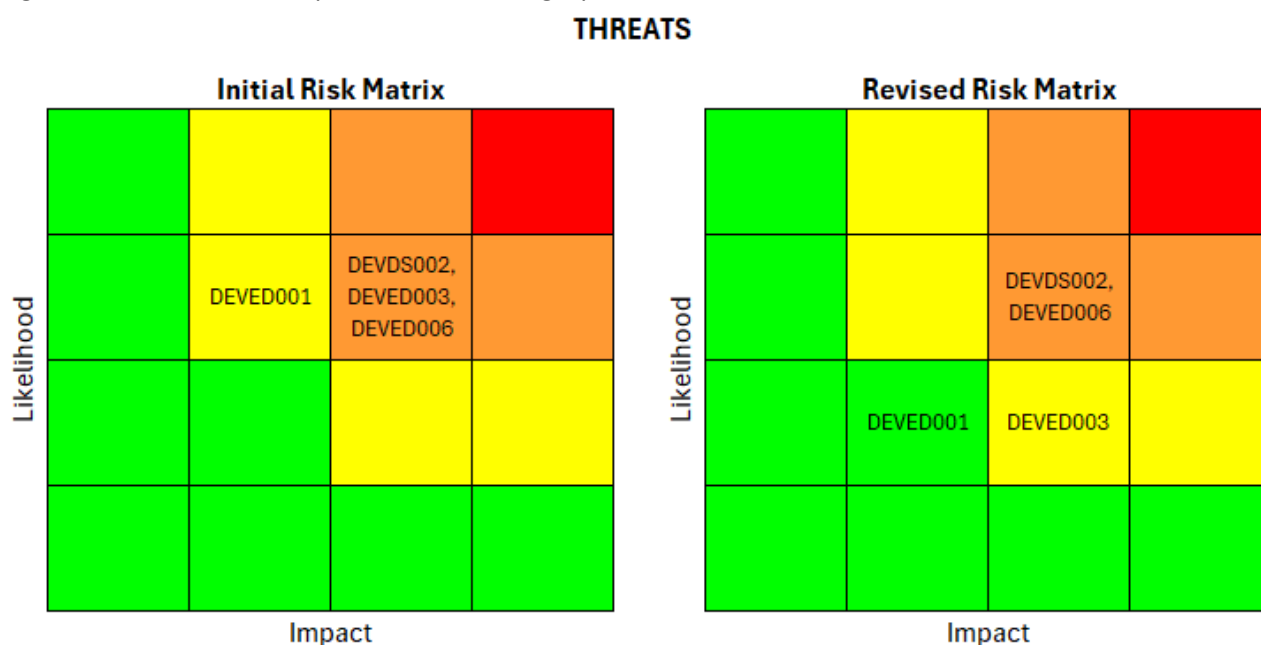
2.4   The Service has identified 4 threats, and these are listed below categorised by Risk Treatment:

Risks retained (acceptable level of risk)
2 risk identified are at an acceptable level and will continue to be monitored:
- DEVDS002 Ongoing reliance on a small number of existing qualified staff.
- DEVED006 Uncertainty of long-term (multi-year) replacement Community-led Local Development Programme.

Risks reduced (action will be taken to reduce the risk to an acceptable level)
2 risks identified will be reduced:
- DEVED001 Declining financial and staff resources to enable delivery of all Business Plan and service objectives.
  - *Risk action:* Prioritise workload as per the Sustainable Development Committee Work Plan.
- DEVED003 Proposed new grid connection to the Outer Hebrides does not materialise.
  - *Risk action:* Engage directly with Government, OFGEM, DECC and Transmission Operators to progress radial connector.

2.5   Elected Members can view the full risk register in the Comhairle's performance management system, Interplan, within the Integrated Risk Management (IRM) module.

DELIVERING THE SERVICE BUSINESS PLAN AND ACHIEVING BEST VALUE

Strategic Outcomes

3.1   Economic Development and Planning contribute to the strategic outcomes listed in Table 1 to support the delivery of the Comhairle's Strategic Priorities.

Table 1: Service alignment to Strategic Outcomes

LOIP	Strategic Priorities	Strategic Outcomes
1. Local Economy and Employment	1.1 Strengthen the local economy.	1.1.1 Development projects associated with the Islands Deal are delivered. 1.1.2 Digitalisation supports the local infrastructure, customer engagement and business development. 1.1.3 Investment in our buildings and infrastructure maximises effectiveness of available internal and external funding source. 1.1.4 Increased level of skills across our communities and workforce 1.1.5 Growth in small and medium sized businesses demonstrated
2. Population and Connectivity	2.1 Support children, families, and young people	The Service does not directly contribute to the strategic outcomes within this priority.
3. Housing and Community	3.1 Support caring and resilient communities and quality of life	3.1.1 The Gaelic language, natural heritage and cultural of our communities is supported and promoted. 3.1.3 Planning and infrastructure meet the needs of our communities. 3.1.4 Our communities are safe, inclusive, and resilient. 3.1.5 Reduce inequality and poverty and promote social mobility
4. Governance Framework	4.1 Deliver Community Leadership	4.1.1 Communities are empowered and continue to be at the heart of our decision making. 4.1.2 Reduction in our carbon footprint and development of an island route map to net zero

Best Value

3.2   In working towards the 11 strategic outcomes, the service aims to ensure that there is good governance and effective management of resources, with a focus on improvement, to deliver the best possible outcomes for the public and to make arrangements for the reporting to the public of the outcome of the performance of its functions. Table 2 lists the service outcomes established to support the delivery of the Service Business Plan (SBP) and to achieve Best Value.

Table 2: Service Outcomes

Delivering the SBP and achieving Best Value
Service Outcomes The service demonstrates that it: • proactively regenerates the Outer Hebrides' local economy and communities; • supports the development of business and community enterprises, and • leads on strategic projects which contribute direct investment into the economic and social infrastructure across the Outer Hebrides.

MEASURES AND ACTIONS

4.1   The Accounts Commission's <u>Best Value in Scotland</u> Report (2023) highlights "the pressures and spending constraints facing councils - increasing demand for services and a real-terms reduction in funding. In this context it is more critical than ever that councils secure and demonstrate Best Value." The performance measures for the Service are detailed in Tables 3 - 10.

4.2   The Corporate Strategy was reviewed in 2023 to ensure that it continues to state and communicate the ambition, aspirations, and commitments of the Comhairle. The overarching aim and ambition of the Corporate Strategy 2024-2027 is to retain and increase the population of the Outer Hebrides. It takes account of national priorities and local needs but does not include actions to achieve its strategic outcomes as these have been developed by the Corporate Management Team and included in the appropriate SBP for monitoring and reporting to ensure that the Comhairle's mission is achieved. The actions for the Service are detailed in Tables 11 - 19.

How we will measure our performance

4.3   The tables below are grouped by Strategic Priority and include the Corporate Strategy 'Measures of Success' Strategic Outcome KPIs that the service contributes to, the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) SPIs that the service have prioritised for improvement, and the LPIs chosen by the service to strengthen its focus on improvement.

4.4   Each performance measure includes the baseline year and data, the target for 2024/25, and the aspirational target for 2030.

Strategic Priority   1.1 Strengthen the local economy.

Strategic Outcome: 1.1.1 Development projects associated with the Islands Deal are delivered.

Table 3: Performance Measures

Measure (KPI title)	Baseline	Target 2024/25	Target 2030	Service
1.1.1.CS01-2 - CD100ai (SLAED:I1): Economic Development and Tourism Expenditure (Capital Spend).	2019/20 £1,431	£1,000	£1,000	Sectoral and Project Support
1.1.1.CS01-2 - CD100aii (SLAED:I1): Economic Development and Tourism Expenditure (Revenue Spend).	2019/20 £9,533k	£9,500k	£9,500k	Sectoral and Project Support
1.1.1.CS8a - Percentage increase in economy from Outer Hebrides Islands	TBA*	0	0	Sectoral and Project Support

Measure (KPI title)	Baseline	Target 2024/25	Target 2030	Service
Growth Deal sectoral project: ___ 12 (one KPI for each sectoral project).				

* Services do not have the data at the moment and do not envisage being able to measure and report on for quite some time and would require consultancy work, as they have done the baselining for it (August 2023)

Strategic Outcome: **1.1.2 Digitalisation supports the local infrastructure, customer engagement and business development.**

Table 4: Performance Measures

Measure (KPI title)	Baseline	Target 2024/25	Target 2030	Service
1.1.2.CS01 - CD131 (DD075) (LGBF: ECON8 / SLAED:IG8): The percentage of residential and non-residential addresses where superfast broadband is available.	2019 69.3%	75%	75%	Sectoral and Project Support
1.1.2.CS02 - CD130 (SLAED:IG7): Percentage of residential and non-residential premises unable to access 10Mbits/s Broadband.	2019 6.4%	5%	5%	Sectoral and Project Support
1.1.2.CS03 - CD137 (SHS7.1): Percentage of Households with home internet access.	2019 81%	85%	85%	Sectoral and Project Support
1.1.2.CS06 - CD138: Business Gateway: Number of Digital Health Checks undertaken. (Trend)	2020/21 28	N/A	N/A	Business and Regeneration Support
1.1.2.CS07 - CD139: Business Gateway: Number of businesses benefitting from intensive 1-2-1 digital support. (Trend)	2020/21 15	N/A	N/A	Business and Regeneration Support
1.1.2.CS08 - CD140: Business Gateway: Number of Digital Skills webinars delivered. (Trend)	2020/21 21	N/A	N/A	Business and Regeneration Support

Strategic Outcome: **1.1.3 Investment in our buildings and infrastructure maximises effectiveness of available internal and external funding source**

Table 5: Performance Measures

Measure (KPI title)	Baseline	Target 2024/25	Target 2030	Service
1.1.3.CS01 - CD076 (DD076) (LGBF: ECON9, SLAED:OC8): Town Vacancy Rates.	2019/20 5.5%	6%	6%	Business and Regeneration Support

Strategic Outcome: **1.1.4 Increased level of skills across our communities and workforce**

Table 6: Performance Measures

Measure (KPI title)	Baseline	Target 2024/25	Target 2030	Service
1.1.4 - CD019 (DD018): Number of Business Enterprise Skills Workshops delivered.	2014/15 41	15	15	Business and Regeneration Support

Strategic Outcome: 1.1.5 Growth in small and medium sized businesses demonstrated.

Table 7: Performance Measures

Measure (KPI title)	Baseline	Target 2024/25	Target 2030	Service
1.1.5.CS01 - CD159 (SLAED: I2): Economic Development Staffing – estimated.	2019/20 36.56	24	24	Business and Regeneration Support
1.1.5.CS06a - CD163a (SLAED: IG4b): Gross Value Added (GVA) by Growth Sector per head (Employment): Financial and Business Services.	2018 41,996	53,000	53,000	Business and Regeneration Support
1.1.5.CS06b - CD163b (SLAED: IG4d): Gross Value Added (GVA) by Growth Sector per head (Employment): Energy.	2018 111,560	120,000	180,000	Renewable Energy
1.1.5.CS06c - CD163c (SLAED: IG4e): Gross Value Added (GVA) by Growth Sector per head (Employment): Sustainable Tourism.	2018 15,853	16,000	16,000	Sectoral and Project Support
1.1.5.CS06d - CD163d (SLAED: IG4f): Gross Value Added (GVA) by Growth Sector per head (Employment): Creative Industries (incl. Digital)	2018 47,643	50,000	50,000	Sectoral and Project Support
1.1.5.CS07 - CD119 (DD063a) (LGBF: ECON5a, SLAED:OC9): Number of Business Gateway Start-ups that are Trading. (Trend)	2019/20 57	N/A	N/A	Business and Regeneration Support
1.1.5.CS02 – CD158 (SLAED OC4): New Business Starts per 10,000 Working Age Population. (Trend)	2019 48	N/A	N/A	Business and Regeneration Support
1.1.5.CS03 - CD160: Business Survival Rate (min 3 Year).	2015-18 63%	62%	62%	Business and Regeneration Support
1.1.5.CS04 - CD161 (SLAED: A1): Number of Attendees at Business Gateway Events. (Trend)	2019/20 459	N/A	N/A	Business and Regeneration Support
1.1.5.CS05 - CD162 (SLAED: OP1): Number of Businesses Supported by Council Economic Development Activity. (Trend)	2019/20 340	N/A	N/A	Business and Regeneration Support
1.1.5 - CD007: Business Gateway: Number of new business enquiries dealt with.	2021/22 1,340	280	280	Business and Regeneration Support
1.1.5 - CD014 (DD020): Number of jobs created/safeguarded.	2014/15 109	45	45	Business and Regeneration Support
1.1.5 - CD015 (DD019): Number of existing businesses supported to achieve growth.	2017/18 22	5	5	Business and Regeneration Support
1.1.5 - CD016 (DD021): Number of young people supported in business.	2017/18 16	40	40	Business and Regeneration Support
1.1.5 - CD017 (DD022): Number of new business start-ups.	2014/15 44	35	35	Business and Regeneration Support

Strategic Priority: **3.1 Support caring and resilient communities and quality of life**

Strategic Outcome: **3.1.3 Planning and infrastructure meet the needs of our communities.**

Table 8: Performance Measures

Measure (KPI title)	Baseline	Target 2024/25	Target 2030	Service
3.1.3.CS04 - DD061 (LGBF: ECON3): Average time per business and industry planning application (weeks)	2019/20 9.53 weeks (about 2 months)	*8.67 weeks	*8.67 weeks	Planning Services
3.1.3.CD010A (DD065A): Percentage of building warrants and amendments to building warrant issued (following a first or subsequent report) within 10 working days.	2018/19 95%	90%	90%	Building Standards
3.1.3.CD011A (DD067A): Percentage of first reports issued within 20 working days.	2017/18 98%	95%	95%	Building Standards

Strategic Outcome: **3.1.5 Reduce inequality and poverty and promote social mobility.**

Table 9: Performance Measures

Measure (KPI title)	Baseline	Target 2024/25	Target 2030	Service
3.1.5.CS13 - CE106: Percentage of households fuel poor (Trend).	2017-2019 40%	N/A	N/A	Renewable Energy
3.1.5.CS14 - CE183: Percentage of households extreme fuel poor (Trend).	2017-2019 24%	N/A	N/A	Renewable Energy
3.1.5.CS15 - CE184: The median fuel poverty gap for fuel poor households adjusted to 2015 fuel prices (annual amount that would be required to move the household out of fuel poverty (Trend).	2017-2019 £1,350	N/A	N/A	Renewable Energy

Strategic Priority: **4.1 Deliver Community Leadership.**

Strategic Outcome: **4.1.1 Communities are empowered and continue to be at the heart of our decision making.**

Table 10: Performance Measures

Measure (KPI title)	Baseline	Target 2024/25	Target 2030	Service
4.1.1.CD008 (DD079): The average time (weeks) to deal with major planning applications determined during the year.	2017/18 36.9 weeks	*17.33 weeks	*17.33 weeks	Planning Services
4.1.1.CD009 (DD080): The average time (weeks) to deal with local planning applications determined during the year, excluding EIAs.	2020/21 9.35 weeks	*8.67 weeks	*8.67 weeks	Planning Services

*Statutory Targets

What actions we will take

4.5 The SBP strengthens the links with the Corporate Strategy and the LOIP. The actions take into consideration the key areas of risk identified at section two whilst focusing on progressing the strategic outcomes.

Strategic Priority: 1.1 Strengthen the local economy

Strategic Outcome: 1.1.1 Development projects associated with the Islands Deal are delivered.

Table 11: SBP Actions

Action	Service
1.1.1.2 Identify and support new energy sector opportunities for the Outer Hebrides.	Renewable Energy
1.1.1.3 Deliver Primary Industries strand of Islands Deal Programme.	Business and Regeneration Support

Strategic Outcome: 1.1.2 Digitalisation supports the local infrastructure, customer engagement and business development.

Table 12: SBP Actions

Action	Service
1.1.2.1 Continue to lobby government for full fibre rollout to every community.	Sectoral and Project Support

Strategic Outcome: 1.1.5 Growth in small and medium sized businesses demonstrated.

Table 13: SBP Actions

Action	Service
1.1.5.1 Deliver Business Gateway services to support business start-up and growth.	Business and Regeneration Support
1.1.5.2 Deliver internal and external business support funding programmes.	Business and Regeneration Support
1.1.5.3 Support growth and resilience within the fisheries and aquaculture sectors.	Business and Regeneration Support

Strategic Priority: 3.1 Support caring and resilient communities and quality of life

Strategic Outcome: 3.1.1 The Gaelic language, natural heritage and cultural of our communities is supported and promoted.

Table 14: SBP Actions

Action	Service
3.1.1.1 Implement the Comhairle's Local Biodiversity Action Plan.	Sectoral and Project Support
3.1.1.3 Support the local tourism industry develop a new visitor strategy up to 2030.	Sectoral and Project Support
3.1.1.4 Support the local Crofting and Agricultural sector through expected transition to new subsidy and net zero future schemes.	Sectoral and Project Support

Strategic Outcome: **3.1.3 Planning, and infrastructure meet the needs of our communities.**

Table 15: SBP Actions

Action	Service
3.1.3.1 Prepare new and updated Supplementary Guidance to support the Development Plan.	Planning Services
3.1.3.7 Undertake preparatory work for new Local Development Plan.	Planning Services

Strategic Outcome: **3.1.4 Our communities are safe, inclusive, and resilient.**

Table 16: SBP Actions

Action	Service
3.1.4.17 Support safe, inclusive, and resilient local communities by the maintenance of an effective building standards service as set out in the Scottish Government Verification Performance Framework and the Verification Operating Framework	Building Standards

Strategic Outcome: **3.1.5 Reduce inequality and poverty and promote social mobility.**

Table 17: SBP Actions

Action	Service
3.1.5.2 Support the delivery of the Outer Hebrides Fuel Poverty Strategy and explore the concept of a Local Energy Economy for the Outer Hebrides.	Renewable Energy

Strategic Priority: **4.1 Deliver Community Leadership.**

Strategic Outcome: **4.1.1 Communities are empowered and continue to be at the heart of our decision making.**

Table 18: SBP Actions

Action	Service
4.1.1.5 Undertake phased preparation of a Regional Marine Plan for the Outer Hebrides marine region.	Planning Services
4.1.1.6. Oversee the delivery of the Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) Programme in accordance with grant obligations with the Scottish Government and the Memorandum of Understanding with the Local Action Group.	Business and Regeneration Support

Strategic Outcome: **4.1.2 Reduction in our carbon footprint and development of an island route map to net zero.**

Table 19: SBP Actions

Action	Service
4.1.2.3 Support renewable energy development, maximising local socio-economic benefit.	Renewable Energy

RESOURCING THE PLAN

5.1 The funding and staffing resources identified to implement our SBP is summarised in Tables 20 - 22 as per the budget approved by Comhairle in February 2024 and the annual budget setting salary estimates exercise.

Revenue Budget 2024/25

5.2   Economic Development and Planning has a Net Revenue Budget of £1.3m, which is allocated across the service within the sections detailed in Table 20.

Table 20: Net Revenue Budget by Service Profile 2024/25

Detail	£ million	%
Building Standards	0.21	16
Business and Regeneration Support	0.36	28
Planning Services	0.57	44
Renewable Energy	0.13	10
Sectoral and Project Support	0.03	2
Total	£1.3m	100%

Capital Budget 2024/25

5.3   The Service has a Capital Budget of £7.8m which is allocated within the Service across the projects detailed in Table 21.

Table 21: Capital Budget

Capital Programme 2024/25 Projects	£ million
Rural Tourism Infrastructure fund	0.095
Community Capital Grant fund	0.065
Regeneration Capital Grant fund	3.548
Gaelic Capital Fund – Cnoc Soilleir	2.75
Garadh a'Bhagh A Tuath	0.006
Town Centre fund	0.079
Place Based Investment Programme	0.163
Nature Restoration fund	0.083
Islands Infrastructure fund	0.392
Islands Programme: • Community Facility Programme • An Taigh Mhor • UHI • Seallam	 0.115 0.039 0.25 0.055
Shared Prosperity fund	0.117
Island Emergency Cost Crisis fund	0.077
Total	7.834

Service Employees

5.4   The Economic Development and Planning Service have 40.55 FTE employees working across the service within the sections listed in Table 22. We support these employees to deliver their duties through a range of policies including personal appraisal and a robust training framework.

Table 22: FTE Employees

Service Profile	Number of FTE employees
Building Standards	8.33
Business and Regeneration Support	11.27
Planning Services	14.74
Renewable Energy	1.81
Sectoral and Project Support	4.40
Total	40.55