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INVERNESS
FUTURES
GROUP

INVERNESS
ONE CITY, ONE VISION



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Inverness 2035

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Why We Need A City Vision

02

Wherever you look in Inverness, you will discover magnificent work being done to enhance Inverness as a city to live in and as a place to visit.

The physical and mental health and wellbeing of our people has rarely, if ever been more important. Whether it is public sector projects, private investment or community initiatives, you don't have to look far to find innovative ways of providing uplifting and inspiring ways to improve the wellbeing of people who live in Inverness and the visitors who arrive here.

This paper does not intend to bypass all that excellent work or aim to replace economic development plans and sectoral projects currently underway.

Instead, it seeks to highlight the need for a shared vision and a way to connect current, planned and future projects to deliver a welcoming, successful, green, sustainable city at the heart of a thriving Highlands.

This paper also aims to be a starting place for partners and invested parties to come together to work towards a common goal – to create an Inverness vision that is unapologetically ambitious.

Only when we know where we are going can we map out the route to getting there.

In setting out what that vision may look like, this paper does not intend to answer the challenges and obstacles that may arise from setting a shared vision.

This paper is a starting point for us to describe what is possible for Inverness and what it could look and feel like in the future, and the steps we need to take to get there.

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03

Part of a Thriving Highlands

When considering the economic and social future of Inverness, it is impossible to separate the city from the rest of the Highlands. The future of the city and the wider Highlands will always be interlinked, and to succeed, each must work in step.

Organisations concerned with the future of the City of Inverness have within their remit responsibility for the development of the Highland region. This means that Inverness is often seen as a part of the whole picture rather than the picture itself. Understandably, this results in a region-wide approach and dilutes any city-specific vision.

The Highland Council sets out a Programme for Administration for the local authority area. At the same time, Highlands and Islands Enterprise is concerned with the development of the region. Still, there is currently no public or shared vision for the City of Inverness.

This is not a criticism of any partner organisations or any approach taken; however, it does highlight the absence of and need for a specific Inverness City approach.

The question must be: why should Inverness be different from any other city with its own unique identity?

If we want Inverness to realise its potential as a modern city - to be attractive to visitors and investors alike - then we must recognise that Inverness requires a distinct vision.

The role of Inverness as the gateway to the region or the capital of the Highlands is a crucial part of its unique offering and always will be, but for Inverness to thrive, we need a vision for the city that is more than its geographical location.



City of Opportunity 2021

04

This is an exciting time for Inverness, with several developments changing the landscape and social fabric of the city.

The £315m Inverness City Region Deal unlocked transformational projects in and around the city.

It enabled partners to develop the connectivity through the construction of critical roads and active travel infrastructure, realising the opportunity to free up land for housing and commercial development.

The City Region Deal set out the ambition to position Inverness as a place of digital opportunity. The public investment in this aim opened the door for partnership opportunities resulting in over £20m private sector investment in digital infrastructure across Inverness.

Without a doubt, full fibre networking across the city is a gamechanger for Inverness, but if it is not part of a wider strategy, it is just technology.

Inverness is already a popular base for businesses. Lifescan Scotland, Norbord Europe, Capgemini, Orion and the Global Energy Group are just some of the major companies that have a significant Inverness base.

The University of the Highlands and Islands changed more than the landscape of Inverness; it has enabled more young people to study and live here.

Respected education institutions and research programmes in the heart of the City allows us to retain talent in the region, increasing opportunities for inward investment well into the future.

The establishment of the UHI campus has set the foundations for a thriving jobs market in the future.

Several new hotel developments are elevating the city's tourism offering. As the retail sector continues to struggle in the face of changing shopping trends, the city centre sees growth in the food and drink sectors.

The ongoing development of Highlife Highland facilities offers modern leisure and social facilities accessible to all in the community and across the city. The Bught Campus area, linked to the city by the Active Travel route offers huge potential for additional cultural and sporting activities for locals and visitors of all abilities and groups.

The continued development of Eden Court's programme offers visitors and residents the opportunity to enjoy culture and arts in the centre of Inverness.

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INVERNESS 2035

**A welcoming
successful
green
sustainable
city at the
heart of a
thriving
Highlands.**

Creating a Shared Vision

06

The vision of Inverness - a welcoming, successful, green, sustainable city at the heart of the Highlands - is an opportunity to create an anchor point for all strategic plans for the city moving forward.

How this might look will be different to us all, and that is why this exercise is so important. Whatever the answer to what Inverness will be in 2035 may be, it needs to have Inverness's people at its heart.

In the pages that follow, this paper will set out some of the policy decisions that may be required, aspirational goals and statements of intent that could form part of the plans to achieve our shared vision.

Hopefully, these options will inspire a collaborative approach to the next chapter of Inverness - one of Europe's fastest growing cities and the city in the heart of the Highlands.



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INVERNESS 2035

A
welcoming
city at the
heart of a
thriving
Highlands.

An Arrival to Remember

08

Inverness will be a welcoming city for visitors from near and far. Shops, businesses, tour operators and residents will be proud of Inverness's world-renowned reputation as the welcoming city. It will be a statement of intent turned into reality by the people of Inverness. Their pride in our welcoming city will make Inverness a great place to live and visit.

Whether visitors arrive by bus, train, car, or flight, their first impression of Inverness will be consistently that of a welcoming city. When they leave, they will do so, with a warm recollection of the Highland welcome they enjoyed throughout their visit.

It will be an experience that stays with them and brings them back time and time again. The airport will be a blend of modern amenities coupled with the warmth of a Highland welcome. The city will be accessible by hub airports, enabling visitors and residents to travel seamlessly across the globe.

When people arrive, they will have access to rail links, eco bikes, electric buses, and self-drive rentals – getting to Inverness City from the airport will be quick, clean and connected.

Visitors will be able to avoid the elements by accessing city transport links all under one roof.

Public transport will be modern, proudly eco, well maintained and clean. Timetables and tickets will be fully accessible online and via apps.

All transport links will be fully integrated with the ability to buy a single pass to that final destination. People arriving by bus will disembark in an attractive sheltered bus station that will be well be maintained and sympathetically designed to suit its surroundings.

Visitors will experience an effortless transition to their destination accommodation, having already accessed the urban trail on their app and aided by the helpful staff and locals they encounter as they move throughout the city.

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An Attractive City Centre

Visitors will be attracted to walking or cycling to their destination because of the beautiful pedestrian streetscapes.

They will marvel at our historical architecture, there to enjoy because of the extensive and regular cleaning of city centre buildings and street cleaning.

Visitors will be able to mentally map out their activities for the days ahead because of well thought out directional signs, pointing them to the world-class Inverness Castle experience, the beautiful riverside trail and all those fantastic culture and sports hot spots in and around the city.

Every entry to Inverness is attractive and welcoming as part of the City's ongoing work to fulfil its promise to be the world's most welcoming city.

Inverness won't just be a city for visitors – it will be a place to enjoy for those who live here. The city centre will be attractive, accessible for all and most importantly family-friendly with a focus on creating a place and atmosphere that has a positive and enriching effect on wellbeing.

Gone will be a city centre prioritised for cars and buses – instead, priority will be given to pedestrians and cyclists. Streetscapes will be designed for active travel, supported by park and ride zones on the city's outskirts. Street furniture will be minimal, and where it can be found, it will be sympathetically designed to ensure disabled people are not hindered by it.

Our streets will be bustling with families enjoying the 'what's on' features of the day or finding their way along the digital urban trails, supported by our gigabit Wi-Fi infrastructure throughout the city.

Independent businesses and retailers will be supported by independent retailer enterprise zones. Our high street will be a blend of retail, office, housing and hospitality.

Inverness's charm will be its people – in its shops, restaurants, businesses and on the streets. Food and drink will be at the heart of the design of our city centre, with restaurants and bars for locals and visitors alike to enjoy.



Family Friendly First

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Inverness will be the best city to grow up in, a claim that will be backed up by being an accredited UNICEF Child-Friendly City and local political commitment to creating nurturing social and school environments – ensuring no child is left behind.

The city infrastructure will be constructed to create family-friendly active travel routes, parks and outdoor public spaces for activities. Inverness will be a growing city where green space is prioritised in every planning development.

The city will be awash with colour because of a citywide partnership between local schools and council services.

Whether it is joint streetscape projects or expressive art adorning walls along the river, when people visit Inverness, they will feel the city's children at its heart.

Thanks to the pedestrianisation of Inverness city centre, families will enjoy spending time in the centre and the local economy benefits significantly from their presence. Making the city centre accessible to all will increase footfall for shops.

Public areas – once considered unattractive – will be reimaged to make them family-friendly routes or parks. These public areas won't be only places to take children, they facilitate much needed social interaction between different generations – purposefully engage with a wide variety of partners to create events that bring together the youngest and oldest residents and visitors.

A long-standing commitment to new housing – both affordable and social rent – will ensure every family has a safe home to live in. The most vulnerable in our society will feel part of a community and be supported.

Care in the community extends beyond public services, and community groups will be leading the efforts in their local area. Schools will be modern, inclusive campuses that reflect our ongoing commitment to nurturing the city's children. Active travel routes and integrated transport links will ensure travelling to and from school is safe and enjoyable.

Often described as the Safe City, Inverness continues to have the lowest crime rate of any city in Scotland.

A
successful
city at the
heart of a
thriving
Highlands.

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Success Where it Matters

There will be shared commitment to the vision to be a welcoming, successful, green, sustainable city at the heart of a thriving Highlands.

People living in Inverness will be connected to this vision and will be central to its journey. The physical and mental wellbeing of the city's people will be at the core of all public policy decisions, with clear success metrics.

All strategic planning will stem from this vision and form a blueprint to attain and sustain this vision.

A collaborative policy approach between public organisations, commerce and communities put the people who live, work and study here at the centre of all development planning.

This blend of the public sector, private and community support, along with strategic infrastructure and development plans, means Inverness will be a city that knows where it is going.

As a result of local policy, cooperatives and community ownership initiatives will bring tired public assets to life across the city.

Communities will have an active role in planning and development.

There will be a shared asset register for the city - detailing the public assets, buildings and land. This will be fully accessible online.

Public policy and investment are concerned with creating a thriving economy and a thriving well-being economy. Development will be sustainable, inclusive and resilient.

Inverness will be a well-regarded incubator for start-up companies, bringing a range of sectors together, creating a sustainable and resilient economy.



Connected Communities & Commerce

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Inverness will be a city that connects businesses to trading partners, workers to jobs and people to places.

The Gigabit connectivity across the city will make Inverness an attractive place to do business. Investment in infrastructure will support economic and social productivity.

Inverness will be the home of start-up businesses, supported by enterprising public policy and a proactive campaign to attract start-ups to the city. Incubator zones will enable small to medium businesses to share resources as they grow.

Flexible and equipped working spaces across the city will make it an attractive and low-cost place for small to medium-sized businesses.

The connected public transport infrastructure and traffic control measures allow workers to travel quickly and safely to work.

The city will be welcoming and attractive to multi-national corporations.

All new homes will be connected via fibre to the premises internet connection, thanks to planning policy that incorporated fibre to the premises as a supply requirement in planning consents.

The city's modern gigabit infrastructure will enable health services to use smart technologies to deliver care in the community and will help build communities.

The use of SMART technologies will support people where they live, socialise and work.

The city will boast a reputation as a STEM centre of expertise, providing well-paid jobs for young people and the research facilities at UHI will be considered world-class.

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Culture, Arts & Leisure

As a successful city with wellbeing at its heart, Inverness will be a showcase for Art, Leisure, Culture and Music, bringing to life Highland heritage through artistic expression in physical art and spaces.

A world-class visitor experience, Inverness Castle will cement the city's reputation for tourism, heritage and arts.

Urban trails will be well planned and engaging.

Venues will keep reimagining the city's entertainment through the extensive augmented reality experiences interwoven across the city.

Eden Court, Scotland's largest single-site, award-winning arts venue, will be one of Scotland's best-loved experience venues, bringing an excellent artistic programme to residents and visitors alike.

Local culture, art and music will be at the core of city plans, nurtured and supported by creative funding.

An ongoing commitment to culture and the arts will grow the city's night economy and ensure Inverness's reputation as an experience city.

Highlife Highland will be leading peer organisations in attracting the best in culture, learning, sport, leisure, health and wellbeing, along with engaged partners, such as Sportscotland, Creative Scotland, Visit Scotland and Scottish Canals.

Every corner of the city will boast modern sport & leisure facilities that are accessible and welcoming.

The riverside will be brought to life with market stalls and activities for the family to enjoy. The walk routes around the city will be engaging and informative. People will enjoy reading about Inverness's history while walking along the canal, visiting the marina or discovering the woodland areas.

Inverness's location in the heart of the Highlands, community-led development and popularity as a place to live and visit will ensure an experience for every style, budget, and taste.



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INVERNESS 2035

A

green

city at the

heart of a

thriving

Highlands.

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Creating Green Spaces

Inverness will be a carbon-neutral city and will boast the lowest air pollution of any Scottish city.

Inverness is at the heart of a thriving Highlands. It will attract visitors from across the world eager to enjoy the outdoor pursuits and beautiful scenery to be found across the region. Nurturing our nature will be at the heart of Inverness in 2035.

Unused public spaces will be turned into community assets and supported with funding to create green spaces.

Projects, such as Edible Inverness, will have ensured the city's green spaces feature edible areas.

The city centre will be reimagined to create green spaces in the heart of the city. The city will be home to multiple community allotment areas.

Public parks will be created with each new large housing development, along with seating areas.

There will be an extensive programme of investment in active travel and bike infrastructure throughout the entire city area.

Inverness will have more pedestrians and cyclists than cars travelling along popular routes. Inverness will be Scotland's cycling city, active travel routes will be well-thought-out and visiting the city centre is a pleasant experience.

Our local economy will benefit from the increased footfall in the city centre because it will be easy to get to and move around. Public transport will be interconnected, green and reliable, making it a preferred mode of transportation to get around the city.

All public vehicles will be electric or hydrogen-powered.

Electric car infrastructure will be well maintained, accessible at all park and rides and in public car parks.



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INVERNESS 2035

A

sustainable

city at the

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A Sustainable Culture

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Promoting education on the importance of sustainable living will not be confined to schools; it will be available to all.

Active travel will be the preferred mode of transport for people travelling around the city to work and study.

Recycling will be an embedded culture with residents of the city.

Renewable energy projects will not only generate power but will also act as educational tools to embed a culture of sustainability.

The Archimedes Screw on the river Ness will be one such example of a popular tourist destination using renewable energy to power buildings.

UN sustainability goals will be incorporated into local public policy and will be at the heart of city planning.

New housing developments will be environmentally friendly with innovative green spaces.

As part of planning consent, new housing and business developments will be required to install solar or renewable infrastructure to a specified standard.

Solar panels will be installed in all new public buildings, schools and homes.

Urban development will be innovative, solar-powered buildings that incorporate green space in the plans.

Sustainable urban agriculture will form part of public planning and there will be a fund to support urban agriculture projects in and around the city.

If Not This, Then What?

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A
welcoming
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This paper has set out what Inverness 2035 could look like at the heart of a thriving Highlands; as a welcoming, successful, green, sustainable city, with physical and mental health and wellbeing at its core. In doing so, it also provides a picture of how policy decisions, aspirations and collaborative working might achieve this.

While no one organisation is responsible for the delivery of Inverness's vision, this vision cannot be delivered without cooperation between public organisations, businesses and communities that will need to work in collaboration.

The vision for Inverness also needs to be resilient to political cycles and changes in leadership. This can be achieved by creating a One City, One Vision stakeholder group.

The question to be posed from this paper is; if this is not the Inverness we should aspire to be, then what is it, how do we describe it and, perhaps most importantly, how are we going to get there?