

Green Freeport Quarterly

Together, realising our potential

Inverness &
Cromarty Firth
Green Freeport

a free trade zone

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Update from the Chief Executive

I'M DELIGHTED TO REFLECT ON A MAJOR MILESTONE FOR INVERNESS AND CROMARTY FIRTH GREEN FREEPORT IN THIS ISSUE – ONE THAT HAS BEEN MANY YEARS IN THE MAKING. IN SEPTEMBER, WE WELCOMED THE UK AND SCOTTISH GOVERNMENTS TO THE HIGHLANDS TO MARK THE FINAL STAGE IN THE PLANNING PROCESS TO BRING OUR GREEN FREEPORT FORMALLY INTO BEING WITH A SIGNING OF A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING.

The document outlines the framework in how we will work with governments and the Highland Council to deliver our shared ambition for sustainable economic prosperity. You can read more about the day elsewhere in the newsletter, but as I reflect on the event, I've also been considering the path forward and the opportunities we must seize to bring that vision to life.

As the UK – and indeed the world – moves towards a green economy, we are seeing an increase in generation of renewable energy. Here in the Highlands, that shift is reshaping our landscape and economy. These developments bring both opportunity and challenge, and it's important that we approach them in a collaborative, considered way.

We understand the deep connections people have with the land and coastline. They are part of who we are. Large scale infrastructure inevitably impacts communities, and that impact must never be overlooked. Listening, engaging and ensuring that development happens with communities rather than to them is fundamental to progress.

At the same time, the renewables revolution offers something profoundly hopeful for our young people and our shared future. For too long, the Highlands

has seen talent and ambition disperse in search of opportunity. The clean energy transition can change that by creating long term, well-paid jobs and apprenticeships that allow young people to build their futures here, close to home and family, and thrive in their communities.

Investment in our ports, manufacturing and grid infrastructure will bring national benefits in the UK's future energy security by enabling home-grown clean power, but it must also deliver local value. At the Green Freeport, we see this value as stronger communities, a more resilient and diverse economy, and sustainable growth.

Our region has always thrived through partnership. How often have we seen success through people coming together to achieve more than any one organisation could alone? Our Green Freeport – one of only two in Scotland – stands as proof of what collaboration can achieve. As we navigate this next chapter, that same spirit of collaboration will guide us, ensuring that the Highlands' energy future is one of shared prosperity and pride.

CALUM MACPHERSON
CHIEF EXECUTIVE, ICFGF

LATEST PROGRESS

- We have signed an MoU with the UK and Scottish governments and Highland Council, unlocking £25m in UK government funding.
- Port of Nigg was acquired by long-term investor Mitsui. Under its stewardship, the facility will undergo continued investment, with plans just announced to extend the quayside to accommodate the largest ships and barges for offloading offshore wind turbines.
- Port of Inverness took delivery of its first batch of hydrated vegetable oil to use as a replacement for marine gas oil to fuel its pilot boats, significantly reducing emissions.
- Scottish ministers have approved Port of Cromarty Firth's marine and dredge licences for its £111m expansion plans, including a 400 metre quay extension.

A landmark milestone for the Highlands

September marked an exciting new chapter for our Green Freeport, with the official signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between us, the UK and Scottish Governments, and the Highland Council. This agreement established a strong framework for co-operation to help us unlock transformational opportunities for jobs, skills and investment across the Highlands.

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The signing marked the final step in a five-year process to create Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport. The agreement was signed by Douglas Alexander MP, Secretary of State for Scotland, and Deputy First Minister, Kate Forbes MSP, on behalf of the UK and Scottish Governments. Councillor Raymond Bremner, Leader of the Highland Council, signed on behalf of the local authority, which will act as the accountable body, ensuring public funds are managed responsibly and strong governance is in place.

The agreement formally unlocked £25 million in UK Government funding to help deliver vital infrastructure projects across our partner ports. This investment will strengthen their world class facilities and accelerate the region's ability to support large scale offshore energy projects.

Our CEO Calum MacPherson said: *"It was a truly a historic moment for the Green Freeport, made possible because of the shared ambition of many organisations to deliver positive change for the economic prosperity of the Highlands, for our young people and future generations, and for the health of our planet."*



Sinclair Browne, member of ICGF Board and CEO of Port of Inverness; Kate Forbes; Douglas Alexander; Councillor Raymond Bremner.



MoU signing ceremony at Aurora Energy Services' training facility in Inverness.



Calum MacPherson



Douglas Alexander, Kate Forbes, Calum MacPherson.



Meet the team

KEY APPOINTMENTS MADE TO ICFGF BOARD

We're delighted to announce the appointment of two highly experienced industry leaders to the ICFGF board as non-executive directors.



Yoshihiro Hayakawa

Yoshihiro is Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director of Global Energy Services Holding Ltd – operators of Port of Nigg – and brings over 25 years of international experience in the energy and renewables sector.

Having worked extensively across Japan, China, Dubai, Mexico and Spain, including with GRI Renewable Industries, Yoshihiro has led major renewable energy initiatives worldwide. His expertise spans supply chain optimisation, strategic investment, and delivering customer-focused solutions across global markets.

Mr Hayakawa's insight will strengthen the board's international perspective and support its mission to drive Scotland's transition to a net zero future through collaboration, innovation and sustainable growth.



Ian Cobban

Ian is Interim Chief Executive of Haventus, which operates the Ardersier Energy Transition Facility. He has amassed four decades of global experience in the energy and port sectors.

Throughout his career, Mr Cobban has held senior leadership positions across the energy industry, including serving as Chief Operating Officer for Global Energy Group. With more than ten years' experience in the wind sector, he has played a key role in advancing renewable infrastructure and operations both in the UK and internationally.

Together, their extensive operational knowledge and industry insight will help guide the board as it works to attract investment, accelerate offshore renewables development and deliver long-term value to the Highlands and beyond.

Local groups benefit from Green Freeport Capacity Fund

Earlier this year, we launched our **Green Freeport Capacity Fund** – a new initiative designed to support community groups across the Highlands deliver projects that promote social inclusion and environmental improvement.

We're thrilled to now announce the first Capacity Fund recipients, which include:

- **Cromarty Grows Together** – transforming disused land in the village centre into a vibrant community garden, with a new cabin to support year-round activity.
- **Day 1** – delivering a Life Skills pilot programme for young people aged 14-16, offering hands-on learning and workplace visits.
- **Repair Café Alness (ILM Highland)** – providing a friendly space where local people can enjoy refreshments and socialise while volunteers repair household items.
- **New Start Highland** – expanding training opportunities at its Training and Reuse Village in Inverness, including a new hospitality skills programme to help tackle poverty, crisis and unemployment across the region.
- **Nigg Old Trust** – restoring The Bishop's Walk beside the historic Nigg Old Church to make it safer and more accessible for visitors.
- **Red Chair Highland** – helping people access digital technology through one-to-one support, workshops and online safety sessions.
- **The Haven Centre run by the Elsie Normington Foundation** – transforming a brownfield site in Inverness to help people

with learning disabilities develop horticultural and landscaping skills.

- **The Ledge** – offering a 12-week climbing and wellbeing programme for six young people from Merkinch Primary School and Alness Academy, to build confidence and teamwork.

Kirsteen Adams, Operations Manager of ICFGF, said:

"It's fantastic to see such a diverse range of community projects receiving support from our fund. These initiatives are strengthening local communities, enabling inclusion and helping to protect and enhance the environment."

We look forward to seeing the positive impact these projects will deliver for communities across the Highlands.



Repair Café Alness (ILM Highland)



Sumitomo employees embark on epic career journey

One of the primary objectives of the Green Freeport is to help create jobs here in the Highlands and develop a future-facing skills pipeline. But the term jobs doesn't really match the scale of our ambition – we want to support the delivery of long-term, well-paid and rewarding careers in the green energy sector.

So what does that mean? Look no further than Sumitomo Electric UK and its subsea cable factory which is currently under construction at Port of Nigg. As part of the company's investment in people development, a large group of employees who will be working at the factory are currently being hosted at Sumitomo's mother

plant in Minato, Japan, to undergo a specialist six-month training programme.

They'll take that knowledge back to Scotland and cascade the skills they have learned across the workforce. More than 150 roles will be created at the factory, including many entry level positions.

Alli Vass, Powerhouse Manager, said: "This is a superb example of how local communities can reap the benefits of the Green Freeport. The professional development opportunity offered by Sumitomo is a gold standard, but employers all over the Highlands are scaling up and considering how they prepare their workforce with the skills

needed for the future through training, reskilling and apprenticeships.

"It's exciting and inspiring to see our vision come to life and to build a picture of the opportunities there could be in future for generations of Highlanders."



A group of workers from Sumitomo recently headed out to Japan for a six-month training course.

Recognition for leading the Highlands with fair, sustainable growth



It's been an exciting few months for the Green Freeport team with our work to shape a sustainable future for the Highlands being recognised locally and internationally.

We picked up two awards for the Europe region in the fDi Intelligence Global Free Zones of the Year Awards. We won the Rising Stars – New Zone of the Year and were highly commended in the Excellence Award – Sustainability category.

The awards, run by The Financial Times, recognise free zones leading the way in investment, innovation and sustainable development. Since launching in 2023, our Green Freeport has secured over £800m in private sector commitments and built strong partnerships between public, private and academic partners.

This recognition is a credit to our partners, the wider community and our dedicated team who continue to support the Green Freeport's mission to deliver a just transition for the Highlands. Thank you to everyone in our community who plays a part in making this vision a reality!

Closer to home, we've been awarded gold status in the newly launched Highland Employer Charter – and we're delighted to have achieved the highest level of accreditation.

Developed by The Highland Council, the charter recognises employers who go above and beyond in four key areas:

- **Fair Pay** – ensuring all staff receive the Real Living Wage.
- **Employ Highland** – supporting the development of the local workforce and engaging with education and third sector volunteering opportunities.
- **Procure Highland** – supporting Highland based supply chains and community benefits.
- **Employers of Choice** – investing in fair work practices that attract and retain staff.

Being among the first eight employers to be awarded accreditation feels particularly special because it reflects our ongoing commitment to ethical employment practices. We believe fair work is the foundation of a strong and thriving community. That's why every employer within our boundaries signs up to our Fair Work Charter, guaranteeing fair treatment and robust protections for all workers.



RIGHT: Alli Vass (front, centre right) attending award ceremony celebrating the first group of local businesses to receive Highland Employer Charter accreditation.