

Green Freeport Quarterly

Together, realising our potential

Inverness &
Cromarty Firth
Green Freeport

a free trade zone

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Ardersier Energy Transition Facility



Update from the Chief Executive

OF ALL THE UPDATES THAT I'VE BEEN ABLE TO PROVIDE ABOUT THE PROGRESS OF INVERNESS AND CROMARTY FIRTH GREEN FREEPORT, NONE HAVE MADE THE TEAM AND I MORE ENERGISED ABOUT THE ROAD AHEAD THAN THE ONE I CAN SHARE IN THIS EDITION.

In June, our Full Business Case (FBC) was finally granted by the UK and Scottish governments. This marks an important milestone and a defining moment in our journey. It represents the culmination of years of hard work, partnership working and ambition, and, more importantly, a collective belief in the transformative potential of the Green Freeport to the Highlands.

While this moment is one worth celebrating, we should also reflect on what has already been achieved before reaching this point in the process. Inward investment is happening. Jobs and apprenticeships have been created. The local supply chain is benefitting. We're already delivering on our aim to capitalise on this once in a generation opportunity, and this confirmation by the Scottish and UK governments only adds to our ability to do that.

The awarding of FBC also unlocks over £25 million in seed funding, which will be channelled directly into vital local infrastructure. These investments will strengthen our partner ports and reinforce our ability to compete globally in offshore wind and renewable energy.

The final step will be to sign a memorandum of understanding with the Highland Council, UK and Scottish Governments. The Highland Council is our accountable body and provides oversight of the use of public funds and proper management in delivering our objectives.

It was also reassuring to see the UK Government recognise, through its Industrial Strategy launched last month, that green freeports are critical to our future economy and energy security. Green freeports feature heavily in the strategy as one of the levers that will deliver long-term economic renewal, helping to rebalance regional economies and create lasting opportunities in communities like ours.

In another exciting development we've just learned about, Mitsui will continue the incredible work done by Global Energy Group as the new owner of Port of Nigg, with a commitment to continued investment at the site.

As we move forward, the road ahead will no doubt bring challenges. But the foundation we've laid is solid, the support around us strong and the opportunities in front of us vast.

One other milestone achievement to reflect upon in this edition is the expansion of our small but brilliant team here at ICFGF. Louise Paterson joined us as our Business Support Administrator, and in just a short time she's made a huge impact providing organisational support and ensuring our day-to-day operations run smoothly. Welcome to the team, Louise!

CALUM MACPHERSON
CHIEF EXECUTIVE, ICFGF

LATEST PROGRESS

- Our Full Business Case was signed off by the UK and Scottish governments
- We launched our website to support investment attraction and sharing of information.
- We've been flying the flag for the Highlands at some global trade events, garnering lots of attention and interest in our area.
- The ICFGF Capacity Fund has been launched to strengthen organisations delivering social and environmental projects across the region.



Building future careers in the Highlands

Sumitomo's new subsea cable manufacturing facility at the Port of Nigg is a major step to sustainable green jobs for the Highlands. The Green Freeport was pivotal in attracting this £350 million investment, one of the largest inward investment projects the region has ever seen.

The factory will manufacture high-voltage subsea cables essential for offshore renewable energy projects, and it will take people at all levels of career experience to make it a success.

However, there will be many opportunities for young people and those looking to get a start. These entry-level roles don't require formal qualifications – what Sumitomo values most is reliability, honesty, trustworthiness and a willingness to learn. Part-time work, volunteering or interests showing proactivity are recognised, and any manufacturing or shift work experience may also be beneficial.

Production operator is one of the entry-level jobs Sumitomo will be recruiting for. You could be involved in forming the copper core of Submarine cables, handling the complex insulation process using advanced machinery, or adding protective layers for subsea deployment. You will work with large-scale equipment and, once certified, have opportunities to operate overhead cranes and forklifts. The roles blend complex technical tasks with manual and precision hand skills, providing variety and challenge each day.

Later this August, a first group of operators will join the company and begin a specialist six-month training programme at Sumitomo's mother plant in Minato, Japan. They will acquire valuable experience and technical know-how during their training, which they will bring back to Scotland to help build the factory's skills base as operations continue to grow.

Looking ahead, hiring for the next phase of operators will begin early next year. These new team members will benefit from structured local training, supported by experienced Japanese trainers and the knowledge that the first group of operators will bring back from Japan. This approach will ensure that technical expertise is passed on effectively, helping to build a strong foundation for long-term skills development within the factory.

The establishment of Sumitomo's facility within the Green Freeport is a clear demonstration of how green jobs can transform communities. These roles are not only well-paid but also give people in the Highlands a chance to contribute to a sustainable future while enjoying the benefits of stable, rewarding employment in their local area.



Groundbreaking ceremony for Sumitomo's new subsea cable manufacturing facility at the Port of Nigg





Career journeys towards a green future

INVERNESS AND CROMARTY FIRTH GREEN FREEPORT IS HELPING TRANSFORM THE HIGHLANDS INTO A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE CAN BUILD AMBITIOUS, FUTURE-READY CAREERS WITHOUT LEAVING THE PLACE THEY LOVE.

Meet Bethany and Ryan, two inspiring Highlanders proving this isn't just a place to grow up – it's a place to thrive.

"I never imagined I could build this kind of career here."

Bethany Clark began as an admin assistant at Fairhurst while studying business management but discovered a passion for engineering. She moved into a Trainee Technician role, completed a Graduate Apprenticeship in Civil Engineering, and earned a First Class Honours degree. Today, she's a Senior Engineer, working on projects linked to the Green Freeport.

"The path I've taken is exactly the kind of opportunity becoming more accessible thanks to initiatives like the Green Freeport," said Bethany.

"Renewables can take me anywhere in the world, and it all starts here."

At 16, Ryan Walker began a Mechanical and Electrical Engineering Apprenticeship with Green Highland. This has enabled him to study at UHI while also gaining hands-on experience in the renewables sector close to home.

"The apprenticeship is just the first step, and I'm really pleased I can do that here," said Ryan.

As ICFGF grows, more than 11,300 new jobs will be created in green industries across the Highlands, helping people earn, learn and shape a thriving, net zero future.



Why do apprenticeships matter to ICFGF and the Highlands?



Q What exactly is an apprenticeship?

A An apprenticeship lets you earn while you learn. You gain practical experience on the job while working towards recognised qualifications – all without needing to choose between education and income.

Q Why are apprenticeships important right now?

A The Highlands is undergoing a major transformation, driven in part by the Green Freeport. With billions in investment and more than 11,300 jobs expected in sectors like engineering, renewables, IT and finance, apprenticeships will be vital in developing the skilled local workforce needed to deliver this growth.

As a region our working age population has declined over the last 30 years, so we need to create opportunities to allow people to stay and not leave for employment.

Q Who are apprenticeships for?

A Everyone. According to Skills Development Scotland, last year, over 2,200 people in the Highlands were in Modern Apprenticeships, including school leavers, career-changers and adult learners. Apprenticeships are a flexible way to upskill and take part in the region's future.

Q What types of apprenticeships are available?

A There are three main types in Scotland. These are: Foundation Apprenticeships for school pupils exploring career paths; Modern Apprenticeships offering paid roles for those starting or advancing a career; and Graduate Apprenticeships which provide work-based learning combined with a degree.

Q What kinds of careers can apprenticeships lead to in the Highlands?

A Everything from offshore wind to digital infrastructure. You'll gain technical skills and also build essential abilities like teamwork, communication and problem-solving – all highly valued by employers.

Q What does this mean for me?

A Apprenticeships are a key part of creating a diverse, skilled workforce. Whether you're just starting out or ready to try something new, there's a place for you in the Highlands' future.



Green Freeport launches its Capacity Fund

WE'RE DELIGHTED BY THE RESPONSE TO OUR NEWLY LAUNCHED GREEN FREEPORT CAPACITY FUND – THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO HAS EXPRESSED INTEREST SO FAR.

The £20,000 fund is designed to strengthen organisations delivering social and environmental projects across the region. Running as a one-year pilot, the Fund offers ten grants of £2,000 each to support initiatives that promote social inclusion or enhance the environment. This could include projects focused on biodiversity, local sustainability

or supporting the transition to green energy.

To be eligible, projects must fall within the Green Freeport area – covering communities from Nairn in the east to Muir of Ord in the west, and from Tain in the north to Drumnadrochit in the south.

Operations Manager Kirsteen Adams said: *"The Green Freeport is still in its early stages, but we're committed to growing alongside the communities that make the Highlands what they are. This fund is a first step in helping local organisations build capacity and continue their fantastic work."*

As a not-for-profit initiative, this fund marks the beginning of our long-term commitment to inclusive regional development. The Capacity Fund builds on the existing local funding initiatives already run by several of our partner ports, and we're working closely with our Highland Council partners to develop a more substantial fund as the freeport matures. This will however take time, so the current fund of £20,000 is the start point.

Find out more on our website
www.greenfreeport.scot

Putting ICFGF on the map

The past few months have been a whirlwind of activity for the Green Freeport team, spreading the word about the scale of the unique opportunity we have here. In June, we were at Global Offshore Wind in London and were blown away by the interest that was shown by potential investors, supply chain companies, politicians and other key figures.

We were joined by our partners Port of Inverness, Port of Nigg, Port of Cromarty Firth, Ardersier Energy Transition Facility and Highland Deephaven to showcase the scale and strength of the region's ability to accelerate offshore wind deployment. Our stand was buzzing throughout the two days, with lots of follow-up discussions planned.

The precursor to Global Offshore Wind was All Energy, which took place closer to home in Glasgow. We attended this event as delegates and had lots of interesting conversations about how the Green Freeport can support the renewables sector in Scotland's journey towards net zero.

We also teamed up with our partners from Highland Council to attend the UK Real Estate Investment & Infrastructure Forum in Leeds. The event is recognised as the UK's leading platform for fostering partnerships and securing investment in regeneration, infrastructure and economic development.

Much of our future investment will come from locally based businesses which is just as important, but we are working hard to ensure the Highlands is attractive for those looking to invest internationally.

A programme of follow-up meetings and site visits is underway, with conversations continuing with a range of businesses, investors and partners across the UK and beyond. Alison Wilson, ICFGF Investment Lead, said: *"There's a real sense of momentum building, and we're excited about the number of meaningful opportunities that have the potential to bring long-term economic benefits."*

