

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

Reflecting on the past three years as I prepare to step down as CEO of Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport, it's the people that stand out – and their shared determination that has taken us from planning to delivery across the Highlands.

Following approval of our Full Business Case last year, our focus is firmly on bringing more investment, jobs and opportunity to the region. What is particularly encouraging is that many of the ambitions we discussed in the early stages of the Green Freeport are now becoming visible across the region. Investment commitments linked to the Green Freeport are approaching £890 million, with continued investor interest across a range of energy and life science sub sectors.

Across Green Freeport tax sites and partner locations, activity is progressing at pace. At Ardersier, completion of the first phase of redevelopment marks an important milestone in transforming the site into a hub for offshore wind manufacturing and deployment. Importantly, the benefits are already extending into the wider Highland economy, with 113 local businesses currently involved in the supply chain supporting development work there.

At Maraen Port of Nigg, construction of the Sumitomo Electric subsea cable factory continues, with more than 150

jobs currently supported on site during construction. The port also secured a further £30 million investment to support development of new quay infrastructure, reinforcing the Highlands' growing role in the UK's energy transition. Meanwhile, Inverness Campus continues to strengthen the region's growing life sciences sector, including progress on the new Global HQ building now under construction.

Alongside private sector investment, public funding is helping support the infrastructure needed for future growth. More than £25 million in seed funding has been allocated for infrastructure projects linked to the Green Freeport, alongside Industrial Strategy Zone funding supporting development near Nigg and the Port of Inverness.

Looking ahead, one of the most significant long-term opportunities for communities across the Highlands remains the Retained Non-Domestic Rates Fund, which is expected over time to reinvest an estimated £547 million into jobs, skills, infrastructure and projects that benefit communities across the region through

business rates generated within Green Freeport tax sites. As this develops over the coming years, it has the potential to create lasting benefits for communities across the Highlands and help ensure that growth is felt widely across the region.

As the Green Freeport continues to move forward, Alison Wilson will take on interim leadership responsibilities while recruitment for a new managing director takes place. Alison has played a key role in the progress made to date, and I know the Green Freeport will continue to move forward with strong leadership, supported by an experienced Board, team and partners across the region.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank everyone across the Highlands who has supported the Green Freeport over the past three years. The shared ambition, commitment and collaboration shown by businesses, communities and partners across the Highlands has been central to the progress made so far and gives me every confidence for the future.

GLOBAL OFFSHORE WIND 2026

The ICFGF team and port partners will be attending the flagship event in Manchester on 16/17 June, to put the Highlands firmly on the global stage in the offshore wind sector.



Calum MacPherson & Alison Wilson

Coming home to opportunity

As Inverness & Cromarty Firth Green Freeport gathers momentum, its impact is not only being felt through investment and infrastructure – but through the growing opportunities shaping the careers and futures of young people across the Highlands.

At 23, Becca Johnstone is building a career in marketing at the heart of the Highlands' renewable energy sector – but she once believed success meant leaving.

After studying in Stirling, Becca expected to settle in Scotland's central belt. Instead, a return home to Inverness changed her perspective.

Now working with Planit Scotland, supporting clients including key Green Freeport partners, she is part of a growing network of young professionals shaping the region's future.

"I thought opportunity existed elsewhere. Now I know it can be right on your doorstep."

Becca believes one of the biggest challenges isn't a lack of opportunity – but a lack of visibility. From apprenticeships to professional roles, she sees huge potential for young people to build meaningful careers without leaving the Highlands.



Rachel Johnstone also assumed that leaving the Highlands was the natural path to success.

After studying in Aberdeen, a marketing internship with Inverness-based engineering firm Ri Cruden revealed a different reality – one shaped by growing demand, new industries and expanding local businesses.

Now working full-time as a Business and Marketing Co-ordinator, Rachel plays a role in supporting recruitment, apprenticeships and business growth within the clean energy sector.

"Coming back home wasn't a backwards step – it was an opportunity."

Her experience highlights how the region's growth is creating diverse career paths – not only in engineering, but across marketing, HR, logistics and beyond.

Together, these stories reflect a wider shift – where investment in the Highlands is not only transforming industry, but reshaping perceptions of what's possible for the next generation.

Helping veterans build new careers in renewables

As the Highlands' renewable energy sector continues to grow, more opportunities are being created for people to build long-term careers close to home.

One of those is "Military to Wind" – a Highlands-based training programme delivered by Aurora Energy Services in Inverness. The seven-week course helps military service leavers move into onshore and offshore wind roles through industry-recognised training and direct links to employers.

The programme builds on the valuable skills many former armed forces personnel already have, helping open the door to careers in a fast-growing sector where demand for skilled workers continues to rise.

As investment in offshore wind and clean energy gathers pace, programmes like this are helping ensure the benefits are felt not only through infrastructure and industry, but through meaningful opportunities for people and communities across the region.

We see initiatives like this play an important role in strengthening skills, supporting employment and helping more people build long-term futures in the Highlands.

£30 million investment marks new chapter for Maraen Port of Nigg

The announcement of a £30 million investment at the newly rebranded Maraen Port of Nigg marks another major step forward for the Highlands' growing renewable energy sector. The investment will support the development of a new heavy-duty quay and roll-on/-roll-off capability, helping the port handle larger offshore wind and energy infrastructure projects in the years ahead.

For the Green Freeport, the announcement reflects growing confidence in the Highlands as a centre for renewable energy, manufacturing and supply chain activity. The Port of Nigg has already plays an important role in supporting offshore wind deployment, and this latest investment will help strengthen that position further.

Importantly, developments like this create benefits that reach far beyond the port itself. Increased activity is expected to support business growth across the supply chain and create high-quality employment opportunities across the Highlands.

The launch of the Maraen brand also signals an exciting new chapter for the port – combining global expertise with strong local roots as the region continues to grow its role in the clean energy transition.

We look forward to continuing to work in partnership with Maraen Port of Nigg as this next phase of development progresses—supporting investment, strengthening the supply chain and ensuring that the benefits of growth are felt across our communities.



Port of Inverness

Funding helps unlock growth at key Highlands sites

We've welcomed new UK Government funding to help prepare two key sites in the Highlands for future growth and investment.

The Industrial Strategic Zone Accelerator funding will support work at the Port of Inverness and land near the Port of Nigg, including environmental studies, site assessments and planning work needed to bring forward land for future development.

While this work may take place behind the scenes, it plays a vital role in preparing sites for future use—creating the conditions for new businesses to locate, grow and support the expanding energy sector.

At Nigg, the project will help shape plans for new industrial land, creating opportunities for businesses to locate, grow and support the expanding energy sector.

For local communities, this is about more than technical studies. The long-term aim is to attract more investment, support local businesses and create high-quality jobs across the region.

The funding forms part of a wider UK programme designed to help freeports and investment zones move more quickly from planning into delivery – supporting regions like the Highlands to prepare for future growth.

We see this as a key step in building momentum and ensuring that investment creates lasting benefits for people, businesses and communities across the Highlands.

Read more on this and other Green Freeport stories at www.greenfreeport.scot

Highland ports and energy facilities driving maritime innovation

PORTS ACROSS THE HIGHLANDS ARE PLAYING A LEADING ROLE IN A MAJOR INTERNATIONAL PROJECT EXPLORING HOW TECHNOLOGY COULD HELP MAKE MARITIME OPERATIONS SAFER AND MORE EFFICIENT.

Together with partners, we've joined the £13.8 million MariSens project, funded by Innovate UK and Eureka, bringing together organisations from across Europe and Asia to test emerging digital technologies in real-world port environments.

Research is now underway at Port of Inverness, Port of Nigg, Port of Cromarty Firth and Ardersier Energy Transition Facility to explore how artificial intelligence, sensors and drone technology could support day-to-day operations and infrastructure management.

The aim is to identify ways to improve safety, reduce the need for inspections in hazardous areas and help ports operate more effectively in the future. Insights from the three-year pilot will be shared internationally, helping shape how maritime infrastructure is managed around the world.

The project has been brought to the region by The PowerHouse, our dedicated skills, research and innovation hub, helping reinforce the Highlands' growing reputation as a centre for innovation within the energy and maritime sectors.

