Green Freeport Quarterly

Inverness & Cromarty Firth Green Freeport
a free trade zone

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Update from the Managing Director

It's been a busy first few months since taking on the role of Managing Director. Having been part of the Green Freeport team since early 2025, I knew the organisation and many of our partners well, but the last few months have reinforced for me both the scale of the opportunity we have in the Highlands and the importance of getting the next stage right.

There are some very visible signs of progress. We're looking forward to the opening of Sumitomo Electric's £350 million subsea cable manufacturing facility at Nigg and to Global completing its new headquarters at Inverness Campus later this year, in addition to Ardersier now being operational following the first phase of its redevelopment.

These are big investments, but ultimately what matters is what follows from them – more businesses investing here, more work for Highland companies and more employment and career opportunities for people who live here. That is where much of my focus has been over the summer.

We've had a number of senior UK and Scottish Government Ministers visit the Green Freeport, out to our sites and speaking directly to the businesses investing here. It is important that decision-makers understand that the ports, industrial sites and infrastructure we have in the Highlands are strategic national assets, with a role to play in offshore wind, energy security and UK manufacturing.

We are also continuing to work with companies considering investment in the region. There are some really interesting opportunities, particularly around offshore wind and manufacturing, and we are competing with other parts of the UK and internationally for that investment.

Some of the things that will determine those decisions are outside the Green Freeport's direct control like the offshore wind pipeline, grid connections, the cost and availability of power, transport infrastructure and wider Government policy. Part of our job is therefore to make sure we are giving Government clear evidence of what businesses are telling us and, wherever possible, making that case collectively with partners across the Highlands.

There is plenty we can do at our own hand though.

Our £25 million Seed Capital Fund is moving forward, with projects progressing through the business case process. We are working with our ports and landowners on new investment opportunities, and we are putting more focus on the workforce and skills that businesses will need as projects develop.

Floating Offshore Wind 2026

The Floating Offshore Wind 2026 conference at P&J Live in Aberdeen on 7-8 October highlights the critical path forward for clean energy infrastructure. As the UK's premier gathering for the sector, the event serves as an essential forum for latest updates on supply chains, policy, and scaling up regional deployment. Our Managing Director, Alison Wilson, is attending the conference and contributing to the programme on Day 1 (Wednesday, 7 October). She will be joining the expert panel for "Session A3: Ports on the race to scale : who is ready to deliver?! from 13:00 to 14:00. It's shaping up to be an insightful discussion.

You'll see some of that reflected elsewhere in this newsletter. There is more on the Workforce North Co-Investment Fund and how employers can access support to invest in their workforce. Joseph also shares his experience of joining us as an intern this summer – a good reminder that creating opportunities for people to develop their skills and careers is just as important as the headline investment figures.

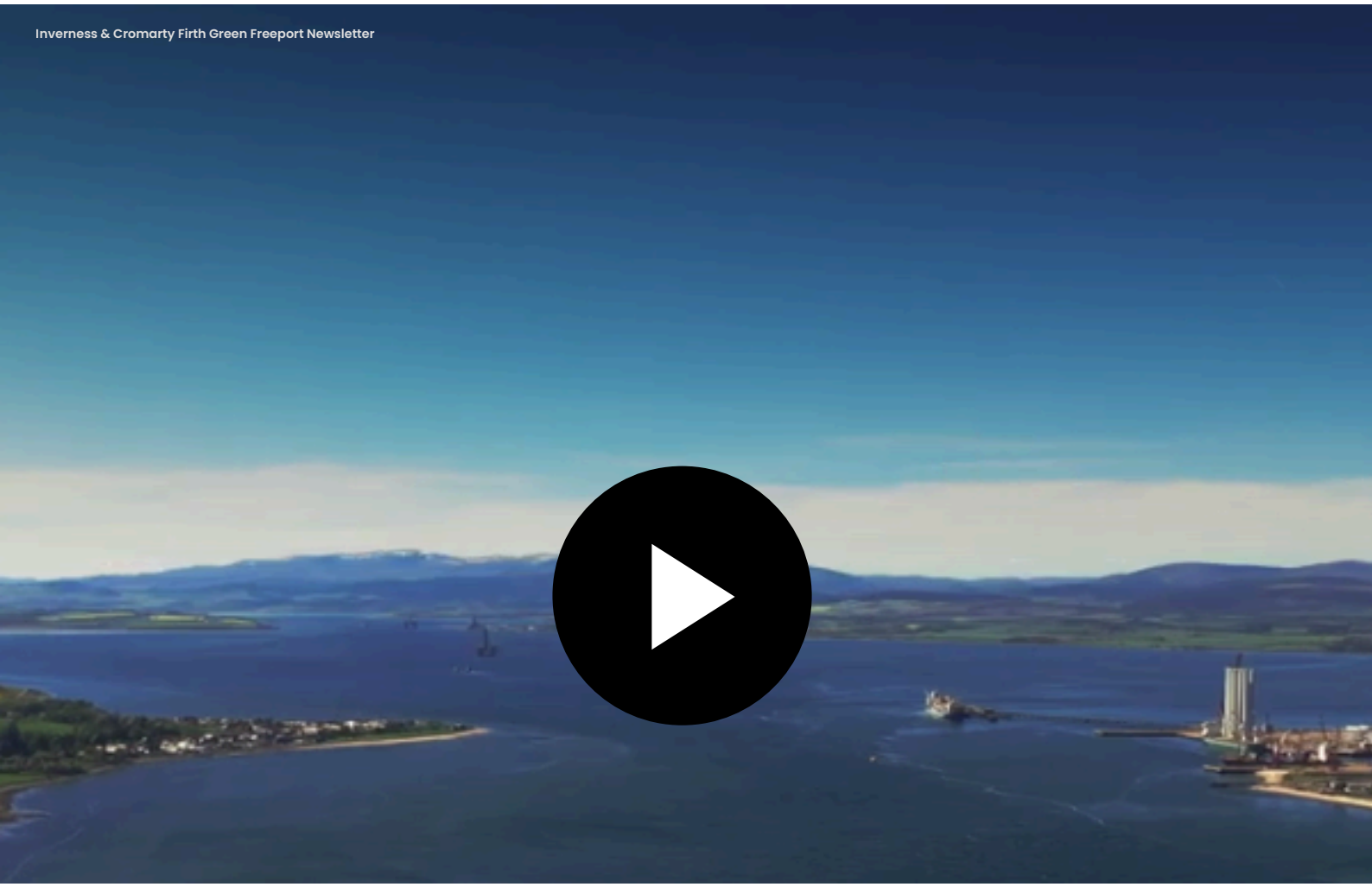
You'll also see some of the businesses and people behind the Green Freeport in our new investor videos. I think that is important. The best way to explain why companies are investing here is to hear directly from those already doing it.

I'm a Highlander and have spent most of my working life here, so I care about what all of this means in practice. Success for me means a young person seeing a career they can build here, a local business winning new work, and new employers choosing to invest and develop long-term operations in the Highlands.

There is a lot happening and plenty still to do, but I'm really encouraged by the conversations I'm having and by the progress we can now see on the ground. My focus is on building on that, helping to land the next investments and making sure more Highland businesses and people have the opportunity to be part of what follows.

There's a good flavour of that in this edition – from Joseph's experience with us this year and new support available to businesses through Workforce North, to hearing directly from some of the companies already investing here. I hope you enjoy reading it.

Alison Wilson



A future shaped here in the Highlands

Our new film was created to showcase Inverness and the Cromarty Firth to potential investors—but at its heart, it is a story about our region, its people and its future.

It brings together some of the businesses, places and people helping to build the Highlands' growing green economy. It also shows why our area has the potential to attract new investment, create high-quality jobs and open up more opportunities for local businesses and future generations.

For our communities, this is about more than major developments and new infrastructure. It is about helping local people gain the skills they need for the jobs of the future, giving young people more reasons to build their lives and careers here, and ensuring businesses across the Highlands can benefit from the opportunities ahead.

There is still much work to do—and the Green Freeport's success will depend on strong partnerships across business, education, the public sector and our communities. This film offers a glimpse of what we are working towards together: a thriving, sustainable Highland economy with local people and places at its heart.

Watch the film and meet some of the people helping to shape that future.

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How one opportunity changed Joseph's career - and his perspective on the Highlands

As investment gathers pace across the Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport, new opportunities are emerging for young people to build rewarding careers in the Highlands. Joseph Quance's story is one example of what that looks like.

Six months ago, Joseph moved from Essex to Dingwall to become Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport's first Innovation intern - an opportunity supported by funding from Zero Waste Scoland through its Circular Economy Internship Scheme.

Now, after closing the book on that experience, he's starting this next career chapter by joining the ranks of international infrastructure specialist Balfour Beatty as a graduate.

During his time in the Highlands Joseph flourished through opportunities to collaborate on real industry projects and deliver meaningful work supporting the shift to green energy.

As the Green Freeport's first Innovation Intern and a core part of the team, Joseph was tasked with leading a feasibility study exploring whether the Highlands could support a composites recycling facility.

His research involved estimating the volume of composite waste produced across the Highlands and assessing whether there was enough demand to support a local recycling facility.

"My study looked at how we could reduce composite waste going into landfill by making composite waste management more circular," Joseph explained.

"I've set the ball rolling and provided a baseline that others can build on. There is interest from investors in opening a facility, so knowing my work could help inform future decisions is something I'm really proud of.

"Towards the end of my placement, I presented the findings to industry peers. I really wanted to do the work justice. The feedback was incredibly positive, and it was rewarding to know people valued the work I'd put in.

"Unlike university reports, this work had the potential to make a real difference," he said. "I left knowing I'd made a meaningful contribution."

The presentation led to conversations with employers across the sector, who were impressed with how Joseph was developing in his Green Freeport role. By the end of his placement, Joseph had received multiple graduate job offers before accepting the post with Balfour Beatty.

Paving the way for others

Alongside his research, Joseph also contributed to
work supporting the University of the Highlands and
Islands' successful funding bid for a new
Offshore Wind Skills Hub.

Supported by Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport and a range of regional partners, the
initiative will create new training pathways and career opportunities across the Highland and Islands.

"Knowing the project has secured funding is fantastic" Joseph said. "I'm happy just to have contributed to something that will help create opportunities for the next generation."

Read Joseph's Blog

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Could your business benefit from reduced electricity costs?

The British Industrial Competitiveness Scheme (BICS) is designed to reduce electricity costs for eligible energy-intensive businesses by providing exemptions from certain tariffs and levies.

The scheme may be particularly relevant to manufacturers, fabricators and engineering companies working in areas such as advanced manufacturing, offshore wind, heavy engineering, steel fabrication, subsea cables, renewable energy components and industrial processing.

Eligibility is not always straightforward and depends on factors including a business's SIC and HS code classifications. As a trusted partner of Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport, Leyton can help businesses understand the scheme, assess their potential eligibility and identify the possible financial benefits.

To arrange an initial discussion, contact partner@leyton.com or visit www.leyton.com/uk.

Workforce North Co-Investment Fund

A new pilot fund has launched to help employers across the Highlands and Islands recruit, retain and develop the skilled workforce they need. The Workforce North Co-Investment Fund will support employer-led projects focused on training, upskilling and reskilling, apprenticeships and the development of workforce pipelines. It will also encourage new and collaborative approaches to shared workforce challenges across the region.

Support is available through three funding streams:
Workforce Growth – for immediate training or skills needs where delivery is already available.
Workforce Innovation – to develop and test new approaches to workforce development.
Workforce Accelerator – to expand successful initiatives in response to urgent or high-volume workforce needs.

Initial priority areas include Net Zero, Construction and the Built Environment, Digital and Data Skills, and STEM-related subjects and progression opportunities.

Eligible employers operating within the Workforce North area can apply, although eligibility and funding criteria vary between the three streams. The current application window closes on 30 October 2026, with a second round expected to run from 30 November 2026 to 29 January 2027.

Find out more and access the application guidance, or email WFN@highland.gov.uk with enquiries.

Skills Development Scotland

Workforce North
Luchd-obrach Tuath