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| **HIGH LIFE HIGHLAND**  **REPORT TO BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  **18 June 2025** | AGENDA ITEM  REPORT No HLH/ /25 |

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| **HR UPDATE – Report by Chief Executive** |

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| **Recommendation**  This report provides an overview of the charity’s Human Resources performance.  It is recommended Directors note:   1. the HR performance information; 2. the creation of a new training and development post; and 3. that HR is monitoring potential changes to employment legislation as a result of the Employment Rights Bill. |

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| **1.** | **Strategy Contribution** |
| 1.1 | High Life Highland’s (HLH) purpose is Making Life Better. The HLH Strategy 2025-2030 contains five strategic objectives which support the delivery of this purpose, and this report supports the following highlighted objectives:   1. Delivery of affordable, accessible and inclusive services across the region. 2. Maximise and grow income to reinvest across services. 3. Ensure a consistent high value of delivery across HLH services. 4. Commit to the net zero and sustainability agenda. 5. **Efficient and effective service delivery through our people and processes.** |
| **2.** | **Background** |
| 2.1 | Improving staff satisfaction levels has been identified by the HLH Board as key to delivering the HLH Strategy 2025-2030. This is measured through the staff survey and other performance information which is collected throughout the year such as absence and attendance rates and turnover. |
| **3.** | **HR Performance Information** |
| 3.1 | HR performance information can be seen in **Appendix A**. This section of the report highlights key points. |
| **3.2.** | **Staffing establishment** |
| 3.2.1 | The graph in **Appendix** **A** reflects the transfer of Adult and Youth Services to The Highland Council in December 2024. Over the coming months the creation of new posts for the Inverness Castle Experience will show an upturn in the establishment. The staffing establishment change between quarter three 2024/25 and quarter four was as follows:   * Quarter 3 establishment = 743.98 FTE * Quarter 4 establishment = 746.68 FTE |
| 3.2.2 | This is a change of 2.7 FTE. Within that the following changes were made:   * Community Venues and Engagement – creation of Senior Community and Engagement Manager post +1 * Inverness Castle Experience posts + 2 * Libraries – deletion of hours from Clerical Assistant post -0.1 * Leisure – minor amendments to staffing structures in East Caithness Community Facility and Inverness Botanic Garden -0.2 |
| 3.2.3 | Recruitment controls remain effective with the changes to the establishment considered by an officer group and approved by the executive at their weekly business meeting. |
| **3.3** | **Staff Turnover** |
| 3.3.1 | Staff turnover was steady over quarter four and no unusual trends or cause for concern were identified. The number of resignations as a percentage of posts (number in brackets denotes the number of individual resignations) during the quarter was:   * January = 0.5% (5) * February = 0.7% (7) * March = 0.9% (9) |
| **3.4** | **Absence** |
| 3.4.1 | The overall absence rate for quarter four continued to decrease and is below both:   * the mean absence rate for HLH; and * the Office for National Statistics benchmark. |
| 3.4.2 | There has been focussed work by the Senior HR Adviser and service managers in 2024/25 on reducing long and short-term absences. HR continues to support managers to ensure that absences are monitored and addressed in a timely and supportive manner. |
| **4.** | **Case Work** |
| 4.1 | Monitoring and reporting of case work (use of formal processes and ACAS claims) provides the Board and management team with an indicator of workforce relations as well as ensuring that the Board is aware of any matters which might have legal, financial or reputational implications. |
| 4.2 | **Internal resolution (grievance) -** There were no new internal resolutions in quarter four. |
| 4.3 | **Disciplinary -** There were three disciplinary investigations during quarter four, all of which were concluded and have not been appealed. |
| 4.4 | **Conciliation and Tribunal Claims -** There were no conciliation claims during quarter four. |
| **5.** | **Industrial Relations** |
| 5.1 | HLH recognises the following Trades Unions which it meets quarterly as a Joint Consultation Forum (JCF) for communication and consultation:   * EIS * GMB * UNISON * Unite the Union |
| 5.2 | The JCF last met on 13 March 2025, and relationships continue to remain positive. |
| **6.** | **Staff Survey 2025** |
| 6.1 | During March, HLH undertook an employee survey. Due to a lower return rate than the previous year, the closing date at the end of March was extended for a further month. A new system is under development to assist with the analysis of responses, and a full report of the survey results will be brought to the next Board meeting in August. An initial review of the results shows a similar emerging trend in responses to those in 2024. |
| **7.** | **Training** |
| 7.1 | The Board has previously identified the need for a more pro-active and structured approach to training and development. With the budget position improving in 2025/26, a training and development officer post has been advertised (will show in quarter one establishment figures). Initial priorities will be to carry out a training needs analysis across the organisation and develop training plans, with an initial focus on delivering management and leadership training. |
| **8.** | **Legislation Changes** |
| 8.1 | The Employment Rights Bill is progressing through Parliament, with changes taking effect from 2026. |
| 8.3 | Some of the key elements of the Bill that are likely to have some impact to HLH:   * Strengthening statutory sick pay by removing the lower earnings limit and removing the waiting period. This will benefit staff paid less than £125 per week who will be entitled to SSP, and staff with less than 26 weeks service who will be entitled to SSP from first day of sickness rather than current fourth day. * Removal of the two-year qualifying period of employment for the right to claim unfair dismissal, making it a day-one right, while simultaneously enabling employers to ensure the employee is a good fit for the job by establishing a new statutory probation period. * Ending exploitative zero hours contracts by introducing rights to guaranteed hours, reasonable notice of shifts, and payments for short-notice cancellation of shifts, with corresponding rights for agency workers. * Making existing entitlements to paternity leave and unpaid parental leave available from ‘Day 1’ of employment. * Enabling parents to take their paternity leave and pay after their shared parental leave and pay. This would allow paternity leave to be taken after the current 52-week deadline period for paternity leave. Shared parental leave and paternity leave are both paid. Currently, most employees take paternity leave immediately after the birth. * Introduction of a new right to unpaid bereavement leave, allowing employees to take leave from work to grieve the loss of a loved one. This is an additional statutory entitlement which is expected to be unpaid. * Introduction of new protections against dismissal for pregnant women, mothers on maternity leave, and mothers who return to work for a six-month period after they return to work. * Increasing the time limit within which employees can make an Employment Tribunal claim from 3 months to 6 months. |
| **9.** | **Implications** |
| 9.1 | Resource Implications – there are some resource implications arising from this report relating to the addition to the establishment of a full time Training and Development Officer. This has been built into to HR staffing budget for 2025/26 onwards. |
| 9.2 | Legal Implications – there are no new legal implications arising from this report. |
| 9.3 | Equality Implications – there are no new equality implications arising from this report. |
| 9.4 | Risk Implications – there are no new risk implications arising from this report. |

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| **Recommendation**  It is recommended Directors note:   1. the HR performance information; 2. the creation of a new training and development post; and 3. that HR is monitoring potential changes to employment legislation as a result of the Employment Rights Bill. |

Designation: Chief Executive

Date: 4 June 2025

Authors: Douglas Wilby

Morven MacLeod, Head of Human Resources

**Appendix A**

**HR Performance Information**

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