

# THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS



#SCOTLANDISNOW



SCOTLAND

# WELCOME TO SCOTLAND

## FÀILTE GU ALBA

**WELCOME TO THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS;** a vibrant region offering a thriving economy and a wealth of natural assets.

As rich in development opportunities as it is culture and heritage, the Highlands and Islands region offers an ideal location to live, work and invest.

Inverness is one of Europe's fastest growing cities and offers culture and convenience, contrasted by striking mountains and coastlines. Charming towns like Fort William, Oban, Portree, Stornoway and Grantown-on-Spey dot the landscape. Locations such as Orkney, the Outer Hebrides and Highlands often rank amongst the top UK locations for work-life balance.

The region boasts a rich history, vibrant economy and broad range of assets which will support the growth of your business in Scotland. From energy and health tech to space, manufacturing and food and drink, the Highlands and Islands region is already home to a wide variety of global investors.

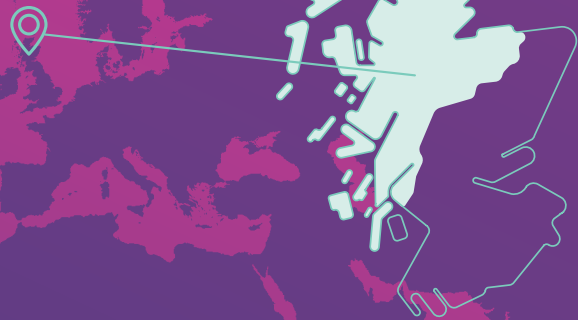
Companies operating in marine science, oil and gas and renewable energy sectors are benefitting from ideal environmental conditions thanks to the substantial

natural assets available in the Highlands and Islands region. Meanwhile, tourism and food and drink industries are world-renowned, and investor attractiveness is boosted by the growing international reputation of the life science and aerospace sectors across the region.

Across all sectors, new opportunities for regional innovation and prosperity are underpinned by strong educational infrastructure, while affordable property options and easy access to the great outdoors come together to create an exceptional quality of life.

In fact, this region has been named 'the happiest place to live in Scotland' by the Bank of Scotland Happiness Index, and when you take a look at what's on offer away from the office, it's not difficult to see why. From mountain biking to fishing for brown trout or Arctic char in the region's freshwater lochs, you will find the perfect activity to unwind.

The Highlands and Islands has the economy, the environment, the assets and the opportunities you need to achieve your business ambitions. Now is the time to invest in Scotland. So come on in; be part of Scotland's continuing success story.



# HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS





Bow Fiddle Rock, Moray

## STRATEGICALLY LOCATED AND WELL CONNECTED

The Highlands and Islands region covers almost 27,000 square kilometres and has comprehensive transport links that keep people and businesses well connected. Of a population of 470,000 people, 62% live in rural areas of the region, 23% in large settlements – 13% in the city of Inverness – and around a fifth on an island.



### AIR

Strong road, rail and air connections underline the global interconnectivity of the region, making travelling to, from and around the Highlands and Islands easy. There are nine national and international airports spread across the region, with direct flights from Inverness airport to major European cities such as London and Amsterdam.



### RAIL

The region has an excellent railway infrastructure which traverses the whole of Scotland and major train stations in the UK. Inverness acts as the primary railway hub for the mainland north of Scotland, connecting the region to Edinburgh and Glasgow in the south, Aberdeen in the east, Thurso and Wick in the north and the Kyle of Lochalsh in the west.



### ROAD

Major trunk roads connect the Highlands and Islands with the rest of Scotland and the UK. There is a direct highway corridor to Inverness or a more scenic route via Loch Ness. The Highlands and Islands has a well-developed electric vehicle infrastructure network with an impressive number of publicly available charging points relative to the region's population size.



### SEA

A network of regular ferry services provides access to and from the region all year round, connecting the mainland with some of the islands and the more rural communities.



### DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY

Commercial and publicly funded fibre broadband rollout has delivered access to superfast speeds for over 80% of homes and businesses across the Highlands and Islands. Ultrafast full fibre is available to around a quarter of the region's premises.

## CAN I GET THE RIGHT PEOPLE IN THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS?

When it comes to finding the talent you need, the Highlands and Islands region benefits from a strong talent pool of well-educated, skilled and knowledgeable professionals across a broad range of sectors.

From apprenticeships to industry leaders, the region offers a dynamic workforce with a higher number of people in high or medium skilled occupations than in Scotland as a whole.

### TALENT PIPELINE

Seven universities have a presence in the Highlands and Islands region:

- University of the Highlands and Islands
- Glasgow School of Art
- University of Stirling
- Heriot-Watt University
- University of Aberdeen
- Scotland's Rural College (SRUC)
- Robert Gordon University

The region produces 10,000 graduates per year, giving your business access to a constant supply of highly educated, quality talent across a range of disciplines.



#### University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI)

UHI is Scotland's newest university with more than 40,000 local and online students across 13 separate locations, integrating both further and higher education.



#### Skills Development Scotland (SDS)

As Scotland's national skills agency, SDS helps businesses around the world discover what Scotland's talent can do for them. They can support you for the whole journey – before, during and after you locate in Scotland.

SDS partners with employers in the region to encourage sustainable economic growth, helping businesses maximise the impact they can have on Scotland's people and the economy.

Apprenticeships offer a flexible way to develop your workforce and build the skills your business needs to grow. There are more than 100 types of apprenticeship available in Scotland that attract funding for training activity of up to £36,000. Over 12,000 Scotland-based businesses are already benefitting from these – and you can join them.

## KEY INDUSTRY ASSETS



### FOOD AND DRINK

The region's food and drink offering has an enviable reputation, with value associated to provenance, place, people, and culture. When you choose the Highlands and Islands, you'll discover significant opportunities for expansion into new premium markets. Employing around 34,000 people, the Highlands and Islands' food and drink sector has a higher proportion of the total workforce compared to Scotland overall.

You can be assured that continued technological investment will only improve productivity and competitiveness, preserving value through authenticity and traceability, directly attributing the quality of the region's premium products to its world-class natural assets.

#### Whisky

By locating in the Highlands and Islands, distilleries can leverage the region's unique water, geology and climate to produce flavourful whiskies. Did you know that four of Scotland's five Scotch whisky regions are located in the Highlands and Islands?

Supported by the Scotch Whisky Association, the industry has committed to reaching net zero emissions in its operations by 2040 and to dramatically reducing the environmental impact of Scotland's national drink in other areas. Aligned to these ambitions, significant investments are being made in low carbon energy solutions, sustainable supply chains and new facilities. In 2021, independent whisky distillery Nc'nean, located in the Morvern peninsula, became the first in the UK to reach net zero emissions for production, beating the industry target by nearly 20 years.

#### Salmon

When you locate in the Highlands and Islands, you'll benefit from the region's temperate waters and coastal weather conditions, which are perfect for breeding healthy salmon – one of the region's biggest exports. The aquaculture sector is supported by a strong research, development and education community and you'll benefit from a strong ambitious supply chain, providing high-quality services ranging from genetics to workboat services.



### LIFE SCIENCES

The dispersed population and unique geography of the Highlands and Islands makes it an ideal location to develop, test and trial new and innovative technologies in healthcare and health tech. The region's ambition is for healthcare technologies to enable patients to be treated remotely if appropriate, meaning they don't need to travel long distances to access hospital care.

#### LifeScan

LifeScan, one of Scotland's largest medical technology companies, is located in Inverness, employing over 850 staff in the development and manufacturing of blood glucose monitoring devices. Producing 5 billion test strips annually, they supply global markets from their Inverness base.



Image credit: John Paul / HIE.



Image credit: John Paul / HIE.



### Inverness Campus

Developed by Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Inverness Campus is a world-class location for those operating in the life sciences sector.

There's also a breadth of business and research activity in the aquaculture, seaweed and animal health sectors.

### European Marine Science Park (EMSP)

A thriving cluster of more than a dozen marine business enterprises near Oban, including Oceanium and PatoGen Ltd. More than 100 marine scientists are permanently stationed at the EMSP to better understand local marine ecology and expand the region's scientific reputation.

### The Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS)

Based at the EMSP, SAMS – Scotland's oldest and largest independent marine science organisation – focuses on understanding how to build a productive and sustainable marine environment.

### Scotland's Rural College (SRUC)

Based at Inverness Campus, researchers work to improve and maintain animal health and welfare. Work has commenced on a new £11 million rural and veterinary innovation centre which will harness expertise in big data and research into animal epidemiology to create and grow businesses.



## RENEWABLE ENERGY

With a strong legacy in the oil and gas industry and an abundance of renewable energy resources, the Highlands and Islands is ideally placed to be at the forefront of the energy industry.

### Opportunity Cromarty Firth

At the heart of the region's commitment to sustainability, the pipeline of renewable energy projects initiated at Cromarty Firth is bringing greater opportunities, employment and prosperity to the region.

### Kishorn Port and Dry Dock

Sitting on 45 hectares of land, with an additional 10 hectares available, Kishorn Port and Dry Dock offers a prime location for development.

### The Port of Nigg / Nigg Energy Park

Providing turnkey solutions to the international energy sector, this location features 1,135 metres of deep-water quayside, mobile drilling rigs with inspection, repair and maintenance works.

### Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport

Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport has been selected to become one of Scotland's first Green Freeports. The Green Freeport aims to build a world-beating floating offshore wind manufacturing sector, creating up to 25,000 new jobs and attracting £2.6 billion in inward investment. In addition to offshore wind manufacturing, it will focus on green hydrogen and creating a new innovation cluster in life sciences.



Image credit: Chris Robson / HIE.

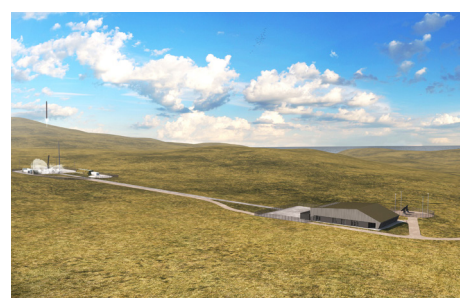


Image credit: NORR / HIE.



## ENERGY TRANSITION

The Highlands and Islands is committed to a highly productive, net zero future and is supporting this transition through a number of pioneering projects.

### ORION Project

A bold project that aims to transform Shetland into the home of secure and affordable energy. The ambition is to fuel a cleaner future and protect the environment by harnessing the islands' renewables potential, using onshore and offshore wind, wave and tidal energy.

### European Marine Energy Centre (EMEC)

A research facility in Orkney, focused on how energy can be generated by harnessing ocean waves and tidal streams, EMEC has conducted and tested wave and tidal energy conversion technology since 2003. The centre is also pioneering the creation of hydrogen from tidal energy.

### ScotWind

ScotWind is set to see the installation of up to 28GW of fixed and floating offshore wind farms in the waters around Scotland. Of the 20 projects proposed, 15 are in the waters off the coast of the Highlands and Islands.



## TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

When you locate in the Highlands and Islands, you'll be connected to a network of innovation centres, providing you with the support you need to grow your business.

### The Data Lab

The Inverness hub of the Data Lab helps businesses to maximise the value of their data by providing specialist advice, support and training.

### The Sustainable Aquaculture Innovation Centre (SAIC)

SAIC works to increase the economic impact and reduce the environmental impact of aquaculture by leveraging commercial enterprise and academia to fund and support commercially relevant, collaborative research.

### Tech Scaler hub

We're ready to turn Scotland into a tech nation. The Scottish Government is investing £42 million to establish a network of seven hubs across the country, giving companies like yours access to education and mentoring, as well as opportunities for peer learning and networking.



## AEROSPACE AND SPACE

The Highlands and Islands is fast becoming a hub of space sector activity in Scotland and looks set to continue to play a vital role in the years to come.

### Commercial Satellite

Scotland's northern geography and low population base provide the perfect conditions to launch commercial satellites into low earth polar and sun synchronous orbits.

### Orbex

UK-based space launch manufacturer Orbex has established its HQ and manufacturing base in Forres, Moray. Orbex will also be the site operator for Sutherland Spaceport. The business aspires to operate the world's greenest spaceport, demonstrated by its use of low carbon biopropane as a fuel source.

There are currently four spaceports in the region which are undergoing development to provide launch capability in the coming years. These are:

- Sutherland Spaceport at the Mhoine, Sutherland
- Spaceport 1, Scolpaig, North Uist, Western Isles
- Saxa Vord Spaceport, Unst, Shetland Islands
- Machrihanish Air Base, Argyll.



# A POWERHOUSE OF INNOVATION AND INVENTION

The Highlands and Islands has a flourishing business community and is a centre for academic R&D. Inverness Campus has fostered innovative partnerships between the National Health Service, academia and the public and private sector, while Orkney's EMEC is a world-leading hub of marine energy research.

## Orkney Research and Innovation Campus

A joint venture between HIE and Orkney Islands Council, the 3.75-acre Orkney Research and Innovation Campus supports the growth of existing research and innovation and the expansion of companies across Orkney's world-leading marine renewables, energy and low carbon sectors.

## The Moray Rural Centre of Excellence for Digital Health and Care Innovation (MRCE)

Funded as part of the Moray Growth Deal, the MRCE supports the remobilisation of health and care services in the region by investing in R&D activities through programmes like Skills Development and person-centred Living Labs.

## Advanced Manufacturing Centre (AMC)

The UHI West Highland AMC in Fort William can help bring your ideas to life by supporting your business with free manufacturing and design technology access and expertise from its highly experienced team.

## Make It Smart Hub

The Make It Smart Hub is a free-to-use resource that enables the region's business community to access support, up-to-date training, equipment and business opportunities.

## PROPERTY OPTIONS

The Highlands and Islands has a well-established commercial sector that provides the square footage, technology and infrastructure you need to get your business up and running quickly. Highlands and Islands Enterprise has a large portfolio of property and land available for immediate development, allowing you to hit the ground running.

- 1 **Enterprise Park Forres** is a flexible business space suitable for a range of sectors, situated on 100 acres of sustainable ground.
- 2 **Inverness Airport Business Park** is a mixed-use commercial property development of 275 acres with 36 acres of serviced land currently available for occupation.
- 3 **Arnish**, located four miles from Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis, is home to one of Scotland's key renewable energy manufacturing sites and has been developed as a key location for the renewable and oil and gas energy sectors.
- 4 **Machrihanish** is a former RAF aerodrome in Kintyre that offers much socio-economic growth potential by transforming the 1025 acres of unique property and assets into a thriving business park.
- 5 **Inverness Campus** is a world-class business location with pioneering facilities. The 215-acre site is already a thriving life sciences community – and there's room for more, with flexible land options available.
- 6 **European Marine Science Park** provides quality office and laboratory accommodation in an established location for marine science.





Inverness

## HIGH-QUALITY, LOW-COST LOCATION

The region is one of the most cost-competitive in the whole of Scotland – and the UK – affording you and your people greater lifestyle opportunities and welcomed financial freedom. Businesses like yours will benefit from our unrivalled natural resources and ambitious cross-sectoral collaboration, while being connected to the rest of Scotland, the UK and the world.

From remote cottages and seaside villages, cosmopolitan flats and modern family homes, the Highlands and Islands has a wide choice of property to buy and rent, perfect for people of all budgets. Better still, the region is committed to building affordable homes for all.

Regional Growth Deals are set to deliver sustained, secure economic and community-wide prosperity and transform the region with a public and private sector cash injection totalling £775 million over the next 10-15 years.

### GROWTH DEAL PROJECTS INCLUDE:

- £105 million for the council area of Moray, supporting eight projects, including the development of the Advanced Technology and Innovation Campus (MAATIC)
- £70 million for Argyll and Bute to position the area as a must-visit location for the international maritime leisure market
- £335 million for the Islands to boost green jobs and sustainable energy, health, tourism and food and drink sectors while supporting the decarbonisation of Orkney, Shetland, and the Outer Hebrides

## QUALITY OF LIFE

The Highlands and Islands is the perfect location to enjoy the best of both worlds: coastal or rural living and bustling city life.

When you choose the Highlands and Islands, you'll experience one of the most distinctive and diverse landscapes anywhere in the UK. With scenic coastlines, sandy golden beaches and picturesque rolling hills, there's so much to explore, right on your doorstep.

You'll discover a treasure trove of global tourism attractions, from Loch Ness, the Isle of Skye and its Fairy Pools and the stone age settlement of Skara Brae in the Orkney islands to the Cairngorms, the mystical Callanish Stones in the Outer Hebrides, Urquhart Castle and Ben Nevis, the famous Bealach na Bà single-track road through the mountains of the Applecross peninsula, and Eilean Donan Castle.

What's more, there's an endless number of sporting and outdoor activities on offer in the Highlands and Islands. From hiking and fishing to canoeing and mountain biking, the region presents countless opportunities for new experiences and exciting adventures.



### THE BEST PLACE TO LIVE IN SCOTLAND

Did you know the Highlands and Islands regularly ranks highly in quality-of-life surveys? The Outer Hebrides has been named the best place to live in Britain for work-life balance, and two other locations in the region – Orkney and Highland – placed in the top 20.



### THE NORTH COAST 500

With just over 500 miles of stunning coastal scenery, the spectacular North Coast 500 route naturally follows the main coastal edges of the North Highlands of Scotland, taking in the regions of Wester Ross, Sutherland, Caithness, Easter Ross, the Black Isle and Inverness-shire.



### THE WHISKY EXPERIENCE

There are no fewer than 47 distilleries spread across the region, with worldwide brands including Macallan, Glenfiddich, and Balvenie deeply embedded in its history and heritage. If you're a fan of a wee dram, you've come to the right place.



### THE HOME OF GOLF

With almost 100 courses, many designed by world renowned names such as James Braid and Donald Ross, the Highlands and Islands offer the complete package for golfers of all abilities. From championship courses continually rated in the world's top 100 like Machrihanish, Royal Dornoch, Nairn and Castle Stuart, to less demanding but equally spectacular nine-hole courses, the area has it all.



### A LAND OF FOOD AND DRINK

The region has a global reputation for its tremendous natural larder of food and drink, and this is one of the region's biggest exports. In Caithness, for instance, natural Scottish seaweed is processed to create 100% sustainable products, including chips, clusters, pestos and tapenades.

## COMMUNITY SPIRIT

No matter where you choose to settle in the region and build your business enterprise, you will discover a welcoming, keen sense of community spirit. Resources are invested in areas to enhance sustainable growth, including social need and market opportunities, fair work practices and resilient business models.

## SO, WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? IT'S TIME TO DISCOVER THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS

Connected business support is available for you before, during and after you locate here, from a range of public sector partners.

We will make the connections you need to ensure your investment goes smoothly allowing you to focus on growing your business.

To find out more about why the Highlands and Islands is the right location for your company, or to experience the area for yourself, get in touch and we will be happy to arrange this for you.

## NOW IS THE TIME TO INVEST IN SCOTLAND



Camusdarach Beach, by Morar

## GET IN TOUCH WE'D LOVE TO WELCOME YOU



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