

PROPOSED FUTURE PRIORITIES FOR ERDF CONVERGENCE PROGRAMME (HIGHLANDS & ISLANDS)

Priority 1 – Enterprise sustainability

Aim: To increase the sustainable growth of the Highlands & Islands economy through improving the competitiveness of its enterprises, particularly through the RTD support environment

Parent strategies: Smart Successful Scotland; National Planning Framework for Scotland

Objectives:

- To establish a viable RTD base and support environment for maximising the economic benefits of the region's research capacity, particularly by developing the region's potential areas of excellence
- To enhance the productive use of ICT and enhancement of ICT infrastructure
- To improve the support environment for entrepreneurship and new and high-growth potential enterprises in the region

Priority 2 – Economic and environmental infrastructure sustainability

Aim: To support key investments in the region's strategic economic infrastructure and the sustainable use of the region's environmental assets

Parent strategies: National Transport Strategy; Securing a Renewable Future; National Planning Framework for Scotland; National Waste Plan; Scottish Sustainable Development Strategy; Green Jobs strategy; Biodiversity strategy; HE Framework

Objectives:

- To support strategic transport actions in improving access and reducing peripherality in the region
- To continue developing the support and teaching capacity of the region's overall higher and further education infrastructure
- To support the development of a wide range of renewable energy technologies (particularly offshore wind, biomass and marine) and maximise their economic, social and environmental value
- To support reclamation of brownfield and contaminated sites as well as strategic improvements to water, waste and flooding systems, where they support economic sustainability
- To maximise the economic and social benefits of tourism and the region's environmental and cultural heritage

Priority 3 – Community sustainability

Aim: To sustain viable communities across the region

Parent strategy: Closing the Opportunity Gap; Scottish Rural Development Strategy

Objectives:

- To support locally-based community regeneration initiatives
- To support the development of community economic infrastructure in the region, particularly where it will help reverse regional out-migration and ensure the economic sustainability of communities
- To complement the social inclusion activity under the ESF programme with appropriate infrastructure investments in the most vulnerable communities
- To increase the capacity of disadvantaged communities to attract and sustain SME activity