



Welcome to the Highlands

A guide to your new area

Introduction

Hello and welcome to the area guide for Highland Council. This guide provides information about the area covered by Highland Council as well as useful tips for when you move house. It covers some essentials about council tax and bin collections in the area, as well as information about how to find your local GP, your local leisure centre and who to contact if you want to manage your money. I hope you find this useful and good luck in your new home!



Paula
Housing Options Scotland Volunteer



This guide has been produced by volunteers at **Housing Options Scotland**. We are Scotland's housing charity for disabled people, older adults and members of the Armed Forces community. If you need help with your housing situation, contact us:

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Background information

Highland Council is the largest local government area in the United Kingdom. The Highland area covers most of the mainland and Inner Hebridean parts of Inverness-shire, Ross and Cromarty all of Caithness, Nairnshire, Sutherland and small parts of Argyll and Moray.

It does not cover the Western Isles, or Shetland or Orkney which have their own local authorities.

If you want to know more about Highland council click [here](#).

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Moving home

When you move into a new home there are several things you need to think about:

Tell others about your change of address.

This might include:

- Friends and family
- Your employer
- Your local job-centre
- The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)
- Your bank, insurance, pension and credit card companies
- Your doctor and dentist
- [Highland council](#)
- The [electoral register](#)
- The [Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency](#) (DVLA)
- [TV licensing](#)
- [Post Office](#) re-direction service
- Telephone, TV and broadband providers
- Charities you might support



Find your way around your new home. Consider getting two copies of keys cut for your new home and ask for instructions/booklets for all appliances to be left for you. Also make sure you know where to locate the following:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gas and electricity meters | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fuse box |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Thermostat for central heating | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Landline telephone sockets |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Water boiler | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TV and satellite aerial sockets |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hot and cold water tanks | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Access points e.g. to loft points/under floor areas |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stopcock (to turn the main water supply on/off) | |

- **Take gas and electricity meter readings.** Do this at your old and new property when you leave/move-in. This will make sure you only pay for the energy you use.
- **Settle up bills at your old property.** Make sure you pay for all bills due - rent/mortgage; council tax; gas/electricity; garden/common area maintenance.
- **Think about changing providers.** Moving to a new home gives you the chance to review the costs of services you use and try to find better deals. Look at comparison sites [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#) to help.



The following websites might also prove useful for you throughout/after your move:



[Home Energy Scotland](#)

For advice about saving on your energy bills and applying for grants or loans to improve energy efficiency in your home.



[Scotland Trusted Traders](#)

This site allows you to find trusted trades - people to carry out work in your home. All traders listed have been vetted by Trading Standards and adhere to the code of practice. Just add your postcode to search.



[Care and Repair \(Scotland\)](#)

Another tradesperson finder website – tradespeople are included based on recommendations from customers and monitored on the basis of customer feedback and trade reputation.

Essentials

The Highland Council website can be found [here](#).



Council Tax

The amount of council tax you pay relates to the valuation band of your property. Water and waste water charges are set by Scottish Water and billed alongside council tax. You can apply and manage your council tax account online and make payments through the council account. You can download the latest council tax and water rates [here](#).

A full council tax charge is payable if there are two or more adults (aged 18 or over) living in a property as their main home. Students and carers usually aren't counted in your household numbers. Discounts also apply for apprentices, school leavers, care leavers and hospitalised, disabled or severely mentally impaired people. For more detailed information please click [here](#).

Waste collection and recycling

Highland Council operates a refuse, garden waste collection and recycling service. You can find which day your bins are collected by clicking [here](#) and searching for your town, village or street under the categories listed. You need to pay for a permit if you want to have garden waste collected by the council. Find out more [here](#).

If you're not sure what to do with a waste item, check [here](#) for advice on re-using and recycling.

If you need to buy bins for your new home, obtain extra bins because you have a larger household or replace a damaged bin, click [here](#).

You can find your nearest recycling centre [here](#). There are also various smaller recycling points. Click [here](#), then on the nearest recycling point listed to see a map.

Transport

Car

The council issues parking permits for residents to allow parking in bays on roads subject to the Permit Scheme, close to their home or business. Parking is not permitted without a permit. You can apply online for any type of parking permit [here](#). Inverness, Fort William and Nairn currently operate permit zone schemes. This allows you to park in any street with bays within your zone. Discounts for permits apply for individuals with a Blue Badge or who are in receipt of the state pension.

If you, a friend or relative have a permanent disability or mobility problem, you can apply for a blue badge (cost £20) [here](#). A Blue Badge allows on-street, free parking without time restriction in Pay & Display bays, on single and double yellow lines without loading restrictions as well as all off-street car parks except the multi-storey in Inverness.

There is restricted access for vehicles on the islands of Eigg, Muck and in Knoydart. Permits are available for residents, temporary contractors and registered disabled persons' vehicles. Find out more [here](#).



Public Transport

If you need to plan a journey using a combination of bus, rail, coach or ferry, try the Traveline website [here](#). Use this planner [here](#) for train journeys. The Highland council website also has links to some useful rail organisations [here](#), including ScotRail, Virgin, and for the Jacobite steam railway trips.

You may want to apply for a disabled persons' railcard, and there is more information [here](#), including how to apply for, or renew your card.

The council website also provides information about bus service providers across the Highlands [here](#). Some areas operate a Dial-a-Bus service – see the list [here](#).

If you are over 60 or have a disability you may be eligible for the [National Entitlement Card](#) which gives free and discounted travel on buses throughout Scotland on nearly all local registered and long-distance scheduled bus services. There is a dedicated website with more information [here](#).

The Thistle Assistance Card

If you need extra assistance when travelling, such as needing more physical help from bus drivers or more time to get on and off public transport, you can get a Thistle Assistance Card. This is not a concession card but allows you to ask for extra help. The card is free and you can get it by completing the form on this [web page](#). If you have any questions see the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page [here](#).

The Young Scot Card

If you are aged between 11 and 26 you can apply for a Young Scot card which will give you travel discounts on rail, bus, and ferry services, as well as other discounts. The discount is generally a third off bus and rail fares. For more information check [here](#).



Ferries and air travel

For some journeys, air travel may be your preferred means. Find information [here](#). Or you may have to use ferry transport – find out about this [here](#).

Education

Schools

The Highland council website can help you find a school for your child, whether it be for nursery, primary, secondary or for special education. Click [here](#).

There are four [special education schools](#) in the Highland council area – two are in Inverness (Drummond School and The Bridge). St Clement's School in Dingwall and St Duthus School in Tain also offer special education.

Adult and Community Learning

High Life Highland is a charity that provides leisure and community learning on behalf of Highland council. You can find out more about adult and community learning [here](#). High Life Highland offers qualifications certificated by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). Find a list of the courses available [here](#).

Colleges and Universities

The University of the Highlands and Islands

(UHI) has many campuses, including Inverness and Perth Colleges as well as community centres and halls that hold classes. Find out more [here](#). From this homepage you can click to find a list of the campuses.



Inverness and Perth are the main colleges, but if you live in the Highland Council area you can also travel to the [University of Aberdeen](#) and [University of Abertay](#) and [North East Scotland College](#).

Money and work

Getting free financial advice



General advice

Highland Council have a leaflet you can download from [here](#) called 'Worrying about money'. It also offers a few tips on its website [here](#).

[Citizens Advice Scotland](#) (CAS) are local, independent charities providing free, confidential advice on a range of topics. They can help with **benefit applications**, and appeals, as well as **general money and debt advice**. You can contact Citizens Advice Scotland by phone (Tel: **0800 085 7145**). Citizens Advice Scotland also have a self-help web page [here](#). Citizens Advice Scotland also have an Advice Project to provide support and advice to people in the armed forces in Scotland.



Armed Forces personnel may also find useful information [here](#) on a range of financial matters.

There are a couple of websites to help with **managing money** - see [Money Matters](#); or the [Money Advice Service](#) which has a useful Budget Planner tool [here](#). If you have a health issue or a disability you can check out information [here](#). If you want a general financial health check, the Money Advice Service offers a free money health check online [here](#).



Age Scotland provides information on **money matters for older people**. Find out more [here](#). Another charity for older people (Independent Age) also offers advice about money [here](#).

[Scotland's Financial Health Service](#) is a government-led website providing a one-stop shop on money matters. It does not provide direct advice, but will signpost you to information and services to help.

Savings and loans

You may be interested in joining a local credit union. A credit union is a financial co-operative which provides savings, loans and a range of services to its members (much like a bank), but it is owned and controlled by members themselves. Find more information [here](#). You can find a local credit union by typing in your postcode [here](#).

Debt advice

The [Highland Council](#) website has some helpful contact details if you need help with managing debt.

[Step Change](#) is a charity giving free advice about debt. It's website has information about types of debt and managing debt.

The [Money Advice Service](#) has useful information about debt solutions too.

There is also a [National Debtline](#) offering free and independent advice. Tel: 0808 808 4000. This operates Mon-Fri 9.00am-8.00pm.



[Citizens Advice Scotland](#) is another useful resource for debt advice.

Pensions

You can find general advice about different types of pensions [here](#). [Pensionwise](#) is a free UK government service for people over 50 designed to help you make decisions about your pension. The [Pensions Advisory Service](#) is also free and impartial and gives information and advice about all types of pensions.

[Age UK](#) and the [Money Advice Service](#) also provide information about pensions.

Benefits and Grants



There are different benefits you may be able to claim depending on your current status and eligibility. Find out about UK benefits generally [here](#).

Citizens Advice also offer guidance [here](#). More specifically, if you are sick or disabled look [here](#) and [here](#); if you are on a low income look [here](#) and [here](#) and if you are over-65 with health or disability issues, look [here](#).

If you need to start claiming benefits, contact your local JobCentrePlus to make an appointment ([0800 055 6688](tel:08000556688)).

The [Scottish Government](#) website has general information about benefits, and suggests you can make an appointment with a Money Talk Team through a Citizens Advice Bureau.

Scottish Welfare Fund

The Scottish Welfare Fund helps people who are on low incomes in Scotland through two main grants. Find out more [here](#). Apply for a **Crisis Grant** if you're

**The Scottish
WELFARE FUND**

struggling financially after a disaster (like a fire or flood), or an emergency (like losing your money or an unexpected expense); or apply for a **Community Care Grant** to help you or someone you care for to start to live, or to carry on living, a settled life in the community. You can find more details about applying through your local council [here](#).

Work



Highland Council have some advice about employability [here](#) and their services link to strategic skills services provided by Employability in Scotland whose website is [here](#).

There is some useful UK government advice on finding a job [here](#), with specific information for those with disabilities.

The **JobCentreGuide** offers free and independent advice about job-hunting and careers. Visit their website [here](#).

JobCentrePlus is the UK government-funded employment agency and social security office which have centres in most cities. The address for the centre in Inverness can be found [here](#).

jobcentreplus

Skills Development Scotland supports people of working age to build their career skills or find training opportunities. See the [MyWorldOfWork](#) website which has a range of resources.

||||
**Skills
Development
Scotland**

Health and wellbeing

NHS Highland is the Health Board covering the Highlands.

It is made up of three regional sections – North and West Highland; South and Mid Highland; and Argyll and Bute.

You can find the website [here](#). Clicking the tab 'Services' at the top of the page and then using the menu at the left side you can access all the NHS services you might need.



GPs and other services



If you need to locate your nearest **GP or Health Centre**, go to the website [here](#), then use the 'Select a region' pull down menu to access a list of services in your area.

For minor ailments, find your local **pharmacies** [here](#).

You can find a full list of **dental practices** [here](#). If you want to register with a dentist, please call the Dental Helpline on 0800 141 2362 first.

Near Me Video Service

Near Me - also known as Attend Anywhere - is an NHS video calling platform that offers video call access to NHS Highland services from wherever you are, without travelling.

Video consultations offer the chance to reduce your travel time and time away from home, work or school and make it easier for you to have a member of your family or your carer with you.

To use Near Me you will need a reliable internet connection and a suitable device for making video calls such as a smartphone, tablet, laptop or computer with webcam and speaker. Find out more [here](#).

Hospitals



There are 26 hospitals in the Highlands area. A full list of these can be found [here](#). There is a hospital in most of the major towns, as well as Raigmore Hospital in Inverness. The website lists the name of the hospital, its location and the regional section it is part of.

Social Care



The NHS Highland website has a section on Adult Social Care [here](#). Again, the menu on the left side allows you to navigate through various services available, including services for older people, people with physical disabilities, people with learning difficulties and people with mental health issues.

Technology Enabled Care

Technology Enabled Care is the use of technology to provide health and care services to people in their own homes, or near to home. The key services include Telecare (a personal - community - alarm system), Telehealth (a remote health monitoring service, using text messages, automated phone calls or apps, to help patients manage their own health condition) and Near Me (a video consultation platform – see above). Find out more about TEC [here](#).

Support for older people

[Morning Call](#) is a charity based in Inverness, set up in 1989 to deliver a free daily call and visiting service to older people experiencing isolation and loneliness. They also offer a housebound library service. You can get in touch with this service by phoning **07514 494053** or emailing info@morningcall.org.uk. You might even want to volunteer with this charity to help others.



Support for carers



The **NHS Highland** website has a section devoted to discussing the needs of unpaid carers, including young carers [here](#). Support for young carers can also be found [here](#).



SharedCare Scotland offers services including events, publications and research reports, and an online directory of short break services for carers. Access their website [here](#).



The **Carers' Trust** aims to ensure that information, advice and practical support are available to all carers across the UK. Find their website [here](#).



The Scottish Government has information for carers, including who can be included as a 'carer'. If you need information about the kind of support available to you as a carer, check [here](#) and use the menu options to explore further.



Care Information Scotland provides information and advice to access support services for carers and you can find their information [here](#).



The Open University in Scotland has produced a free short course (10 hours of self-study) for people with caring responsibilities - 'Caring Counts: a self-reflection and planning course for carers'. Find out more [here](#).

Health and social care for veterans and the armed forces



NHS Inform also has useful information if you are a veteran seeking help with health care. Find out more [here](#).

Every NHS Board in Scotland has an **Armed Forces and Veterans Champion**. NHS Board champions are usually senior members of staff who hold overall responsibility for making sure that the priority treatment guidelines are understood and applied in their NHS Board area. It is important to tell your GP that you have served in the armed forces as this will ensure you receive appropriate information and services specifically for veterans. More information about your NHS rights as a veteran can be found [here](#). There are a number of **NHS dedicated services for veterans** about which you can find out more [here](#).

The **Veterans Welfare Service** is a UK Government service provided through Veterans UK. It aims to provide a free welfare service that promotes independence, maintains dignity and provides continuous support through life. Check details [here](#).

Leisure

High Life Highlands

[High Life Highland](#) is a charity established to deliver leisure services and community learning on behalf of Highland Council. It delivers and supports adult learning, arts, leisure centres, libraries, museums, outdoor education, sport and youth work.



You can take out highlife membership for leisure and/or libraries [here](#). There are different [membership options](#) – all-inclusive, budget (for those on certain benefits) and pay-as-you-go. Membership gives you and your family access to leisure centres throughout the Highlands to enjoy swimming pools (incl. lessons), fitness suites, squash courts, and group exercise classes for all abilities and interests. You get other benefits and access to libraries too. Find out more [here](#).

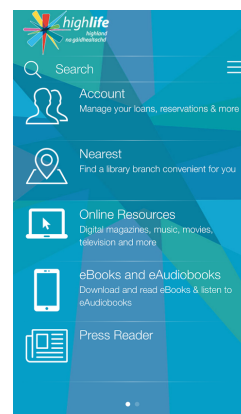
Your membership card is part of Leisure Link Partnership, which as well as covering leisure facilities in Highland region, gives you access to similar facilities in Moray, Orkney, the Western Isles, Argyll & Bute and the Borders at no extra charge.

Libraries



Information about libraries can be found [here](#). On this page you can find the location of your nearest library, join the library service and search for books, e-books, CDs, etc. Using your library card, you can access digital newspapers and magazines, graphic novels, eAudiobooks, use the online reference library and sign-up for computer and internet services.

There is a library app which can be downloaded for free for [Android](#) and [Apple](#). This allows you to manage your library account, make reservations as well as find books and other resources to reserve, renew and borrow. It also allows you to scan the barcode on any book anywhere, then search the catalogue to see if that book is available for borrowing instead of buying. You can also use the app to find your nearest library and its opening hours, directions to find it and lots of other information.



Sport and Fitness

For swimming pools and fitness facilities, you can find a list of **sports and leisure centres** across the Highlands [here](#). Clicking on an item in the list will take you to a page dedicated to that centre, with information about opening times, facilities, directions, timetables and classes.

If you want start gentle **jogging**, the High Life Highland website has a 5K (approximately 3 miles) programme that you can follow yourself over a period of 8 weeks, building up gradually. Find out more [here](#).

You can access **online fitness classes** using a log-in user name and password. Find out more [here](#). At the bottom of that page, you can find out how to sign-up to use the online classes, of which there is a good choice.

There is a calendar of **sports courses** in the region available [here](#). Simply use the drop-down menus to choose the sport you are interested in and the venue nearest you. There is also information about training events hosted by sportscotland [here](#).

High Life Highland also runs a number of **Community Sports Hubs** across twelve Highland communities. Find out more [here](#).

If you are interested in **outdoor activities**, you can find out more [here](#). The Countryside Rangers run various activities; there are holiday activities; as well as places to book for outdoor adventures.

Cinemas, theatre and entertainment

The [Vue cinema](#) in Inverness is located within the Retail and Business Park to the east of the city. It has eight screens and can accommodate almost 2,000 people. This cinema accepts the Cinema Exhibitors' Association (CEA) card allowing accompanying carers in free. To apply for a CEA card go online [here](#). As well as films, this cinema shows musicals, operas, dance and comedy on the big screen.

Also in Inverness is the [Eden Court](#) venue which houses two cinemas, two theatres, two dance studios, a restaurant and a café/bar. The centre offers arts projects and programmes and classes for all tastes and ages.



In the far north of Scotland, the town of Thurso has the [Merlin cinema](#). It offers mainstream films, as well as stage to screen presentations and other forms of entertainment.

On the Isle of Skye, the [Aros Centre](#) in Portree provides entertainment of various kinds.

At Fort William just off the A82, you will find the [Highland Cinema](#). It has regular screenings, a café and bar with a covered terrace and wood-burning stove.

Outdoors

Hiking, Hillwalking and Climbing

The Highlands is famous, not least of all, for its hills and mountains. You need to have some experience and be well equipped to go hillwalking and climbing in the area as the weather conditions can change rapidly. However, if you want to find out more about the Corbetts or Munros or find climbing routes, there are plenty of mountain guiding companies who provide accompanied trips for those with no or little experience. You



can also access the Scottish Mountaineering Club website [here](#). The Club organises events and lectures, and the website lists some useful publications as well as lists of hills and climbing routes.

Cairngorms National Park

There are lots of outdoor activities on offer within the boundaries of the Cairngorms National Park – from kayaking to cycling to hillwalking. For more information click [here](#).

Visitor attractions



There are a number of visitor attractions in the Highlands area. In Inverness, you can visit the [museum and art gallery](#), the [botanic gardens](#) and [Inverness Castle](#) which has stunning viewpoint over the city.



If you enjoy hillwalking or climbing, you might first want to visit the Ben Nevis visitor centre to get your bearings. Find out more about Britain's highest mountain or the beautiful Glen Nevis [here](#).

Lairg in Sutherland is the place to go to visit the [Ferrycroft Information and Heritage Visitor Centre](#). The centre offers information about the uses of land and water in the Highlands and a social history of how people lived there in the past.

At Newtonmore, you can visit the [Highlands Folk Museum](#) – Britain's first open air museum. There are re-created examples of black-houses and crofts illustrating the lives people once led in the Highlands.



[Thurso Art Gallery](#) offers more opportunities to view examples of local crafts and paintings. Exhibits change every 4 – 6 weeks and comprise paintings, photographs and multi-media exhibits.

Children's activities



There is lots to do in the Highlands. If you are looking for ideas of how to keep the family busy and entertained check this [link](#).

Key Contacts

The Highland Council

To contact Highland Council see [this page](#). On the page you can report a problem (click the relevant text box), request a service, or make a payment.



Councillors

You can find your local councillors from [here](#) and clicking on the name of your ward. You can find which ward you live in by visiting the Scottish Boundary Commission website [here](#) and entering your postcode.

MPs and MSPs



UK Parliament

There are three MPs across Highland areas in the UK Parliament:

- Jamie Stone (Liberal Democrat) – Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross
- Ian Blackford (SNP) – Ross, Skye and Lochaber
- Drew Hendry (SNP) – Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Speyside

You can find your MPs and their contact details [here](#) by entering your postcode and email any of them using the format: firstname.surname.mp@parliament.uk.

Scottish Parliament

You are represented by seven regional MSPs and one of three constituency MSPs:

Constituency MSPs

Gail Ross (SNP) - Caithness, Sutherland and Ross
Fergus Ewing (SNP) - Inverness and Nairn
Kate Forbes (SNP) - Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch

Regional MSPs - Highlands and Islands

John Finnie (Scottish Greens)
Maree Todd (SNP)
David Stewart (Scottish Labour)
Rhoda Grant (Scottish Labour)
Jamie Halcro Johnston (Conservative)
Edward Mountain (Conservative)
Donald Cameron (Conservative)

You can find your MSPs and their contact details [here](#) by entering your postcode and email any of them using the format: firstname.surname.msp@parliament.scot.

Euan's Guide

Euan's Guide is a website which reviews the accessibility of different venues across the UK. You can search by location on the website [here](#).

Inclusion Scotland

Inclusion Scotland is a charity aiming to ensure inclusive policy, practice and decision-making for disabled people. Their website has information about employability, human rights, poverty and social security and encourages disabled people to become active citizens to secure their rights and entitlements. Find out more [here](#).

Housing Options Scotland

Housing Options Scotland offer information and advice to disabled people, older adults and members of the Armed Forces Community. Contact us on: **0131 247 1400** or via the website [here](#).

Veterans

Veterans can receive specific support from national veteran charities and groups. **Veterans Scotland** have produced an information guide [here](#) which covers lots of contacts and advice. The Scottish Government has also produced two guides - one with [general information](#), one with [information about housing](#).

[Poppy Scotland](#) are also able to offer advice and support.

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