

Highlights

Over 500,000 kwh of green electricity will be generated annually by the Hydro Ness project.

Reused waste materials to landscape.

Improved Active Travel networks and created space for planting - creating a community space for wellbeing/learning and biodiversity benefits.

Worked closely and proactively with partners, stakeholders and local communities to gain engagement, input and create educational opportunities.

Hydro Ness will realise annual carbon savings of 140,000kg of CO₂.



The Highland Council

Highland Council, based in Inverness, is a local authority working in partnership to develop the Hydro Ness project. They are utilising historical infrastructure from a disused hydro scheme and using the surrounding area to create renewable energy, a STEM learning hub, and a destination for visitors, connecting to wider attractions in the city. The Highland Council declared a climate and ecological emergency 2019 and the region has set a target of delivering a net zero Inverness and low carbon Highland by 2025.

Hydro Ness, consisting of twin 46kw Archimedes screws, uses the natural flow of the river Ness to generate electricity and through a direct wire model supply the nearby Inverness leisure Centre (ILC). ILC, one of the highest consuming buildings across the Highland Council estate, is a hugely important and valued community asset. The Highland Council worked with partners and stakeholders to ensure that the energy scheme would also support the community and provide a learning and inspiring hub as well as a landmark which will attract new visitors.

Category description: Engaging Scotland

The Engaging Scotland Award recognises a “green team” or a dedicated task force that channels ideas and energy into delivering pro-environmentally sustainable changes within an organisation or the community.

The project underpins the Highland Council's commitment to achieve Net Zero by 2025 and have a just transition. They worked in the local area to improve the biodiversity, ensure the project has no harmful impact on salmon habitat and supports a wide variety of plants, animals, and other species.

The self-financing project helps stabilising energy prices for local community assets, building economic resilience. By creating a landmark, the council has strengthened the local economy which is reliant on tourism. They engaged with the local community through several initiatives such as their work with Eden Court where two local artists involved the community to understand what they wanted represented in the display. They also launched a Naming Competition which received a lot of interest from students across all Highland's schools. They hope that by engaging with the community and providing learning sources, they can drive behaviour changes to achieve their Net Zero ambition. The judges felt the project was very impactful and had great replication potential.



Quote from the company:

“To be recognised by VIBES for winning the Engaging category is a great achievement which we are very proud of.”

“We hope that by taking our place amongst many excellent projects working towards achieving Scotland’s Net Zero ambition, we will inspire more organisations to make a difference.”

Councillor Ken Gowans, Chair of The Highland Council's Economy and Infrastructure Committee.