

Committee	UHI North, West and Hebrides Board of Management, Learning, Teaching and Research Committee
Subject	Building a Wellbeing Economy Ecosystem: Opportunities for the Highlands and Islands and UHI
Action requested	☐ For information only For discussion ☐ For recommendation ☐ For endorsement ☐ For approval
Summary of the paper	Purpose: This draft is shared as a short, informal ‘thought piece’, bringing together learning and engagement from recent events, international conferences, emerging strategies, current research activity and stakeholder discussions. It is intended to prompt discussion rather than set direction or recommend action. The aim is to outline what is meant by a ‘wellbeing economy’ and by ‘pentahelix collaboration’, and why these ideas are becoming increasingly important in some strategy, policy, investment, and place-based work. Set in the context of the Highlands and Islands and UHI. It explores what opportunities this way of thinking might offer for the region, for UHI, and for UHI Transformation, with a focus on long-term wellbeing, resilience, and prosperity. The paper is intended as a starting point for conversation. If the ideas resonate, and are seen to add value, further reflection and proportionate next steps could be developed alongside existing priorities and capacity.
Resource implications	N/A
Risk implications	No
Date paper prepared	9/1/26
Date of Board / Committee meeting	11/3/26
Author	Prof Stuart Gibb
Link with strategy Highlight how the paper links to the Strategic Plan	UHI NWH Research and KE strategy
Island communities	N/A

Status (e.g., confidential, non-confidential)	Non-confidential
Freedom of information	
Consultation How has consultation with partners been conducted?	TBC

Recommendation

– For information / discussion

This paper seeks to explore whether a wellbeing economy lens, supported by pentahelix collaboration, offers a useful way to bring greater clarity to UHI's purpose, impact, and regional role. It draws together current thinking and practice at a time when UHI Transformation is sharpening focus on long-term value, contribution, and place.

The paper does not propose adoption or new activity. It asks whether more clearly naming and framing what UHI already does could strengthen leadership, improve alignment with policy and partners, and support a shared narrative rooted in the Highlands and Islands. If this approach is seen to add value, it could be explored in a limited, low-risk, and proportionate way. If not, the paper stands as useful horizon scanning.

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