

Agenda Item	19
Report No	SRC 16/13

**TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLAN – TAIN REGENERATION**

**Report by Director of Planning and Development**

**SUMMARY**

This report updates the Committee on a proposal submitted to the Scottish Government for consideration for funding towards a design workshop (or “Charrette”) aimed at delivering regeneration in and around Tain Town Centre. This opportunity is part of the Scottish Government’s Charrette Mainstreaming Programme and follows the recent publication of a review of Scotland’s town centres, and subsequent Town Centre Action Plan.

**1. Background**

- 1.1 The Scottish Government has recently announced a short term opportunity to bid for grant funding towards design workshops (“charrettes”) relating to the regeneration of town centres. This follows the recent publication of the National Review of Town Centres External Advisory Group report: *Community and Enterprise in Scotland’s Town Centres* and the Scottish Government’s response to it – the *Town Centre Action Plan*.
- 1.2 A full analysis of the Town Centre Action Plan will be reported to a future meeting of full Council, but this report seeks Member agreement to progress further work in Tain, as part of a joint bid with Nairn and Fort William. The bid proposal is being submitted by the Council, in partnership with Royal Burgh of Tain Community Council. In time we will be seeking to take this proposal forward in partnership with other interested parties, including businesses and other interested groups.
- 1.3 Over the past two years work has been carried out on the production of the Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan (IMFLDP) which guides the future direction and scale of growth across the area. The IMFLDP is currently at “Proposed Plan” stage and identifies a mix of land uses in Tain to facilitate the delivery of housing, employment and community uses. Through public sector asset management, provision of new community facilities and under utilisation of existing buildings there are a number of opportunities for development which can help to support the regeneration and renewal of town centre and the future development of the town as a whole. The design workshop proposed as part of the bid to Scottish Government will aid collaboration between different interest groups and allow new opportunities for regeneration to be considered and co-ordinated.
- 1.4 If successful, grant funding would be provided by Scottish Government for a specialist team of architects, urban designers and community planners to facilitate the creation of a town centre masterplan. As Members will be aware, the “charrette” process involves the creation of a dynamic environment within

which the local community can put forward ideas and aspirations for shaping their town in years to come. The intention would be that this new masterplanning work would help move forward existing strategy and plans, with a particular focus on projects for implementation.

## **2. Project Aims**

2.1 The bid which is being submitted to Scottish Government covers Tain, Fort William and Nairn. The particular aims of the proposed design workshop (or charrette) for Tain would be to:

- Prepare a Development Brief for Tain which identifies the key sites for development within the settlement which will ensure that the existing town is consolidated, addresses its infrastructure issues and protects and enhances the outstanding built and cultural heritage of the town;
- Consider the opportunities for best use of sites which have/ are about to become vacant through public sector asset management;
- Identify proposals which will facilitate an upturn in footfall for the town centre which will include consideration of enhancements to the existing and perhaps provision of new active travel connections to and from the town centre;
- Explore mechanisms and funding processes for delivering improvements including the potential for a catalyst project.

2.2 In order to achieve these aims, the workshop will need to:

- review new and existing opportunities for regeneration within the town centre or other related areas;
- address the balance between discouraging through-traffic but encouraging footfall in the town centre, including understanding requirements for car and coach parking;
- examine how the public and private sector can make the best of their assets and investments to facilitate town centre regeneration;
- explore opportunities for increasing Active Travel and Public Transport – improve the quality of pedestrian and cycle links (including alignment with the Council's Carbon Clever plans) and facilities for public transport;
- improve the quality of the built and natural environment, particularly the physical appearance of existing buildings, and opportunities for spaces to meeting and socialising; and
- identify opportunities to improve utilisation of vacant sites and buildings and underused upper floors for housing.

## **3. Assessment and Timescales**

3.1 Assessment of submissions by the Scottish Government will be based on the fit of proposals with the issues identified in the guidance on funding. In particular, how the regeneration of the town centres would benefit from using charrette-style working. Proposals are being considered on a "first come first served basis" and it is expected that the results of the assessment process will be made available within four weeks of receipt of submissions.

3.2 The Scottish Government has stipulated that programmes must allow for

completion of the project before the end of March 2014. An indication of timescales proposed has been provided to Scottish Government, with the intention to carry out the design workshops during February 2014.

#### **4. Fit with the Programme for the Highland Council**

- 4.1 The work outlined in this report contributes to commitments within “Working together for the Highlands”, in particular supporting the development of urban centres and putting local communities at the forefront of these processes.

#### **5. Resource implications**

- 5.1 The grant fund is relatively small, with only £120,000 available across Scotland. The bid requests a contribution of £20,000 (the maximum allowable under the scheme) from Scottish Government towards the total cost of providing the three “charrette” design workshops. A contribution of costs from the Council (expected to be in the region of £15,000) towards venues, publicity, graphic design and other support costs would be met from existing budgets.

#### **6. Carbon Clever, Legal, Climate Change and Equality implications**

- 6.1 There are no known direct legal, equality or climate change implications arising from this report. Effective integration of development opportunities with wider green travel and high design standards are a fundamental means of delivering the Council’s carbon clever aspirations, and as such will be actively managed.

#### **7. Recommendation**

- 7.1 The Committee is invited to agree the submission of a proposal to Scottish Government for funding towards a design workshop (“charrette”) aimed at delivering regeneration in and around Tain Town Centre.

Designation: Director of Planning and Development

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