

**The Highland Council**  
**ADULT & CHILDREN SERVICES COMMITTEE**  
**15 JANUARY 2014**

Agenda Item	5a.
Report No	ACS/15/14

**Capital Programme – additional item – Floral Hall, Inverness**

**Report by Director of Education, Culture and Sport Service**

**Summary**

This report seeks approval to draw down £39K funding from the Community and Leisure Facilities generic budget heading as a funding contribution towards a £111K investment to rebrand and re-launch facilities at the Floral Hall, Inverness.

**1.0 PROPOSAL**

- 1.1 The Council has previously found it difficult to find a clear identity for the Inverness Floral Hall and Training Centre, being unclear if it was a visitor attraction, part of the wider nursery operations onsite or a training facility for people with learning disabilities, with some interest to the public as a side attraction. Over the last 10 years, it has been considered for partial or full closure on several occasions, most recently and in the run up to the creation of High Life Highland (HLH), with a full review and options appraisal being led by THC's Inverness Area Corporate Manager. With the creation of HLH, the aspiration by Inverness Councillors that a clear and positive role can be found for the facility has passed to HLH along with the 25 year lease.
- 1.2 HLH has developed a Business Case to clarify the identity of Inverness Floral Hall and support its development as a key visitor attraction for Inverness, while improving its operating deficit over the next three years. The proposal centres around the extension of the café area and improving the kitchen facilities to increase and enhance the number of covers available in the café and to enable the introduction of the sale of an expanded range of goods. In particular, the expansion and enhancement of the retailing and catering offer available will allow HLH to work with tour operators to attract higher volumes of visitors to Inverness. HLH has secured an investment of £33K from the private sector to support this development. The Inverness Common Good Fund has agreed to fund a further £39K on condition that the final gap in the funding comes from ECS to enable the £111K project to proceed. In addition, HLH will invest £16K to develop the marketing and promotional material required to support the rebranding and promotion of the facility.
- 1.3 The overarching proposal for the development is to re brand and re launch the facility as 'Inverness Botanic Gardens'. A new programme of horticultural events and activities will be designed to encourage repeat visits by those living in and around the Inverness area. In addition, HLH has removed the admission charge to encourage repeat visits and to help to establish 'Inverness Botanic Gardens' as a key asset to be enjoyed regularly by the people of Inverness. The proposal will also seek to register 'Inverness Botanic Gardens' with the Association of Scottish

Visitor Attractions and to promote the facility as a key visitor attraction to encourage more people to visit Inverness and to offer a quality experience, free of charge, while they are in the City. At present, the Floral Hall attracts 18,000 visitors each year. With this development, the aim is to double this figure over a three year period.

- 1.4 In establishing the identity and unique selling proposition of the facility as a key attraction to locals and visitors, HLH aims to increase the number of visitors each year and, in doing so, to improve the financial viability and sustainability of the venue in year three of the development. The funding contribution from the ECS Capital Programme budget will help to complete the funding package required to enable this development to progress, to secure the long term future of this facility and to develop it into an attraction in Inverness that is valued equally by residents and visitors alike. It is recommended, therefore, that Members approve this funding drawdown from the Community and Leisure Facilities generic budget heading.

## **2.0 IMPLICATIONS**

- 2.1 There are no resource, legal, equality or climate change implications arising from this report.

## **3.0 RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 The Committee is asked to:-

- Agree that £39K be drawn down from the Community and Leisure facilities generic budget heading as a contribution towards an overall £111K investment package to rebrand and re-launch Inverness Floral Hall as “Inverness Botanic Gardens”.

Designation: Director of Education, Culture and Sport

Date: 13th January 2014

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**Background Papers: None**