

The Highland Council
Resources Committee - 27 August 2014

Agenda Item	10.ii.e
Report No	RES/36/14

Highland Science Skills Academy: Application to Capital Discretionary Fund 2014/15

Report by Director of Development and Infrastructure

Summary

This report requests approval for a contribution of a total of £150,000 from the Capital Discretionary Fund towards a funding package that will enable the development of a hub for the Highland Science Skills Academy at UHI's Inverness Campus Partnership Facility. This is a new joint building with HIE.

The Highland Science Skills Academy project is supportive of the Council's Programme "Working Together for the Highlands", and of the prioritisation and creation of quality jobs in the Highlands. This is further underlined in its commitment to ensuring the best possible quality of life for children and young people in the Highlands, where every young person in the area has access to the best education and training system we can deliver.

1. Background: Highland Science Skills Academy

1.1 The Highland Council, at its meeting of 26 June 2014, agreed a contribution towards the establishment of a Low Carbon Institute to be located at the new HIE/UHI building on the Inverness Campus from the Carbon Clever Initiative Budget. That report also contained a detailed description of proposals for the establishment of the Science Skills Academy. This facility, which would promote careers in science, technology, engineering, mathematics and digital media (STEMD) subjects across the Highlands, would be aimed at encourage people from a wide range of ages and backgrounds living in the area to consider careers in technology-based industries which are increasingly important to the region and where skills shortages are becoming apparent. A further report, considered at the meeting of the Highland Council on 26 June 2014, approved a contribution of £20,000 towards a funding package of £80,000 to meet the costs of employing a suitably qualified person to take forward an action plan designed to progress the further development of the project.

2. Financial Breakdown: Highland Science Skills Academy

- 2.1 A location for the Academy has been incorporated into the plans for the proposed £13m, 4,900sqm, joint HIE/UHI facility on the Inverness Campus site. The UHI is investing approximately £6.65m in this new facility. They are funding this from a mixture of grant funding and their own resources, with the Highland Science Skills Academy accommodation being included in the UHI premises and projected to extend to 180 square metres. This would include laboratory and seminar space, together with room to accommodate technical staff and for storage. The total capital costs of developing the Science Skills Academy element of the joint HIE/UHI buildings are estimated at £763,000. The total cost includes land purchase, and fit out costs as well as build costs.

Funder	Amount	Status
The Highland Council	£150,000	Applied for
UHI/ERDF	£553,000	Awarded
Private Sector Investment	£60,000	Awarded
Total	£763,000	

3 Conclusions

3.1 Highland Science Skills Academy

The aim of the facility is to connect the education system in the Highlands and Islands with the world of work. The proposed facility will act as a focal point for “education to work” related initiatives. Its location, within a new facility designed to develop a wide range of exciting new outreach activities (including a new Centre for Offshore Technology, a Life science post-graduate teaching laboratory, and a fish genetics research facility), should provide an ideal environment for people throughout the region to learn about the opportunities that careers in STEM related activities can present them with. The project will aim to be as inclusive as possible, not just targeted at high achieving academic young people, but encouraging all young people by helping them to realise the practical applications that STEM related subjects can be put to.

4. Implications

- 4.1 Resource - the £150,000 requested from the Capital Discretionary Fund forms an important element of the overall funding package for the Academy and will ensure that matching funding from additional sources will be able to be drawn down.
- 4.2 Rural - whilst the physical location of the Science Skills Academy will be in Inverness, the purpose behind its development is to examine new ways of engaging with communities throughout the Highlands and Islands. The Science Skills Academy will use technology to ensure outreach activities in other learning centres across the region avoiding the need for travel to Inverness

4.3 There are no equalities, legal, climate change/Carbon Clever, risk, or Gaelic implications directly arising from this Report.

Recommendation

The Committee is recommended to support the application by the University of the Highlands and Islands for a grant of £150,000, from the Capital Discretionary Fund towards the capital cost of building the Highland Science Skills Academy.

Designation: Director of Development & Infrastructure

Date: 14 August 2014

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