

Agenda Item	12.
Report No	CS/10/15

**Northwest and Central Sutherland Discretionary Fund Support North Coast Leisure Centre**

**Report by the Head of Policy and Reform**

**Summary**

This report invites Members to increase the ward discretionary funding award from £6,000 already provided to £11,004 to support the cost of urgent repairs to the PV and Solar Thermal Panel Energy System at North Coast Leisure Centre. The report also provides Members with some detail about the activities of North Coast Leisure.

**1. Background**

- 1.1 The North Coast Leisure Centre is a community owned swimming pool and leisure facility that was formed in 1972 with the Leisure Centre coming into operation in 1995. It provides a highly valued service to a number of communities across the north coast of Sutherland
- 1.2 Through the efforts of the manager, staff and active committee, the Centre which operates all year round offers a wide range of planned activities for the community. The committee have endeavoured in many ways to attract funding to help develop the Centre and its activities in order to make the Centre's operation sustainable and includes a number of renewable projects to help reduce its energy costs.

**2. Funding Requested**

- 2.1 To reduce its energy costs and generate an income, North Coast Leisure was successful in securing funding from a loan from the Energy Saving Trust to install a new PV, Solar Thermal Energy System. The system was installed in late 2013 but in October 2014 it was found to have been installed incorrectly with the incorrect fixings and was in such a dangerous state it would have to be removed from the Centre roof, reinstalled and re-commissioned. Solar Power Scotland, the company who installed the system have gone into liquidation and it is unlikely that any redress to this company will be possible although that is being pursued.
- 2.2 North Coast Leisure has had two quotes provided to reinstall and re-commission the system with the preferred quote of £11,004 coming from a locally based company in Caithness.
- 2.3 In December 2014 Ward Members agreed a contribution of £6,000 to be made from the North West & Central Sutherland Ward Discretionary Fund not only to

support the leisure centre but also because of safety concerns for people in the vicinity should the panels be dislodged from the roof. These concerns were heightened given the time of year and likelihood of strong winds. When Ward Members approved the funding it was with a view to the balance for the works to be found from other funders. However the North Coast Leisure Centre Committee, who in the past have been very successful at fundraising and securing funds for many projects, have come back to say that after an extensive effort they have not been able to secure any other funding for reinstating the PV panels and have asked for further support from the Ward Discretionary Fund.

2.4 The request is for a further £5,004 to cover the full costs of this project. All Members are fully supportive of this application not least because safety concerns continue. Members are asked to approve the payment of the second tranche to bring the total award from local budgets to £11,004. Any award over £10,000 requires Committee approval.

**3. Implications** Resource; Legal; Equalities; Climate Change/Carbon Clever; Risk and Gaelic and Rural Implications.

3.1 The proposed award can be made from within this year's ward discretionary fund. It is recommended that the Council makes it a condition of the grant that should any financial compensation be paid to North Coast Leisure Centre from Solar Power Scotland or those acting on their behalf, that the Council is reimbursed.

3.2 The project works with all local communities and includes vulnerable and disadvantaged people and those with additional needs. It also supports a remote rural community and ensures that they have access to good leisure facilities.

3.3 The project to meets the aims of the Climate Change/Carbon Clever by having a renewables system generating energy and reducing their carbon footprint.

3.4 There are no known legal or Gaelic implications.

#### **4. Recommendation**

4.1 The Committee is asked to approve an increase in the award to the North Coast Leisure Centre from £6,000 by a further £5,004 from the Northwest and Central Sutherland Ward Discretionary Fund, with conditions of grant to include repayment should the group succeed in obtaining financial compensation as outlined in paragraph 3.1. This additional award would bring the total funding from the Council to £11,004.

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