

**The Highland Council**

**Highland Council Committee**

**5 March 2015**

Agenda Item	12
Report No	CIA/10/15

**Viewing Platform, North Tower, Inverness Castle**

**Joint Report by the Director of Development and Infrastructure, and the Inverness City Manager**

**SUMMARY**

This report seeks approval to gain the necessary funding to undertake the alteration/refurbishment works to create two viewing platforms, shop and access arrangements to the North Tower, Inverness Castle.

**1 Introduction**

1.1 The present Castle sits on the site in which previous castles were once located, and has an interesting and eventful history. The history of the previous Castles lives on in the stories of King Duncan and Macbeth to the many seizures and rebuilds during the Scottish Wars of Independence and thereafter. The present red sandstone castle was built in the 1830's by the Scottish architect William Burn to serve as the County Hall of Inverness-shire, and house the High Court and council offices. To this day it is still used for both Sheriff and District Courts.

**2 Proposed Works**

2.1 The Highland Council aims to find a new viable, and economically sustainable, alternative use for Inverness Castle following the site being vacated by the court service that will provide access for locals and visitors, and maximises the impact on the economic, social and cultural life of Inverness and the Highlands. A working group has been established, co-chaired by Fergus Ewing MSP, Minister for Energy Enterprise and Tourism, and Cllr Drew Hendry, the Leader of the Highland Council.

2.2 It is proposed to turn the North Tower of the castle into a viewing platform for locals and visitors to access a 360° view of the city and surrounding area. Some initial work on how access might be provided to the North Tower to create a new viewing platform has been undertaken. This envisages an entrance area / shop on the ground floor, two further floors with interpretation, and access to two different viewing areas. The first (lower) of these is level with, and would be accessed from, the second floor interpretation area while the upper

viewing area sits on the roof above this, and would be accessed by a further staircase.

- 2.3 Whilst the Inverness area has a range of attractions to offer visitors most of these are located outside the city centre. Opening part of the castle as a new attraction in the centre of the city would help fill this gap offering visitors a reason to visit the centre of Inverness which would then have a positive effect on the businesses of the city as well. A conservative estimate by High Life Highland of 25,000 adults and 1,500 children has been projected for the opening year of the tower which is sufficient to cover all operating costs. As it becomes more established as an attraction there is likely to be an increase in numbers due to things such as smaller scale tour companies adding it to their itinerary or commercial guide books listing the castle as an attraction.

### **3 Budget**

- 3.1 The total cost of the project is estimated at £360k. Development and Infrastructure have agreed to invest £200k, and it is anticipated that HIE will invest £60k. This would leave £100k to be invested by the Inverness Common Good Fund.
- 3.2 The Castle is in a primary position, and is seen in almost every 'signature' photograph of the City. The Castle Working Group is considering development options for the Castle and the North Tower to encourage economic growth and vibrancy of the City. All are agreed that the views from the Castle are stunning, and Visit Scotland and other Partners support the proposal to create a viewing platform which will act as a draw for tourists and locals alike. This fits well with Members' views that the Inverness Common Good Fund should be used to encourage economic growth. The allocation of £100k from the Common Good Fund is proportionate, and will encourage the growth and development of our tourist economy.

### **4 Expenditure Profile**

- 4.1 The table below gives an expenditure profile for the North Tower project, including contingencies and fees.

<b>Expenditure Profile</b>	<b>14/15 £</b>	<b>15/16 £</b>	<b>16/17 £</b>	<b><u>Total</u> £</b>
Construction Costs	0	303,077	4,615	307,692
Fees	26,154	23,539	2,615	52,308
Total	26,154	326,616	7,230	£360,000

## **5 Project Management**

- 5.1 The 'client' will be represented by the Inverness City Manager. The project will be managed by the Development and Infrastructure Service, and there will be regular progress reports made to the City of Inverness Area Committee as appropriate, with Members and other stakeholders being involved as necessary. Stakeholders will include HIE, and other interested parties such as the Civic Trust, Inverness Concern and the City Heritage Trust. Key liaison will also take place with Historic Scotland.
- 5.2 Once open, it is proposed that this new attraction for Inverness city centre is operated by Highlife Highland.

## **6 Governance**

- 6.1 This is a Council contract on a Council owned building, Inverness Common Good will provide funding support. Monthly reports will be issued to the Inverness City Manager who meets with the Project Manager on a monthly basis.
- 6.2 Contract Monitoring reports will be issued to the City of Inverness Area Committee.

## **7 Implications**

- 7.1 Legal  
The Highland Council will continue to meet all its legal obligations under the terms of any contracts agreed.
- 7.2 Climate Change/Carbon Clever  
All contracts will be managed in a manner which meets the Highland Council's obligations in relation to climate change.
- 7.3 Resource  
A separate report will be issued by the Director of Finance to outline the financial implications for the Common Good Fund, forming part of the Investment Strategy and Capital Planning for the Fund.
- 7.4 Rural and Gaelic  
The addition of this facility will enhance the City as a place to visit and have a consequential positive impact on the visitor experience for all the City Wards which include Landward areas. The Council's policy on Gaelic signage will be adhered to.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Committee is invited to approve the Common Good Fund investment in the measures outlined in the foregoing report to carry out the alteration/refurbishment of the North Tower, Inverness Castle.

Designation: Director of Development and Infrastructure and the  
Inverness City Manager

Date: 12 February 2015

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