

The Highland Council
Community Services Committee
4 February 2016

Agenda Item	12
Report No	COM 9/16

Cromarty-Nigg Ferry

Report by Director of Community Services

Summary

This report describes work done towards replacing the contract for the Cromarty – Nigg ferry, and recommends granting of delegated powers to award a contract should the tenders received come within the available budget.

1. Background

- 1.1. For many years the Council has had a contract for a summer ferry service between Cromarty and Nigg. Before the start of the 2015 season, the operator terminated the contract due to difficulties with sandbanks building up off the slipways and with berthing arrangements. Due to timescales it was not possible to secure a replacement contract in 2015. However, the Council made a commitment to retender the service for 2016.
- 1.2. There is strong community support for a replacement contract. Community Council members have been in contact with Global Energy about dredging arrangements and have also identified potential berthing possibilities. The community are also keen to include the ferry in marketing activities which will also promote local businesses on both sides of the Firth.

2. Work done to date

- 2.1. Transport Co-ordination Unit staff have met with a community group and have developed alternative vessel specifications and timetable options. A passenger ferry (also able to carry bicycles) is proposed as an alternative, in case a car ferry proves unaffordable.
- 2.2. Tenders are being invited on 26 January 2016, with a return date of 8 March 2016

3. Consideration

- 3.1. The ferry is well used by tourists and is seen as significant in attracting tourism business to the Black Isle and Easter Ross. It also forms part of National Cycle Network Route 1. It has potential to take workers to and from the Nigg yard and, if supported by the Nigg employers, an all-year service could be considered in future.

- 3.2. The previous contract price was just under £50,000 per year. It is difficult to estimate what price will be tendered for the replacement, but the options invited are intended to maximise the possibility of an affordable service.
- 3.3. In order to allow time for a successful tenderer to have a service in place for the start of the season on 1 June, it is proposed that the Committee grant delegated powers to the Director, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair, to decide which version (if any) of the contract to award, once the tenders have been evaluated.

4. Implications

4.1. Resource

The budget for ferry transport includes provision of £50,000 for this contract. A lower tender (or no award) would result in a budget saving whereas a higher tender, if accepted, would create a budget pressure.

4.2. Legal

There are no legal implications.

4.3. Equalities and Rural

There are no equalities implications. The contract would support the economy of a rural area.

4.4. Climate Change/Carbon Clever

There are no specific climate change implications. Emissions from the ferry can be set against reduced mileage for some car trips, and the ferry will support cycling activity.

4.5. Risk

There are no risk implications. The contract states that the contractor is responsible for securing suitable berthing, and for providing a vessel which is suitable for the prevailing sea conditions.

4.6. Gaelic Implications

There are no Gaelic implications.

Recommendation

Members are invited to approve the granting of delegated powers to the Director, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair, to award a contract subject to prices received in the current tender exercise being within the available budget.

Designation: Director of Community Services

Date: 22 January 2016

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