

Agenda Item	11
Report No	CIA/22/18

## HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** City of Inverness Area

**Date:** 31 May 2018

**Report Title:** Inverness Townscape Heritage Project

**Report By:** Director of Development and Infrastructure

### 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the Inverness Townscape Heritage (TH) project. The delivery phase of project commenced on 23 November 2015 and is scheduled for completion in January 2020.
- 1.2 The Inverness TH project is a key element of the delivery of the City Centre Development Brief, specifically the regeneration of Academy Street. The TH project is primarily a third party grant scheme that helps communities to regenerate Conservation Areas displaying particular social or economic need.
- 1.3 The project has a heritage focus and recognises that integral to a successful regeneration, is the provision of complementary business support and employability activity – thereby addressing the challenges faced by business, property owners and people within the city centre.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to note progress being made in delivering the Inverness Townscape Heritage project.

### 3. Background

- 3.1 The aim of the TH project is to improve the quality of life for those who live, work or visit Academy Street by:
- preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of the street;
  - repairing and restoring authentic details and materials;
  - bringing historic buildings back into appropriate, sustainable and economic use
  - improving public realm to make Academy Street (Station Square) a welcoming and attractive environment; and
  - increasing training opportunities in heritage skills and wider community engagement in local heritage.
- 3.2 The Inverness TH project Fund is made up of three funding partners:
1. Highland Council (£800,821)
  2. Historic Environment Scotland via the Inverness City Heritage Trust (£946,841)
  3. National Lottery Heritage Lottery Fund (Maximum of £1,494,400 linked to level of private sector investment).
- 3.3 This creates a combined project fund of £3,242,062 of which £2,641,082 is allocated to third party capital grants for building repair projects. The remaining £600,980 is allocated to revenue (Activity Plan delivery, staff costs and overheads).
- 3.4 The TH Partnership includes representation from the Council, Inverness BID, Visit Loch Ness and Inverness TBID, Highlife Highland and Crown and Central Community Council. Councillor Richard Laird is the Council's appointed representative and Chairs the Partnership Board.

### 4. Capital Grants

- 4.1 The projects are categorised into high, medium and reserve. These were set out in the development phase as a result of extensive public consultation and programme of building surveys on the street. This identified the most important properties and where grant monies could have the highest impact on regeneration. The priority list is evaluated annually to reflect changes in ownership and the likelihood of a building repair project progressing.
- 4.2 High Priority Projects:
- 4.2.1 **96 Academy Street (Al Welders)** is the highest priority for the Inverness TH project. A grant award has been made for a full building repair project (public bar at ground floor; first floor restaurant and second floor residential unit), which includes the restoration and reinstatement of the mosaics. It is anticipated this project will be onsite by July 2018 and will be completed within 18 months.
- 4.2.2 **93 – 97 Academy Street (Blackfriars)** is currently in for planning consent for a full renovation of all three floors. The owners currently have a grant application under consideration by the TH project.
- 4.2.3 **Station Square** is the only Public Realm work to be undertaken by the TH Project. The intention is that it will be carried out as part of the wider Station improvement project. ScotRail Abellio will tender these proposed works shortly. Once tendered a grant application will be made.

#### 4.3 Medium Priority projects:

There are currently seven medium priority projects for the Inverness TH project. Discussions are ongoing with each building owner.

1. 21 – 25 Academy Street (Vacant)
2. 19 Academy St (Victorian Market Façade)
3. 18 Academy St (Royal Highland Hotel)
4. 59 – 61 Academy St (Paul Mulvaney Hairdressing)
5. 12 Academy Street (Arch – Station Project)
6. 99 Academy Street (Cameron's)
7. 28-34 Academy Street (Highland Rail House)

#### 4.4 Grant awards to date:

<b>Building</b>	<b>Project detail</b>	<b>Grant award</b>	<b>Total Project costs</b>
42 Academy Street MandCo	Stonework repairs during the reinstatement following the fire.	£12,075	£30,188
114 Academy Street Polness	Pilot showcase shopfront project to reinstate the original shopfront and signage	£16,129	£16,978
109 Academy Street MacGregor's	Shopfront	£2,738	£3,912
Unit 3  Victorian Market	Shopfront	£4,809	£6,870
96 Academy Street Al Welders	Full building repair project bringing all 3 levels backing into use and the refurbishment and reinstatement of all 4 decorative mosaics.	£961,173	£2,125,888

## 5. Activity Plan

5.1 The Activity Plan developed for the Inverness TH project covers 4 key areas:

### 5.2 The Digital Trail

5.2.1 The creation of a self-guided heritage trail for Academy Street delivered via a digital platform that will link with the wider city visitor experience. Highlife Highland, which holds all the original collections for Academy Street, is delivering the trail as a key partner of the TH project.

5.2.2 In developing the trail content, 30 engagement events have been held to date. This includes participation by a wide range of individuals and groups including Merkinch Primary School, the Girls Brigade, the East Church, former Al Welders staff, Inverness Royal Academy etc. Over 600 individuals have participated in events and helped shape the content of the trail.

5.2.3 The programme of engagement is now drawing to a close with only a further 5 events due to take place in the coming month. The Digital Trail will be based around 10 key points of interest on the street and will be launched in September 2018.

### 5.3 Employability

- 5.3.1 The TH project Team includes a part time Employability Officer who is dedicated to working with long term unemployed clients in Inverness city centre to help them engage with support services to enable them to progress towards employment. Obtaining HLF grant assistance for such a resource represents their holistic approach to regeneration and marks a departure from the traditional focus on purely physical regeneration.
- 5.3.2 The Employability Officer role is now well established and on a weekly basis provides one to one support to over 20 clients at a range of city centre locations including the NHS Harm Reduction Centre, HMO Rossall House, Porterfield Prison, Inverness Foodstuff Lunch Club and the Spectrum Centre Work Club.
- 5.3.3 The TH project now has a strong working relationship with the wide variety of agencies and organisations dealing with the issues surrounding unemployment, which allows effective support and signposting for clients. This includes regular contact with a number of other organisations in the city including Criminal Justice, Housing, Persistent Offender Programme and DWP.

### 5.4 Education and Training

- 5.4.1 Significant public consultation was undertaken during the development phase of the TH project and during this process it became evident that there was concern that architectural heritage detail was being lost to the detriment of the city centre.
- 5.4.2 The Education and Training elements of the TH project are essential in helping a diverse audience understand the importance of our built heritage, the benefits of historic design and materials and how to maintain and protect the built heritage for future generations.
- 5.4.3 Seminars and Guidance have been delivered on Traditional Shopfronts. 114 Academy Street was a pilot showcase shopfront project which successfully demonstrated the positive impact of removing oversized plastic signage and bright paint, to uncover the original shopfront.
- 5.4.4 The Traditional Building Maintenance Guide has been produced and supported by a comprehensive programme of evening talks and full day training courses covering topics including Traditional Windows and Doors, Stonemasonry, Roofing and Lime Mortar, Harling and External Paint.
- 5.4.5 The TH team are also working closely with Business Gateway to ensure businesses on Academy Street benefit from the advice and support Business Gateway offer.

### 5.5 Awareness and Engagement

- 5.5.1 Academy Street has a rich story to tell not only as a gateway welcoming people to Inverness, but for many who lived, worked and socialised on the street. The Project has hosted a number of talks covering topics including AI Welders and the Rose Street Foundry, The Victorian Market, Burnett's Bakery and Harry Gow, and a screening of Casablanca (the last film shown at La Scala). To date these events have had over 250 attendees and they will continue to run for the duration of the project delivery.
- 5.5.2 Social media is now well established with over 550 followers on Facebook. The most popular post achieved a reach of over 6,000. A regular programme of communication is in place and posts of particular interest include the Historic Drawings of Academy Street by Gordon Lynn and the recent press announcement on the grant award to

Cairngorm Brewery for the restoration of 96 Academy St.

5.5.3 On Twitter, the TH project has 270 followers with the most popular tweet achieving over 33,000 impressions.

## **6. Implications**

6.1 Resource – The TH project funding package comprises of Council, HLF and ICHT/HES funds. The programme of activity is costed and is on target.

6.2 Legal – All grants over £25k are accompanied by a formal legal agreement.

6.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) – The employability element of the project seeks to ensure that unemployed individuals residing in the city centre are supported as they progress towards employment.

6.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever – The TH project seeks to bring underutilised property back into use.

6.5 Risk – The TH funding package requires a specific level of private sector investment to be made.

6.6 Gaelic – No implications.

Designation: Director of Development and Infrastructure

Date: 21 May 2018

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