

Agenda item	6
Report no	RC/002/18

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Ross and Cromarty Committee

Date: 30 January 2019

Report Title: Ross and Cromarty Area Priorities

Report By: Acting Head of Policy

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1** This report asks Members to scrutinise and note the update information provided in the appendix to the report which outlines the actions and outcomes that have been achieved in relation to the Area Priorities which Members approved at the January 2018 Ross and Cromarty Committee meeting.

2. Recommendations

2.2 Members are asked to:

- Scrutinise and note the actions and outcomes that have been achieved in relation to the Area Priorities as set out in Appendix 1.

3. Background

- 3.1 In 2016, building on the localism agenda and increased delegation of decision making to local committees, each local committee was asked by the Leader to consider developing a set of strategic Council priorities for their area. This was done and the resulting key priorities were agreed by the Ross and Cromarty Area Committee in October 2016. Following local elections in May 2017 the local priorities were reviewed and updated following discussions with Members and the Area Chair. These updated Area Priorities were approved by the Committee in January 2018 when Members also agreed to pursue these priorities with the wider Council membership and as part of the Council's Programme 2017-22 and to engage with partners where appropriate. It was also noted that further work would be done to identify how the local priorities agreed can be supported by staff and any other Council resources.

4. Actions and Updates

- 4.1 The Area Priorities document sets out the key steps required and Service(s) and partners that may be involved. The Monitoring framework as attached at Appendix One then notes a summary of key measures/actions that have been undertaken and any other relevant information.
- 3.3 Members are asked to review and note the Monitoring Framework and the actions taken and in hand.

4. Implications

- 4.1 Resource – each of the priorities may have staff and financial resources.

Legal - none

Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) - the local community have been consulted on the naming proposals for each of the three areas.

Climate Change/Carbon Clever - none

Risk – none

Gaelic - none

Designation: Acting Head of Policy

Date: 21 January 2019

Author: Helen Ross

Background Papers:

Ross and Cromarty Area Priorities- August 2018

Action Plan

<p>A. Transport and Infrastructure Developing, improving and protecting infrastructure including road, rail, cycle routes, broadband and improved connections to the national grid.</p>	
Partners	Highland Council /Transport Scotland/HiTrans/HIE
Key Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing and improving the road and rail network, including working with partners to improve the safety of junctions (3.6). • Working with Hi Trans to seek improved cycle routes throughout Ross and Cromarty (3.6). • Understand the potential for community transport and encourage communities to explore/develop community transport initiatives. (3.7). • Supporting communities and businesses to have improved broadband access and connectivity. Ensure up to date awareness of Broadband provision/issues via HIE and Community Broadband Scotland including updates re potential to use the SWAN Network and examples of best practice (3.1). • Seek improved infrastructure, Lobby the Scottish Government/partners as appropriate to support key infrastructure - eg to support Stromeferry By-pass solution and the re-opening of Evanton Railway station (3.4).
Update actions/measures	<p>Evanton Railway Station: <i>Last bid to Local Rail Development Fund re Evanton Railway station unsuccessful Awaiting the re-opening of the Transport Scotland funding bid process. Application to be led by Hitrans' 'rail specialist'.</i></p> <p>Update on D and I Infrastructure Projects in Ross and Cromarty:-</p> <p>A890 Stromferry Bypass/Rock Stabilisation</p> <p><i>The 2018 annual inspection report identified 4 very high risk rock slope areas. Detailed consideration has been given to the stabilisation works, the methods of construction and the associated traffic management. Two of the very high risk areas require similar stabilisation measures to that just completed. The two other slopes require up slope catch fencing measures.</i></p>

It is proposed to undertake stabilisation to two slopes in autumn 2019 and at the same time undertake the ground investigation works required to design the upslope catch fencing. Note traffic management required for these works will require the construction of a road onto rail bypass – but also three total weekend closures.

It is proposed that the two up slope catch fencing solutions will be undertaken in Spring 2020 using 20 minute all red traffic management – which has been successfully used in the past.

The budget estimate for these very high risk slopes is £2.7M.

It is proposed that following budget allocation – public consultations shall be undertaken regarding the nature and timing of the works.

Funding for the stabilisation works will be sought at Environment Development and Infrastructure committee on the 31 January where the recommendation will be - that members allocate capital funding of £1.9M in 2019/20 and £800K in 2020/21 to the Stromeferry Rockface Stabilisation line noting that the current allocation in 2020/21 is £515K.

Feedback from Transport Scotland with regard to the STAG report on the long term solution is anticipated. An approach to the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity was made who confirmed the matter as a local road and as such the responsibility of Highland Council - suggesting that approach be made to the Scottish Futures Trust.

It is recognised that selection of the preferred route is the next step in the progression of a long term solution.

Approval for the Formation of a Cross Party Options Selection Group will be sought from EDI on the 31 January. The recommendations for the group being:-

4 ward members

- Biz Campbell*
- Ian Cockburn*
- Alexander MacInnes*
- Derek MacLeod*

- *Chair and two Vice Chairs of Environment Development and Infrastructure*
 - *Allan Henderson*
 - *Hugh Morrison*
 - *Trish Robertson*

- *Chair and Vice Chair of Corporate Resources*
 - *Alistair Mackinnon*
 - *Mathew Reiss*

Development Infrastructure Dingwall

A separate paper is included on the agenda of this committee, noting that if this report is approved it will become a material consideration for relevant planning applications and pre-application advice in respect of residential development in Dingwall.

Bridges

With completion of Newhall Bridge, there are no remaining schemes in the DandI Capital programme which are located in Ross and Cromarty.

Crask Junction

Funding has been secured to deliver the upgrade to this junction. There has been some delay in delivery – this as a result of finalisation of land access arrangements and also design resource issues. It is anticipated that tree felling operation will commence in the near future and that this will allow the completion of the scheme. The community have been updated and assurance given that the delay does not impact on the funding allocation.

	<p>Flood Issues</p> <p><i>At the EDI committee on the 8 November 2018 a report was approved ED/76/18 in respect of the Section 37 report that included an update on progress made in the implementation of the Highland Local Flood Risk Management Plan, of which Rodd and Cromarty is contained within this Local Plan District.</i></p> <p><i>The report (available at https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/1226/emergencies/81/flooding/3)</i></p> <p><i>This report includes an update on actions taken throughout Ross and Cromarty.</i></p> <p><i>Capital allocation has been made to progress the Flood Study for Dingwall – where a Flood Protection Study to assess the fluvial and coastal flood risk in Dingwall is ongoing. A detailed hydraulic model has been built for the assessment of damages and potential options. A Public Exhibition as well as wider stakeholder engagement to discuss baseline flooding and potential options has been carried out. Wider stakeholder engagement and a Public Exhibition are planned for early 2019. The study will progress the development of the preferred option following consultation, which will allow future funding to be considered by Scottish Government – the next round of funding bids shall be made late 2019, recognising that throughout Scotland many local authorities are developing proposals. 42 schemes throughout Scotland were supported in the last 6 year cycle which finishes in 2022.</i></p> <p><i>Supporting communities and businesses to have improved broadband access and connectivity – an update is provided via a separate report to the Ross and Cromarty Committee on 30th January 2019.</i></p>
B	Economic Development
Partners	THC (Community Services, Planning, Development and Infrastructure); HIE;
How	
Key steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with our partners to explore and support inward investment with a focus on town and village centre regeneration, where appropriate (1.4). • Promote the opportunities for sustainable economic development e.g. as provided by the Wester Ross Biosphere (4.1).
Update actions/measure	<i>Information relating to Ross and Cromarty will be included in a service report to EDI on 31st January. A link to this report will be emailed to R and C Members prior to the Committee meeting for their information and update.</i>

C	Tourism
Partners	THC , Visit Scotland, NC 500, CFPA, HIE
How	
Key steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote tourism, for example by promoting the NC500 route across the whole of Ross and Cromarty (4.3). • Support improved infrastructure e.g. via identification of potential revenue sources/ commercial or community opportunities/community asset transfers or buyouts. (4.3) • Consider how the growing cruise industry affects Invergordon and surrounding area and prepare a masterplan for the town, along with appropriate partners(4.3).
Update actions/measure	<p>Update <i>NC500 continues to get significant promotion from both VisitScotland and NC500 company. THC doesn't undertake any tourism marketing but does seek to influence the above activity where possible / necessary. The Council along with Transport Scotland have also produced a plan to signpost the route and following a successful bid for LEADER funding by the Council this is now fully funded and should see installation commence in spring 2019.</i></p> <p><i>THC has led on and continues to lead on a number of Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund (RTIF) bids for locations across Ross and Cromarty although in some cases the projects themselves will be community not Council led. A first round bid for improvements on the Bealach na Ba road was successful in autumn 2018.A further bid for coach parking in Invergordon did not meet the fund criteria and did not proceed. A number of further bids for the second round have been passed the expression of interest stage and should be submitted as full application by the January 31 deadline. These are:-</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Balintore - Motorhome Facilities, Harbour Lighting and Parking</i> • <i>Cromarty and Nigg - Slipway improvements and motorhome facilities</i> • <i>Gairloch - Toilets, Motorhome Facilities and Electric Charging Points</i> • <i>Wester Ross - scenic Viewpoints with Parking (Glen Torridon, and A832 near Poolewe /Loch Maree)</i> <p><i>A further Highland wide project is being submitted that should see motorhome waste facilities added at 12 Highland Council operated public toilets of which 3 are in Ross and Cromarty – Silverbridge, Achnasheen and Ullapool. When taken with the 9 elsewhere in Highland and other local projects this should see a network across all of Highland. As a gateway to Wester Ross the Achnasheen site is being developed as more of a “hub” so will also see an information board promoting the wider area, public Wi-Fi and electric vehicle charging.</i></p>

	<p><i>The Council continues to work with and has provided a small amount of financial support to the two Destination Organisations in the area – Visit Wester Ross and Black Isle Tourism Team.</i></p> <p><i>There may also be further updates available from transport / roads regarding parking coach parking issues related to cruise business</i></p> <p><i>Work was undertaken to provide additional parking to support traffic in Invergordon on cruise days</i></p> <p><i>Unfortunately this did not prove viable but work with partners will continue to support the best possible traffic management on cruise liner days.</i></p>
Priority D	Housing
Partners	THC (CS), Residents Groups
How	
Key steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with officers, Council House tenants and local residents to achieve the improvement of Council Houses, Estates and the surrounding environment (1.2). • Promote improved condition of the common areas on housing estates including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Supporting the work of Community wardens and b) Ensuring clarity of responsibility between Community Services and Housing work within housing estates
Update actions/measure	<p><i>Housing Capital Programme and Environmental Work programme informed by local consultation undertaken with Members and Residents group</i></p> <p><i>'Rate your estate' walkabout undertaken with tenants to highlight priorities</i></p> <p><i>Community wardens' input focussed on housing estate areas</i></p> <p><i>Pilot work on ensuring clarity of responsibility between Community Services and Housing work within housing estates to take place looking at a pilot estate in Dingwall. Methodology to do this agreed but timescales for this are uncertain, given other work pressures for both teams.</i></p>
Priority E	Education
Partners	THC (CandL, PDI)
How	
Key steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure education estate provision is fit for purpose for nursery, primary, secondary and special school pupils across the Ross and Cromarty area with members able to scrutinise the progress and cost of local projects regularly (2.4).

Update actions/measure	<i>Capital investment priorities are reported for approval to strategic Committees. The Area Care and Learning Manager and Estate Strategy Manager will liaise with Members at Ward level regarding future priorities, progress on approved projects and any issues relating to the condition, sufficiency and suitability of the school estate. It has been also agreed that updates will be provided on the Early Learning and Childcare investment programme in each of the Wards, and these reports will be rolled out from February onwards.</i>
Priority F	Community Partnerships and Community Planning
Partners	Highland Council, SFRS, Police Scotland, HIE, NHS, RVA, HLH
How	
Key steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support effective local Community Planning Partnerships which enable and support communities and community involvement in them (1.3)
Update actions/measure	<p>Community Partnerships: <i>Community Partnerships brings key public bodies, agencies, third sector organisations and community groups together to plan for, resource and provide services which improve the local outcomes in the way that will help reduce inequalities in key areas across Ross and Cromarty. Partnerships achieve this through the development and the delivery of Local Children’s Plans, Adult Plans and Locality Plans and the Highland Community Learning, Development and Engagement Plan.</i></p> <p>Mid Ross Community Partnership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conon Bridge Locality Plan (in place) ○ Dingwall Locality Plan (community engagement/conversations underway) <p>Easter Ross Community Partnership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Balintore Locality Plan (in place) • Alness Locality Plan (community engagement/consultation underway) <p>Skye, Lochalsh and Wester Ross</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kyle of Lochalsh Locality Plan (community engagement/community conversations underway) <p><i>Mid Ross, East Ross and the Skye, Lochalsh and West Ross Child Plans - These plans which are underway are supported directly by family resource co-ordinators and senior managers. Finalisation of the plans will be agreed in the near future by the community partnerships. Once plans are on the CPP web pages the link will be forwarded to Members.</i></p>

	<p><i>The Mid Ross, East Ross and Skye, Lochalsh and West Ross Adult Plans have been developed. These will be loaded onto the appropriate Community Planning Partnership page after which the appropriate links will be provided to Members.</i></p> <p><i>Community asset transfers – 3 asset transfers have been agreed (Gairloch Area Development Ltd, transfer for car park and public toilets; HTSI, Former Assessors Office, Ferry Road Dingwall for office accommodation for HTSI plus hot desking space for groups etc and Seaboard Memorial Hall, Balintore, Balintore Harbour toilets for improved toilets plus community space in addition to comfort scheme at the hall).</i></p> <p><i>2 more asset transfer requests are currently under consideration (Seaboard Polytunnel for land at Harbour Green for community polytunnel and Strathpeffer Residents Association for Community Park Project).</i></p>
Priority G	Health and Wellbeing
Partners	Highland Council, NHS Highland, HLH, various community groups
How	
Key steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure sufficient information around key care provision and capacity including community initiatives and examples of good practice (3.2, 3.8). • Ensure sufficient scrutiny of key services for adults and children which support health and wellbeing (3.2, 3.8).
Update actions/measure	<p><i>Adult and Child Plan information is contained under the Community Partnership/Community Planning section above. These plans also contribute to Health and Well being.</i></p> <p><i>Mental Health and Wellbeing: Following positive work between Fortrose Academy, the local community and agency partners, the development of the Wellbeing in the Black Isle Partnership has been hugely beneficial in ensuring that the wider community are getting involved and taking responsibility for Wellbeing. The Highland Council was asked to co-ordinate a Multi Agency Meeting to ensure that any lessons learned from the Wellbeing in Black Isle Partnership were shared with other Ross and Cromarty Schools and communities.</i></p> <p><i>In Tain Royal Academy Pupil Equity Funding as, as a pilot, been used to fund an Educational Psychologist</i></p> <p><i>Education Scotland carried out a CLD inspection of Highland in October / November 2018. The report has just been made public and can be accessed via the link: https://education.gov.scot . This inspection looked at</i></p>

	<p><i>Highland strategic leadership and focused on Mid Ross as their geographical area of interest. In the report there are several mentions of HandW initiatives that are making positive differences to people, young and old – Cromarty rowing club which regularly attracts over a quarter of the population and there are significant HandW benefits; Dingwall men’s shed “achieving health benefits” for members; ambitious third sector community organisations who are enhancing community life; Choose Life in Fortrose in which young people are increasing their mental wellbeing; members of the WEA Women in the Highlands Choir gain increased wellbeing from their participation.</i></p> <p><i>Other areas: youth work – all areas (Tain / Balintore, Invergordon, Alness, Dingwall, Fortrose, Ullapool and Gairloch) run regular FUSION events which are basically good quality youth clubs where there are mixes of activity (exercise, music, arts / crafts, and healthy eating) as well as opportunities for young people to engage with youth workers in discussions and support and more around range of topics: health, wellbeing, youth participation (voice of young people), wider achievement, issues/concerns in their communities. There are also a range of more focused interventions e.g. cooking classes, intergenerational activities, 1:1 support and advice/guidance, employability / employment, equalities. All this contributes to enhanced wellbeing among young people due mainly because youth workers are meeting with and engaging with them on a regular basis and building and maintaining relationships; this helps young people feel safe and confident to have conversations thereby enhancing their ongoing wellbeing</i></p>
Priority H	Community Services and Waste
Partners	
How	
Key steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise local decision making across both revenue and capital CS budgets with the aim of delivering the right balance of preventative and response work (5.1). • Explore potential to redistribute disaggregated budgets to permit the funding of village officers where this is a local priority (5.1).
Update actions /measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Members seminar on 16 and 17 Jan 2019 explored local area governance as a key strand of the day 1. This will be progressed through a Member Steering group which will meet over the coming weeks. Day 2 included a workshop on income generation and local decision making and the feedback from this will shape how this work is progressed in the coming months.</i>

Priority B	Localism
Partners	
How	
Key steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that revenue and capital budgets are disaggregated to the true local level and information brought timeously and in such a way as to maximise members' ability to influence priorities and outcomes (5.1).
Update actions /measure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Member discussion held Jan 18 re disaggregated budgets for Housing revenue Account and Roads</i> • <i>Budget Work ongoing re Property Revenue Maintenance Budget with Member seminar scheduled for 30 January 2019.</i> • <i>Housing Capital Programme and Housing Environmental Works provided to members at ward level for comment prior to presentation to Committee for approval.</i> • <i>Planned and Cyclical Property works provided to members at ward level for comment prior to presentation to Committee for approval.</i> • <i>Roads and bridges programmes provided to members at ward level for comment prior to presentation to Committee for approval.</i> • <i>As noted above, the Member Seminar of 16 and 17 January 2019 explored local area governance as a key strand of the day 1. This will be progressed through a Member Steering group which will meet over the coming weeks. Income generation and the disaggregated budgets were considered on day 2, with a view to improving local decision making. Feedback from this, and how best to take forward will be considered within each local area</i>