

11 January 2021

## **Documents can be made available in alternative formats on request**

Dear Member

A special meeting of the **Easter Ross Area Committee** will take place **remotely** on **Wednesday, 20 January 2021 at 10.00am.**

You are invited to attend the meeting and a note of the business to be considered is attached.

Yours faithfully

**Stewart Fraser**  
**Head of Corporate Governance**

- 1. Apologies for Absence**  
**Leisgeulan**
- 2. Declarations of Interest**  
**Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt**

Members are asked to consider whether they have an interest to declare in relation to any item on the agenda for this meeting. Any Member making a declaration of interest should indicate whether it is a financial or non-financial interest and include some information on the nature of the interest. Advice may be sought from officers prior to the meeting taking place.

- 3. Town Centre Fund** **PP 1-17**  
**Maoin Meadhan a' Bhaile**

There is circulated Report No ERA/01/21 dated 7 January 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer: Infrastructure and Environment.

The Committee is asked to consider and agree the proposed projects to receive Town Centre Grant.

## **Easter Ross Area Committee Membership**

Mike Finlayson (6)  
Derek Loudon (7)  
Pauline Munro (6)  
Alasdair Rhind (7)

Fiona Robertson (7)  
Maxine Smith (6)  
Carolyn Wilson (6)

Agenda Item	3
Report No	ERA-01-21

## HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** Easter Ross Area

**Date:** 20 January 2021

**Report Title:** Town Centre Fund

**Report By:** Executive Chief Officer: Infrastructure and Environment

### 1. PURPOSE/EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Scottish Government has allocated The Highland Council an additional £1,066,000 ring-fenced Town Centre Fund (TCF). On 5 November 2020, Members of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee Members agreed an area distribution of the grant. Easter Ross Area Committee was allocated £140,260. The eligible settlements for TCF investment are Alness, Evanton, Invergordon, Balintore and Tain
- 1.2 While a Town Centre focus remains with the fund, the key driver behind the extra funding is to stimulate local construction activity and support employment across Highland at this time of economic crisis. Accordingly, the Scottish Government has conditioned the grant offer that grant expenditure must be complete by March 2021 (i.e. works completed or contracts signed/commenced within 2020/21).
- 1.3 At the 23 November 2020 Joint Ward 6 and 7 Business Meeting, Easter Ross Committee Members requested that Council Officers engage with existing TCF Grantees to determine whether the approved 2019/20 projects required additional financial assistance to complete or enhance their projects. Members also highlighted a small number of established local priorities that met the objectives of the 2020/21 fund and could be developed very quickly by the Council. Of primary concern to Members was the ability to meet the challenging timetable. As such it was felt that by working with existing Grantees and prioritising Council led projects, it would mitigate the threat of funds not being committed by 31 March 2021.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members are asked to consider and agree the proposed projects to receive Town Centre Grant.

### 3. IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 **Resource** – The additional TCF grant is capital (for investment in fixed physical assets) and ring-fenced with specific conditions attached. The grant can be spent by The Highland Council or third parties. Subject to grant conditions being satisfied. The proposed projects will utilise the full TCF area allocation.
- 3.2 **Legal** – When managing external funding it is imperative that the risks to The Highland Council are accessed/mitigated and any back to back grant award letters with third parties, and financial claims management protect The Highland Council financial and reputational interests.
- 3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural)** – The purpose of the additional grant is to support the construction sector with contracts in town centres across Highland.
- 3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever** – No direct implications arising albeit specific projects may bring positive implications.
- 3.5 **Risk** – As per item 3.2 above.
- 3.6 **Gaelic** – As per item 3.4 above.

#### 4. **TOWN CENTRE FUND GRANT AWARD: 2020/21**

- 4.1 On 10 September 2020 the Scottish Government announced an additional £18m through the Town Centre Fund as part of its national economic recovery stimulus package, particularly aimed at supporting construction activity across Scotland. On 18 September the Scottish Government issued its formal grant offer to The Highland Council. The value of the grant offered is £1,066,000.
- 4.2 The grant offer and accompanying guidance includes the following key conditions of grant:
1. *All grant expenditure must be complete by 31 March 2021 (whether the project is led by Council or third party);*
  2. *The grant is for capital expenditure which is additional to that which is already or would otherwise be allocated to the 2020-21 budget, and should not substitute for existing spend;*
  3. *The Grant may also be used to fund third party capital expenditure in the current year; and*
  4. *No part of the grant may be transferred to the Capital Fund, nor may any part of the grant be used to meet the costs of debt redemption.*

#### 5. **DELIVERY CONSIDERATIONS**

- 5.1 The Scottish Government, in the TCF grant award guidance, explicitly states that: *it is expected that local authorities will prioritise projects which are established and can progress in time to meet this deadline (31 March 2021). Expenditure is defined as “It is expected that work will be completed; or, at least work or contracts signed or commenced within 2020/21”.*
- In other words this, together with the town centre purpose of the fund, can be read as: the Scottish Government is expecting The Highland Council to support existing Town Centre located projects that could benefit from some additional spend, or new Town Centre projects that are ‘shovel ready’ to be progressed.

## 6. TCF PROPOSALS

### 6.1 Tain Picture House

6.1.1 A further phase of works to complement the 2019/20 TCF project have been identified:

1. Lift - £36k
2. Ramp - £4k

Both items are viewed as being critical to the sustainability and usability of the property by making it accessible to all.

6.1.2 Slight concern exists regarding deliverability, in as far as statutory consents have not yet been obtained, however, applications for Planning, Listed Building Consent and Building Warrant were all submitted early in December 2020. Assuming that these are granted then there is no reason why contracts cannot be awarded by 31 March 2021 and funds expended by the end of September 2021 as quotations have been obtained by the Grantee.

### 6.2 Rose Garden, Tain

6.2.1 Ward Members identified a number of work packages associated with improving this important town centre asset:

- Provision of new surfacing for the Rose Garden paths - £45,300
- Provision of lighting and power for the community markets in the Rose garden - £TBC (verbal update will be provided)
- Potential provision of stretch marquee to support the community markets - £TBC (verbal update will be provided)
- Refurbishment of the Public toilets after persistent and significant vandalism to more a more vandal proof facility with steel fitments and a more robust locking mechanism - £TBC (verbal update will be provided)
- CCTV - £7,800

6.2.2 This is a partnership project between The Highland Council (Performance and Governance Service) and the Tain Task Force. At the time of writing it is proposed that Tain Task Force delivers the path improvements and the installation of the stretch marquee. However, it may be more cost effective and practical for the Council to deliver the project in its entirety. A verbal update will be provided in respect the items of expenditure that still need to be costed and how the project could be delivered so as to deliver maximum value for money.

6.2.3 There are no concerns with this proposal.

### 6.3 Shore Road, Invergordon

6.3.1 The Highland Council (Performance and Governance) is seeking £50k towards an £80k project to provide a system of traffic and passenger management in Invergordon which will:

- Improve the visitor experience and attract more visitors to Invergordon town centre
- Encourage cruise passenger footfall and spend in the town of Invergordon

- Increase pedestrian safety
- Reduce the negative impacts of the cruise business on residents by improved management cruise related traffic, both vehicular and pedestrian.

6.3.2 The TCF grant will specifically deliver two laybys suitable for tour coaches to drop off and pick up passengers and associated directional signage for cruise passengers visiting the town.

6.3.3 There are no issues with this proposal. It was submitted as a first round TCF project and whilst well received, it did not receive funding.

#### 6.4 **Evanton Street Lighting**

A project concept is in place to install new architectural lighting columns on the southern entrance to Evanton. This is a Council led project but at the time of writing, no project detail or costs have been provided. A verbal update will be given.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer: Infrastructure and Environment

Date: 7 January 2021

Author: Alan Webster, Regeneration and Employment Team Leader

## APPENDIX 1: TCF PROPOSALS

<b>Town Centre Fund Project Proposal</b> (Send to <a href="mailto:regeneration@highland.gov.uk">regeneration@highland.gov.uk</a> )	
<b>Site address:</b>	Tain Picture House, Tower Street, Tain, IV19 1DY
<b>Ownership:</b>	Tain Heritage Trust (Company Limited by Guarantee SC 184712 and SCIO SC026678)
<b>Project lead and contact details:</b>	Sarah MacKenzie – Tain Heritage Trust
<p><b>Description of project. Including where the proposed TCF grant will be invested. (e.g. acquisition, demolition, <u>remediation</u>, % contribution towards capital build costs):</b></p> <p>Tain Picture House is of significant historical and architectural importance within the town centre of Tain. The former cinema is not just any old cinema but an important part of Tain's heritage. Tain is one of the gems of the Highlands, not least because of its architecture. Many of its best-known public and private buildings were designed by the Maitland family of architects between 1848 and 1912. The former Picture House, now a grade B listed building, was designed by them and built between 1874 and 1876 as the Tain Public Hall. Built in a distinctive French Renaissance style, it was the venue for concerts, bazaars and important events in the history of Tain and District.</p> <p>The Picture House is one of the key attractions within Tain's Townscape and part of an overarching strategy to attract visitors into the area and yet currently the building sits with boarded up windows, a sad existence for a building that once played such a vibrant and significant part in the history, heritage and culture of Tain and District.</p> <p>Our plans for making the building safe for the next stage of re-development will create a much needed boost to our community, keeping the momentum high with our volunteers and members who are committed to this project and continue to give generously of their time and talents.</p> <p>The Tain Picture House has three levels, a basement, ground floor with an auditorium and a balcony. We have submitted for planning permission for Disability Discrimination Act for external works and for listed building consent. No planning permission is required for interior works, the use of the building will remain the same.</p> <p>We want to get the building ready for major refurbishment works but before we can safely enter the building, we require the following remediation works to be carried out. Thereafter we can allow contractors access for redeveloping the building on a phased basis. We are very grateful for the £110,000 received in order to replace rotting floor joists, repair broken windows and external pillars at the entrance, removing vegetation and growth from balcony and stonework and improve the visual image of the front of the building which forms part of the Tain Town Centre Streetscape. This package of works is underway.</p>	

The further works that are essential are the building of a ramp and the input of a lift. Ensuring inclusive access is an integral component of sustainability because it helps eliminate the need for costly structural change during a building's life, thus contributing to economic viability and long-term usability. This work also ensures compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act.

**Estimated outputs** (e.g. jobs created, Xm<sup>2</sup> of floor space brought back into productive use, ha land remediated, X residential units created):

We estimate 300m<sup>2</sup> of floor space will be brought back into use and 1-2 direct jobs will be created.

**Indicative costs** (Please provide a breakdown of key cost elements):

Cost item	Amount funded from TCF	Amount funded from other sources (please specify funder)	Total Cost
Lift	£36,000.00	£0	£0
Ramp	£4,000.00	£0	£0
<b>Total</b>	<b>£40,000.00</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>

**If planning permission has been obtained, details on the type of planning permission (full, outline, conditional, unconditional), should be provided showing the date of approval. If there are any outstanding planning procedures/appeals or if there are likely to be any further planning appeals, these should be clearly explained below, stating the likely timescale for the resolution indicated:**

An application was submitted for planning permission for the internal and external alterations to the building to form disabled access on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 2020, Reference 20/04783/LBC. The status of this application is Under Consideration. Based on the 6-week lead time we have been advised that it can take to process planning applications, we estimate that we will have the outcome of the application by the 14<sup>th</sup> of January 2020.

**Timescale for completion. Please specify when contracts will be awarded. When work will start on site and be complete, including when Town Centre Fund elements will be complete:**

Once Planning permission is in place and funding is secured, we can follow the relevant procurement routes and call for quotations. We aim to carry out works between January 2021 and August 2021.

**Briefly describe what community consultation has been carried out in relation to your project:**



We have agreed a partnership approach to delivering this redevelopment project between Tain Heritage Trust, Tain and Easter Ross Civic Trust and Tain and District Development Trust.

### **Consultation Overview**

Throughout this project, there have been a number of consultations and community engagement exercises and processes, from which the direction of the project has been shaped. The various studies and engagements below demonstrate the community support for the project.

- Public consultations and local charrette.
- Visited; local school (to understand how the Picture House could be relevant today), local care homes and day care centres – listening to the fond memories from residents that have enjoyed the Picture House Building and have seen the positive impact that the building had in terms of bringing communities together and how it provided a central place for individuals living in rural parts of our community to unite.
- Created a business development group with over 50 + businesses, providing a sounding board for how a Tourist Attraction such as the Picture House can benefit local businesses.
- A volunteering sign-up program is in place and so far, we've had local schools helping at community events, free labour and services offered and community groups working with us to fundraise.

Support has also been given from our Local Community Council, Local Councillors and MP Jamie Stone (see letters of support).

### **Community Engagement Event – June 2017**

At an early meeting in June 2017, over 100 members of the community were consulted on what projects they felt would be most important to Tain, and therefore would wish the Trust to move forward. 74% of respondents at this meeting prioritised the restoration, and re-purposing / re-opening of the Picture House as their favoured priority.

### **Consultation on the Governance and Management of the Project – February 2019**

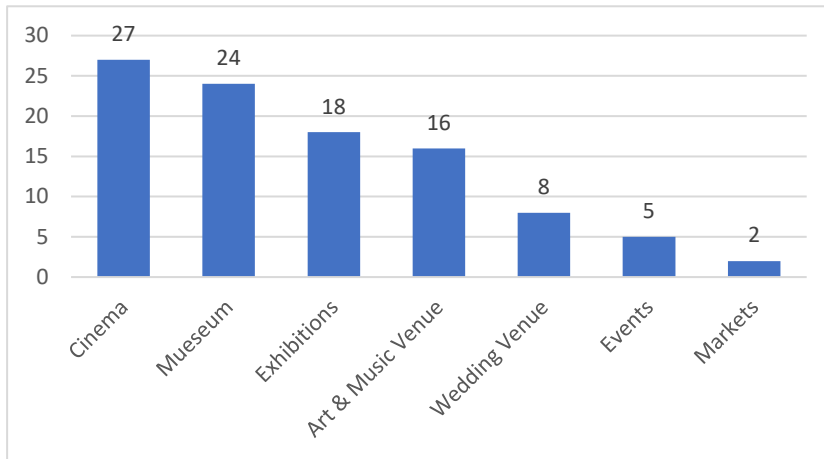
In a meeting of over 100 members, there was a majority vote in favour of the Tain and District Development Trust to become a Charity and adopt the correct articles of association to allow the Tain and District Development Trust to take ownership of The Picture House building.

### **Creative Workshop – 2019**

At an open invited creative workshop, 23 community members were in attendance, all of whom were in agreement that the Tain Picture House should be recognised as a key attraction for the area, and ideally as part of a wider strategy to bring Tain onto the map as a unique tourist destination.

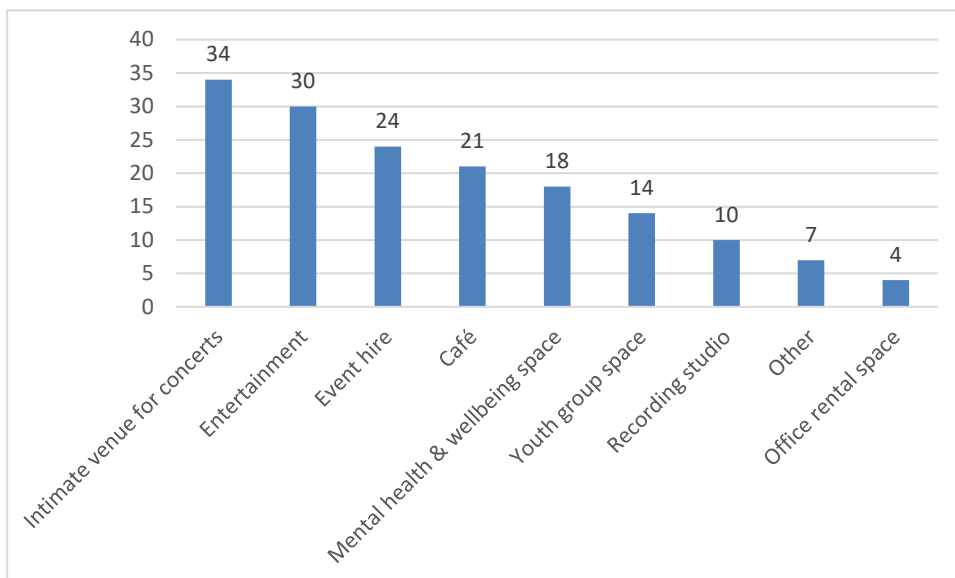
### **Community Survey – February 2019**

The Community were consulted and asked what they would like to see with regards to the Picture House restoration. As the chart below demonstrates, the use of the cinema was the top preference, followed by heritage / museum space, exhibitions, and an arts and music venue. It is noted that the limitations of space would potentially mean that the best option for delivering the most outcomes would be to combine Cinema and Arts & Music venue given the shared space opportunities.



### Community Survey – November 2020

It was very clear from previous surveys and consultations that the community want to see the Picture House restored as a cinema but what is less clear is the other uses for the building. The community were recently consulted and asked this time, 'Apart from a cinema what else would you like to see the building used for?'. The chart below details the responses, with an intimate venue for concerts and entertainment venue (music, comedy, theatre etc) as the top two preferences, followed by event hire, café and mental health & wellbeing space.



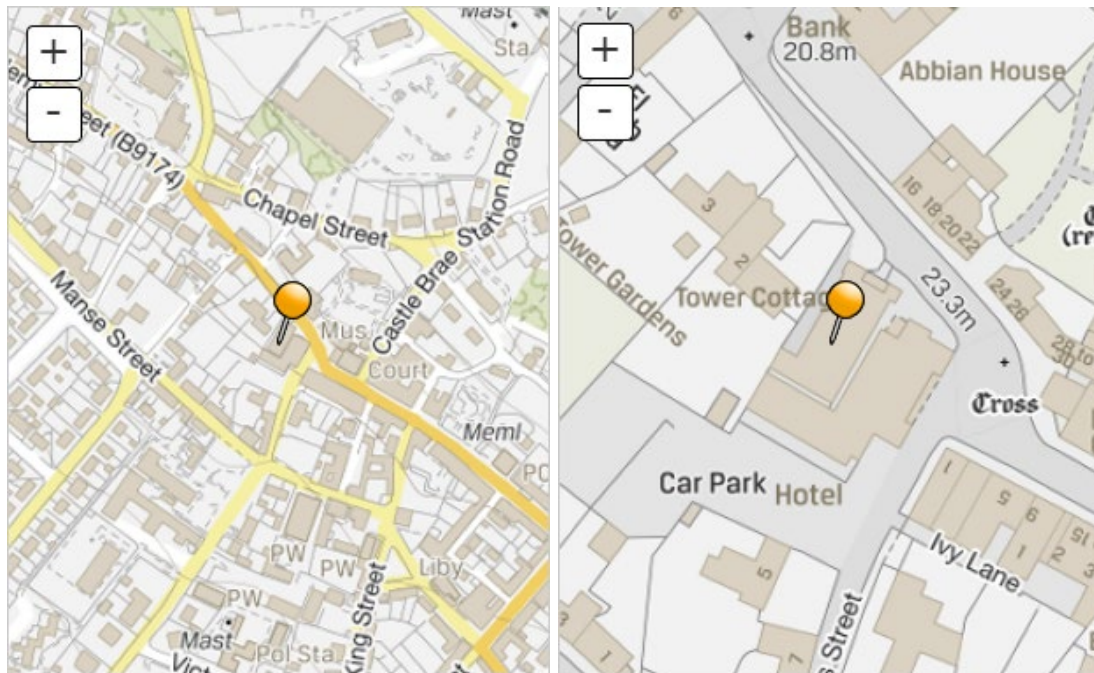
How is the community involved in shaping plans? Community Engagement is very much key here from our point of view, we very much expect to see the community being at the heart of the project in terms of helping to shape projects.

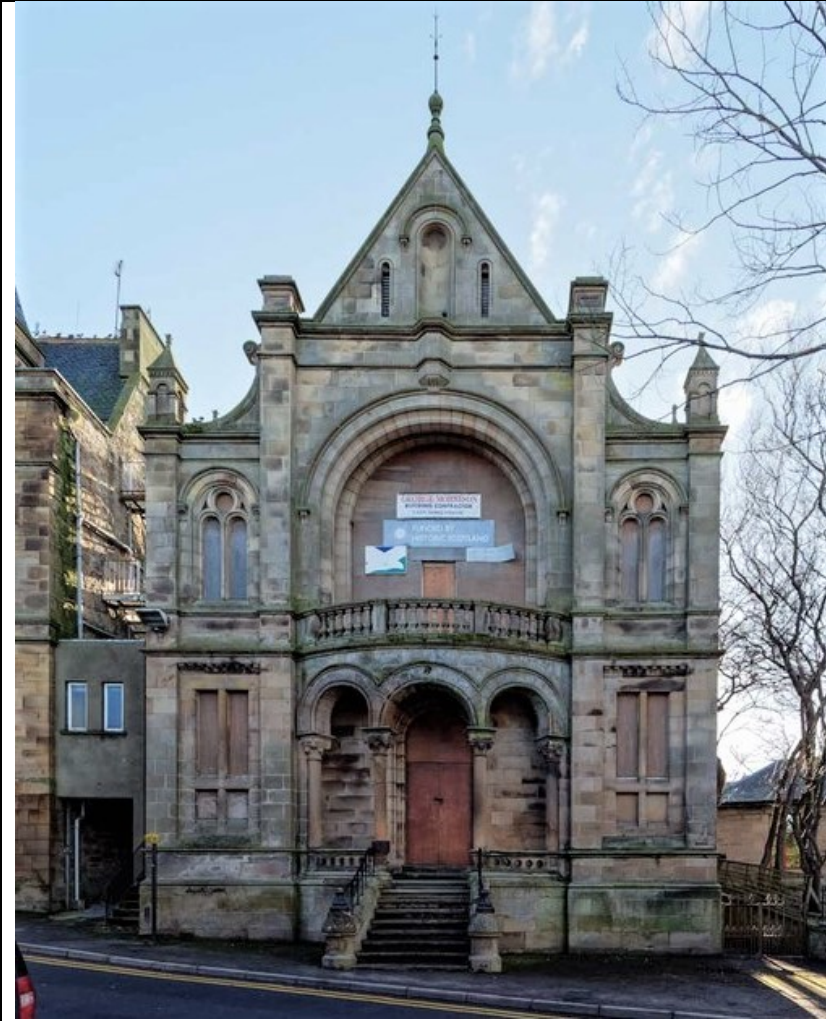
We have involved the community as follows;

- Engaging with 150 representatives from Community Groups
- Engaging with 60 Local Businesses
- By engaging with Over 100,000 visitors brought in from NC500, Glenmorangie, Tain Museum, Tarbat Discovery Centre and Seaboard Centre
- Engaging with 100 Volunteers (We currently have a volunteer list specifically for the Tain Picture House Project with 68 volunteers actively been involved so far with the clear up to the building.)

Community involvement is key to the success of this project and it is for this reason that we have involved them from the start. We have held numerous consultations with the community, we have delivered motivational talks within our local schools with over 200 of our members being Junior members, we have visited our local care homes and day care centres to ensure that we are sensitive to the history and heritage of the project and we are building strong links between government bodies, local businesses and community groups to create a powerful force for positive changes for Tain and District. When the Picture House is brought back to life our community will know that it is there because of them giving a sense of pride and place.

#### Location plan and photographs of site/property:









<b>Town Centre Fund Project Proposal</b> (Send to <a href="mailto:regeneration@highland.gov.uk">regeneration@highland.gov.uk</a> )	
<b>Site address:</b>	Rose Garden, Tain High Street, Tain IV19, 1AE
<b>Ownership:</b>	Highland Council
<b>Project lead and contact details:</b>	Helen Ross (Highland Council) Debbie Sutton (Highland Council) Tain Task Force
<p><b>Description of project. Including where the proposed TCF grant will be invested. (e.g. acquisition, demolition, remediation, % contribution towards capital build costs):</b></p> <p><b>The project consists of the following elements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of new surfacing for the Rose Garden paths</li> <li>• Provision of lighting and power for the community markets in the Rose garden</li> <li>• Potential provision of stretch marquee to support the community markets</li> <li>• Refurbishment of the Public toilets after persistent and significant vandalism to more a more vandal proof facility with steel fitments and a more robust locking mechanism</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Estimated outputs</b> (e.g. jobs created, Xm<sup>2</sup> of floor space brought back into productive use, ha land remediated, X residential units created):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved and safe surfacing in the popular Rose Garden which also hosts regular community markets</li> <li>• Lighting and power will better support the markets and Allow even events as well</li> <li>• Public toilets are an essential facility in a town the size of Tain for both locals and visitors. At present the toilets are often closed due to persistent vandalism. More robust facilities will ensure they remain available for use.</li> </ul>	

**Indicative costs** (Please provide a breakdown of key cost elements):

<b>Cost item</b>	<b>Amount funded from TCF</b>	<b>Amount funded from other sources (please specify funder)</b>	<b>Total Cost</b>
Path re surfacing	£37,775 +VAT = £45,330	£	£37775+ VAT=£45,330
Lighting and power provision	£TBC	£	£TBC
Toilet refurb	£TBC	Ward Discretionary Budget £1,000	£TBC
CCTV	£7,800		£7,800
Stretch marquee			
<b>Total</b>	<b>£TBC</b>	<b>£TBC</b>	<b>£TBC</b>

**If planning permission has been obtained, details on the type of planning permission (full, outline, conditional, unconditional), should be provided showing the date of approval. If there are any outstanding planning procedures/appeals or if there are likely to be any further planning appeals, these should be clearly explained below, stating the likely timescale for the resolution indicated:**

No planning permission required.

**Timescale for completion. Please specify when contracts will be awarded. When work will start on site and be complete, including when Town Centre Fund elements will be complete:**

Contracts will be awarded by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021, works completed by July 2021

**Briefly describe what community consultation has been carried out in relation to your project:**

Local Councillors have received regular complaints about the condition of the toilets and the regular closures caused by vandalism. Local community groups have also raised the issue of the poor condition of the paths in the very popular Rose garden and several of the business who regularly attend the community markets have also emphasised the importance of the provision of power and light for the well attended community markets.

**Location plan and photographs of site/property:**



<b>Town Centre Fund Project Proposal</b> (Send to <a href="mailto:regeneration@highland.gov.uk">regeneration@highland.gov.uk</a> )	
<b>Site address:</b>	Shore Road, Invergordon
<b>Ownership:</b>	Highland Council
<b>Project lead and contact details:</b>	Helen Ross ( <a href="mailto:helen.ross@highland.gov.uk">helen.ross@highland.gov.uk</a> ) and Garry Smith ( <a href="mailto:garry.smith@highland.gov.uk">garry.smith@highland.gov.uk</a> )
<b>Description of project. Including where the proposed TCF grant will be invested. (e.g. acquisition, demolition, remediation, % contribution towards capital build costs):</b>	
<p>This project aims to provide a system of traffic and passenger management in Inver which will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the visitor experience and attract more visitors to Invergordon town</li> <li>• Encourage cruise passenger footfall and spend in the town of Invergordon</li> <li>• Increase pedestrian safety</li> <li>• Reduce the negative impacts of the cruise business on residents by management cruise related traffic, both vehicular and pedestrian.</li> </ul> <p>The proposal is particularly significant at a time when it will be vital, post covid encourage visitors into the town and increase footfall to increase regeneration.</p> <p>To deliver the agreed traffic and pedestrian systems and to obtain the potential economic benefits for all sides the following must be put in place.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 x 15m by 2.5m deep laybys plus tapers, one with the provision of a footpath to it</li> <li>• 1 x Pedestrian crossing</li> <li>• Directional signage at Port and other locations</li> <li>• Road Traffic Order preventing waiting 7am – 10am in agreed locations</li> <li>• Standard lining of 6m bays in Invergordon High Street</li> <li>• Allocation of spaces for pickups in an agreed car park from 7am – 10am.</li> </ul> <p>The Town Centre funding will cover the cost of the 2 laybys and the directional signage</p>	
<b>Estimated outputs</b> (e.g. jobs created, Xm <sup>2</sup> of floor space brought back into productive use, ha land remediated, X residential units created): 2 laybys suitable for tour coaches to drop off and pick up passengers Directional signage for cruise passengers visiting the town. This provision will support the following outputs:	

- Support local business to make the most of the very high level of cruise liner visits.
- Encourage cruise passengers and other visitors into the High Street for food, shopping and to visit attractions such as the excellent local community run museum.
- Support tour operators to give their clients the best possible experience – and hopefully encourage them back for a longer stay in Highland another time providing economic benefit to the town.
- Support the community to achieve their aspirations by managing the impacts of cruise traffic and maximising the benefits of this traffic Embed and increase trust between the community and key partners and businesses.

**Indicative costs** (Please provide a breakdown of key cost elements):

Cost item	Amount funded from TCF	Amount funded from other sources (please specify funder)	Total Cost
Provision of 2 coach laybys on opposite sides of the road with associated lighting, drainage kerbing etc	£45,000	£	£45,000
Directional signage	£5,000	£	£5,000
Pedestrian crossing	£0	Cromarty Firth Port Authority - £30,000	£30,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£50,000</b>	<b>£30,000</b>	<b>£80,000</b>

**If planning permission has been obtained, details on the type of planning permission (full, outline, conditional, unconditional), should be provided showing the date of approval. If there are any outstanding planning procedures/appeals or if there are likely to be any further planning appeals, these should be clearly explained below, stating the likely timescale for the resolution indicated:**

The laybys are permitted development, no planning required

**Timescale for completion. Please specify when contracts will be awarded. When work will start on site and be complete, including when Town Centre Fund elements will be complete:**

Contracts will be in place by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021, work completed by end May 2021

**Briefly describe what community consultation has been carried out in relation to your project:**

The project is the product of long and detailed community consultation as outlined below.

The benefits of the cruise liner business to the wider Highlands has been well documented. However, the cruise business has not always been welcomed within the town of Invergordon with some feeling that within the town that the negative impacts on residents outweigh the benefits. This has resulted in significant tensions between cruise operators, local businesses and residents. To address these issues the Council has worked closely with the local community council, the Port of Cromarty Firth and local business and cruise tour operators to try to find a path that all could support. This included separate meeting with the community and with tour operators to 'frame the problem' followed by joint workshops to identify solutions. The provision of the laybys, directional signs and the pedestrian crossing are the solutions identified by this extensive consultation.

#### Location plan and photographs of site/property:

