

Agenda Item	5
Report No	TC-03-21

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Tourism Committee

Date: 17 March 2021

Report Title: Tourism Infrastructure

Report By: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report updates Members on recent work to produce a Tourism Infrastructure Plan for the Highland area. It also provides an update on the position with a number of tourism infrastructure projects currently under way, most notably those funded through the Scottish Government's Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
- i. Note the current position with the production of a Highland Tourism Infrastructure Plan, and
 - ii. Note the current situation with tourism infrastructure projects that are under way.

3. Implications

- 3.1 **Resources** - The Highland Council employs a Tourism Projects Coordinator who liaises with project leads and submits all Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund applications and supporting evidence including for projects not being run by The Highland Council. The costs of this post and activity are met from the Service budget. Where projects are led by The Highland Council, the resources required are met by the services concerned.
- 3.2 **Legal** - There are no legal implications arising directly from this report, but all projects funded by the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund or other grants are the subject of a legal agreement between the grant awarding body and The Highland Council. Similar legal agreements are in place between The Highland Council and any third parties delivering projects.
- 3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural)** - There are no community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) implications arising directly from this report. However, the delivery of the projects described are expected to produce positive benefits for communities as well as for visitors.

- 3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever** - There are no Climate Change / Carbon Clever implications arising directly from this report. However, projects have been developed with elements of sustainability in mind and these require to be detailed in the applications for Round 3 Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund projects. Some elements of the Tourism Infrastructure Plan will specifically focus on infrastructure that would help reduce climate change impacts.
- 3.5 **Risk** - There are no risk implications arising directly from this report.
- 3.6 **Gaelic** - There are no Gaelic implications arising directly from this report. However, in keeping with The Highland Council's Gaelic policy there can be Gaelic elements to some of the infrastructure projects described.

4. Tourism Infrastructure Plan

- 4.1 Members of The Highland Council's Tourism Working Group previously tasked officers with the production of a Tourism Infrastructure Plan that would help to identify gaps in the provision of facilities and services for visitors to Highland. Work was well under way to produce this plan with the audit stage largely completed by early March 2020 when, due to the Coronavirus pandemic, The Highland Council tourism team paused this work to take on delivery of the Covid-19 Small business grants to Highland businesses. and this work is anticipated to continue until the end of July 2020.
- 4.2 Work on the plan recommenced in July and a draft plan was presented to The Highland Council's Tourism Committee on 14th October 2020. At this meeting, Members agreed that a brief consultation exercise be carried out with local Members / Community Councils and other partners and this was done with responses being invited by the end of December 2020. Over 30 responses were received in addition to The Highland Council's tourism officers holding individual sessions with members through their ward business meetings.
- 4.3 Due to the additional Coronavirus restrictions that came into place on Boxing day, further grant schemes were announced, and staff again seconded to manage these as this support for Highland businesses, including those in the tourism sector was agreed to be the highest priority. This unfortunately has meant that no further work on the plan has been possible since then. However, this plan is aimed at identifying the longer-term infrastructure needs (which were therefore not yet budgeted for) and so it isn't expected that this delay will have any direct impact on the forthcoming season. Instead, the complementary Visitor Management Plan that is also being presented to this committee picks up on all the more immediate activities required for the 2021 season.
- 4.4 When forming the business grants team, The Highland Council's Tourism Project Officer was specifically excluded from the team so as to allow activity on projects already under way to continue. A number of these projects were referenced in the draft Tourism Infrastructure Plan and at this time all are considered to be progressing as expected. Further details on those projects are given in sections 5 and 6 below.

5. Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund

- 5.1 On the 10th October 2017 the First Minister Announced a £6 million investment in a new Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund. The first round of awards was announced in October 2019 with the second round following in June 2019. Following the successful implementation of the first 2 rounds the Scottish Government announced in September 2019 that a further £3m of funding would be available for a third round in 2020/21. All

three rounds to date have funded over 3 million towards highland infrastructure projects.

- 5.2 The first round of the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund saw 6 Highland projects awarded funding with a total of £1.1m and a total project value of £1.5m;

RTIF - Round 1

Project Location	Description	Status
Bealach Na Ba, Scenic Viewpoints	Six Scenic Viewpoints on the Bealach na Ba - led by The Highland Council.	Construction underway and nearing completion.
Blabheinn, Skye, Visitor Facilities	Composting Toilets and Car Parking redesign to allow 30 vehicles - led by the John Muir Trust.	Project completed.
Old Man of Storr Visitor Facilities	Toilets and Motorhome Facilities at the Old Man of Storr - led by The Highland Council.	Construction underway and nearing completion.
Glenfinnan Viaduct Car Park	100 Space Car Park and 10 Motorhome spaces at the viaduct - led by Glenfinnan Community Facilities Company.	Project completed
Lochinver Campervan Facilities – Phase 1	Motorhome Chemical Waste Facilities at Assynt Leisure Centre - led by Assynt Development Trust.	Construction underway nearing completion.
Mallaig Tourism Facilities / Traigh Beach Toilets	New Toilet build at Mallaig with added Motorhome Facilities and two Composting Toilets at Traigh Beach - led by the Road to the Isles Facilities Group	Traigh Toilets – Project completed Mallaig Toilets Construction underway and nearing completion

- 5.3 The second round of the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund saw another 6 successful projects awarded funding. These applications include a total grant award of just over £1.4m and a total project value of 2.3m;

RTIF - Round 2

Project Name	Description	Status
Isle of Eigg Visitor Facilities	Creating new Toilets and Showers, Interpretation and Signage at An Laimhrig - led by Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust	Start Date w/c 8 th March (Delayed due to Covid-19)
Glen Nevis Visitor Facilities	Installing Public Transport Access Facilities, Parking, Signage, Paths and Toilet Facilities at Lower Falls Car Park - led by Nevis Landscape Partnership	Finalising Lease Agreement

Portree Parking	Expansion of the Bayfield Car Park and provision of Motorhome Facilities for waste and water.	Under Construction nearing completion
Cromarty Campervan Facilities and Slipways	Campervan Facilities including Hardstanding, Waste Disposal and Toilets, along with improved Slipways for the Cromarty-Nigg Ferry - led by Cromarty Community Development Trust	Campervan Facilities – finalising Community Asset transfer Slipways – project completed
Storr, Footpath Improvements	Creating an enhanced visitor access while protecting iconic landscapes and internationally important habitats - led by The Highland Council	Project Completed
Glenfinnan Bridge	New Bridge to join the new car park to the Viaduct, avoiding people having to walk on the A830 Trunk Road - led by Glenfinnan Community Facilities Company.	Construction underway
Helmsdale Toilets and Motorhome Facilities	Upgrading the current Highland Council Toilets and add Motorhome Facilities to a vacant land plot nearby.	In the planning process
Glenmore Parking	Parking management and linking paths – led by the Cairngorms National Park Authority	Construction underway

5.4 RTIF - Round 3

On the 14th October 2020 The Highland Council submitted 15 applications to round 3 of the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund, this was down 3 from the original EOI stage back in January 2020 and mainly due to the project not being ready to submit a full application. The decision was announced on the 5th January 2021 with 5 Highland projects awarded funding, subject to conditions. This was also followed by 5 waitlist projects that would receive funding if any awarded projects could not meet their conditions or if there was an underspend.

All approved and waitlisted projects are currently working toward meeting grant their conditions. The approved projects make up a total funding bid of £820,688 with one round 3 project funding still to be confirmed.

Approved Projects		
Project Name	Description	Status
Accommodating the popularity of Glencoe	Development of an overarching plan for improved visitor infrastructure and management on the routes along the A82 in Glencoe and in Glen Etive - led by the National Trust for Scotland.	In process of meeting grant conditions
Kinlochewe Tourist Facilities	Provision of new carbon neutral toilets and shower facilities, parking bays with electric hook up points and motorhome waste facility at Kinlochewe - led by Community Out West Trust.	In process of meeting grant conditions

Ardnamurchan Lighthouse Project	The project seeks to alleviate burgeoning guest pressure, improve guest safety by improving the one-way access, improve accessibility by increasing visitor parking and better facilities for cyclists, and making all paths wheelchair friendly , and improving the guest experience with interpretation and upgrades to paths at the Ardnamurchan Lighthouse complex - led by Ardnamurchan Lighthouse Trust.	In process of meeting grant conditions
Photographers Knoll Footpath – Old Man of Storr	496m of footpath at Old Man of Storr to Photographer’s Knoll popular viewpoint and photographic location at the site.	In process of meeting grant conditions
Lochinver Campervan Facilities – Phase 1	Installing a motorhome greywater disposal facility connected to the public foul sewer. Tarmac and porous paving resurfacing of the Assynt Leisure Centre car park, with SUDS surface water drainage into the public surface water sewer.	In process of meeting grant conditions

Waitlist Projects	
Elgol Tourist facilities	New public toilets, realigned parking bays, 480m path linking the village to the parking and motorhome waste disposal facility in a village which is popular with visitors and an increasing number of boat trips - led by Broadford and Strath Community Company.
Sleat Community Campervan Facilities	8 bay campervan site service point with motorhome waste point, toilet and shower - led by Sabhal Mor Ostaig / Sleat Community Trust.
Kyle of Sutherland Visitor facilities	Development of motorhomes facilities at South Bonar Bridge with 5 electric hook-up points and a motorhome waste facility, new toilets incorporating showers, a covered eating area and E-bike charging point - led by Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust.
Dornoch Parking	Creation of a car and coach parking site which is 40m from the main square with 40 car parking spaces and 6 coach spaces to cope with increasing numbers of visitors and the increase in the cruise traffic from the nearby Invergordon terminal - led by Dornoch Area Community Interest Company.
Loch Ness Visitor Facilities	<p>Foyers New toilet facilities that will replace a condemned toilet block. A chemical waste disposal point and a public electric charging point – Led by Fall of Foyers Toilet Subgroup / Stratherrick & Foyers Community Council.</p> <p>Invermoriston Provision of motorhome waste unit and upgraded public toilets and with modernised environmentally friendly facilities along with a new and enhanced waste system capable of servicing the needs of the increasing tourism number stopping at the village of Invermoriston.</p>

6. North Coast 500 Signage

- 6.1 In addition to the projects being funded through the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund, The Highland Council's tourism officers have also been working with NC500 Ltd, Transport Scotland and Council roads colleagues on a project to signpost the NC500 route so as to enhance the visitor experience and improve road safety.
- 6.2 After a successful LEADER bid, all local authority signs have now been installed with trunk road signs due to be installed in the upcoming weeks.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment

Date: 3 March 2020

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