

Agenda Item	13.
Report No	CC/15/21

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Caithness Committee

Date: 22 April 2021

Report Title: Highland Coastal Communities Fund – Assessment of Applications

Report By: Executive Chief Officer: Infrastructure and Environment

1. PURPOSE/EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Highland Coastal Communities Fund is a new fund designed to support economic regeneration and sustainable development around coastal areas in Highland. The fund is derived from revenue generated by Scottish Government Crown Estate marine assets. Each year, local authorities are allocated a proportion of the profits.

Within an overall allocation to Highland of £3,034,703, the Caithness Area Committee has been awarded £409,652.26 of Crown Estates revenues for distribution within the Caithness Area. Funding will be distributed as the Highland Coastal Communities Fund – Caithness (HCCF).

- 1.2 Broad eligibility criteria for the scheme is as follows:

All projects are expected to be able to meet at least one of the following priorities:

- Economic recovery
- Community resilience
- Mitigating the impact of the climate/ecological emergency
- Addressing the challenges of rural depopulation.

Projects should be able to demonstrate that they are:

- Sustainable/viable
- Providing value for money
- Providing additionality
- Able to evidence local support/local benefit
- Able to evidence positive impacts for coastal communities and/or the coastal economy

- 1.3 An open call for expressions of interest was held during December 2020. Following this, a number of projects were invited to proceed to full application stage.

- 1.4 In summary the position in Caithness at Area Committee on 22nd April is as follows:

Available HCCF Funding – £409,652.26
Number of applications for consideration – 14
Total value of grant requests - £ 452,082.80

To aid Members in their decision making, the following appendices are provided to this report:

- Summary spreadsheet of applications for consideration including RAG status from technical assessment
- Project summary and outcome of technical assessment for each application

Technical assessments and the RAG status are based on the application form and supplementary information provided during the application process.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. Agree to ring-fence approximately £100k for member-led strategic investments to benefit the Caithness economy and secure match funding with local stakeholders. Further details of this investment to be brought back to Area Committee.
- ii. Consider all applications presented for funding and agree whether to approve, defer or reject the application. An approval of funding should detail the amount approved and outline any conditions of funding that Members wish to attach to the approval over and above the required technical conditions. A deferral would allow an applicant to resubmit the current application at a future date with updated information. A rejection would mean that the application will not proceed and any future application to the fund should be brought forward initially as a new expression of interest.
- iii. Agree which applications should receive a funding award from HCCF up to the value of the available area allocation

3. IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 **Resource** – Caithness has available funding of £409,652.26 Applications under consideration total £ 452,082.80 and there is a recommendation to ringfence funds for strategic investments. If applications approved exceed the funds available the committee will need to undertake a prioritisation process to agree the funding awards.
- 3.2 **Legal/Risk** – When managing external funding it is imperative that the risks to The Highland Council are assessed/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)** – Coastal communities funding is available to all Area Committees within Highland with a coastline. The focus of the funding is economic recovery and community resilience. Consideration on issues relating to equalities, poverty and rural issues are dealt with on an individual basis for applications and covered in the technical assessments of project

- 3.4 **Climate Change/Carbon Clever** – Mitigation of the climate/ecological emergency is a specific aim of the HCCF funding. All applicants are required to evidence environmental sustainability as referenced in the technical assessments
- 3.6 **Risk** – As per 3.2 above.
- 3.6 **Gaelic** – Consideration given within individual project applications in line with HC policy

Designation: Executive Chief Officer – Infrastructure and Environment

Date: 26th March 2021

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 – RAG Status Summary Sheet

Appendix 2 – Project summary and outcome of technical assessment

Ref 136 - Caithness Voluntary Group – Here for Caithness	
Total Project Cost: £14,076.80	Grant Requested: £9,082.80
<p>Caithness Voluntary Group are applying for assistance in developing a project which will provide support for the ongoing needs of vulnerable people in Caithness, to ensure their health and wellbeing is maintained, and that there is a clear path to both preventative and interventional support as and when it is needed. Based on feedback from the community, CVG aim to create a ‘one stop shop’ idea of a ‘digital platform’ that is, from the outset, committed to supporting the journey of the individual accessing it; adults, children, or professionals. Project costs include creation of website, creation of video content and staffing costs (Project Officer -1 day per week for 12 month period).</p>	
Technical assessment outcome – passed. Project is eligible for HCCF Funding	
Ref 20 - St John’s Episcopal Church Wick – Provision of Accessible Toilet and Improved Accessibility to Church Building	
Total Project Cost: £77,895.00	Grant Requested: £15,000.00
<p>This project involves an extension to the church building to accommodate a fully accessible toilet (the church currently has no toilet facilities) and improving access at the entrance for wheelchair users and others with mobility problems. The aim of the project is to make the building more sustainable in the long term and allow wider community use of the building.</p>	
Technical assessment outcome – passed. Project is eligible for HCCF Funding	
Ref 34 – Dunnet Forestry Trust – Dunnet Community Forest Projects	
Total Project Cost: £29,914.00	Grant Requested: £22,436.00
<p>Dunnet Forest has been managed by the Dunnet Forestry Trust under lease from NatureScot (Scottish Natural Heritage) for 18 years and has recently taken ownership through a community asset transfer. In 2019 the Trust undertook a consultation to measure the support of the community for a community buyout of Dunnet Forest. People in the community were also asked for ideas for new activities and facilities to follow transfer of ownership. The consultation also generated a wide range of ideas for the future of the forest and those having the strongest support form the basis for the following suite of projects which will mark the transfer of ownership and the launch of Dunnet Community Forest:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a volunteer programme 2. Tree nursery 3. Compost Toilet 4. Car park extension and improved forest entrance 5. Children’s play area <p>These five projects are the subject of the application to HCCF.</p>	

Technical assessment outcome – passed. Project is eligible for HCCF Funding	
Ref 160 – Keiss Primary School Parent Council – Keiss Primary School Trim Trail	
Total Project Cost: £31,691.52	Grant Requested: £23,000.00
This project is to install trim trail play equipment at Keiss Primary School which currently has limited facilities. Out with school hours, the trim trail would be open to use by the wider community, including learners from throughout the county who could access the site for remedial and play sessions, it would also provide a hub for family learning programmes such as after school clubs and play sessions.	
Technical assessment outcome – passed. Project is eligible for HCCF Funding	
Ref 70: Thurso Youth Club – Refurbishment – Phase 1	
Total Project Cost: £54,564.00	Grant Requested: £40,923.00
This project is to refurbish the kitchen at Thurso Youth Club. During last year’s lockdown the Youth Club became the base for Thurso Community Development Trust’s Community Response for Thurso and West Caithness. It has been identified from previous consultation and the community response that there is a need for a permanent meals service for isolated and vulnerable elderly people. The kitchen facilities would also be available to other groups and to run the Youth Clubs Youth Café and cookery club.	
Technical assessment outcome – passed. Project is eligible for HCCF Funding	
Ref 50: John O’Groats Mill Trust – John O’Groats Mill Trail	
Total Project Costs: £40,280.00	Grant Requested: £30,080.00
This project is to create a basic all abilities trail from the car park at John O’Groats along the coast to the John O’Groats Mill extending approximately 650 meters, alongside the installation of information boards covering the history and the ecology of the local area. The project is expected to benefit residents as well as visitors to John O’Groats who will have improved access to a stretch of historic and scenic coastline.	
Technical assessment outcome – passed. Project is eligible for HCCF Funding	
Ref 83: Befrienders Highland – Caithness Expansion	
Total Project Costs: £9,200.00	Grant Requested: £7,360.00
Befriending Caithness is a voluntary service that aims to reduce isolation and loneliness in the county by matching volunteers to older isolated adults in the Caithness area. Befrienders Caithness currently have 11 Friendships within the Caithness area which is the maximum the service can adequately supervise with one member of staff working 2 days per week. This project seeks to employ a Volunteer co-ordinator an extra day per week to be able to further address isolation and loneliness for individuals with mental health difficulties.	

Technical assessment outcome – passed. Project is eligible for HCCF Funding	
Ref 132 - Caithness Voluntary Group – Listening Ear	
Total Project Cost: £49,700.00	Grant Requested: £39,700.00
The purpose of this project is to plug the gaps in the need for a crisis support response, for people struggling with their mental health, facing challenging personal circumstances or needing someone to talk to. It is considered there is a distinct lack of equity when accessing services to support mental health and the area does not receive the level of support that other areas receive. Project costs involve employment of part time Project co-ordinator and part time admin support along with associated expenses.	
Technical assessment outcome – passed. Project is eligible for HCCF Funding	
Ref 76 – Thurso Community Development Trust – Socially Grown Greenhouses & Hub	
Total Project Cost: £127,376.00	Grant Requested: £77,376.00
This project consists of two elements, firstly to expand Thurso Community Development Trust’s current ‘Thurso Grows’ project by taking over the existing Highland Council greenhouses to grow food while developing skills and stimulating local economy by encouraging and training enterprise in local people. The project costs consist of repair and maintenance of greenhouse building, equipment and materials, and to employ a part time greenhouse manager.	
The second element of the project is to set up a zero-waste shop in the town centre with office space for the TCDT to operate from. Project costs relate to fitting out a town centre premises to contain the shop and to employ an Enterprise officer for 18 months to run the facility as a social enterprise.	
Technical assessment outcome – passed. Project is eligible for HCCF Funding	
Ref 13 – Brough Bay Association – Brough Bay Harbour Project	
Total Project Cost: £139,344.00	Grant Requested: £27,000.00
Brough Bay Association’s mission is to maintain and improve the facilities at Brough harbour for locals and visitors alike and aims to further the advancement of community development, heritage and culture, including rural regeneration and the encouragement of volunteering for all involved. This project seeks to upgrade the existing slipway which is a vulnerable condition due to storm damage, install beach access steps and extend the nearby car parking area.	
Technical assessment outcome – passed. Project is eligible for HCCF Funding	
Ref 64 – Bridgnorth Ironmongers Ltd – New Post Office For Wick	
Total Project Costs: £19,500.00	Grant Requested: £9,775.00

This project is to provide and facilitate all the functions of a modern-day post office for the use of the whole community of Wick. Project costs include refurbishment of the building including window painting, guttering, external redecoration and repairs to keep building wind and watertight.	
Technical assessment outcome – passed. Project is eligible for HCCF Funding on condition that a business plan is provided	
Ref 163 – Scrabster Harbour Trust – Cruise Ship Gangway Upgrade	
Total Project Costs: £37,400.00	Grant Requested: £18,700.00
This project will complement the multi-million pound upgrade of the St Ola pier that has been designed to increase cruise ship capacity. Project costs being applied for are to purchase and install an access gangway from pier to ship.	
Technical assessment outcome – passed. Project is eligible for HCCF Funding	
Ref 89 – Dunnet Bay Distillers Ltd – Phase 1: Conservation and Refurbishment of Castletown Mill into a Craft Whisky Distillery and Visitor Attraction	
Total Project Costs: £507,000.00	Grant Requested: £76,050.00
This project seeks to conserve and refurbish the currently derelict Castletown Mill into a craft whisky distillery and visitor attraction. Project costs relate to phase 1 of the development including costs related to conservation of the building, architecture and professional fees and deposit towards stills for whisky distillation.	
Technical assessment outcome – passed. Project is eligible for HCCF Funding at this stage – Details of State Aid implications & match funding confirmation required before formal approval could be made	
Ref 133 – Crowvus – Silas Writers’ and Artists Retreat	
Total Project Costs: £111,200.00	Grant Requested: £55,600.00
This project seeks to purchase, renovate and repurpose a currently disused building in Wick as a writers and artists retreat. Profits will be re-invested in the community through the employment of a literacy development officer aimed to improve literacy skills around the County. Project costs related to purchase and renovation of the building.	
Technical assessment outcome – passed. Project is eligible for HCCF Funding on condition that applicant registers as an appropriate social enterprise organisation	