

Agenda Item	7
Report No	CIA/12/21

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Inverness City Area Committee

Date: 27 May 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 Inverness City Area Committee has been awarded £12,156.72 of Crown Estates revenues for distribution within the Inverness Area. Funding will be distributed as the Highland Coastal Communities Fund – Inverness (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; or
- 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; and
- 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 Inverness at Area Committee on 27th May is as follows:-

Available HCCF Funding – £12,156.72
Number of applications for consideration – 1
Total value of grant requests - £12,156

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

- Project application form
- Technical assessment and RAG status

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 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.

3. Implications

3.1 **Resource** – Inverness has available funding of £12,156.72 Applications under consideration total £12,156, there are therefore no resource implications should members wish to approve all applications.

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** – 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.

3.6 **Gaelic** – Consideration given within individual project applications in line with HC policy

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment

Date: 11 May 2021

Author: Fiona Cameron, Programme Manager

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Application form – Merkinch Local Nature Reserve
Appendix 2 – Technical assessment – Merkinch Local Nature Reserve

Highland Coastal Communities Fund



- Please read the Application Form and the Guidance Notes completely before completion
- **No project should start or commit expenditure before receiving approval of grant**

SECTION 1: PROJECT SUMMARY

1.1 Organisation/applicant name	The Highland Council
1.2 Project title	Merkinch Local Nature Reserve- Boardwalk & Active Travel Route

1.3 Total cost of project	Total cost of project	£523,853.00
	Match Funding	£511,697
	Grant requested	£ 12,156

1.4 Estimated Start Date	November 2021
1.5 Estimated Finish Date	June 2023 (includes 12mths Defect period on main contract works)

1.6 Which of the following programme themes will your project meet?	
Economic Recovery	
Community Resilience	X
Mitigation of climate/ecological emergency	
Rural de population	

How will your project benefit coastal communities or the coastal/marine economy?
<p>The proposal is to replace the aging boardwalk located within the Merkinch Local Nature Reserve (MLNR) and upgrade the adjacent path to form a fully accessible route between the Carnac Crescent entrance to the reserve and the main sea wall path near the railway crossing.</p> <p>The MLNR currently represents the only quality access to the coastal waterside in Inverness and is valuable to the entire city as an area for conservation and recreation. It has also been identified that the paths</p>

through the reserve represent the only fully off-road access into the residential area of South Kessock, which is severed from the city by the railway and is the 8th most deprived community in Scotland.

As well as rejuvenating the access provision within the reserve, the proposal will form half of the new Active Travel Route connecting South Kessock with Merkinch and the city beyond. (Scottish Canals will be commencing the Railway crossing and canal path improvements this summer.) This will also improve links between the Nature Reserve, Caledonian Canal and the wider Inverness paths network. It will facilitate a much wider and inclusive access to these quality green spaces, at a time when Covid 19 has demonstrated our need to reconnect with nature.

The project will provide direct benefits to local communities and workforce as well as providing connectivity between them. It will strengthen the nature reserve as an important facility for recreation, access to nature, and health & wellbeing to the whole of Inverness, as well as a potential tourist destination. The ongoing maintenance and enhancement of the reserve also contributes to THC's Care and Maintenance outcomes. The project is supported by the Merkinch & SK Locality Plan, the MCC, Friends of MLNR, SK Residents Assoc, and from over 15 other groups and organisations. Sustrans are a major partner providing up to 70% match funding.

SECTION 2: CONTACT DETAILS

2.1 Main contact name	
Contact number	
Alternative contact number	

2.2 Position	
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2.3 Address	
Postcode	

2.4 Email address	
2.5 Website address	

SECTION 3: ORGANISATION DETAILS

3.1 Organisation Status	Please indicate (x)	Organisation number
Company limited by guarantee		
Constituted Group		
Public Body	X	
Private Business		

Charity		
SCIO		
Other (please specify)		

3.2 Are you VAT Registered? (delete as appropriate)	YES		
3.3 If you are registered for VAT please quote number			
3.4 Is the VAT related to the project being reclaimed from HMRC (x) <i>please provide any relevant details in the box below, details of exemptions etc.</i>	Wholly	Partially	None

Notes:

3.5 Key Project Personnel – please list personnel involved in this project detailing their skills to be involved	
Name and position in organisation	Skills/Area of work
Claire Bell- Project Officer.	Project manager for funding & initial consultation, Landscape Architect, liaison with Sustrans, & key consultees. Oversee the Directional & Interpretation signage.
Bryan Stout- PDU- Principal Engineer	Principal Engineer & design team manager overseeing project.
Steven Grant- PDU- Engineer/ Site Engineer	Engineer/ Designer for Boardwalk & path; Statutory & Key Stakeholders Consultation regarding design matters; and assistance in wider public consultation for boardwalk/ path design; Construction stage site engineer & Contract administrator.
Douglas McDonald- Engineering Technician	Assistance with drawing production and planning application.
Katy Martin- Ecology Officer	Project Environmental Advisor/ Environmental Clerk of Works (ECoW) during the project. Regular reporting and inspections will become part of the project environmental management.

SECTION 4: PROJECT DETAILS

4.1 Where will the project be happening? *(Please include postcode)*

Merkinch Local Nature Reserve, Inverness, IV3 8SQ

4.2 Project summary. Please summarise your project as concisely as possible:

(a) What need or opportunity will your project address? How do you know that there is local support for the approach you are taking?

The project is located within the Merkinch Local Nature Reserve and aims to replace the deteriorating boardwalk and path with a new 'all abilities' boardwalk and Active Travel Route. This will connect the community of South Kessock with the Carse and surrounding communities but will also provide more inclusive access for the local and city-wide community to enjoy and reconnect with the natural environment on their doorstep.

Existing boardwalk

The existing timber boardwalk is integral to the access on the reserve, but it is almost 30 years old and last August it had to be closed to public due to health and safety concerns. Although temporary repairs were carried out by the Friends of MLNR and the Conservation Volunteers (TCV) allowing it to reopen, the access ramp had to be removed and it is estimated that the remaining boardwalk may also have to be permanently closed within the next year.

The loss of the facility during this short period of closure highlighted the importance of the access it provides to the local community, particularly during the current Covid situation.

Aim: The project aims to replace and improve this facility.

Merkinch Local Nature Reserve

The MLNR was designated in 2007 and is currently the only Local Nature reserve within the Highland Council area. It was born out of the imaginations and perseverance of the local South Kessock and Merkinch community and remains a place that is special to the local community. It has also become increasingly well used by the wider Inverness community and visitors to area.

Aim: The project will improve access for all users and increase opportunities for connection with the green/blue environment and the valuable

Maintenance

Although the reserve is owned by Highland Council and a small area by Scottish Canals, the management and maintenance of the reserve is looked after by the Friends of MLNR, which apart from a Heritage Lottery funded project manager position, is largely made up of volunteers from the local community. The continual maintenance of the boardwalk over recent years has a burden on the management of the site.

Aim: The project will aim to replace the boardwalk using recycled plastic to provide longevity and minimise maintenance.

Community Connection

The Friends of MLNR and the community often use the reserve to host events (guided walks, cycling, football, American Football, Junior Rangers, etc), which promote social inclusion. The FMLNR Project Manager also has a regular presence on the reserve, and has encouraged

volunteers from many different and difficult backgrounds (recovering addicts, people with mental health issues etc.) This and the community investment in the reserve, help to provide a family friendly environment which increases the feelings of social inclusion.

Aim: The project will aim to improve inclusive access to the reserve.

Health & Wellbeing

The rich environment of the nature reserve provided an important location of green space for the local communities to escape to during the recent Covid19 lockdown.

Aim: By replacing the boardwalk and providing inclusive access, the reserve will continue to provide a tranquil and rejuvenating setting for improving physical and mental wellbeing.

Maximising of funding

The project has received 100% design funding through Sustrans 'Places for Everyone' funding, and they would seek to offer up to 70% match funding for construction, as well as support with community engagement. A contribution of £12K from HCCF would therefore have potential to draw down an additional £28K from Sustrans.

Aim: To maximise match funding for the benefit of the community.

Project as Part of the Wider Access Network to Green Space

The project strengthens the links between Nature Reserve and the canal towpath network, which provides an important link to a large part of the city and the surrounding green spaces. Highland Council and other agencies have also helped fund the Scottish Canal's new waterside Community Hub, which this route will provide direct access to.

Aim: to strengthen the wider access network to Green Space.

EVIDENCE OF SUPPORT

Footfall Counters

Footfall counters are located on the paths in two locations, one at the boardwalk and another near the railway crossing. Between the period May 2019 and June 2020 there were almost 24,769 crossings of the boardwalk and 41,065 at the railway.

The data also shows that in May 2020 during the Covid lock down period the amount of footfall on the boardwalk path showed a 60% increase from the same period the year before.

Letters of Support

Letters have been provided from the following key Partners and Stakeholders:

- Sustrans
- Scottish Canals
- Friends of Merkinch Local Nature Reserve
- Merkinch and South Kessock Locality Plan

Community Groups and stakeholders have been directly consulted by THC and the following groups have provided letters or emails of support for the project:

- Merkinch Partnership (member of the M&SK Locality Plan)

- Merkinch Community Council
- South Kessock Residents Association
- Inverness Own Your Street Project (Merkinch & South Kessock)
- Paths for All: P4H Programme (inc. Merkinch Family Centre Parent Group)
- The Highland Green Health Partnership
- NHS Highland- Daniel Jenkins (FMLNR Health Walks)
- Sustrans I Bike Officer
- Clarity Walks
- The Conservation Volunteers
- Merkinch Green Gym
- Spokes for Folks / Cairn Medical Practice
- Fairfield Medical Practice- Dr Ali Dallas
- Velocity- Active Health
- Cycling Without Age
- Paths for All
- The Highland Council -Access officer

Statements of Support:

The Friends of MLNR Project Manager have also consulted widely, and when posting a request for support for the board walk replacement on its Facebook site in September it received 38No positive comments.

Refer to attached Statements of Support.

(b)

(c) Project Summary and main activities

Project

The proposal is to replace the deteriorating boardwalk located within the nature reserve and to upgrade the adjacent paths to form a fully accessible route between the Carnac Cres entrance and the main sea wall path near the railway crossing. We will aim to provide signage, interpretation, and seating along the route, but the extent of this will be dependent on the final budget; if we are able to source further funds through Sustrans indirect match funding we may be able to increase these place making improvements.

Our proposals form part of the Sustrans funded ‘Space by the Water’ project to create an off-road active travel route between South Kessock and Merkinch. Our project will connect directly to the path infrastructure improvements about to be implemented by Scottish Canals this autumn. The full route will be suitable for walking, cycling & wheeling, with increased widths, improved gradients, and much increased longevity of materials.

Boardwalk

The main element within the project will be the construction of the new boardwalk. The design will require to take account of the 2.5m level change between the pond side and the sea wall path, using gradients suitable for all abilities access (max 1:20)- and for the width to be minimum 2.8m between the parapets. (The current structure is 1.3m.) At the request of the key stakeholders, and to improve the longevity and reduce the maintenance requirement, we are proposing the use of recycled plastic for the structure.

A couple of design options will be presented for public consultation in early June.

Path Upgrade

The path either end of the boardwalk will also need upgraded from the existing bound gravel surface to a sealed bitmac surface. Whether this has a spray and chip finish to help soften the appearance will depend on the available budget. The physical constraints of the sea wall will limit that short section to a 1.5m width, but we will include appropriate passing spaces. The path from the boardwalk to Carnac Cres, will be increased to 2.5m width, and will incorporate suitable construction to deal with the drainage issues near the pond, which currently cause sections of the path to regularly flood.

Placemaking Items

Lighting: The budget and semi-rural location do not allow the use of full lighting, but the use of solar studs will help to mark the route after dark. It is also proposed to install at least one lighting column at the Carnac Crescent access between the houses. Whether we can afford to include path level lighting on the boardwalk itself will depend on the final available budget.

Seating: We are aiming to incorporate seating into the viewing area along the boardwalk. If additional budget becomes available it would also be desirable for a seat to be included at the sea wall, and at least one other at the field end.

Interpretation: The current budget includes for one interpretation panel on the viewing area of the boardwalk to help people understand the rich wildlife in the area. The Friends of MLNR are keen to assist in providing information. A graphic designer and interpretation writer will be employed and manufacture costs included.

If additional budget is found then it would be desirable to include another further panels near each seating area, which could include topics such as the history of the area, and wildflower meadows. Interpretation might also be included within the design of the seating structure (eg timber carvings similar to recent picnic tables installed at Carnac Point).

Directional Signs: Finger post signing at main junctions along the route. The proposed budget also factors in signs for the rest of the reserve, particularly at the entrances, and for pedestrian directional signs elsewhere in the local area to promote the Nature Reserve & canal. (eg at Caranarc point). The extent of the signs will depend on the final available budget.

Other:

Although not currently included within this application, we will aim to include further placemaking items along the route if additional budget is found (eg, tree and wildflower planting, paving detail and railings at the entrance) .

(d)In development of your project, please detail how you have considered the following:

Environmental impact:

Item 4.3 describes how we have consulted with the statutory agencies (SEPA and NatureScot) regarding the impacts of the project. A Phase 1 habitat survey and a Tree Survey were carried at an early stage, which identified bird nesting and otters as the main areas of concern. We will continue to take these into consideration within the design and programming.

The outcomes of the project itself will be positive to the environment, by providing an Active Travel alternative for the residents of South Kessock to access the facilities at the Carse/ Merkinch, including the shops and school. It also connects into the Canal path route to the wider city area.

Investing in the Nature Reserve provides a safeguard for nature and a place for educating the community through the activities of groups such as Friends MLNR, TCV, Wild Things and the local Primary Schools.

Equalities impact/issues

An equalities Impact Assessment was carried out as part of the Development stage of the project and has been updated as project has continued- refer to appendix. This will be reviewed and updated after the proposed consultation in June.

At present the current boardwalk is unsuitable for families with prams, any types of wheeled users, or people with mobility issues. Several walking & cycling for health groups have noted that they have been limited in using the nature reserve due to the lack of an all abilities route. The Sustrans Ibike officer also carries out school cycle rides in the area and is keen to be able to promote a safe off-road route to school children.

By creating an 'all abilities' standard of path and board walk, this will provide an opportunity for these groups to access all the benefits of this quality green space for recreation, health and well-being, and as an off-road active travel route to the facilities at Merkinch and beyond. It will also provide the infrastructure for groups such as the Friends of MLNR, to carryout community and family events, which help promote social inclusion and encourage social contact.

The Conservation Volunteers use the nature reserve regularly in association with the Friends of MLNR to carry out repairs and managing the site. They attract various age groups, including retirees and students. They have stated in the consultation that: 'Without the access that the boardwalk provides it would certainly diminish the reserve and have a negative impact on our projects, volunteers, and partners.'

Seating will be included on the boardwalk for resting for the elderly and those with disabilities.

Directional signage will be included to inform and orientate users of their options for access and egress from the site. Better directional signs within and out with the nature reserve will help promote the route and other access opportunities to quality green spaces within the local area and the city as a whole. The more people that begin to use the path, the safer and more confident others will feel using Nature Reserve, and this will help increase community connections with the local environment.

Improvements to the existing railway crossing will be carried out through Scottish Canal's access project. This will allow access for wheeled user including mobility scooters and trikes.

(e) Who will benefit from your project?

The replacement boardwalk and path upgrades will provide direct benefits to the local communities (South Kessock, Merkinch, Clachnaharry, Scourgoie, Dalneigh and Muirtown) as well as connectivity between them. The project will also provide an important facility for recreation, access to nature, and health & wellbeing to the wider Burgh of Inverness, and a potential tourist location for visitors to the city.

The South Kessock residents will have an improved off-road link to the amenities at and near the Carse (shops, schools, places of work). It will also provide them with the quickest route to Scottish Canal's proposed water sports/ community hub building which is proposed for Muirtown Basin.

Social groups such as mothers with buggies, disabled wheel users, cyclists, old & infirm will directly benefit from being able to access the nature reserve and an active travel route.

The Friends of MLNR will benefit from a reduced maintenance burden by way of a high-quality boardwalk and sealed surface paths.

The Friends of MLNR, Merkinch School, and groups such as the Merkinch Family Centre Parent Group, the Junior Rangers and RSPB Explorers, will continue to have access to the wetland area for nature learning and other outdoor activities.

Green Health organisations such as Claritywalks, P4H, Spokes for Folks already use the nature reserve and canal to provide health & wellbeing activities to local and citywide groups, but the closure of the boardwalk would prevent this. An upgraded facility would allow them continued use and increase their ability to use the reserve more inclusively.

The Inverness I-bike officers currently work with Merkinch Primary and the other schools in the area, and the improved access will allow them to make much better use of the area for led cycle rides, to encourage Active Travel.

(f) How will your project be continued after HCCF funding and/or what will the lasting benefits of the project be?

The Friends of MLNR will continue to manage the nature reserve with the help of their volunteers and The Conservation Volunteers. They will be able to use the boardwalk as a route for led walks and community activities and will maintain a regular vigilance over the new structure and path. They will continue to carry out regular Risk Assessments of the paths and structures and organise any general repairs, however the materials and high-quality specification should reduce the maintenance burden of the existing route.

The Highland Council as the landowner will maintain a responsibility for the boardwalk structure and will carry out their own annual H&S inspection.

The project will provide a lasting impact by providing 'all abilities' access to the Nature Reserve and to the Inverness paths network linking Merkinch, Clachnaharry and South

Kessock through some of the city's attractive green/blue spaces. The boardwalk plays a critical role in connecting people to the outstanding natural, cultural and industrial heritage of the Beaully Firth, River Ness and Caledonian Canal. In turn those connections attract locals and visitors to use the area for recreation to the benefit of their physical and mental well-being. The Nature Reserve and access to and through it are key components serving the water-based activity centred on the Muirtown basin.

The recreational value is matched by the Active Travel benefits of the traffic-free connections for walkers and cyclists to make their way around and through the city, making the most of the spine of the Caledonian Canal's towpaths. On a local community level, it will offer a direct route for the South Kessock residents to the neighbouring communities of and facilities, whilst experiencing the benefits of the coastal environment and nature on their doorstep.

(g) Please outline how your project fits with other local plans or strategies

Muirtown & South Kessock Development Brief

Our project responds to the following opportunities for the Nature Reserve highlighted within the Development Brief :

- improve the connectivity between South Kessock and the Carse.
- Improve the pedestrian railway crossing.

Space by the Water Master Plan 2017

The Highland Council (THC) has been working in partnership with Scottish Canals and Sustrans for a number of years in an effort to improve and develop the Muirtown & South Kessock area.

The 'Space by the Water' project was conceived as part of a joint bid with Highland Council and Scottish Canals for SG Green Infrastructure Funding in 2017, with the objective of providing an integrated network of high-quality green spaces that follow the river, seafront and canal. The project was centred around environmental and access improvements to a series of existing green spaces, including Carnac Point, the Merkinch Local Nature Reserve (MLNR) and the Muirtown Canal Basin, as well as improving the linkages between each of these sites and their accessibility to the surrounding communities.

Despite failing to secure GI funding, various elements of the project were taken forward separately, including path improvements at Carnac Point and now the development of the Active Travel Route between South Kessock and the Carse. (Refer to the masterplan within the Powerpoint Presentation)

Sustrans provided design stage funding to both Highland Council and Scottish Canals to develop the 'Space by Water: Active Travel Route' as two separate projects- refer to Location Plan. Scottish Canals have now had Construction Funding for their section of the route between the canal access at Carsgate Road up to and including the railway crossing and will be commencing on site later this year.

Our project will provide the connecting route between the railway crossing and South Kessock.

Scottish Canals Outdoor Community Hub Building

In conjunction with the Space by Water project, Scottish Canals have also received multi funding for the construction of an outdoor community hub building, to be sited on the canal side at the Carse. The first phase (The Treehouse) is being carried out in conjunction with the active travel route works and will include community facilities, toilets, workshops, and office space for community enterprises. The Phase 2 will follow in 2022 and include a canalside café and waterside facilities. <https://www.scottishcanals.co.uk/placemaking/carse-hub-inverness/>

Our project will provide South Kessock residents with direct Active Travel access to the facility

Inverness Active Travel Network

The project ties into the overall Inverness Active Travel Network plan as a connecting route to the Abban Street improvements which were included as part of the 2017 Community Links Plus funding.

Merkinch and South Kessock Locality Plan

The partners of the Merkinch and South Kessock Locality Plan have given the project their support noting the following (refer to attached letter of support):

“The ongoing maintenance and enhancement of green spaces in the locality is of primary importance and contributes to our Care and Maintenance outcome, specifically, ‘the area is a safe, attractive, useable space that residents are proud of and have ownership of’.

In the current climate, having an accessible Active Travel Route for all would be beneficial to residents, local workforce and those visiting the area for leisure purposes. This safe and accessible outdoor venue will undoubtedly contribute to the wellbeing of the community.’

4.3 Does your project require planning permission or any statutory regulatory requirement or consent? (delete as appropriate)		YES
If YES, please detail		
Type	Steps Taken	Date
Planning Consent required	Initial consultation held between planning officer & engineer in Nov 2020. Supportive of project but Planning permission is required. Planning Application to be submitted following public consultation in early June 2021.	Nov 2020 June 2021
NatureScot	Consultation held between planning officer & engineer in November. NatureScot supportive of project. Main issues are bird nesting and otters. We are committed to carry out surveys as and when required on the project timeline and work within the regulation	Nov 2021

	<p>framework and guidance as regards these species.</p> <p>This may mean altering timescales/ programmes of work to remove/reduce the impact to the environment and in particular these species.</p> <p>The current programme is for construction to be carried out in the winter months, so will avoid bird nesting season. However, if necessary, vegetation can be cleared prior to construction.</p> <p>We have employed Katie Martin as our project Environmental Advisor/ Environmental Clerk of Works (ECoW) during the project. Regular reporting and inspections will become part of the project environmental management.</p>	
<p>SEPA- CAR licence may be required</p>	<p>NatureScot supportive of project. Requirements for SEPA will also be covered under the methodology as outlined above however measures to control activities harmful to the natural watercourses will require to be identified and a Controlled Activities Regulation (CAR) Licence will likely be required. The extent of the risk will be identified once construction materials and methodologies are agreed.</p> <p>SEPA are happy that the Scheme to date will not pose any Flood Risk however will review end May/ early June prior to the Planning Application stage.</p>	<p>Nov 2021</p>

SECTION 5: BUDGET

This can be provided in a separate excel spreadsheet if you prefer. Please delete the example below before completing this form.

5.1		
Budget Heading	Detailed cost	Amount
Boardwalk & Path:	<p>Replacement Boardwalk & Path improvement works between Carnarc Crescent and Railway Crossing Access. Based on 2019 cost estimate. This was costed for path & boardwalk only.</p> <p>Allowance for approx an additional 10.3% contingency due to Covid & Brexit related uplift on contractor & material costs since. <i>(* Refer to note below.)</i></p>	<p>£ 395,000</p> <p>* £40,853</p>
Placemaking items:	<p>Extent of the following will depend on the available budget after the tender return for the Boardwalk and Path works.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lighting column at Carnarc Crescent entrance and lighting studs on path surface. (est. £10K) • Seating (est £5K) • Interpretation sign panel. (est. £5K) • Directional signs on route. (est. £1K) • Directional signs in wider nature reserve/ Merkinch area. (est. £7K) 	£ 28,000
Fees:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction Contract Management • Project Management 	£ 60,000
TOTAL PROJECT COST		£523,853

***NOTE: Without the HCCF grant, this contingency would not be available, resulting in the potential loss of the placemaking element of the project and further engineering cuts from the path/ boardwalk.**

SECTION 6 – MATCH FUNDING

6.1 Please give details of any other funders that will contribute to the project:			
Name	Confirmed Yes/No	Date (month/yr)	Amount £
THC- Planning & Development Capital Programme- Green Infrastructure budget.	Yes	March 21	100,000
Inverness Common Good Fund	Yes	Nov 20	22,500
Inverness Common Good Fund- additional funds -application submitted April 2021 for up to £22.5K. Final amount may depend on results of this HCCF bid. (** refer to not below)	No		** 22,500
Sustrans- Construction Stage 70% Direct Match funding towards project budget	No		366,697
Total £			511,697
Please detail HCCF Grant requested £			12,156
(This should total project costs section 5) Total £			£523,853

**** NOTE:**

There is a current application for an additional £22.5K from the ICGF towards this project. That application is based on the original project budget of £483K. However, this does not include any additional uplift for Covid/ Brexit related costs, which recent construction projects have reported to be coming in from tender approx 10% over budget.

Therefore, even if the ICGF application is successful in delivering the full £22.5K grant, we would still like to pursue this HCCF grant, as it will provide an essential contingency against the risks to the project over the full construction period.

6.2 Will your project involve any “in kind” support?	
YES/NO	No
Please detail:	

SECTION 7 – BUSINESSES AND REVENUE GENERATION PROJECTS

For all business applications or projects that will generate revenue you **MUST** submit a business plan to accompany your application. Please also complete the following:

7.1 Have you had any support from other organisations in developing your project:

Business Gateway	
HIE	
Other (please detail)	

7.2 Have you previously received public funds for your business/organisation?

Yes	
No	

If yes, please provide further details:

Highland Coastal Communities Fund – Application Assessment

File Reference:	87	Applicant Name:	The Highland Council	Organisation Type:	Public Body
Project Title:	Merkinch Local Nature Reserve – Boardwalk & Active Travel	Date application received:	8/5/21	Area Committee:	Inverness

Project Summary			
Total eligible project costs (£)	£523,853	Total HCCF funding sought (£)	£12,156
Percentage HCCF grant intervention rate applied for (%)?	2.3%		
Estimated Start Date	November 2021		
Estimated Finish Date	June 2023		

Application Technical Check			
		Yes-No-N/A	Comments
1	Is HCCF grant requested within the Highland/local thresholds?	Yes	
	Has any work already started/costs been incurred prior to application?	No	No costs that form part of this application have been incurred although a design stage has been undertaken and funded by Sustrans
2	Does the project have to comply with any Statutory Regulatory Requirements?	Yes	
	Are the necessary planning consents/licences in place or applied for?	No	Planning permission due to be applied for in June 2021, pre planning discussion undertaken. SEPA consent and potentially will require CAR licence. SEPA to review flood risk end of May/June. Construction materials and methodologies will need to be known in order to determine the need for CAR licence.
3	Is project activity being proposed, a public sector statutory duty?	No	
4	Is application organisation VAT registered? Has evidence to confirm VAT status been received?	Yes	Highland Council Project
5	Is the proposed activity/project within 5km of coastline or has applicant provided justification of benefit to coastal communities?	Yes	
6	Is the applicant an eligible business/organisation/person? Has	Yes	

	applicant confirmed organisation type and appropriate registration?		
7	Will the project generate revenue? Has the applicant provided a business plan (if required)?	No	Not revenue generating
8	Project fits with the following HCCF priority(ies) - Economic Recovery - Community Resilience - Mitigation of climate/ecological emergency - Rural Depopulation	Yes	Community Resilience
9	Is a full match funding package in place or applied for pending decision (written evidence provided)? If a match funding decision(s) is pending, what is the expected date of decision(s)?	No	
10	Is the application form signed and dated by chair person or equivalent (authorised signatory)	No	Application to be signed off by Philip Shannon on behalf of THC

Assessment Criteria

	Application has demonstrated:	RAG Status	Comments
11	Project Robustness		This is an extremely well developed proposal and the amber status only reflects the fact that not all match funding is formally confirmed (although Sustrans have given written confirmation of their intention to offer 70% match) and that permissions are still required
12	Engagement & Support		Application demonstrates excellent support both from local groups and from other agencies. Footfall counters on site also show the extensive usage of the area and have also shown that there was a 60% increase in this last May during lockdown compared to the previous year, showing the value of the site locally
13	Meeting a Need of Demand/Market Demand		Application demonstrates how much the site is valued and it is clear that there is a need for the works to be undertaken to ensure that access to this area is not lost
14	Legacy & Exit Strategy		As landowner, THC will undertake annual H&S inspections. FMLNR will continue to undertake routine maintenance; however, will be greatly aided in the new construction that is proposed from recycled plastic, which will reduce the works that are required in future and ensure that this will be a long lasting improvement
15	Consideration of equalities issues/impacts		Full equalities impact assessment undertaken as part of the design stage and subsequently updated. This will be updated again following consultation during May/June. Access to the nature reserve is currently limited due to the lack of an all abilities path, which will be addressed by this project.
16	Environmental sustainability		Consultation with SEPA and NatureScot along with Phase 1 habitat survey and tree survey. Mitigation of environmental impacts will be considered throughout construction phase. One aim of the project is to provide an active travel route. Investing in the Nature Reserve provides a safeguard for nature and a place for

			educating the community through the activities of groups such as Friends MLNR, TCV, Wild Things and the local Primary Schools.
17	Value for Money		Sustrans intend to provide 70% match funding for the project therefore an approval from HCCF would release around a further £28,000 match funding. Full tender process to be carried out prior to any works being awarded.
18	Match funding		Confirmation still required of £22,500 from ICGF and formal confirmation of the overall contribution from Sustrans although the fact they have fully funded the design stage and written that their intention is to match fund the project at 70% is considered very positive.
19	Meets Local Priorities	N/A	
20	Additionality		
	Please indicate whether HCCF funding is required to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allow the project to proceed - Increase the scope of quality of the project - Accelerate the implementation of the project 		Confirmation of HCCF funding will also release further match funding from Sustrans and on this basis it is considered that HCCF funding is required in order for the project to proceed, along with potentially increasing the scope/quality of the project.
	Has loan finance been considered? Please explain why loan finance has not be considered a viable option:	No	No revenue generation and therefore not appropriate for commercial finance
Procurement and RoC:			
21	Are all project costs eligible/essential?	Yes	
22	Have the project costs been sufficiently broken down and itemised?	Yes	
23	Have the recommended HCCF procurement requirements been met, where required? If not what steps have been taken to judge whether costs are reasonable?	No	Costs are based on a 2019 cost estimate and a contingency sum has been included to reflect the current market trends showing costs increasing by around 10% due to Covid and Brexit. Full tender exercise to be carried out prior to the awarding of any contracts.
24	Is the applicant is VAT registered, has VAT been removed from eligible project costs?	Yes	THC is VAT registered – check costs exclusive of VAT
25	Has the applicant received previous funding from public sources in the last three fiscal years?	Yes	

Document Checklist		
	Yes-No-N/A	Comments
Expression of Interest	Y	
Application technical assessment checklist	Y	
Most recent bank statement	N	THC Project

Certified financial accounts:	N	
Research / Evidence of need and demand	Y	
Financial statement demonstrating need for public funding (if relevant) (e.g. letter from applicant/bank statements etc.)	N/A	
Complete business plan (If relevant)	N/A	
Evidence of control/ownership of asset	N	Required
Job descriptions (and activity plan) for any post which funding is sought towards	N/A	
May apply:		
Current constitution or articles and memorandum	N/A	
Current committee members or directors' list	N/A	
Permissions – planning, building warrant etc.	N	Project condition
Policies – equal opps Child protection (if relevant)	Y	Available on THC webpages
Written confirmation/evidence of match funding (if available)	N	Some outstanding – project condition
Insurance	N	
Additional:		
Letters of support	Y	
Partnership Agreement	N/A	
Other		

Assessed by:	Name:	Fiona Cameron
I can confirm that I have completed the eligibility checks as set out above.	Date:	11th May 2021

