

Agenda Item	9
Report No	CIA/14/21

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: City of Inverness

Date: 24 May 2021

Report Title: Bught Park Feasibility Study

Report By: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 A feasibility study of the Bught Park facilities has been carried out on behalf of the Council as landowners and the Bught Park Users Group. The study funded by Highland Council and Highland and Islands Enterprise is nearing completion and this report sets out the emerging findings. It is proposed, as reported to Highland Council meeting on 13 May 2021 to include improvement of facilities at Bught Park as part of the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund bid, so it is considered important to garner the views of the members of this Committee on the emerging findings related to this multi-se Council asset.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:-
- i. Consider and agree the emerging findings of the Bught Park Feasibility Study; and
 - ii. Note the inclusion of the Bught Park facilities improvement (refurbishment and/or new build for inclusion within the UK Government Levelling Up Fund bid).

3. Implications

- 3.1 **Resource:** There are no resource implications arising directly from this report. Clearly the need for improvement and enhancement of Bught Park facilities will give rise to consideration within future capital programmes, but these will be subject to the appropriate Governance at that time.
- 3.2 **Legal:** There are no legal issues arising from this report

- 3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural):** Bught Park is a critical resource for both local and Highland communities, and the consideration of future opportunities is seen as entirely positive.
- 3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever:** Any enhancement of facilities will require to be contributing to the Council's response to the climate and ecological emergency.
- 3.5 **Risk:** There are no other risks identified at this time.
- 3.6 **Gaelic:** Any proposal will reflect the strong cultural link to the Bught Park.

4. Background

4.1 This report presents the findings of a feasibility study and options appraisal for the proposed development of facilities at Bught Park in Inverness. This is the centre of the principal area of sports provision in the city and is a key historic base for sports and culture in the city. The research was commissioned by the Bught Park Users Group (BPUG) and The Highland Council and was undertaken between October and December 2020. The main objectives of the research were to:-

- review the existing evidence base to build up a picture of the current standards of Bught Park and its facilities, as well as to take stock of current usage and existing/planned local competing provision;
- undertake consultations with BPUG members and wider stakeholders to better understand views on Bught Park, and their needs and aspirations regarding its future development; and
- develop and appraise a list of development options for Bught Park with a view to arriving at an agreed preferred option.

4.2 Following extensive consultation with user groups a number of options have been developed, which will form the key conclusions of the final report. These can be summarised as follows:-

Option 1 – Do-Nothing

The Do-Nothing option is the counterfactual position and would mean that the project (in any shape or form) would not go ahead. No investment would be made in improving the quality of, and/or extending the provision of, facilities at Bught Park.

Investment in pitch maintenance and safety would continue as it is now. In any options appraisal there is a need to consider the Do-Nothing option to understand whether delivering the project will make a difference compared with not delivering it, and to understand what the impact will be if partners do not deliver the project. It can help to support the case for change.

Following discussion at the reference group, it was recommended that Option 1 should be discounted on the basis that it fails to address an identified need to improve the quality and accessibility of the stadium facilities noted in the Conditions Survey. Current facilities are ageing, not fit-for-purpose and do not meet modern day standards. They will likely only fall into more disrepair if investment continues to be limited and/or done on an ad-hoc basis. Bught Park is a high-profile strategic asset for the city, and the current condition/quality of facilities do not reflect this.

Option 2 - Address Stadium Quality and Accessibility Issues

Option 2 would involve investment in the existing stadium facilities only. This relates to the completion of works identified within the property inspection report that was carried out by Highland Council (2018). More specifically, the report identified the need for the following works to be done:-

- Recommendation for a Suitability Survey, a full Access Audit and a full Fire Risk Assessment.
- General maintenance/repair items noted should be incorporated in the planned maintenance programme.
- Consider upgrading the internal environment of Blocks B (Male Changing) and D (Female Changing) to modernize facilities for user comfort and improve accessibility.
- Install a security and access system (including CCTV) to the site and all buildings.
- Consider upgrading grandstand to improve accessibility, spectator comfort, control access and provision of sanitary / welfare services.
- Upgrade emergency lighting and fire alarm/detection system to Block C.
- Investigate roof void to Blocks B and D for presence of suitable fire compartmentation.
- Investigate source of water supply throughout and install appropriate signage.

Following discussion at the reference group, it was recommended that Option 2 should proceed as a minimum, on the basis that it would address an identified need to improve the quality and accessibility of the stadium facilities noted in the Conditions Survey. The consequences of not carrying out this work could be that in the future, the stadium facilities might not meet statutory requirements which could render the facilities unusable. The Camanachd Association has also identified Bught Park as a priority area for facilities development in its strategy document (i.e. to address poor quality pitch and changing facilities) to grow the sport at all levels and to optimise strategic partnerships. It would also enhance the user and spectator experience.

Option 3 – Extension to Existing Stadium

Option 3 is an extension to the existing stadium structure to create new/additional changing and club accommodation. The intention would be for the facility to then serve as a home to multiple sports clubs e.g. Shinty and Hockey, and could consist of:-

- additional squad changing rooms which would be larger and perhaps of a higher standard than the existing spaces and be used for matches played on the main stadium pitch;
- club lounge/bar/kitchen, medical and social spaces;
- offices for clubs, NGBs and others;
- meeting rooms for club and coach development activities and broader community use;
- accommodation to support events held in the Bught Park; and
- a heritage element which focuses on shinty being Scotland's oldest indigenous game with its main heartland being in the Highlands and its spiritual home being the Bught Park.

Following discussion at the reference group, it was recommended that Option 3 should be considered further alongside Option 4 to establish which option would offer the best solution to providing additional changing and ancillary accommodation. There is preference for either Option 3 or 4 to proceed as by doing so would enhance utilisation and usage of Bught Park and contribute towards its sustainable future. The facilities would provide a home for a number of clubs including shinty, American Football and hockey. The inclusion of enhanced changing accommodation, social spaces, offices for key stakeholders and some space for wider community access and perhaps a shinty heritage space could help to build a more sustainable financial operating model whilst at the same time addressing quality and accessibility issues.

Option 4 – Development of a New Changing and Club Pavilion

Option 4 is similar to Option 3 – the main difference is that the creation of a new/additional changing and club ancillary provision (i.e. see bullet points above) in Option 4 would be accommodated within a new club pavilion that would be separate from the existing stadium building.

Following discussion at the reference group, it was recommended that Option 4 should be considered further alongside Option 3 to establish which would offer the best solution to providing additional changing and ancillary accommodation. However, either Option 3 or Option 4 should proceed, in addition to Option 2, as by doing so would enhance utilisation and usage of Bught Park and contribute towards its sustainable future. The facilities would provide a home for a number of clubs including shinty, American Football and hockey. The inclusion of enhanced changing accommodation, social spaces, offices for key stakeholders and some space for wider community access and perhaps a shinty heritage space could help to build a more sustainable financial operating model whilst at the same time addressing quality and accessibility issues.

Option 5 – Development of a Full Size Floodlit Synthetic Grass Shinty Pitch

Option 5 would involve the creation of a full size floodlit synthetic grass shinty pitch to be located within the boundary of the Bught Park. The facility would create additional capacity and quality playing/training facilities for sports and clubs e.g. shinty, football and American football.

Following discussion at the reference group, it was recommended that Option 5 should be discounted at Bught Park, although efforts should continue to find alternative locations should funding become available.

Option 6 - Full size floodlit synthetic grass football pitch

Option 6 would involve the creation of a full size floodlit synthetic grass football pitch to be located within the boundary of the Bught Park. The facility would create additional capacity and quality playing/training facilities for sports and clubs e.g. shinty, football and American football.

Following discussion at the reference group, it was recommended that Option 6 should be discounted at Bught Park, given the provision of alternative facilities elsewhere in the city.

Option 7 – Events Infrastructure

Option 7 would involve the development of some basic infrastructure that would support the delivery of a programme of events at the Bught Park and help reduce the set up and take down time associated with the event delivery thus minimising the disruption to sports activities e.g. water points, energy points, “drive ways” / hard core tracks.

Following discussion at the reference group, it was recommended that Option 7 should proceed if funding becomes available. The creation of basic events infrastructure allows a programme of events to continue to be delivered. It could also help to ensure that set up and take down periods can be minimised to reduce impact on clubs and sports activities and programmes.

Option 8 - Indoor 4 court tennis centre

Option 8 would involve the creation of indoor 4 court tennis centre to be located within the boundary of the Bught Park.

Following discussion at the reference group, it was recommended that Option 8 should be discounted on the basis that it would encounter planning permission challenges and strong resistance from the community regarding such a development on valued greenspace. It has, however, been identified as a strategic gap in facility provision, and efforts continue to identify suitable locations and funding opportunities.

Option 9 - Indoor athletics centre

Option 9 would involve the creation of indoor athletics centre (70+m indoor straight) to be located within the boundary of the Bught Park.

Following discussion at the reference group, it was recommended that Option 9 should be discounted on the basis that it would encounter planning permission challenges and strong resistance from the community regarding such a development on valued greenspace. It has, however, been identified as a strategic gap in facility provision, and efforts continue to identify suitable locations and funding opportunities.

7. Next Steps

- 7.1 The final feasibility report on Bught Park is yet to be finalised, but this report sets out the broad direction of travel. Members are asked to consider and agree the emerging findings.

As members of the Committee will be aware from the Council meeting on 12 May 2021, it is the intention that the development of the Bught Park facilities should form part of a Levelling Up Fund bid. Members are asked to note that the options identified in the study relating to the building fabric, comprising either improvement of existing facilities and/or the development of additional new-build facilities will be progressed as part of this bid.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment

Date: 13 May 2021

Authors: Malcolm Macleod