

City and Area of Inverness Economic Recovery Sub-Group
Thursday 1 July 2021 at 11:00am

ACTION NOTE

Present:

Cllr Carolyn Caddick (CC); Cllr Duncan Macpherson (DM); Cllr Isabelle Mackenzie (IM); Cllr Janet Campbell (JC); Cllr Jimmy Gray (JG); Cllr Trish Robertson (TR); David Haas (DH), Inverness City Area Manager; Allan Maguire (AM), Head of Development and Regeneration; Stewart Nicol (SN), Inverness Chamber of Commerce; Michael Golding (MG), Visit Inverness Loch Ness; Kevin Murray (KM), Kevin Murray Associates; Rim Chouaib (RC), Kevin Murray Associates; Iain MacPherson (IM), Kevin Murray Associates; Craig Baxter (CB), Planner; Scott Dalgarno (SD), Development Plans Manager

Items		Note/Action Agreed	Action For	Action Undertaken
1.	Appointment of Chair for the Meeting			
		NOTED Cllr Graham Ross' resignation, it is deemed appropriate for the Lead Officer to ensure a Chair for the meeting NOTED JG volunteered to Chair the meeting, there was no contrary view		
2.	Welcome/Apologies for Absence			
		NOTED apologies were received from Provost Helen Carmichael, Cllr Alasdair Christie, Cllr Ken Gowans, Cllr Margaret Davidson, Cllr Alex Graham and Cllr Bill Boyd		
3.	Marketing			
		<p>Michael Golding presented an overview to Members of the opportunities and ongoing work being undertaken by Visit Inverness Loch Ness and Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New campaign 'Inverness See You Soon' went live on social media yesterday with the aim to target people across the UK • LNER Partner Project has a nationwide competition on VILN website. Work is being done with the Director of Communications on this project • VILN have continued to grow on social media, last month reaching 1 million people. This shows the direction of travel they are going in • Work is being done with Visit Scotland on a partner project. Inverness Influencer Lodge is scheduled to take place in September covid travel restrictions permitted • Work is also been done with Lochaber Chamber of Commerce and Visit Highland on a Great Glen marketing campaign with phase 2 scheduled for September this year • VILN have applied for £100K to the Visit Scotland Destinations Fund running from Nov 21 – March 22. Support has been received from Inverness BID, Inverness Chamber, Scotrail, LNER and Inverness Airport • Recognised once schools return after the summer period there could be a real challenge for the sector. To succeed and have a positive recovery people need to know what the Inverness area has to offer. As VILN now have a strong digital presence it is important to ensure the quality of the resource is followed through to when people visit • NOTED MG encouraged Members to support the visibility of VILN and in doing so this will also help support the economy 		

Members comments:

- Cllr Mackenzie advised feedback from some of the Victorian Market Traders is not positive with trade quiet and footfall down. The 'See You Soon Inverness' campaign was encouraged but there was a feeling of imbalance with campers and motorhomes not tending to come into the City Centre leaving the retail sector struggling
- **NOTED** MG advised VILN recognises the challenges facing the city in recovery. Shoppers habits have changes with less dwell time, even though footfall is less people are still spending when they do shop. There is optimism for the Summer period but there is a disconnect seen with Guest Houses and B&B's across the UK, moving into summer it is hoped the overspill will help fill these gaps. Recognised it is hard to predict how the Summer session will go
- **NOTED** DH reassured Members work is ongoing to support Traders and the campaign by BID and VILN will help support this further
- CC highlighted the opportunity that is people are coming into eat it needs to be ensured they are aware of the shops to allow more dwell time. CC also encouraged the promoting and marketing idea of Workcations
- **NOTED** MG advised Inverness is well positioned with main transport hubs and low-priced accommodation. Workcations is an untapped market with massive excess capacity. There is significant room availability that needs to be tapped into between busy Summer periods and challenging winters
- DM suggested signposting and influencing local people to areas that aren't as busy during the busiest periods. DM also emphasised the need to let people know booking in advance is usually required now due to restaurants having to follow covid guidance
- **NOTED** DH advised there have been discussions with Business Leaders across Highland and feedback shows people are still coming to the Highland area with NC500 being one of the more popular destinations. It is recognised COVID is still making people reluctant to book. It is hoped the Street Food Trail starting in August will help encourage some people back into the Centre
- CC commented given the HSE guidance regarding the Ledge Climbing Wall planning application, are we comfortable that we are permitted to establish a campervan site, within the gas facilities danger area
- **NOTED** DH confirmed there has been consultation with planning and the location of facilities has not caused concern. Campervan facilities will be in place towards the end of August. Difficulty in obtaining construction materials has caused delays. This will allow daytime usage only
- The Events and Festivals Working Group is working at pace to get a programme for the near future

4. Inverness City Area Branding update

DH advised Members that Kevin Murray Associates update on the branding and those following from Council officers on city transport strategy and on the City centre Masterplan are all part of the effect in establishing a place plan for the city. This is all integral and will be joint together going forward but thought a great opportunity to get Members opinions at present. This will culminate in planning for a report to City Area Committee in due course

Kevin Murray Associates gave an overview and update of the Masterplan following on from their previous meeting with Members and the feedback provided:

- Feedback from workshop one gave encouragement to take key themes forward. Interviews were carried out with some sectors which helped refine the strategy goals and content. A further second workshop was then undertaken to establish the scope and alignment. Place, Destination, Economy and organisation were all looked at
- It was recognised many issues were already identified with themes, strategies and projects already in place.

		<p>There were other elements linking across or had connections. The key message that came out of this was there is a lot happening but how can it be joined up</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An overview of the 3-part positioning strategy rethinking Inverness was given. Step up to raise the city aspirations, performance and contributions. Shape up to strengthen distinctive place quality, offer and experience. Join up to enhance collaboration and support, promotion and celebration • Moving forward there needs to be stronger 'beating heart' approach for the City to make people want to grow and invest in businesses • Recognised the importance of positioning the castle right once complete and then aligning everything else • Members were encouraged to feedback any views with plans to finalise the strategy over the next few weeks <p>Members Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JG highlighted the issues of tension between Inverness and outlying areas. Eden Court is important in moving forward and it needs to be promoted as its important for the whole of Highland. JG also encouraged links into heritage as this is important to maintain • CC supported JG comments around surrounding areas and emphasised that Inverness is the 'beating heart' that can help improve things for all • CC queried the timescale of launches for the Park and Ride or if this will all be done as one • NOTED CB confirmed these park and ride areas are likely to be one at a time due to the broad-spectrum • SN commented that it is important with timing the launch of the castle right. Concerns were also raised around engagement with the city and wider business community, as it was felt important to have businesses buy into all the projects and they are not engaged with enough • NOTED AM invited SN to feed in any ideas on the best way to engage with the Business Community as he is keen to involve them as much as possible with the masterplan to widen and ensure ideas from the business community marry together • ACTION: Officers are to go away and come up with a communication plan to ensure the message is out there. Plan is to present this to next meeting • ACTION: SN agreed to meet with AM and DH to develop ideas of how to engage with Businesses and agree to come up with ideas. • NOTED DH confirmed Officers are aware liaison with businesses is crucial to this. CARG is the first point of contact as direction of travel is currently at the early stages, once there is a clear position there are plans to go out to the Business Leaders. Officers are listening to what has been instructed by CIAC and once ready and collated and there is an understanding of capacity of plans to deliver a strong vibrant city in Highlands, engagement with the business community will be done. It is recognised challenging at present as this cannot be done in person with restrictions • IM agreed to comments made around communication and networking but highlighted there is usually a lack of communication with feedback and there is a need to engage with a wider group as CARG doesn't always tap into all the different sectors. Suggestion was made for a public panel to be involved • Recognised following engagement carried out by KM there now needs to be careful follow up on how to deliver what comes next for the city centre masterplan and how to present this as a package of complementary work stream strategies so this can be brought to CIAC and link in with the local development plan to work across all sectors • It is not enough just to coordinate, there needs to be aims for the city to reinforce a stronger role with ambition 	<p>SN/AM/ DH</p>	
5.	Update on Master Plan			

		<p>Allan Maguire advised Members consults are still working on the Masterplan and the timescale for the draft is early next week. There is a wide ranger of ideas being put forward. The work done on the Transport Strategy and City Branding are to be pulled together to ensure they are interlinked</p> <p>ACTION: AM to present plan at next CARG meeting prior to public consultation. Consultants to be present to advise of detailed report and ensure tied with other ongoing works</p>	AM	
6.	Transport Strategy			
		<p>Craig Baxter gave Members an overview and update on the transport strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding has been secured to look at the transport strategy • Looking at ways for the Highlands to be less dependant on cars. It is recognised there will be always be a need in rural areas, but a balance needs to be struck. The aim is for people in the centre to have more available ways of accessing the centre than driving • Economic recovery and the long term 20-year vision is being looked at. Inverness is the hub of the region so it needs to be established how this will work for transport • Consultation hasn't yielded a lot of resistance and a report will be going to CIAC in November • Phase 1 of the bus partnership plan has been successful this will allow for some quick wins • Public transport needs to be more readily available and made priority to become more attractive to get people out of cars • Park and Ride now has funding which will allow this to be looked at and taken forward <p>Members Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JG queried the possible option of linking in with the road plans beside Caley Stadium and the lank use near that side of the city • IM highlighted the importance of recognising not everyone can walk or cycle into town. Some are also reluctant to use transport since covid 		
7.	Key Strategic Projects			
		<p>David Haas update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Victorian Market redevelopment is progressing within budget. challenges have been faced with services. Stripping out has been complete and reconstruction is now to begin. There has been interest in the new units and there are now active negotiations ongoing with some parties which are local suppliers • Town House works are nearing completion with the car park soon to be returned to public use <p>Allan Maguire updated on the key City Centre Projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academy Street former Farmfoods has been handed over • Church Street housing project is progressing well • Barron Taylors/Union Street work is going well. There has been some press around the regeneration works ongoing and the effect it is having on the streetscape. • Castle Project is out for tender for the main construction. Enabling works are complete • Recognised there will possibly be challenges with new builds and regeneration projects going forward due to shortages in construction materials • Close work has been done with BID who are pleased with the way the demolitions have been carried out. Challenges have been faced with store deliveries, taxis and blue badge holders but these have been managed in a fair way 		

		<p>Members Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members recognised these scaffolding works show progress and that something is being done so these short-term challenges will provide more gain in the long term JG suggested possible press release regarding complaints around scaffolding NOTED SN is willing to comment and address in August Courier on construction issues. ACTION: SN to work with DH/AM on this SN queried the old college site and if there are any plans in place. It is thought UHI are still confirming the short-listed bids ACTION: AM to raise this with UHI and respond to SN 	SN/DH/ AM	
8.	Notes of Previous Meeting/Matters Arising			
		It was AGREED the notes of the previous meeting were an accurate record. There were no further matters arising.		
9.	Date of Next Meeting			
		It was AGREED the next meeting is to be scheduled for Mid-August as this will be a good opportunity to advise and update Members prior to CIAC	LM	