

Agenda Item	14
Report No	CP/32/21

## THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** Communities and Place

**Date:** 31 August 2021

**Report Title:** Recycling Improvement Fund (RIF) Update

**Report By:** Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place

### 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides Members with an update on the Scottish Government's new Recycling Improvement Fund reported to the previous Committee meeting. Seven expressions of interest (EOI) were submitted to meet the first timescale of 19<sup>th</sup> May 2021 within the 5-year programme. All submissions were viewed positively and subsequently one full application for funding has been submitted to date. The others will be submitted for future consideration at timescales agreed with Zero Waste Scotland (ZWS) and as stage 2 bids are developed.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to Note:
- i. the fund is a five-year programme of £70m and it will operate on a rolling basis for new EOI and stage 2 applications from local authorities;
  - ii. seven EOIs were submitted to address levelling up, alignment with recycling improvements already planned and in support of new national recycling requirements expected, totalling over £7.6m;
  - iii. positive feedback from ZWS with all EOIs meeting the criteria for the next stage;
  - iv. that one stage 2 application was submitted within the two-week deadline for the first round of submissions for extending the garden waste service to accommodate housing growth in East Inverness and Nairn;
  - v. work will continue to develop stage 2 applications for the remaining projects and these along with any new EOIs will involve further Member briefing and reports;
  - vi. a Member workshop on route optimisation is planned prior to the next Committee meeting in November 2021. This is part of the waste transformation project.

### **3. Implications**

#### **3.1 Resource implications**

Part of the objectives of the Recycling Improvement Fund (RIF) is to provide financial support to Local Authorities to help with aligning the waste collection service to the revised Code of Practice under the Household Recycling Charter. This is currently the only source of funding for significant new recycling developments. Any new capital resource for recycling from the RIF may have revenue implications, particularly where this means new service delivery. This will be quantified for each project to ensure affordability and sustainability. However, it should be noted any revenue costs associated with additional recycling would also see a reduction in disposal costs elsewhere.

3.2 The first bid to proceed to stage 2 is to extend the garden waste collection service associated with housing growth in East Inverness and this is an income generating service, supporting new service delivery costs. In addition, work continues on route optimisation to identify the most efficient route for waste collections. Early engagement has taken place with Trade Unions on the route optimisation project. As optimised routes are identified there will be further engagement with staff and Trade Unions. This approach can help make service development affordable and sustainable, including any new services supported by the RIF. A member briefing on the route optimisation project will be planned for prior to the next Committee meeting in November 2021.

#### **3.3 Legal implications**

The RIF aims to support waste and climate change legislations and directives by increasing recycling rates and levelling up recycling services.

#### **3.4 Community implications (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island)**

The public show high satisfaction with refuse collection and recycling facilities and they are regarded among the most important services provided to the public. If successful in gaining funding the Council will be able to improve recycling services further, particularly in areas where services could be levelled up especially in rural and remote communities. There is scope for partnership working with 3<sup>rd</sup> sector and community bodies in recycling developments.

#### **3.5 Climate Change / Carbon Clever implications**

Any increase and/or improvement achieved in the quality of recycling reduces the effect of greenhouse gas emissions. The fund is there to support the transition to net zero emissions from waste by 2045. There is a strong case for the Council to be supported given our performance on recycling compared to other Councils, the rural challenges we face and the levelling up of service communities could benefit from within the region.

#### **3.6 Risk implications**

The recycling fund does not provide an allocation to each local authority. Funding will be made based on the quality of the EOIs and applications made. It will be competitive. There is a risk of the Council not being successful with stage 2 applications or any new EOIs. This will be mitigated by strong submissions and taking advice from Zero Waste Scotland.

3.7 If the Council is not successful in accessing funding, there is a risk that the Council's current performance on recycling rates and greenhouse gas emissions will deteriorate further. This will affect our relative performance as compared to other Scottish Councils in 2019 we:

- generated the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest amount of household waste per person (0.53 tonnes per person compared to a Scottish average of 0.44);
- had the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest rate of household waste going to landfill at 51.2%;
- had the 5<sup>th</sup> highest level of emissions per person (at 1.26 TCO<sub>2e</sub> compared to a Scottish average of 1.04 TCO<sub>2e</sub>) with 297,898 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emitted in 2019; and
- recycle less (41.3% of household waste compared to a Scottish average of 44.9%).

3.8 If the Council is not successful in accessing funding, there is a risk of public dissatisfaction. Feedback from the Council's Citizens' Panel (2019) shows Refuse/bin collections are ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> most important service and recycling facilities the 5<sup>th</sup> most important service. While we enjoy relatively high satisfaction with recycling facilities and refuse/bin collection, with 70% and 67% net satisfaction rates respectively and both services have been in the top 7 of most satisfaction with Council services for the previous 5 years, there is a risk that this positive feedback is not sustained if we are unable to refresh and improve recycling services. The importance of climate change action is increasingly reported.

### 3.9 Gaelic implications

If new services are developed, signage would be refreshed to include Gaelic language in keeping with Council policy.

## 4. **Progress with applying to the Recycling Improvement Fund**

- 4.1 The background to the five-year rolling Recycling Improvement Fund (RIF) administered by Zero Waste Scotland (ZWS) was explained in the [report](#) to this Committee in May 2021. The report also described the objectives of the RIF, the funding availability, eligibility and assessment criteria and the process for applying.
- 4.2 The type of potential service developments to include on EOIs was included in the previous report to Committee. By 19<sup>th</sup> May 2021 seven EOIs were submitted. They include where levelling up services would provide benefits, where there would be alignment with improvements already planned and underway as well as future developments linked to national policy. This includes the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) from 01 July 2022 and the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) from 2024<sup>1</sup>.
- 4.3 The EOIs submitted are summarised below. In total the value of the EOIs submitted is £7.616m.
- **Expansion Garden Waste Collection** – to accommodate considerable household expansion in East Inverness and Nairn by procuring fleet and bins (£320k).
  - **Expansion of Food Waste collections** – additional fleet to cover Nairn 2022/23, Mid and East Ross 2023/24 and Fort William 2024/25. Timing aligned to new waste transfer stations modifications needed. This would increase food waste collections to half of all Highland households. Plus trialling a new collection method for other areas using refuse collection vehicles (RCVs) with food pods in 2025 (collected alongside other waste) and aligned with the vehicle replacement programme (£881k in total).

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<sup>1</sup> Further guidance on how these and the Household Recycling Charter are to be implemented is awaited.

- **Improvements to Bring Facilities** – 10 further Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) recycling points in rural locations (£15k), additional textile banks to fill gaps in rural locations (£15k), additional recycling containers (1100l wheeled) for the Small Isles and Knoydart (£10k).
- **Community Composting** – purchase 5 vessel composters in each of 4 years for remote rural locations and near to hospitality and food production businesses (£100k p.a., £400k total). Partnership with Keep Scotland Beautiful and it is proposing a fund to encourage local community sector organisations to come forward too. Scope to link with the Service’s community food growing and larder project.
- **Household Waste Recycling Centre Improvements** – improved signage, more separation of materials, installation of compaction units, training of site staff and introduce a mobile recycling centre (articulated lorry with stillages and segregated containers) visiting multiple locations each month (total £590k).
- **Kerbside Collections – Alignment with Household Recycling Charter Code of Practice** – introduce twin stream recycle collection (collected 4 weekly with paper and card separated from cans and plastics) and reduced waste volume in smaller container (collected fortnightly) where food waste collections are provided. 2023 purchase bins for Inverness and Inner Moray Firth, 2023 purchase bins Fort William, 2025 onwards upgrades to rural transfer stations for twin stream recycle and new bins. Communications with householders. (Total bid £5.3m).
- **Technology based solutions** – introducing Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) at Inverness HWRC and in-cab devices and back-office licenses to monitor quality of recycle and kerbside collections and replace paper-based systems currently in use. (Total bid £85k).

4.4 Submitting an EOI is not an application for funding and does not commit the Council to anything. It does enable the fund administrator (Zero Waste Scotland) to provide feedback and advice prior to any funding application being invited. EOIs and stage 2 applications are to be invited at regular intervals, so there will be further opportunities for the Council to submit new or alter existing EOIs over the programme period.

4.5 An EOI is required to highlight the following factors which means they are important to whether an application for funding will subsequently be invited:

- Nature of proposal
- Impact on material quality
- Impact on recycling rate
- Impact on waste arisings
- Potential Carbon Savings
- Additional benefits of changes
- Timescale of project
- Indication of cost

- Status of Member approval
  - Alignment with Household Recycling Charter (where applicable)
  - Alignment with other Scottish Government & Local Government Policies (e.g. DRS)
- 4.6 The initial feedback from Zero Waste Scotland regarding the EOI submissions is positive. The submissions have been accepted as meeting the criteria for proceeding to the second stage.
- 4.7 For the first round of stage 2 applications only 2 weeks-notice was provided. An assessment of which bid could be developed in time and with the greatest impact was made, leading to a submission for the expansion of the garden waste service. As noted above, any revenue costs associated with additional recycling would also see a reduction in disposal costs elsewhere. This is an income generating service so would meet our affordability criterion without adding a pressure to the revenue budget. It is also a service expansion that can be implemented at pace and for 2022, supported by the work underway on route optimisation.
- 4.8 Through a continued dialogue with ZWS, the remaining projects highlighted in paragraph 4.3 and potentially any new projects will be programmed over the fund period. The funds available in Year 1 of the national programme are reported to be £16m. The waste team will continue to work to develop these bids and brief Members including through Ward Business Meetings.
- 4.9 Members will continue to be updated on progress with RIF stage 2 applications and EOIs.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place

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