

Agenda Item	5
Report No	NC/16/21

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Nairn and Nairnshire Area Committee

Date: 15 September 2021

Report Title: Place Based Investment Funds – Proposed Funding Allocations

Report By: Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 Following on from the budget agreed by Highland Council in March 2021, a £100,000 Place Based Investment Fund was allocated to each Ward for the 2021/22 financial year. This fund is intended to enable a flexible local response to address the four harms of Covid which are identified as direct health harms; health impacts not directly related to Covid; societal impacts and economic impacts.
- 1.2 Early discussions with Local Members at Ward level have identified a range of opportunities for spend against the Place Based Investment Fund for the Ward. This report asks the Committee to agree the budget allocation outlined in the report and to note the marker for future spend.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
1. Consider and agree the proposed allocation of Place Based Investment Funds as follows:
 - Direct funding award to Green Hive to support the development of the Seaman's Hall Community Hub Project - £25,000
 - Towards play area provision - £10,000
 2. Consider and agree the proposed sums to be ringfenced for the following areas of work:
 - Towards the development of accessibility projects within the ward led by the Nairn Access Panel - £10,000

- Towards projects to improve health and wellbeing outcomes, to be led by the Community Partnership - £5,000

3. Note that work is underway to explore allocating the remaining funding to the development of motorhome infrastructure and to support the development of Town Centre projects and that proposals will be brought for consideration to a future meeting of this committee.

3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource implications – it is proposed to allocate £35,000 and ringfence a further £15,000 of the £100,000 Place Based Investment Fund for Nairn.
- 3.2 Legal implications – Funding will be made to external groups and/or other Council services in line with the Scheme of Delegation and grant guidance. Further reports will be brought back to this committee to agree the funding the ringfence monies and to consider proposals for motorhome infrastructure and Town Centre projects.
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) impacts – The proposed allocations have been based on discussions with partners and the community and specifically supports a number of priorities identified by the Community Partnership. The proposals include an aim to promote health and wellbeing outcomes through improving outdoor space and the accessibility of outdoor space for all.
- 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever implications – There are no specific climate change implications however the Green Hive Community Hub project has a series of aims which include specifically addressing climate change and developing sustainable activities.
- 3.5 Risk implications – the main risk identified relates to the allocation of funding for play equipment. New play equipment will in time require maintenance and repairs and at present resources are extremely limited for this. The future maintenance burden can be mitigated, if not entirely eliminated, by Amenities staff ensuring that any new equipment is low maintenance and uses standard parts but also taking a broader approach to play and regarding play areas as social spaces for all age groups with less focus on play equipment and promoting natural play around existing features or features constructed out of standard materials (timber etc).
- 3.6 Gaelic implications – There are no specific Gaelic implications.

4. Background

- 4.1 As part of the Health and Prosperity Strategy agreed through the 2021/22 budget process, £2.1m was approved for distribution through Area Committees to support local responses to address the four harms of COVID (direct harm caused by COVID; other health impacts; societal impacts and economic impacts) and consider local investments to support recovery. £100,000 per ward was agreed.
- 4.2 Discussions with communities and partners have highlighted two key strands for investment of funding – Well-being investments with a particular focus on addressing health and societal impacts of covid and investment in local infrastructure to stimulate economic growth and address economic impacts of the pandemic. With these, several priority project areas for potential spend of this funding allocation:

Wellbeing Investments

- Green Hive Community Hub project
- Play areas
- Accessibility projects
- Initiatives to promote health and wellbeing outcomes

Investment in infrastructure

- Development of motorhome provision
- Projects supporting Town Centre development

- 4.3 This report outlines current proposed allocations, proposed ringfenced allocations for certain projects to come forward with detailed proposals to a future committee and areas for potential future investment where development work is still required, and which would also come back to a future meeting for consideration.

5. Proposed Funding Allocations

5.1 *Green Hive*

Green Hive and the Seaman's Hall Trustees propose to develop the current hall into a new community hub. The aim is to provide a wide range of activities but also a route to opportunities to volunteer, escape isolation, skills development, preparation for work and for some, ultimately find employment.

- 5.2 The following summarises the key purposes of the venture outlined by Green Hive and Seaman's Hall Trustees. The full proposal from Green Hive is set out at appendix 1.

- **Meeting place** –
 - *a warm and welcoming place for volunteers and local community groups to get together, reconnect and discuss ideas and projects over a coffee*
 - *a place where public sector partners can engage with the community, perhaps running advice or information "clinics".*
 - **Seaman's Hall:** *a lounge space in the main hall would serve this meeting place and creative movable wall dividers would enable flexible use of the space for different groups. The kitchen offers an ideal gathering space for a relaxed kind of community "cafe", while the outside space looking onto the river would provide a calming complement to the indoor venue.*
- **Education** – *we will have staff, volunteers and printed materials on hand to advise local people on what can/cannot be recycled and encourage people to "do their bit". **Seaman's Hall:** this could be in the form of information boards on the walls of the main hall as well as a digital zone in the main hall for people to access the internet free of charge. We would make our litter picking kits, growing kits available for people to take immediate action to improve the river and green spaces in Nairn*
- **Heritage** - *we envisage a heritage group, involving trustees of the Hall and representatives of Nairn Museum, recreating the story of the Hall and Fishertown, providing "story boards" around the walls of the premises and creating resources to stimulate the involvement of schools, dementia support organisations and intergenerational projects.*
- **Demonstrations/Activity Organisation** – *we would look to show people how recycled materials are turned into new items in-store and/or organise demonstrations at our local workshop. The hub could also be a meeting point and space to organise other activities such as litter picking, tackling invasive species in the river and beach cleans. **Seaman's Hall:** Using the hall space we would provide indoor activities themed around*

environmental protection and hire the space to local groups to support and facilitate their activities.

- **Social/Arts evenings** – *a space to complement the local community centre by providing Arts evenings, Arts classes, exhibitions and social gatherings. **Seaman’s Hall:** Building on our relationship with Nairn Book and Arts, WASPS, Eden Court and other arts groups we would host evening events and festival events which are art themed*
- **Community Larder** – *by working with a local baker, we would redistribute unused food at a discount or for free within the local community. This would not be a food bank but would again entice people into the hub and provide an outlet to prevent food going to waste. **Seaman’s Hall:** The community kitchen could be a productive making space for food, such as soups and fruit juices but the larger hall could also include a community larder element*
- **Retail** – *enabling us to generate additional income for the charity through the sale/hire of recycled volunteer-made goods, eco-friendly transport, local produce from our Community Orchard etc. **Seaman’s Hall:** this could take place as a ‘patio cafe’ at the front of the building selling teas, coffees and fruit juice from the community orchard. As well as a retail space inside as part of the larger hall.*
- **E-bike and beach wheelchairs:** *We have just launched the hire service for the community of our e-bike and trailer. We have secured funding to buy more e-bikes and rent these out to the community. Additionally we are supporting Nairn Access Panel on a beach access platform and for the purchase of beach wheelchairs so people with disabilities can access the beach. **Seaman’s Hall:** The patio area out front would have bike racks installed allowing for the safe yet visible storage of our fleet of e-bikes for hire which would be stored in the internal storage during the evening along with the beach wheelchairs.*
- **Recycling** – *we would provide recycling bins for people to deposit their irregular recycling e.g. become a Terracycle centre. **Seaman’s Hall:** As part of the internal storage as well as the secure external storage we would install a plastics recycling service which community volunteers would support the upcycling of plastics into park benches, clocks and other products at our community workshop*
- **Volunteer Recruitment** – *provide a space for potential volunteers to see what we do and to sign up and get involved. We will be able to offer people the chance to engage and to pick up opportunities to engage at our commercial workshop in Balmakeith. **Seaman’s Hall:** we believe in the power of volunteering and would be targeting new volunteers to engage in Seaman’s hall particularly those from harder to reach groups in the town who do not traditionally volunteer.*

5.3 The project is currently in phase one which involves agreeing the terms of a memorandum of understanding and establishing a steering group including representatives of the Hall trustees and applying for funding for phase two. Phase two represents the development phase and preparation of a business plan by consultants, architect drawings and submission of a planning application. It is estimated that the costs for this phase to be between £25-30,000.

5.4 It is intended that the business plan and associated development work in phase two will inform a detailed funding plan for the acquisition, adaptation and running of Seaman’s Hall and to be able to make submissions for grants and sponsorship on this basis.

5.5 It is proposed to allocate £25,000 towards the work being undertaken by Green Hive to develop a community space in the Seaman’s Hall. This award would be subject to the Council’s normal grant conditions.

5.6 *Play Areas*

Members are aware of the importance of play in the lives of children and their families and the benefits to their well-being of having quality accessible equipment. The impacts of Covid have been felt across the age ranges so this important investment will provide opportunities for active recreation. Funding will be prioritised in line with discussions with amenities officers and implemented by Council staff. There is an aim to take a broader approach to play and regarding play areas as social spaces for all age groups with less focus on play equipment and promoting natural play around existing features or features constructed out of standard materials (timber etc). This will help to develop a more sustainable approach to play provision. Members are eager to encourage community involvement in the improvements and opportunities for community funding where possible to further enhance the investment and create sustainable play provision.

5.7 It is proposed to allocate £10,000 towards play provision in the ward to be delivered by the Council's amenities team.

6. **Proposed Ring-Fenced Allocations**

6.1 *Accessibility Projects*

Work has been ongoing, led by the Nairn Access panel, to develop a number of accessibility projects across Nairn. This is a key priority of the Nairn and Nairnshire Community Partnership. The main focus of this work is to develop wheelchair access to the beach and through portable ramps in town. Funding is already in place to take forward a feasibility study, with contribution from the Nairn Ward Discretionary Budget. It is proposed to ringfence £10,000 of the area Place Based Investment Fund to contribute towards the realisation of this project, particularly in relation to path improvement works. Once a proposal is fully developed, this will come forward to a future meeting of this committee to formally allocate this funding.

6.2 *Improving Health and Wellbeing Outcomes*

A key priority of the Nairn and Nairnshire Community Partnership is improving health and wellbeing. This is part of the revised outcomes and priorities for the partnership and connects to key other priorities related to improved spaces and places. The partnership has been asked to consider potential projects and a proposal will come forward to a future meeting of the committee.

7. **Potential Future Areas for Investment**

7.1 Ward Members have identified two key areas for potential investment related to improving local infrastructure to stimulate economic growth. These are:

- Delivery of motorhome infrastructure – this has been identified as a key priority locally in order to better manage the increasing number of motorhomes visiting the town and provide key waste facilities. A feasibility study is already underway in order to identify potential viable locations for this type of provision. The feasibility study is due to be completed in the coming months and the findings will inform how best to progress this project.
- Town Centre Development – work is ongoing to develop a strategic partnership to focus on economic improvements to the town under the auspices of the Community Partnership. Key partners including BID and HIE are involved in this development. It is proposed to work through the partnership to explore key priorities and determine how best the Place Based Investment Fund could support Town Centre Development.

7.2 A report on future spending allocations will be brought forward to future meeting of the Nairn and Nairnshire Area Committee.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place

Date: 31 August 2021

Author: Emma Tayler, Acting Ward Manager
Alison Clark, Head of Service (Community Support and Engagement)

Appendix 1: Green Hive Seaman's Hall Proposal

Seaman's Hall, Nairn
"A centre of good for the whole town"¹

This is a request for funds to enable Green Hive (formally known as Nairn River Enterprise) to engage development consultants to prepare plans for the adaptation of Seaman's Victoria Hall and a 5-10 year business plan for the development of its use by the community under Green Hive's management. Both the Board of Green Hive and the trustees of the Hall are in agreement on the principles of the long-term plan outlined here and are in the process of preparing a memorandum of understanding to that effect.

This document sets out what the longer-term plans are, outlines in four phases the broad timetable on which they will be delivered and the currently estimated costs for each phase.

This request is for funds to cover Phase II, the Development Phase, currently estimated at between £25,000 and £30,000. This estimate is based on experience in relation to previous contracts; in Muir of Ord for the development phase of the Muir of Ord Hub; our own experience in commissioning a feasibility study of premises and waste diversion options in Nairn; and other development commissions we are aware of across the Highlands in the past 5 or 6 years.

We estimate consultant fees for the preparation of a business plan at an average rate of £350-425 per day. We believe this will require approximately 30 days of consultant time. In addition, we estimate the fees for architect appraisal, proposal, drawings and planning application to be in the order of £13,000-£15,000

If a grant of £25,000 can be made available from Highland Council's Ward funds, Green Hive will seek any supplementary funding required to meet the legal and consultancy outcomes sought.

Nairn River Enterprise registered in 2015 as a company limited by guarantee: SC521561 and a charity registered with OSCR in 2017: SC047727
Bank: Cooperative Bank, PO Box 250, Delf House, Southway, Skelmersdale WN8 6WT; account number 65790313; sort code 08-92-99

web: <https://www.hub.greenhive.co.uk/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/NairnsGreenHive>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/workshopgreenhive/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/NairnsGreenHive>

¹ Ex-Provost Mackintosh, Seaman's Victoria Hall AGM, 1890

The Plan for Seaman's Victoria Hall

As the Covid-19 pandemic gradually comes under control, this is a plan for how the trustees of Green Hive and the Seaman's Victoria Hall would like to create a vehicle for Nairn's recovery, establishing fresh purpose for a building with proud local heritage and capitalising on the community impact and support of a respected local charity. Seaman's Hall was described in 1890 as a "*centre of good not only to the lower part of the town but ...to the whole town*", but has been struggling to fulfil its original purpose in recent years. Green Hive is an environmental charity with a robust track record of successful engagement and collaboration with volunteers and partners in the community.

This plan envisages the establishment of a new community hub at Seaman's Hall which not only offers a wide range of activities in itself but also provides a route to opportunities to volunteer, escape isolation, to do good for the community, learn new skills, prepare for work and for some, ultimately find employment. Through these activities, the hub will provide the town with a substantial route to achieving effective climate action, making Nairn **Net Zero Nairn**. The hub will achieve this because of the public sector stakeholders who support and use it, because of Green Hive's experience in engaging volunteers in activities which benefit the town and its environment and because it will provide a vital link to work and the local economy through Green Hive's Balmakeith recycling workshop (which is to be expanded to 7-day use) as well as to local business partners.

Priorities for Nairn

The recovery objectives for the town are becoming ever clearer through consultations and dialogue with the Community Planning Partnership, Highland Council, NHS, HIE and others and this plan for Seaman's Hall can make a significant contribution to their delivery. Here, for example are the priorities identified by NHS Highland for the third sector:

1. Activity and services to improve social connectedness, including those which tackle loneliness and social isolation.
2. Community development which promotes cohesion and collaboration in, and building resilience for, local health and wellbeing needs. (Local being a defined community, geographic or thematic)
3. Activity and services that support vulnerable individuals to live well within their community, including those that promote independence and living longer within community settings.
4. Activity and services that support people with long term health conditions to live well.
5. Activity and services which promote and support volunteering and community led approaches to health and wellbeing

Similarly, here are priorities set out by Highland Council in its recovery planning:

1. Community measures to tackle inequality and poverty (particularly acute in two SIMD areas of Nairn)
2. Recruitment and job retention to help young people and prevent out-migration
3. Climate change and carbon clever measures

For the Nairn and Nairnshire Community Planning Partnership a key priority is its Place making theme, which takes inspiration from the Scottish Government's place based funding drives and Highland initiatives in other areas. A particular concern is to build sustainable recovery from the ground up through partnership with the third sector, capitalising on existing skills and capacity rather than introducing untested initiatives.

The Space - Seaman's Victoria Hall.

Seaman's Victoria Hall is a community "hub" designed and built in the 19th Century which was intended to provide a space in the town which all could access and make use of. Although a place built upon the aspirations of the population of Fishertown, it opened as a place for the residents of all of Nairn. For many years it successfully fulfilled this function but in recent decades has struggled to find ways of appealing to the community. Activity there has diminished and prior to COVID-19 it was primarily used as an indoor bowls club (with falling and aging membership), Polling Station and occasional space for Book & Arts Festival exhibition. Since the first lock-down there have been no activities there. The trustees of the Hall are exclusively volunteers and describe themselves as aging with little prospect of recruiting "new blood". They have begun seeking advice on transferring their ownership of the Hall to an alternative charity better placed to take forward their original objectives and with support and advice from HTSI, HIE and local councillors have decided to take this forward with Green Hive.

Space maker - Green Hive

Green Hive was formed as Nairn River Enterprise in 2015 and became a charity in 2017. It began as an entirely volunteer run group and has expanded in the intervening years as it has reached further into the community and now has three employees and a workshop base in Balmakeith. For more than two years Green Hive cut its teeth in the old Links School, using studio space there to test and develop its first "mini" community hub. We relinquished the studio after the advent of COVID-19 restrictions, taking much of our activity on-line.

When Green Hive started its programme of activities and workshops, we could never have predicted the direction, diversity & development that lay ahead. This is all due to the volunteers investing in our projects, our skilled and committed volunteer board of directors giving fantastic support to our staff, partnerships and collaborations with more than 40 organisations and the community of Nairn getting on board with Green Hive and our values. Everyone involved has taken real pride in looking after Nairn's green spaces and working together to come up with local solutions to global environmental issues.

In terms of activity, in total from March 2018-March 2021, we held 178 workshops/events, with 789 volunteers giving Green Hive 2716 hours of their time. So, during this time we have built a strong foundation of local volunteers and, as a community-led organisation, we have also been able to substantially bolster the skills and expertise in our Board, recruiting three new members in the last year. The combination of strong community involvement, a strong volunteer board and an effective staff team means that we are well placed to sustain and expand our community engagement for years to come.

What Seaman's Victoria Hall can mean for Nairn

The importance of Seaman's Victoria Hall for community heritage and its prominent location on Harbour Street will provide a high profile for the community, volunteering and environmental opportunities available through Green Hive to Nairn townspeople and beyond. Our e-bikes being stored by day outside in the patio area streetside and the extended meeting/community cafe space on a riverside terrace at the rear of the building will draw people to the hall.

The Hall and its activities will act as a feeder to Green Hive's Balmakeith workshop, offering a broad spectrum of opportunity. The workshop collects, processes and re-purposes waste plastic using original techniques focused on artistic creativity as much as on commercial production. In 2020 alone, despite Coronavirus, volunteers gave more than 700 hours to help establish the workshop, make more than 70 unique items from 100% recycled waste plastic, distribute 160 plastic recycling education packs and diverted more than 2.6 tonnes of plastic from landfill. This provides scope for volunteering, training, employability and employment, ultimately producing long-use decorative objects from discarded single-use plastic. We have developed an approach which enables us to offer placements for trainees, capacity to scale up production and hire time to outside providers to run their own educational workshops.

The hub will serve many purposes (some of which are yet to be discovered!) and will provide opportunities for:

- **Meeting place** –
 - a warm and welcoming place for volunteers and local community groups to get together, reconnect and discuss ideas and projects over a coffee
 - a place where public sector partners can engage with the community, perhaps running advice or information “clinics”.
 - **Seaman's Hall:** a lounge space in the main hall would serve this meeting place and creative movable wall dividers would enable flexible use of the space for different groups. The kitchen offers an ideal gathering space for a relaxed kind of community “cafe”, while the outside space looking onto the river would provide a calming complement to the indoor venue.
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Our plan to establish Seaman's Victoria Hall as the heart of Net Zero Nairn

Our plan is divided into four phases, following the initial work we have done with the Hall Trustees. This is set out in tabular form in appendix A.

Phase I: Initiation is the current phase, during which we will instruct lawyers and agree the terms of a memorandum of understanding, establish a plan and steering group including representatives of the Hall trustees, apply for funding for Phase II and commission consultants and architects to help deliver Phase II. We are in discussions with HIE regarding the funding of the legal costs and additional advice regarding the transfer of ownership.

Phase II: Development. This is the Phase for which we are currently seeking funding. The consultants will deliver the outcomes on which we will brief them

- collaborate with Green Hive on conducting market research (among other things to assess demand for and income from activities like those identified in the section above)
- collaborate with Green Hive on engaging the community on possible uses of the Hall and design options for its adaptation
- produce options for the repair and adaptation of the building.
 - Hall Trustees have conducted a comprehensive building audit and made careful estimates of costs. These are of considerable assistance and will be taken into account
 - Hall trustees have identified heating as inadequate and inefficient. Green Hive has experience of raising funding from Zero Waste Scotland for the installation of a ground source heat pump and other adaptations at its Balmakeith workshop and will ensure this approach is incorporated
- prepare final drawings on which a planning application would be drafted and, where required, submit an application for planning consent

Phase III: Fundraising.

With the benefit of the consultants' reports, building and business plans, Green Hive will be in a position to put together a detailed funding plan for the acquisition, adaptation and running of Seaman's Hall and make submissions for grants and sponsorship on this basis. This phase will overlap with the closing stages of the consultant's work in Phase II during which time Green Hive will develop discussions with potential funders. We estimate at least 7 months will be needed from starting on this phase to reaching completion.

Estimated costs: unknown. Green Hive has expertise in this area, both on its board and in its staff group and is supported by an award winning specialist on a sessional sub-contract basis.

Phase IV: Transfer of ownership.

In this phase we estimate that around 4 months will be needed to complete the building works currently anticipated on the basis of the Hall trustees' audits and to achieve recruitment of the required additional staff.

