

Agenda Item	9
Report No	DSA/006/22

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Black Isle Committee

Date: 15 February 2022

Report Title: Place Based Investment Funds –
Proposed Funding Allocations

Report By: Interim Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 Following on from the budget agreed by the 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 identified initial priority areas for spend against the Place Based Investment Fund for the Ward. At Area Committee on 16 November 2021, Members agreed to (a) invest £20,000 in Mental Health and Wellbeing, (b) invest £25,000 in play parks and open spaces, (c) to invest £25,000 to establish a grant fund for investment in community-led projects and (d) allocate £30,000 to Support Sustainable Economic Recovery. It was agreed that proposals to take forward this latter commitment would be considered at the February Committee.
- 1.3 This report asks the Committee to agree a proposal to deliver against the Support Sustainable Economic Recovery priority.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to consider and agree the proposed allocation of Place Based Investment Funds as follows:
- (a) **Black Isle Partnership – Development of Local Place Based Plan: £30,000.**

3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource implications – The resource implications are set out in the report. The proposals outlined would allocate the remaining monies from the Black Isle Place Based Investment Fund.
- 3.2 Legal implications– there are no legal implications. It is required that the companies awarded funding will follow legal procurement process and or can demonstrate current, legal, financial and employment practices.
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) impacts – The allocation of funds to support local community led projects and activities will enable activities and services to be directed in ways that promote improved use of outdoor and public spaces, reduce societal impacts, improved mental health and well being, building community capacity and supporting local economies and improved mental wellbeing.
- 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever implications – Investment in play parks and open spaces and environment both rural and urban will go some way to enjoying the outdoors and encouraging walking and cycling rather than car travel.
- 3.5 Risk implications - risks are mitigated as the projects will be delivered by established experienced community organisations using the Highland Council’s standard grant criteria/process.
- 3.6 Gaelic implications – There are no specific Gaelic implications.

4. Background

- 4.1 As part of the budget setting process, a Place Based Investment Fund was created for 2021/22 allocating £100,000 to each Ward across Highland. The aim of this Fund is to address the four harms of Covid:
 - Direct health harms; to people’s health through contracting the virus.
 - Health impacts not directly related to Covid; a wider impact on health and social care due to the impact on services and how people can or maybe cannot use these services.
 - Societal impacts - as a result of the measures put in place to slow the spread of the virus this could lead to increased feelings of isolation or anxiety and impact on the wellbeing of individuals. It is also noted how different groups of the population have been adversely impacted by the pandemic – younger people and older people.
 - Economic impacts – how the economy has been impacted by the pandemic including employment and income for individuals.

5. Investment in Sustainable Economic Recovery

- 5.1 The Black Isle Committee on 16 November 2021 approved an allocation of £30,000 towards Sustainable Economic Recovery addressing how the pandemic has impacted on the economic recovery – including tourism, training and employment. Committee agreed an allocation of £30,000 towards this aim with a proposal for delivery to be considered at the next Black Isle Committee.
- 5.2 A call for potential proposals was made to community development organisations across the Black Isle. One application was received. A summary of the proposal is set out below.

6. **Black Isle Partnership – Development of Local Place Based Plan Proposal**

6.1 **Background**

Black Isle Partnership is an experienced private Company Ltd by Guarantee who in Spring 2021 produced a draft strategy for a self-reliant Black Isle. This was based on survey results from over 100 respondents.

6.2 Throughout the Pandemic the Black Isle Partnership worked closely with the Black Isle Community Resilience Groups, taking on many roles including - securing funding, fund management, employing and managing a temporary part time Community Resilience Co-ordinator who worked closely with The Highland Council's Humanitarian Assistance Centre. The BIP also helped to co-ordinate emergency response activities and facilitated in partnership a weekly conference call with community volunteer groups, Community Councils and The Highland Council's Black Isle Councillors and Officials.

6.3 **Objectives of the Black Isle Partnership**

- a. To provide, in the interests of social welfare, facilities for recreation and other leisure time activity available to the public at large within the Black Isle, for improving their conditions of life.
- b. To relieve poverty among the residents of the Black Isle.
- c. To advance education and to promote training programmes and opportunities for the benefit of the residents of the Black Isle, particularly among young people and the unemployed.
- d. To promote and /or preserve the environment for the benefit of the general public.
- e. To promote trade and industry for the benefit of the general public.
- f. To provide or assist in the provision of housing for people in necessitous circumstances within operating area.
- g. To promote, establish and operate other schemes of a charitable nature for the benefit of the community within the Black Isle.

6.4 **Project Proposal – Local Place Plan for the Black Isle**

The Black Isle Partnership propose to utilise the funding to develop a local Place Plan for the Black Isle. Black Isle Partnership (BIP) will manage/co-ordinate the process, which will be carried out by a specialist contractor. Competitive Tenders will be invited through advertising. The brief will clearly state that the process must demonstrate full consultation across the Black Isle with Community Councils, voluntary groups, charities, Mid Ross Community Partnership, businesses, individuals and statutory partners.

6.5 The BIP outline a number of factors which make the need for a pan-Black Isle Local Place Plan critical at this time:

- The pandemic has changed the way people view their local area. It has highlighted the importance of community and the fact that we are dependent on one another for support.
- The establishment of The Highland Council's Black Isle Area Committee. This is aligned with a drive from Local and National Government to divest more decision-making powers and finance to local areas.
- With Local Government Election in May 2022 - A local Place Plan will enable the Black Isle Ward to identify priorities and give a strong focus for the next five years.
- The Climate Emergency. The Highland Council has declared a Climate Emergency. However, local residents are confused about what this means for them and, more importantly, what they can personally and collectively do in response. For over ten years Transition Black Isle have alerted people to the future impacts of climate change and initiated a range of projects to mitigate them e.g.'s local growing schemes, community markets, active travel. Through a local Place Plan more ambitious projects could, and should, be agreed and implemented e.g. carbon reduction in housing, heating and food consumption etc.

- Economic Development. Looking beyond the pandemic there has been much talk of 'not going back to the way things were before' and 'building back better'. By placing the climate emergency at the centre of place planning it is implicit that projects which support a circular economy are the only viable option. The concept of the 20-minute neighbourhood needs to be embraced and this will have significant positive benefits for the local economy in terms of jobs and employment.

6.6 The proposal highlights the that there is renewed energy and concern that communities should be doing something and that this should start from a grass-roots level, taking a bottom-up approach. The proposal aims to build on existing initiatives happening locally but creating a shared plan outlining local priorities. The proposal aims to address the four harms of Covid but with emphasis on economic impacts. It will help identify how specific projects supported by Black Isle communities can be taken forward for the benefit of all.

6.7 The development of the plan would aim to build on the work the Partnership has already undertaken on Self-Reliant Black Isle and other local plans and strategies – namely the Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan, the Black Isle Tourism Strategy, the Knockbain Community Action Plan.

6.8 **Delivery**

It is proposed the funding will be used to appoint a part-time Project Co-ordinator to service the programme and its outcomes and to appoint a consultant who will deliver a local place plan. Duties of the co-ordinator will include:

- managing the tendering process;
- calling and recording partnership meetings;
- collating and updating information of all stakeholder organisations;
- liaising with the Place Plan organisers.
- The Co-ordinator will work on business development for BIP to support the outcomes of the Place Plan, and also provide support to BIP partner organisations in their funding and engagement activities as required.

6.9 The tendering process for the Place Plan facilitation will be managed by a Steering group. Members will be selected from the community partnership group that has met regularly since March 2020. It is made up of individuals from the seven Community Councils, the newly-formed Black Isle Parent Council, as well as other representative development groups, business community and statutory partners and organisations.

6.10 Throughout, the PAS guide for Local Place Plans will be used as reference: [Local-Place-Plans-Guide-PAS-Approach.pdf](#)

7. **Assessment**

7.1 The Proposal from the Black Isle Partnership demonstrates a commitment to the community leading a Place Based approach to the Black Isle area. A Place Based approach supports developing a vision and direction of travel for resourcing and investment whilst providing economic benefits.

7.2 Through the production of a local Place Plan it is envisaged that more people will be engaged and empowered in the local decision-making process. Encouraging new community activists to come to the fore and broaden the range of volunteers already committed to shaping the future of the area. The process itself will foster a deeper understanding of collaboration and strengthen the concept of partnership.

- 7.3 The proposal and proposed approach from the BIP supports the Council's Place Based Framework, agreed at Council in December 2022. It will be important that the BIP also works with wider public sector partners in the development of the plan.
- 7.4 Future projects benefiting the Black Isle as a whole will be identified, and ranked in terms of public support and deliverability, with recommendations on which ones should be prioritised going forward. Having a Place Based Plan will enable the Black Isle to be in a stronger position to attract external funding.
- 7.5 The Proposal also includes appointing three mentees – to observe the process and develop knowledge/skills for future community facilitation processes. It is anticipated that these individuals will play a significant role in the development of projects recommended by the Place Plan therefore providing a legacy for the future.

8. Management of Funds

- 8.1 The funds allocated in accordance with the report will be managed by the Ward Manager in accordance with the Council's grant scheme.

Designation: Interim Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place

Date: 10 February 2022

Author: Diane Agnew, Ward Manager

Background papers: Place Based Investment Fund Operational Guidance; P

AS guide for Local Place Plans will be used as reference:

[Local-Place-Plans-Guide-PAS-Approach.pdf](#)