

Agenda Item	5
Report No	ERA/17/22

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Easter Ross Area Committee

Date: 8 November 2022

Report Title: Place Based Investment Funds – Update

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 with underspend carried forward into 2022/23. Discussions with Local Members at Ward level identified play as a key priority for spend under the Place Based Investment Fund for the Wards. In addition, allocations were also agreed to support other priorities including to support key toilet facilities, active travel and for small community grant funding streams to help communities address the harms of covid.
- 1.2 This report provides Members with an update on progress with the projects and initiatives supported by the Place Based Investment Fund in Easter Ross.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked:
 - I. To note the update on Place based Investment Funds in Wards 6 and 7

3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource – resource implications are set out in the report.
- 3.2 Legal – projects being delivered by Highland Council Services will meet all legal requirements, working within procurement frameworks. Projects being delivered by communities will make use of the existing Ward Discretionary application forms and process to ensure good governance and oversight.

- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) – The allocation of funds to support local communities will enable activities to be directed in ways that promote equality and tackle the harms of Covid. The allocation of resources to support improved play areas will also support strong communities with access to good quality play opportunities and improved mental health and wellbeing. There is significant investment proposed into play areas in some of the most deprived areas of Easter Ross. The proposed community grant schemes will support local communities to meet the needs in their communities and address the harms of Covid. This will also strengthen local communities.
- 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever – There are no specific climate change implications but cycle track improvements in the Cromarty Firth Ward will support active travel.
- 3.5 Risk – there are no identified risks as projects will either be delivered in-house within the known budget or will be provided as grants to established organisations using the standard grants criteria / process.
- 3.6 Gaelic – There are no specific Gaelic implications.

4 Background

4.1 The Place Based investment fund was discussed at Easter Ross Area Committee in February 2022 and the following allocations were agreed:

4.2 Ward 6 – Cromarty Firth

Play Provision Investment

- Investment in play park provision in Novar Crescent, Evanton - £10,000
- Investment in play park provision Milnafua, Alness - £10,000
- Investment in play park provision Westford, Alness - £10,000
- Investment in play park provision Shillinghill, Alness - £10,000
- Investment in accessible play equipment, South Lodge Primary School - £5,000

Infrastructure improvements

- Investment in the Evanton, Alness, Invergordon cycle path to support Active Travel - £15,000
- Provision an automated locking system for Alness toilets to prevent ongoing vandalism issues - £3,000

Community Development Support

- Support to Invergordon Social Club for a Feasibility Study to consider their future development to ensure sustainability - £20,000
- Creation of a community grants funding stream for community groups to apply for grants of up to £5,000 for projects to address one or more of the four harms of Covid - £14,500

Total = 97,500 (£2,500 was previously allocated to the provision of Nigg Ferry)

4.3 Ward 7 – Tain & Easter Ross

Play Provision Investment

- Investment in play park provision in Pinewood Crescent Tain - £2,500
- Funds required to make a new Chain for the Tain Links chain climbing wall - £850
- Investment in play park provision at Chapel Brae, Portmahomack –£5,000

- Investment in play park provision at Woodlands Drive, Milton and at Milton MUGA - £28,000
- Investment in play park provision at Redspur Gardens, Fearn - £2,000
- Investment in play park provision at Cameron Place, Nigg to provide landscaped play, - £2,000
- Investment in play park provision At Balintore (Abbotshaven Junior and Senior - £3,300
- Investment in play park provision at Hilton Seaside- £2,000

Community Development Support

- Contribution of £5,000 to the refurbishment of Seaboard Harbour Toilets
- Provision of a small grants stream of £46,850 to address the harms of Covid open for applications of up to £10,000

Total = 97,500 (£2,500 was previously allocated to the provision of Nigg Ferry)

5 Update on Cromarty Firth Place Based Investment Proposals

5.1 Play Provision Investment - £45,000

A priority for the Cromarty Firth ward was investment in play park provision to upgrade and improve facilities across the ward and particularly some of the most deprived areas. An update against each area for investment can be found outlined in table 1 below.

It is important to note that there have been significant challenges in processing the planned improvements. This has been primarily due to a combination of delays in receiving equipment orders and installation delays due to staffing shortages from external contracts. The commitments remain and will be progressed in each location as soon as practicable.

Table 1

Area of Investment	Update November 2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Novar Crescent, Evanton - £10,000 to provide a twinwall pipe, climbing ramp, grass matting, a rope bridge plus landscaping and planting. 	Twin wall pipe; Climbing Rope; grass matting; rope bridge /steel posts most items have been delivered. Landscaping, planting and boulders can only be ordered when we are ready for installation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milnafua, Alness - £10,000 for a 2-seat swing set, climbing boulder and landscaping. 	2 seat swing set and MUGA basketball rings have been ordered and delivered.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shillinghill £10,000 for an inclusive roundabout with appropriate surfacing or similar. 	Inclusive see-saw and ancillary items have been ordered. Delivery expected in late November or early December
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Westford, Alness - £10,000 to provide springy tops, a giant's causeway steps, 2 climbing boulders plus grass matting, and landscaping. 	2No springy toys have been ordered. Landscaping and boulders can only be ordered when we are ready for installation. Grass matting ordered and awaiting installation.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Lodge School – contribution to school provision of accessible play as part of a £13,000 project to develop accessible play including a wheelchair accessible platform at the base of one of the playground trees £5,000. 	<p>An update will be provided up committee</p>
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5.2 **Infrastructure Developments**

Evanton- Alness- Invergordon Cycle track - £15,000

The funding provided was to support maintenance and improvement work on the cycle track to enable it's continued use as a key active travel route. Planning for works is underway and a further update will be provided to Members when a timeline is known.

5.3 **Cromarty Firth - Alness Toilets – £3,000**

Funds had been allocated from the PBIF to put in place an automated locking system for the toilets in Alness. However, the site has experienced vandalism on an ongoing basis and is currently closed. The installation of the locks will not stop the vandalism and if the locks are installed and get broken, there is a risk of someone getting stuck inside the building. Officers recommend the site remains closed in the short term and further engagement is held with community groups with the aim of the community taking over the running of the site. The Council would commit to paying any group interested a monthly comfort scheme payment. It is recommended the funding is retained whilst this option is explored.

5.4 **Community Development Supports**

Invergordon Social Club Feasibility study - £20,000

Invergordon Social Club was awarded the £20K from PBIF to enable a feasibility study to be undertaken to inform a new business model. Due to the pandemic, the club have experienced a significant drop in income and recognise that they are not able to continue indefinitely as they currently are. The group provide an important role in the community currently, but the study will also consider how they can best address issues around loneliness, isolation and general wellbeing.

The Community Support Co-ordinator has worked alongside the group and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, to support them to become a formal charity, thereby opening further funding routes going forward.

A consultant has been appointed to develop the feasibility study, ERS consulting, and community engagement work has commenced. The research will then be utilised to prepare reports to highlight the community's wants and needs and the steps required by the Social Club to meet these, including the feasibility.

5.5 **Small Grants Budget - £14,500**

With the remaining PBIF funds for Cromarty Firth, a community grants fund was created for community groups to apply for grants of up to £5,000 for projects to address one or more of the four harms of Covid. Table 2 outlines the grants approved to date. £794 remains and the Community Support Coordinators based in Easter Ross will continue to

promote the funding opportunities to local groups and provide support with the development of projects and applications.

Table 2

5.5 Cromarty Firth Small Grants - £14,500

Group	Project	PBIF Contribution
Evanton Social & Events Group	Recreational area upgrade	£1,000
Alness Comm Association	Purchase of gazebos to support community based outdoor events	£4,738
Cromarty Firth Env Group	High St. Benches	£1,893
A1 Community – Alness Foodbank	Purchase of a portacabin and generator as temporary location of a foodbank until the hall is redeveloped	£3,200
West End Residents Associations	Social inclusion events for children, young people and families	£1,375
Kensal Club	Supporting lunchclub and outings for older people to reduce social isolation and loneliness	£1,500
Total		£13,706

6 Update on Tain and Easter Ross Place Based Investment Fund Proposals

6.1 **Play Provision Investment - £45,650**

A priority for the Tain and Easter Ross ward was also investment in play park provision to upgrade and improve facilities across the ward. An update against each area for investment can be found outlined in table 3 below.

As highlighted at section 5.1, it is important to note that there have been significant challenges in progressing the planned improvements. This has been primarily due to a combination of delays in receiving equipment orders and installation delays due to staffing shortages from external contracts. The commitments remain and will be progressed in each location as soon as practicable.

Table 3

Area of Investment	Update November 2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of a new basket swing in Pinewood Crescent Tain - £2,500 	Basket seat installed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funds required to make a new Chain for the Tain Links chain climbing wall - £850 	New chain net complete and installed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of new equipment at Chapel Brae, Portmahomack - £5,000 towards a total project cost of £15,000 with the remaining £10,000 covered by the Covid Response Funds repurposed for play equipment and agreed at the November Area Committee. 	Orders and work on hold pending outcome of Community Council meeting with Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment in play park provision at Woodlands Drive, Milton (to include general maintenance and 2 additional items to be agreed subject to local consultation (£20,000) and at Milton MUGA (general maintenance and additional drainage (£8,000) – total £28,000. 	Amenities are in consultation with the community group as to what they would like to purchase for Woodlands Drive play park. Exploratory drainage works have been undertaken and drainage works are programmed over the winter.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment in play park provision at Redspur Gardens, Fearn - £2,000 	All items have been ordered. Works are due to start Monday 7 November to remove unit and ready site for Nigg unit to be installed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment in play park provision at Cameron Place, Nigg to provide landscaped play - £2,000 	This work has been programmed over the winter period.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment in play park provision at Balintore (Replacement grass matting at Abbotshaven Junior and a new aerial rotator top Senior) - £3,300 	All Items have been delivered and awaiting installation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment in play park provision at Hilton, Seaboard - £2,000 	Awaiting quote for shredded rubber.

6.2 **Community Development Supports**

6.3 Balintore Harbour Toilets - £5,000

The PBIF awarded £5,000 to Seaboard Memorial Hall to support the completion of the refurbishment of the Balintore Harbour Toilets. This was part of a wider project funded by Coastal Communities funds but due to increased costs, a further contribution was required to enable completion of the project. The work is now complete.

6.4 Tain & Easter Ross – Small Grants Scheme - £46,850

With the remaining PBIF funds for Tain and Easter Ross, a community grants fund was created for community groups to apply for grants for projects to address one or more of the four harms of Covid. Table 4 outlines the grants approved to date which total £42,101. £4,749 of the fund remains.

Table 4

Group	Project	PBIF Contribution
Kilmuir & Logie Easter Action & Development Group (Kale)	Mercat Munchies	£1,140
Cromarty Firth Men's Shed	Delivery of community based sessions to address social isolation and loneliness and delivery of training to build capacity	£9,500
Milton Woodlands	Purchase of tools to support path redevelopment and access for wider community	£4,585
Seaboard Cares	Funding to support addressing social isolation and loneliness through community activity	£500
CCAST	Funding to continue variety of community support initiatives in Tain including benefit advice and food bank	£9,779
CCAST	Assistance with Mansfield Hub community space	£9,950
Tain Youth Café YMCA	Warm Space Pilot Project	£6,647

Designation: Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place

Date: 31 October 2022

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