

Agenda Item	7
Report No	CC/03/23

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Caithness

Date: 6 February 2023

Report Title: Community Regeneration Fund – Assessment of Applications

Report By: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 Community Regeneration Funding is an umbrella term for a number of funds that are available for communities/organisations to access in Highland. It comprises the Highland Coastal Communities Fund and the Place Based Investment Programme, both of which are Scottish Government Funding streams to support economic regeneration and sustainable development in Highland. Area Committees are awarded devolved allocations according to approved formulae and decision making on which projects should receive funding sits with elected Members.

Within Caithness, the following allocations are available for distribution:-

- Highland Coastal Communities Fund (capital/revenue) - £398,650
- Place Based Investment Programme (capital) - £153,360

Total funds available - £552,010

1.2 Broad eligibility criteria for the fund is as follows:-

All projects are expected to be able to meet at least one of the following priorities:-

- economic recovery;
- community resilience;
- mitigating the impact of the climate/ecological emergency; or
- addressing the challenges of rural depopulation

Projects should be able to demonstrate that they are:-

- sustainable/viable;
- providing value for money;
- providing additionality;
- able to evidence local support/local benefit; and

- able to evidence positive impacts for coastal communities and/or the coastal economy;

1.3 In summary the position in Caithness at Area Committee on 6 February is as follows:-

- Available Funding – £552,010
- Number of applications for consideration – 16
- Total value of grant requests - £556,612.11

One existing HCCF and PBIP supported project (Wick Toilets) has requested an uplift of funding due to cost increases creating a shortfall in the funds available to deliver the project. A verbal update on the detail of this request will be provided at the Committee meeting.

1.4 To aid Members in their decision making, the following appendices are provided to this report:-

- **Appendix 1** - Application form for each project; and
- **Appendix 2** - Summary spreadsheet of applications for consideration including RAG status from technical assessment

Technical assessments and the RAG status are based on the application form and supplementary information provided during the application process.

2 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:-

- Consider** all applications presented for funding and agree whether to approve, defer or reject the application. An approval of funding should detail the amount approved and outline any conditions of funding that Members wish to attach to the approval over and above the required technical conditions. A deferral would allow an applicant to resubmit the current application at a future date with updated information or for the project to be approved subject to further funding becoming available. A rejection would mean that the application will not proceed and any future application to the fund should be brought forward initially as a new expression of interest;
- Agree** which applications should receive a funding award from CRF up to the value of the available area allocation; and
- If there is a balance of area funds remaining, **consider** the request for an uplift of funding to project HCCF221 – Wick Toilets and award an additional approval of funding up to a maximum of £150,000

3 Implications

3.1 **Resource** – Caithness has available funding of £552,010. Applications under consideration total £556,612.11 and one existing project has requested an uplift of funding of around £150,000 (exact figures to be provided verbally at the Committee meeting). If applications approved exceed the funds available, the Committee will need to undertake a prioritisation process to agree the funding awards.

3.2 **Legal/Risk** – When managing external funding it is imperative that the risks to The Highland Council are assessed/mitigated and any back to back grant award letters

with third parties, and financial claims management protect The Highland Council financial and reputational interests.

- 3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural)** – Community Regeneration Funding is available to all areas within Highland for distribution by Area Committee. The focus of the funding is economic recovery and community resilience. Consideration on issues relating to equalities, poverty and rural issues are dealt with on an individual basis for applications and covered in the technical assessments of project
- 3.4 **Climate Change/Carbon Clever** – Mitigation of the climate/ecological emergency is a specific aim of the CRF funding. All applicants are required to evidence environmental sustainability as referenced in the technical assessments
- 3.5 **Risk** – When managing external funding it is imperative that the risks to The Highland Council are assessed/mitigated and any back to back grant award letters with third parties, and financial claims management protect The Highland Council financial and reputational interests.
- 3.6 **Gaelic** – Consideration given within individual project applications in line with HC policy.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

Date: 20 January 2023

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Background Papers: Appendix 1 – Project applications
Appendix 2 – RAG status summary sheet