

Agenda Item	6.
Report No	SCC/04/24

The Highland Council

Committee: Sutherland County Committee

Date: 23 January 2024

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 elements of the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund along with 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 Sutherland the following allocations are available for distribution in 2023/24:-

- Highland Coastal Communities Fund (capital/revenue);
- Place Based Investment Programme (capital); and
- UK Shared Prosperity (separate capital and revenue allocations)

Total funds available - £715,561.61 (this is a mix of capital and revenue from the individual funding programmes above including some underspend from previous years allocations).

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; and
- able to evidence positive impacts and wide community benefit

1.3 In summary the position in Sutherland at Area Committee on 23 January 2024 is as follows:-

- Available Funding – £715,561.61
- Number of applications for consideration – 16
- Total value of grant requests - £653,452.11

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

- **Appendix 1** – Project application forms; and
- **Appendix 2** – RAG Summary Spreadsheet

RAG status on key criteria is based on the application form and supplementary information provided during the application process. All applications presented are technically eligible – if any criteria are marked as red this does not indicate an eligibility concern but reflects the quality of information provided or outstanding requirements that will require technical conditions to be applied to any award of funding.

2 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:-

- Consider** the applications presented 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** the approved CRF grant award for each application up to the value of the available area allocation; and
- If there is a balance of funding remaining, **agree** to ringfence remaining grant within the 2023/24 allocation to deliver area priorities identified through work to develop an area-based plan, subject to full applications being brought to a future committee meeting for consideration.

3 Implications

3.1 **Resource** – Sutherland has available funding of £715,561.61. Applications under consideration total £653,452.11 therefore, there are no resource implications in approving the funding award as requested.

3.2 **Legal** - 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, Rural and Island)** - The focus of the funding is economic recovery, regeneration and community resilience. Consideration on issues relating to equalities, poverty and rurality are dealt with on an individual basis for applications and covered in the technical assessments of projects.
- 3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever** - Mitigation of the climate/ecological emergency is a specific aim of the CRF funds. All applicants are required to evidence environmental sustainability as referenced in the technical assessments.
- 3.5 **Risk** - A balanced approach to risk is necessary when disbursing grant funds as sometimes it is necessary if a community led project is to proceed, to forward grant payment. Factors such as past knowledge of and project experience of the grant recipient, release of funds related to invoices/works completion certificates etc are considered in such assessments.
- 3.6 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** – No risks arising directly from this report. Risks within projects are identified and managed on a project-by-project basis by the applicant organisation.
- 3.7 **Gaelic** - Consideration given within individual project applications in line with the Council's policy.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

Date: 8 January 2024

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Background Papers: None

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Project Application Forms
Appendix 2 – Project Technical Assessments – RAG Summary

Appendix 1 - Project Technical Assessment - Sutherland RAG summary spreadsheet 23 January 2024

Ref No	Organisation	Project title	Project description	Strategic Objective	Total project cost	Grant Requested	Project start date	Project end date	Match funding confirmed (Y/N)	Outstanding consents/permissions (Y/N)	% rate	Project Robustness	Engagement & Support	Meeting a need/demand	Legacy & Exit Strategy	Equalities issues/impacts	Environmental sustainability	Value for Money	Match funding	Meets Local Priorities	Additionality	Score	
2129	Lairg & District Community Initiatives	Ferrycroft Playpark Development	LDCI intend to install a new 'all-abilities' children's playpark on land adjacent to Ferrycroft Visitor Centre. LDCI aims to create a facility that will meet the needs of all of the community, including children with disabilities. It is hoped that the development will be the first stage in improving the wider Ferrycroft site to ensure it is a focal point in Central Sutherland.	Addressing causes of rural depopulation	£ 125,454.24	£ 60,000.00	01/04/2024	30/09/2024	Partial	N	48%	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	3	3	27	
2133	Golspie Golf Club	Climate Mitigation Water Management Project	It is recommended that groundwater abstraction system should be installed to ensure a reliable source of water supply to manage the golf course as identified within the options appraisal report. The effects of climate change has introduced a range of challenges that are directly impacting the operation of the golf course and threaten its long-term sustainability. Drought conditions are being experienced annually leaving the club with no option than to find a solution to this issue.	Tackling the climate emergency and working towards net zero	£ 19,885.00	£ 18,765.00	04/03/2024	24/06/2024	Y	Y	94%	2	2	3	3	2	2	3	3	2	3	25	
2162	Strathnaver Museum	Exploring the Archives	Following Strathnaver Museum's recent £2.2m refurbishment, there is increased capacity to host professional and co-curated exhibitions. Working with artists, the project will explore topics relevant to the community using items in the museum's collection to create new professional artwork and exhibitions. A series of workshops and programme of events will be developed targeting young people via the schools and providing opportunities for local people to engage with the arts supporting health and wellbeing initiatives in the area.	Increasing community resilience	£ 34,663.20	£ 5,755.20	01/03/2024	31/12/2024	N	NA	17%	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	27
2166	Assynt Development Trust	Lochinver Glebe housing design stages 4a & 4b	The overall aim is to build around 30 affordable housing in Lochinver. This is a phased project, and it is currently in the design/planning/technical phase of the development complying with the various RIBA stages before construction. This application is a follow-on phase of the currently CRF funded stage 3 works. Phase 4a and 4b will see a building warrant, road construction consent and the procurement exercise for the first 10 houses in preparation of the construction phase.	Addressing causes of rural depopulation	£ 164,026.00	£ 90,000.00	01/02/2024	01/07/2024	N	Y*	55%	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	27
2182	Durness Community Group	Durness Play Park	Purchase and install new equipment for the currently situated play park on School Road, Durness including picnic tables and benches. The aim is to make the park an inclusive environment for children of all ages and abilities. The site is within close proximity to Durness Primary School and nursery and would be used on a daily basis by the local children and from the surrounding area.	Addressing causes of rural depopulation	£ 114,355.60	£ 56,899.01	01/03/2024	30/06/2024	Y	N	50%	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	29
2183	Helmsdale Heritage and Arts Society (Timespan)	People's Mobile Archive	Seeking funding to support the second phase of the People's Mobile Archive (PMA) project, a social well-being initiative aimed at addressing social exclusion, loneliness, and isolation in Helmsdale and rural and remote Sutherland communities. The project specifically focuses on improving the well-being of older individuals living in isolated rural areas, coastal regions, as well as vulnerable groups and refugees resettling in the area. The PMA will utilise Timespan's diverse and socially relevant heritage collections of over 12,000 items to provide well-being services, resources, activities, and events that foster connections and promote a sense of community belonging. This project is built on the successes and outcomes of the pilot that ran between 2022-2023.	Increasing community resilience	£ 64,773.00	£ 31,964.00	01/03/2024	01/03/2025	Y	NA	49%	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	29	
2188	Assynt Development Trust	Development Officer Post	Continuation of 1 x full time equivalent (or 2 x part time) Development Officer posts working on a range of projects in the area.	Increasing community resilience	£ 36,000.00	£ 21,600.00	01/03/2024	31/03/2025	N	NA	60%	2	2	3	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	24	
2190	Brora Development Trust	Development Officer	Brora Development Trust requests funding from CRF to fund the continuation of a full time Development Officer beyond the current funding period which is the end of March 2024. Full time post 35-hour a week and will have additional line management responsibilities. The Trust has a work plan in place for 2023-2026 with a robust portfolio of programmes under 5 thematic headings: Community; Social; Economic; Environment and Placemaking. The work plan is delivered currently by the Development Officer and a part time Visitor Information Officer.	Helping economic recovery and sustaining growth	£ 48,163.00	£ 29,163.00	01/04/2024	31/03/2025	N	NA	61%	2	2	3	2	2	3	3	2	2	3	25	
2191	Brora Development Trust	Visitor Information Point Officer	Brora Development Trust requests funding from CRF to fund the continuation of a Visitor Information Officer beyond the current funding period. This post will increase to full-time. The Visitor Information Officer will be responsible for delivering and completing projects in line with the organisation work plan, developed on findings of a community consultation. The Information Officer will be responsible for managing the visitor information point, developing income generating opportunities and be involved with the 'press pause initiative' which will identify short- and long-term tourism projects.	Helping economic recovery and sustaining growth	£ 33,750.00	£ 20,250.00	01/04/2024	31/03/2025	N	NA	60%	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	2	2	3	24	
2193	Assynt Development Trust	Administrative Staff Post	To create a new part time post to cover administrative duties, to relieve workload pressures on the voluntary board and development officers. This post will ensure that good governance, financial management and communication will continue to be provided for the Trust with an opportunity to renew some organisational policies and procedures.	Increasing community resilience	£ 13,600.00	£ 9,600.00	01/03/2024	31/03/2025	Y	NA	71%	3	2	3	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	26	

2194	Dornoch Heritage SCIO	Historylinks Heritage Hub – Community Programme	The Community Programme will be run from the newly built Heritage Hub, currently under construction. The aim is to encourage residents to see the Hub as a resource through offering a range of opportunities to experience and enjoy heritage, such as storytelling, using recordings and music, workshops on traditional crafts, creating their own work and exhibits. The goal is to foster well-being and a strong sense of belonging especially for the more vulnerable members of the community. To implement the Community Programme, funding is being sought to appoint an Engagement Officer, offer support and training to project volunteers with some capital costs to host workshops and events.	Increasing community resilience	£ 28,155.00	£ 18,985.00	01/03/2024	01/03/2025	N	NA	67%	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	2	2	3	26
2201	Go Golspie Development Trust	Ross Street Playpark Project	Ross Street Playpark project will refurbish and replace dilapidated play equipment and benches in this well-used recreational space installing accessible equipment and improving access with a new entrance, paths, signs and lighting. Responding to strong local demand and identified community need as there is nothing similar available locally, accessibility will be the central focus of this project. Equipment will include a sensory boardwalk and a roundabout with full wheelchair access.	Addressing causes of rural depopulation	£ 118,978.00	£ 85,000.00	01/03/2024	31/01/2025	N	NA	71%	2	3	3	2	3	2	3	2	3	3	26
2202	Assynt Development Trust	Lochinver Main Street Playpark Green Space Enrichment Phase 1	The project seeks to enhance the playpark at the Main Street green in Lochinver with replacing retired old equipment with engaging play experiences, supporting disability friendly options, sensory play and the overall enhancement of the valued green space within the community.	Addressing causes of rural depopulation	£ 100,000.00	£ 50,000.00	01/03/2024	02/01/2025	N	Y - MoU/ lease?	50%	1	2	3	2	2	2	2	1	2	3	20
2235	Farr North Community Development Trust	Delivery of Farr Community Action Plan	Seeking funding to employ a Manager and Officer to deliver the Community Action Plan (CAP) to be published early 2024. The CAP is expected to have individual plans for the 3 community councils of Farr, North Sutherland, as well as an over-arching strategic view. Priority areas of work include improving access to amenities and services and improving the lives of isolated, older and vulnerable people. The work-plan will be driven by the CAP. Existing initiatives already in place such as the development of a community transport scheme (business plan and consultation to be updated) and Farr Eats meals on wheels initiative - these projects will continue to be supported by the posts. In addition to developing the CAP actions, part of the funding is to develop a website for the new Trust.	Increasing community resilience	44,515.90	£30,360.90	01/04/2024	28/02/2025	Y	NA	68%	3	2	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	27
2262	Assynt Development Trust (ADT) on behalf of NW2045	NorthWest2045 Place Plan Coordination	The NW2045 group is a cross-sectoral coalition working across the North West Highlands to address the causes of rural depopulation. The group has created and is implementing a community-led Area Place Plan. A post is required to maintain the momentum and enhance this work, through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and data gathering to strengthen evidence for NW2045's work and ensure they are addressing community priorities. • Supporting collaboration: providing Secretariat function. • Building NW2045's profile locally through in-person events and online. • Maintaining NW2045's external / national profile – online and securing contact with policy-makers • Seeking long-term financial sustainability for NW2045. • Financial management for NW2045 projects. 	Addressing causes of rural depopulation	£ 50,110.00	£ 50,110.00	01/03/2024	28/02/2025	NA	NA	100%	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	1	3	3	26
2291	Carbisdale Castle Community Interest Company Limited	Carbisdale Community Centre	Establishing community activities at a new woodland hub in the grounds of Carbisdale Castle. The hub will educate visitors about the Battle of Carbisdale and the castle's history, host education and cultural opportunities, provide a vital rapid response facility protecting from the increased risk of wildfires, provide a training facility for local firefighters, and be available as a point of interest for visiting groups such as The Young Carers Sutherland (TYKES), schools, and uniformed youth organisations. This will benefit the community by promoting tourism, education, culture, heritage preservation, and assisting with climate change adaptation.	Helping economic recovery and sustaining growth	£ 150,000.00	£ 75,000.00	01/01/2024	01/08/2024	Y	Y	50%	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	3	3	1	18

Total £ 1,146,428.94 £ 653,452.11

Total available funding £ 715,561.61

Remaining balance £ 62,109.50

NOTE: RAG assessment criteria scoring. All projects are given a rating against key assessment criteria. As part of the application paperwork, applicants are made aware of the criteria for these. These ratings are then converted into scores as follows: Red – 1, amber – 2, green – 3. This allows a total score for each project to be provided. Ratings are based on information provided during the application process and are provided as a guide only. All projects presented are eligible but if Members wish to approve projects that have red or amber ratings it would usually suggest that additional conditions may be attached to the award to address these concerns.