

Agenda Item	10
Report No	PLN/09/25

# The Highland Council

**Committee:** Caithness Committee

**Date:** 20 January 2025

**Report Title:** Caithness Place Based Initiative Fund Update

**Report By:** Chief Officer Community and Housing

## 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides Members with an update on projects supported by Highland Council Place Based Investment (PBI) funding in the current financial year. Members are also asked to homologate the re-purposing of £1,556 of PBI funding.

## 2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. Note progress made on PBI supported projects in the current financial year
- ii. Homologate re-purposing of £1,556 underspend of Ward 3 PBI funding to support Wick town centre regeneration projects.

## 3. Implications

### 3.1 Resource

The resource implications are set out in the report.

### 3.2 Legal

The allocation of PBI funding is delegated to Area Committee. Any repurposing of PBI allocations requires Committee approval.

### 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island)

The projects referred to in this report deliver benefits to the communities of Wick and Thurso by improving active travel opportunities and supporting the regeneration of Wick town centre. The Thurso and Royal Burgh of Wick Community Councils have been consulted on these projects.

### 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever

None

### 3.5 Risk

The projects referred to in this report are all led by Highland Council services in accordance with procurement policy and Contract Standing Orders.

3.6 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)**

None

3.7 **Gaelic**

None

**4. Impacts**

4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.

4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.

4.3 **Integrated Impact Assessment - Summary**

An Integrated Impact Assessment screening has been undertaken on the proposed budget and the conclusions have been subject to the relevant Manager Review and Approval. The Screening process has concluded that there are no impacts identified in relation to the proposed budget, with the exception of the positive socio-economic impact of funding for additional regeneration projects in Wick.

<b>Impact Assessment Area</b>	<b>Conclusion of Screening/Full Assessment</b>
Equality	<i>No impact</i>
Socio-economic	<i>Positive impact</i>
Human rights	<i>No impact</i>
Children's rights & well-being	<i>No impact</i>
Island and mainland rural	<i>No impact</i>
Climate change	<i>No impact</i>
Data rights	<i>No impact</i>

**5. Background**

5.1 Place Based Investment (PBI) Fund

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.

5.2 In August and November 2021 and in February 2022 Caithness Committee considered PBI funding allocations and agreed the following:

Ward 2		Ward 3	
Playpark improvements	£40,000	Playpark improvements	£40,000
Community led active travel	£20,000	Replace bus shelters	£35,000
Thurso active travel – Janet St.	£30,000	Wick town centre regen.	£25,000
Community amenities equipment	£10,000	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>£100,000</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>£100,000</b>

## 6. Progress to date

6.1 Members have been regularly updated on progress with projects at Area Business Meetings. At the beginning of the current financial year the following projects still had to be completed:

### 6.2 Thurso Active Travel Janet St.

Highland Council Active Travel team is delivering a number of projects in Thurso in 2024, including at Ormlie Road and Janet St. The improvement works at Ormlie Road will provide junction improvements between Castlegreen Road and Juniper Drive with new drop kerbs and tactile paving and some surface repairs. At Janet St. PBI funding is supporting improvement work at the Mall, where the footpath will be widened, resurfaced, vegetation trimmed and the A9 park entrance relocated to the corner of Janet Street. The path towards the bridge will have surface repairs and the bridge leading to the Boating Pond abutment repairs. At the time of report writing works are expected to start imminently and will be completed by April 2025.

### 6.3 Community Led Active travel

Members allocated £20,000 PBI for community based active travel projects in Thurso. In consultation with Local Members and Thurso Community Council, improvement works at Victoria Walk were selected as a priority. The project involves replacing sections of timber fencing on the cliff edge with pedestrian guardrail and repairs to the stone dyke fence on the landward side of the path. The contractor has been appointed and at the time of writing this report works are due to start shortly. The project will be completed this financial year.

### 6.4 Wick Town Centre Regeneration

The project delivering improvements to the Riverside area is part of a programme of infrastructure repair and improvement works to enhance the appeal of the town centre of Wick to increase the numbers of locals and visitors and boost the economy of the town centre. The project was awarded £18,000 of the £25,000 PBI funding allocated to Wick town centre regeneration to match fund £50,000 from the Council's Community Regeneration Fund. The project focuses on the Riverside area of the town centre and includes:

- resurfacing St Fergus Road with traffic calming measures
- resurfacing pathways at the Riverside area with level access kerbing
- demarcation of taxi ranks and other parking such as coach parking bays.

These works have substantially been completed, with only the lining works remaining. This will be completed once winter is over and winter maintenance has finished as the salt and low temperatures affect the adhesion of the lining paint.

The remaining £7,000 was used for works around Wick Town Hall including repairs and repainting of railings and stonework, and small scale projects throughout the town centre carried out by Criminal Justice unpaid work team, with support from PBI for materials. Further work continues to be carried out by the Criminal Justice unpaid work team using the remaining balance (£523) along with an underspend of £1,556 from the already completed Bus Shelter replacement project.

Members are asked to homologate the transfer of £1,556 to the Wick Town Centre Regeneration Project.

Designation: Chief Officer Community and Housing

Date: 8 January 2025

Author: Phil Tomalin, Community Development Manager

Background Papers:

Appendices: