

The Highland Council

Agenda Item	8
Report No	DSA/06/25

Committee: Dingwall and Seaforth

Date: 10 February 2025

Report Title: Community Regeneration Funding Award

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report summarises the background to the homologation of up to £162,541.90 Community Regeneration Funding (CRF) investment in the Sir Hector MacDonald Memorial in Dingwall.

2 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:-

- i. **Note** the risk of external grant conditions not being met; and
- ii. **Agree** by homologation the Council investing £162,541.90 CRF grant in the restoration of Sir Hector MacDonald Memorial in Dingwall

3 Implications

3.1 **Resource** – There are no resource implications. The commitment to invest up to £162,541.90 towards a structural upgrade to the Sir Hector MacDonald Memorial in Dingwall and subsequent homologation will secure the available grant funding.

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 **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 receipt, release of funds related to invoices/works completion certificates etc are considered in such assessments.

3.4 **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 organisations.

3.5 **Gaelic** – Consideration given within individual project applications in line with the Council's policy.

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 This is a monitoring and update report. Therefore, an impact assessment is not required.

5 Background

5.1 Community Regeneration Funding is an umbrella term for several funds that are available for communities/organisations to access in Highland. At present, in Dingwall & Seaforth, there is an uncommitted balance of £162,541.90. This balance comprises funding from the Place Based Investment Programme (PBIP), which is a Scottish Government (SG) grant to support economic regeneration and sustainable development in Highland. These funds must be spent on fixed capital assets.

5.2 Members will recollect that the current SG grant offers are made on annual basis with the expectation that funds are expended by the financial year end. Project approvals are made at Area Committee by Members following assessment of the project by the Community Regeneration Funding Team. The current available balance in Dingwall & Seaforth must be invested in a project prior to 31 March 2025 to remain compliant with the SG grant conditions. Failure to do so would leave the funding vulnerable to clawback and therefore potentially withdrawn from the area.

5.3 At the 19 February 2024 meeting of the Dingwall and Seaforth Committee, Members agreed to ringfence any 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.

6 Investment Opportunities

6.1 Considering the requirement to spend SG PBIP grant by 31 March 2025, a desktop review of the development work associated with the Dingwall and Seaforth Area Place Plan (APP) was conducted late last year to determine whether any shovel ready priority capital projects existed in the locality. Both Eagle House and the Hector MacDonald Memorial emerged as strong candidates. The latter, being highlighted as a priority project, of strategic importance and with significant community support.

Whilst neither project is shovel ready, sufficient preparatory study work was available to determine that the Hector MacDonald Memorial was the only viable proposition due to the costs involved. Given the need to move at pace, Council Officers committed to moving the project forward, along with the Dingwall Community Development Company, who wish to take possession and manage the asset on completion of the restoration works.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

Date: 21 January 2025

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Background Papers: None

Appendices: None