



**REPORT TO: ECONOMIC GROWTH, HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL
SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE ON 6 OCTOBER 2020**

**SUBJECT: INFORMATION REPORT: RURAL TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE
FUND PROPOSAL**

**BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND
FINANCE)**

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of delays in submitting an application to the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to the Economic Growth, Housing and Environmental Sustainability Committee following a decision of Moray Council on 17 June 2020 to agree a simplified committee structure as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the case of this Committee, the combining of the delegated responsibilities of Economic Development and Infrastructure, Community Services (Housing and Property) and Finance (budget, capital and revenue monitoring) (paragraph 9 of the Minute refers).

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 On 2 September 2020, Council (paragraph 8 of the minute refers) approved the submission of an Expression of Interest for the Coast to Country proposal to the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund (RTIF). The project is a Moray-wide partnership between Council, Visit Moray Speyside Tourism BID, HIE and various community trusts and associations to create a strategic network of facilities across Moray that will contribute to tourism and relieve pressure on local beauty spots.
- 2.2 It will provide much needed waste disposal units for an increase in Camper vans and additional infrastructure such as toilets, parking and signage in the eligible rural areas of Moray.
- 2.3 Whilst good progress has been made in developing the details of the project from locations, evidence of demand and need, costs of the creation of a Moray wide booking and paying platform etc., it became apparent that it was unrealistic to have the full details for all the elements in place by the deadline for the Expression of Interest on 18 September 2020 and if successful to have

all applications for any permissions submitted by the stage II deadline of 14 October 2020, which is an essential requirement by the RTIF.

- 2.4 Development work will continue to identify potential sites, develop plans and drawings and report back to committee for approval to submit planning applications where required, engage with community groups and consult on the proposals and develop a suitable proposal for the operation of a network of sites within Moray.
- 2.5 There are no details of when the next round of RTIF is likely to be but officers will aim to have everything ready for submission by December 2020, subject to committee approval.

3. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

The proposal will contribute to achieve the corporate plan priority to promote economic development and growth, also the LOIP priority of a growing and sustainable economy

(b) Policy and Legal

The Council considers support for economic development issues on their merits, against the objective to facilitate sustainable economic growth and the desired outcomes of the Ten Year Plan and Corporate Plan. For any partnership agreement Legal will be consulted.

(c) Financial implications

The full details of the proposal are still being finalised and at this stage the indicative costs are in the region of over £400,000. Council agreed (paragraph 8 of the minute refers), that this year's Coastal Community Fund allocation would be made available as match funding for the works and seek further match funding for the works from HIE. This will be reviewed for any future years funding applications.

Any Community Trust/Association will provide in kind contribution of the value of land and possibly a cash contribution, details still to be confirmed.

Any monitoring and maintenance cost will be accommodated by either Community Trust/Association and within the Environmental and Commercial Section existing budgets with the aim to find a permanent solution for all toilets in Moray.

(d) Risk Implications

To mitigate any risks, a partnership agreement will be drawn up at full application stage outlining all partner's contribution and commitment to the project.

(e) Staffing Implications

The overall project management for the works will be undertaken by Senior Engineers from the Consultancy section.

Staff from the Economic Growth and Regeneration section will provide support for submitting the applications, interim and final claims to the Funders and make arrangements for claimed funds for works carried out by Community Trust/Associations to be transferred to them.

(f) Property

If the funding applications are successful it will provide chemical waste disposal points and create new or upgrade or extend some of the parking areas to deal with some of the visitor pressure points and provide additional infrastructure at the various sites.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

The fund will bring economic investment into Moray's coastal and country areas of which some are characterised by low wages, low rates of full-time employment, wealth deprivation and child poverty

(h) Consultations

The Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance), the Head of Economic Growth and Development, the Legal Services Manager, Paul Connor (Principal Accountant), Lissa Rowan (Committee Services Officer), the Equalities Officer and the Payments Manager have been consulted and comments received have been incorporated into the report.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The proposal is a collaborative approach that focusses on improving the visitor experience in rural parts of Moray that have faced pressure on the infrastructure or has negative impacts on communities due to significant increases in visitor numbers. In particular the growth in the motorhome sector within the context of the changes in behaviour of visitors, communities and any requirements resulting from the COVID-19 crisis.**
- 4.2 Whilst it was not possible to submit an application to the RTIF at this point, the extra time will allow officers to develop a robust business case and will ensure that the relevant community groups are engaged and consulted in the process.**
- 4.3 If future funding applications agreed by Council are successful it will allow the Council to alleviate some of the problems through investment in the infrastructure such as car and camper van parking, toilet facilities, chemical toilet waste disposals and signage.**
- 4.4 It also complements and links into the development work by Visit Moray Speyside Tourism BID with support from HIE to find long term sustainable solution for toilets in Moray.**

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Background Papers: Documents on file in Economic Growth & Regeneration section.

Ref: