



**REPORT TO: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE
SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 21 JUNE 2022**

**SUBJECT: FORRES TOWN CENTRE IMPROVEMENT PLAN – FUNDING
OPPORTUNITY**

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

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of funding opportunities that could help to deliver the Forres Town Centre Improvement Plan and to authorise submission of Expressions of Interest (EOIs) to the funders by no later than 31 July 2022.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III A (2) of the Scheme of Administration relating to long-term financial plans.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that Committee agrees:

- (i) to approve the submission of EOIs to the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Historic Environment Scotland to support delivery of the Forres Town Centre Improvement Plan, with no financial or contractual obligations to Council; and
- (ii) if successful, to consider a further report in November / December 2022 concerning submission of applications for the development phase.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Draft Town Centre Improvement Plans were agreed by the Planning and Regulatory Services Committee on 18 January 2022 for Aberlour, Buckie, Dufftown, Forres, Keith and Lossiemouth (Paragraph 10 of the minute refers). Community consultation on the plans has now been completed and it is anticipated that final documents will be reported back to Committee in August 2022. The plans aim to support the regeneration of town centres in Moray by setting out a range of proposals, including bringing vacant and derelict sites back into use, improving active travel connections, greening and

other streetscape improvements in order to create vibrant; attractive; green; healthy, safer and inclusive town centres.

3.2 The [Forres Town Centre Improvement Plan](#) objectives include:

- Strengthen the unique sense of place of Forres Town Centre by creating a high quality experience of shops, attractions and facilities for the community and visitors.
- Promote Forres as a place that is welcoming and pleasant to spend time in, that is green and easy to get to on foot and by bicycle.
- Support the refurbishment and regeneration of Forres Town Hall.
- Create a high quality heritage interpretation trail attraction for visitors and the community to engage with.
- Increase landscaping through the High Street through the introduction of street trees to connect Grant Park through the High Street to Castlehill and embed opportunities for food growing.
- Improve public realm to create opportunities for social interaction and enhance key approaches into the High Street through the lanes linking into car parks.
- Develop a Shopfront Improvement Scheme to ensure that traditional shopfronts are retained and improved to strengthen and enhance the character of the historic High Street.
- Promote sustainable travel and improve pedestrian experience.
- Re-purpose vacant and derelict buildings to reduce the number of empty properties and increase number of people living in the town centre

3.3 **Forres Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) Proposal**

Moray Council agreed at its meeting on 31 October 2018 (Para 9 of the minute refers) to submit a Forres CARS application to HES based on the Conservation Appraisal, Management, Action Plan and Interpretation Plans that were produced to support the scheme, however the fund was very competitive and the application was unsuccessful (Paragraph 9 of the minute refers). The proposal included:

- Improvements to public realm
- Repair of priority buildings
- Traditional shopfront repair scheme
- Small grant scheme
- Traditional skills training & interpretation

3.4 New funding opportunities recently launched by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) and Historic Environment Scotland (HES) fit the context of place based regeneration and therefore align very well with the objectives of the Forres Town Centre Improvement Plan. The funders are working in partnership to take a collective approach to their area based funding programmes. They aim to co-fund heritage projects that support place-based regeneration and boost local economies. Applications for the same project can be submitted through each organisations' individual grant programmes. They will work together to consider projects which – with dual funding – can maximise impact and deliver positive and lasting change for Scotland's places and communities.

- 3.5 **NLHF Grants for Heritage** programme aims to halt and reverse the decline of historic landscapes and townscapes by capitalising on their unique character to create attractive, vibrant, and interesting places where people want to live work, visit and invest. The programme supports physical works to repair and enhance the historic area, activities to help people engage with the heritage, development and operational costs. All projects must be inclusive and environmentally sustainable.
- 3.6 **HES Heritage & Place Programme** is the successor to the Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS). It aims to contribute to the development of vibrant and sustainable places in Scotland, through community-led regeneration of the historic environment. The programme supports the development and delivery of heritage-focused schemes within conservation areas, or alternatively distinctive heritage areas with local authority recognition.
- 3.7 For both programmes there are still two separate expression of interest, applications, and decision processes but the two organisations will be working closely to provide joint support to projects and the 3 stages of application will run in parallel: **EOI by 31 July 2022**, the Development Phase (takes up to 12 months) and the Delivery Phase (maximum 5 years from commencement of scheme).
- 3.8 This funding offers a fantastic opportunity to apply for funding to deliver the Forres Town Centre Improvement Plan and to include the wider area. Buildings outside the central town boundary of the Conservation Area can now be included which creates potential to add important buildings such as Nelson's Tower and the former Leancoil Hospital to the proposal. The NLHF can contribute to green spaces therefore Grant Park could also be added. There would also be scope to include stone masonry apprenticeships, as delivered by Elgin CARS.
- 3.9 The [Discover Moray's Great Places](#) partnership project led by the Moray Economic Partnership under the theme group Tourism and Culture in 2019/2020, produced a wealth of interpretive material relevant to Forres. This resource could be used in combination with the Interpretation Plan produced for the Forres CARS proposal, to develop a high quality heritage interpretation trail that would engage the local community and visitors, as outlined in the Forres Town Centre Improvement Plan.
- 3.10 Initial meetings with stakeholders in the Forres area will be held to help define the EOIs and demonstrate community support. If the EOIs are successful, a more detailed report will be presented to Committee in November / December 2022 to request approval to submit applications for the Development Phase (max length 12 months). A Partnership Agreement will be drawn up during this phase.
- 3.11 In 2024, the Delivery Phase applications (if submission is approved and successful), will result in a 5 year investment programme similar to what was carried out under the Castle to Cathedral to Cashmere project.

- 3.12 There are also additional place based funding opportunities which could also provide match funding such as UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the Place Based Investment Programme.

4. **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

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

The project will contribute to achieving 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 for the Development Phase Legal will be consulted.

(c) Financial implications

None arising from this report however both schemes have the potential to secure substantial investment. NLHF Grants for Heritage can provide grants of £250,000 up to £5 million and the HES Heritage & Place is offering grants from £750,000 up to £1.5million.

(d) Risk Implications

None arising from this report

(e) Staffing Implications

Staff from the Economic Growth and Regeneration section will prepare and submit the EOIs in consultation with stakeholders. If invited to submit applications for the Development Phase, it is considered that preparation of the applications can be accommodated within existing staffing resources. Staffing costs are eligible for the Delivery phase and will be included.

(f) Property

None arising from this report

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

An equality impact assessment is not required because the reason for the report is for the Committee to consider a request to submit EOIs for funding. An equality impact assessment will be submitted with the next report if the EOIs are successful.

(h) Climate Change and Biodiversity Impacts

No climate change or biodiversity implications have been determined for this report because the reason for the report is for the Committee to consider a request to submit EOIs for funding.

(i) Consultations

Consultation has taken place with the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance), the Head of Economic Growth and Development, the Legal Services Manager, the Equal Opportunities Officer, Paul Connor (Principal Accountant) and Lissa Rowan (Committee Services Officer) and comments received have been incorporated into the report.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Delivery of the Forres Town Centre Improvement Plan is an agreed priority that aligns well with the new NLHF Grants for Heritage and the HES Heritage and Place Programme.

5.2 The new schemes present a good opportunity to secure significant funding for regeneration of the Forres area based on the extensive preparatory work previously undertaken for Forres CARS and requires submission of EOIs by 31 July 2022 only at this stage.

5.3 There are multiple strands of complementary match funding available for both development and delivery work which could result in a substantial programme of investment for the Forres area, similar to Elgin and Keith CARS.

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Background Papers: Documents on file in Economic Growth & Regeneration
Ref: