



REPORT TO: MORAY COUNCIL ON 12 MAY 2021

SUBJECT: STAYCATION READY PROJECT

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

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of the overall project details, proposals to seek additional funding and request to use the Scottish Crown Estate net revenue allocations for 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 to coastal local authorities for the coastal areas of this project.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Council in terms of Section III A (2) of the Scheme of Administration relating to long-term financial plans.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 The Council is asked to:

- (i) give delegated authority to the Head of Environmental and Commercial Services in consultation with local ward members to install Phase 1 and 2 of the projects as outlined in paragraphs 3.4 and 3.5 subject to agreement with local community councils on a suitable location, which may differ from those identified in the report;**
- (ii) approve proposed waste disposal points charges of £6.82 per use, as outlined in paragraph 3.4;**
- (iii) approve the submission of an Expression of Interest and if successful submission of a stage 2 application to the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund, as outlined in paragraph 3.7;**
- (iv) approve the Coastal Communities fund allocation for 20/21 and 21/22 for funding phase 3, as match funding for the application to the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund phase 4 and any elements, which are not eligible in the coastal areas, as outlined in paragraph 3.6; and**
- (v) approve the submission of an application to NatureScot Better Places Fund, as outlined in paragraph 3.8.**

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 On 2 September 2020, the Council (paragraph 8 of the minute refers) approved the submission of an Expression of Interest to the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund (RTIF) with match funding from the 2020/2021 Coastal Community Fund allocation as match funding - for the works in the coastal areas to create a strategic network of facilities across Moray that will contribute to tourism and relieve pressure on local beauty spots, by utilising the revised model standards and innovative approach to planning for such facilities approved at the Planning and Regulatory Services Committee on 8 October 2019 (paragraph 22 of the minute refers). The project is a Moray-wide partnership between the Council, Visit Moray, Speyside Tourism, BID, HIE and various community trusts and associations. A further information report was submitted on 6 October 2020 advising the Council that it proved to be 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 and so no first round application was ultimately submitted.
- 3.2 At the budget setting meeting of Moray Council on 3 March, 2021 (paragraph 5 of the draft minute refers) it was agreed to allocate £170,000 from the Capital Plan with £85,016 maintenance budget, both for 2021/22 to address the increasing issues at various tourism spots with car/mobile homes parking and disposal of waste. This money was to address the issues for this year.
- 3.3 The Staycation Ready Project consists of 6 phases for 10 sites as outlined below:
- 3.4 **Phase 1- Installation of Waste Disposal Points.** Chemical waste disposal points across Moray for caravans and mobile homes – initial survey completed for 5 sites at Burghead, Craigellachie, Portknockie, Portgordon and Ballindalloch. The waste disposal points will contain; a drinking water tap, a point to empty toilet waste and grey water waste point. These facilities will be designed with a locking system in place to allow charges to be made to use them. The proposed charges will be made via a web portal. The charge will only be for those enhancements that increased the revenue burden on the Council and partners. The proposal is to introduce a charge for the use of the waste facilities rather than charging for parking, which will ensure that the overall project is not in direct competition with any local caravan and camping sites.
- 3.5 Maintenance of waste disposal points and upgraded car parks (phase 2 and beyond), will be from revenue budget, agreed when the budget for 2021/22 was set on 3 March 2021 and includes the appointment of staff to service waste disposal points, litter picking at hot spots, the hire of vehicles and temporary toilets along with the purchase of Sea Gull Proof Bins.

- 3.6 To administer this, Officers are working with partners to define a single code that is given to a user to access the facilities once payment has been received. The system is a combination of the household waste sites and current payment systems. It will be a fully automated system. The cost per use will £6.82. Details of how this has been derived as follows based on data from Sottish Water:-

Item	Cost Per Use
Freshwater based on 0.3p/l and a 50l Aqua Roll being used	£0.15
Standing Charge per use	£0.04
Waste Water Disposal based on Septic Tank at 5000l capacity	£1.33
Staffing Cost Based on the assumption that 1 FTE with van for 6 months would clean each site and that each site would have 5 uses a day and maintenance	£5.30
Total	£6.82

- 3.7 The longer term aspiration is for the same system/platform to be rolled out for use with our community partners on projects in Findhorn and Cullen. Tenders were issued on 21 April 2021 and are currently in the process of being assessed and awarded. Anticipated completion of phase 1 work is by the end of May 2021. The budget allocation of £20,000 is from Moray Capital Plan. The works required at the proposed site locations have been classed as permitted development and building warrants have been applied for.
- 3.8 **Phase 2 - Tourism Enhancements** at current sites where **increased** Tourism is adversely affecting rural communities, the purpose of the upgrades is to improve the infrastructure to cope with increased use. Overnight stops are not encouraged but signage will advise on safe use of the car parks.
- 3.9 **Element 1:** Fiddich Park- The entrance between the Access Road and carpark will be improved. The edging bollards will be replaced. The carpark parking areas designed with signage added to highlight the rules for informal camping Ducting will be installed under new surface where applicable.
- 3.10 **Element 2:** Ballindalloch – The car park will be resurfaced with defined edging between road and carpark. Marking out will be installed for vehicle parking spaces. This will be vertical posts rather than ground marking. Signage will be added with regards to guidance for informal camping. Repair and replace the edge fencing to prevent unauthorised access.
- 3.11 **Element 3:** Portknockie – A new parking area is proposed to be at the back of the Harbour by the west side. The works will include a new gravel surface with appropriate drainage, fencing around the edge to keep use away from cliff edges and also provide edge protection to coastal area. The fencing will be marked out with informal marking for spacing. A new bin compound will be installed, with a fresh water point installed at the harbour toilets. An access gate will also be installed.

- 3.12 **Element 4:** Burghead – Works at Burghead are proposed to be along the seafront where the old railway line came in to the harbour and station. The works will involve repairs to the access road with increased traffic calming. Work to the grassed area to reinforce it to prevent damage to the space. Increased signage to point visitors to rules for informal camping and tourist activities.
- 3.13 **Element 5:** Lossiemouth - Installation of Waste point and water point. This is to be mains connected with fresh water supply. There will also be option of washing down of equipment. The current proposed site is East Beach Carpark but is currently subject to consultation with local community council lead group.
- 3.14 Planned completion of phase 2 works is by April 2022. The budget allocation of £150,000 is from Moray Capital Plan. It should be noted that £30K was to allow for the potential of additional sites to be included other the 5 listed in phase 1. The above sites are subject to consultation with local community councils and ward members in line with recommendation 2.1(i).
- 3.15 **Phase 3 - Coastal Communities Staycation Enhancements** This phase is to enhance the current provision for overnight staycation within Moray with emphasis on Community maintained locations. The sites are Cullen, Findhorn, Lossiemouth and the proposals include:
- Cullen – Repairs to Road, Chemical Waste Point, Temporary surfacing to stopover area (this will form subbase for main stay action project under RTIF. £50,000. The Council are supporting Cullen Community on delivering this project. Planning permission and other statutory consents are required for elements of this project.
 - Findhorn - Remove blind corner to North West of car park, to improve visibility and increase number of car parking spaces, resurface and level off North East Area of car park to increase parking spaces, 3 Barriers £20,000
 - Lossiemouth - Signage & sensors as this location is not eligible for RTIF £10,000 Moray Council will be delivering this project
- 3.16 This Project would require an allocation of £80k from the Coastal Communities fund 20/21. If the proposal is approved the planned completion of phase 3 is by mid-August 2021. The above projects are subject to consultation and where applicable statutory consent.
- 3.17 **Phase 4 - Creation of New Carparks and Overnight Stopover Points** is a partnership proposal for submission to the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund (RTIF). The Scottish Governments RTIF has recently opened the next round for applications for proposals inaccessible and remote rural areas - excluding settlements above 3000 people - to alleviate existing visitor pressure points or where there is an expectation of a future pressure point from additional visitor numbers due to COVID19, growth initiatives such as route development etc. It can provide for Local Authorities or National Park Authority in Scotland grants from £75,000 to a maximum of £375,000 at an intervention rate of up to 70% for capital expenditure only. However priorities are given to projects which are part of a strategic development plan for a location or sector; are sustainable, innovative, integrated and resolve both an immediate visitor pressure point but

take account of wider area pressures; have strong community support and have a higher level of match funding. Expression of Interest can be submitted anytime but no later than 13 August 2021. If successful stage 2 application deadline is 10 September 2021 with the outcome known by 29 October 2021.

3.18 The RTIF proposal will include the following:

- Surface access road dunes road at Findhorn. This project will be delivered by the community group
- Create Stopover Points with the Cullen Community Group. This will include spaces for over 15 campervans, water point as well as a small community hut for village maintenance. The Community Group will maintain and manage the site. The site is on land rented to the Community Group by Seafield Estates. This project will be delivered by Moray Council with the support of the community groups and will require planning permission and a caravan site licence.
- Bow Fiddle Rock Carpark. This is a creation of a new car park at Bow Fiddle Rock will be for cars only. It will also include enhanced footpaths. This element is on land owned by Seafield Estates who are in support of the project. Moray Council will be required to maintain the carpark. This project will be delivered by Moray Council. Planning permission for the creation of the car park will be required.
- Ben Rinnes car park extension. This is a community led project, which is to extend the existing parking to allow more access to the site. The land has been gifted to the community group. On completion of the works the community group will take the car park maintenance over. This project will be delivered by Moray Council on behalf of the community group. Planning permission for the extension of the car park will be required.
- Hopeman - this element is to increase parking in Hopeman. It includes an extra 15 spaces near the playing field. This is a community led project and will require the Council to maintain the carpark going forward. Planning permission for the extension of the car park will be required.
- Ballindalloch Toilet upgrade. This project will be delivered by Moray Council
- Electric car charger at Craigellachie - Fiddich Park This project will be delivered by Moray Council
- Signage and sensors for 9 sites. This project will be delivered by Moray council

3.19 The total project cost is £510,000 with a request from RTIF for £278,616 with proposed match funding from the Coastal Community Fund of £191,384 and request for £40,000 from HIE. Community partners provide in kind contribution ranging from volunteers to value of land. If the proposal is approved to submit stage 1 & stage 2 applications to RTIF with Coastal Community Fund as match funding is successful, the planned completion of this phase is end of March 2022.

3.20 **NatureScot Better Places Fund** - NatureScot have launched a second round of the Better Places Fund to help ensure services and infrastructure are in place to manage visitor numbers and behaviours during the 2021 tourist

season. In this round constituted organisations, including local authorities, registered charities, trusts and community groups can apply.

3.21 The fund will support the following:

- Visitor management operational services: Funding for new and additional seasonal ranger and visitor management posts.
- Visitor infrastructure: Funding for projects that can be delivered quickly and help address visitor pressures at busy hot spot locations, including temporary or permanent infrastructure
- The funding of staff posts is for the 2021 season only, and will extend as a maximum to end October 2021. The fund is looking to provide up to a maximum of £75K towards temporary or permanent visitor management related infrastructure projects.

3.22 The opportunity to further enhance the overall project is being explored and the proposal is to submit a funding application which includes the cost for two seasonal rangers and the revenue costs associated with the maintenance of the tourism enhancements and litter hot spots for 14 May 2021 deadline. Whilst no specific match funding is required it is planned to use some of the maintenance budget allocation for temporary toilets as match funding element. It is anticipated that the outcome of any applications will be known by 28 May 2021.

3.23 **Consultation** – The placement of waste disposal units has been discussed at the Joint Community Councils Meeting and affected community councils and local councillors have been advised of the locations. The Council's Senior Engineer supported by the Community Support Unit has been in discussions with the local communities and where concerns have been raised alternative locations have been considered to assess if they meet the criteria which includes, disabled access, access to services, owned by the Council, and adjacent parking and therefore the locations listed in paragraph 3.4 and 3.5 may be subject to change.

3.24 Whilst the various project elements involved from the outset relevant community partners, however public consultation is scheduled before submitting the Expression of Interest form for the RTIF project (phase 4). For each site, site illustrations are being prepared to show the details of the proposed work. An example is attached as **APPENDIX 2**

4. 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 and lease arrangements Legal will be consulted

The legal position in relation to overnight stopping is complex, the Highway Code has provision for drivers to pull off the road if they are feeling tired and this could include sleeping overnight in the vehicle. Wild Camping under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act only applies to tents, not vehicles.

Provision of overnight stops in the form of caravan/motorhomes for more than 28 days in a year is likely to require planning permission for a change of use of a site, and once given planning permission the site would require a site licence under the Caravan Sites Act 1968 which would apply spacing standards and other provisions. The application of this legislation is not suitable to control sites that are primarily provided as car parks rather than formal stop over sites, as the spacing standards for the site licence would significantly reduce the capacity and safe operation of the car park.

For this reason, with the exception of Cullen the provision of car parks and upgrades of car park noted in the report are being provided specifically to alleviate the impacts of increased tourism, informal camping will not be encouraged but guidance on the safe use of the car park will be provided.

Provision of waste disposal points by the Council is permitted development and does not require planning permission and the use of these facilities is not tied to the occupation of any specific site in Moray.

(c) Financial implications

The overall project cost for all 10 sites is £850,000 with Council commitment of £255,000 in place. See Appendix 1 for funding of projects. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, Scottish Ministers' arrangements for Scottish Crown Estate net revenue allocations to coastal local authorities confirmed that it can be used for a range of support measures as long they are aligned with coastal community benefit. It is proposed to use previously approved Coastal Community Fund 2020/2021 allocation of £138,192 and request that the 2021/2022 allocation, which will be at least the same amount or slightly more as match funding for the RTIF application and also to fund elements which are out with the RTIF criteria in the coastal areas. For proposals in the country area, HIE indicated that they are considering providing the necessary match funding.

Subject to Committee approval the project funding stream and drawdowns are shown below for 2021/22 & 2021/22 excluding any potential Nature Scot Better Places Fund grant.

(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.

A number of projects are still subject to statutory consent including Planning and Building warrant

(e) Staffing Implications

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

Staff from the Economic Growth & 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 at Findhorn to be transferred to the Findhorn Village Conservation Company.

Three seasonal staff will be recruited to service the stopover points, empty bins and litter pick litter hot spots across Moray. A funding application for two seasonal rangers from the NatureScot Better Places Fund will be submitted should approval to apply for funding be granted by Council.

(f) Property

The works will create new and 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 Head of Environment and Commercial Services, Environmental Protection Manager, Consultancy Manager, the Head of Financial Services, the Legal Services Manager, the Equalities Officer and the Democratic Services Manager have been consulted and comments incorporated into this report.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The work being carried out this year and the proposals are a collaborative approach that focusses on improving the visitor experience in Moray in areas that have faced pressure on the infrastructure or had 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.

5.2 If the funding applications are successful it will allow opportunities to further alleviate some of the problems through investment in the infrastructure and maximise existing funding allocations.

Background Papers: Documents on file in Economic Growth & Regeneration section
Ref: SPMAN-524642768-376