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**REPORT TO: MORAY COUNCIL ON 2 SEPTEMBER 2020**

**SUBJECT: RURAL TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE FUND & COASTAL COMMUNITIES FUND PROPOSAL**

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

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

- 1.1 To inform the Council of the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund and of Scottish Ministers' arrangements for Scottish Crown Estate net revenue allocations for 2020-2021 to coastal local authorities for funding coastal community benefit.
- 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 Council is asked to:**

- (i) consider the Moray Coast to Country proposal and agree for the submission of an Expression of Interest on behalf of the partnership to the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund**
- (ii) subject to the project being accepted to proceed to the next stage, instructs officers to prepare a stage 2 application for consideration at meeting of Economic Growth, Housing and Environmental Sustainability on 6 October 2020**
- (iii) note Scottish Crown Estate net revenue allocations for 2020-2021 as Moray's Coastal Community Fund**
- (iv) approve the reallocation of this year's Coastal Community Fund of £138,192 from the participatory budgeting framework to provide match funding for the coastal area of this proposal**

### 3. **BACKGROUND**

3.1 The Scottish Governments Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund 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.

3.2 The Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund (RTIF) will continue to support collaborative projects that focus on improving the visitor experience in rural parts of Scotland that have faced pressure on their infrastructure or negative impacts on communities due to significant increases in visitor numbers. It will also look forward to address anticipated future pinch points as a result of growth initiatives such as route development, major events, the anticipated resurgence in the Cruise market, film and TV production as well as the continued growth in the motorhome sector within the context of the changes in behaviour of visitors, communities and any legal requirements resulting from the COVID-19 crisis. It is only for 'accessible and remote rural areas', excluding settlements above 3000 people.

3.3 Grants are available for:

- New or upgraded Car Parking including new disabled parking and dedicated motorhome and coach parking
- Paths of not more than 500m to and from car parks and scenic areas to ease access and address pressure points. These should be of a suitable width to enable distancing as required
- Scenic roadside viewpoints
- Overnight Motorhome Bays with or without electrical hook up points adequately spaced to meet regulations on distancing
- New or upgrades to existing Toilets where this creates additional provision and promotes Equality of access, particularly where these meet the new requirements for health and hygiene in the wake of COVID-19
- Chemical waste disposal facilities, water supplies and black and grey waste disposal facilities for campers and motorhomes
- Recycling Points
- Directional road signage, waymarks and improved external interpretation

3.4 The Coast to Country proposal is a Moray-wide partnership between Council, Visit Moray Speyside Tourism BID, HIE & the Findhorn Village Conservation Company to provide much needed waste disposal units for an increase in Camper vans & additional infrastructure such as toilets, parking & signage in the eligible rural areas of Moray.

3.5 The details so far include the following:

<b>Location</b>	<b>Proposed works</b>
Cullen	Chemical Toilet Waste disposal
Portknockie - Bow Fiddle Rock	Interpretation, Signage, upgrade path, Car Parking/Layby
Harbour	Chemical Toilet Waste disposal
Portgordon	Chemical Toilet Waste disposal

Hopeman	Extended car parking adjacent to park/beach
Findhorn	Chemical Toilet Waste disposal, Toilet, barriers, Camper van parking marking and numbering motorhome parking bays, improving surface drainage (drain, plastic grating and chips at certain points), repair of pot holes in 'road', signage, repairing fences, picnic tables, area for recycling bins, reaction solar lighting, three fire extinguishers, repair boardwalks and steps to beach, improve access roads and cycle tie-up point
Craigellachie - Fiddich Park	Electric charging points, cycle racks, replace dilapidated set of wooden steps, carpark upgrading & extending poss. for Camper van parking
Ballindalloch	Waste disposal –poss. 2 Cubicle Toilets
Ben Rinnes	Extend car park and provide cycle parking
Other areas	Other eligible areas are being considered for Chemical Toilet Waste disposal and electric hook ups

- 3.6 This proposal directly links into Moray wide strategic coordinated proposal being developed by Visit Moray Speyside Tourism BID with support from HIE to enable community groups, i.e. local development trusts in the key tourism 'hot spots' to create business cases which would enable them to apply to key funding streams, such as windfarm community benefit, to takeover and operate the toilets in their areas on long-term, financially viable basis.
- 3.7 At this stage the full details are still being worked up for an Expression of Interest application deadline on 18 September 2020. As a minimum of 30% match funding is required, it is proposed to utilise this year's Coastal Community Fund allocation.
- 3.8 In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, Scottish Ministers' arrangements for Scottish Crown Estate net revenue allocations for 2020-2021 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. This year's allocation for Moray is £138,192. Prior to the pandemic, this Coastal Community fund had been considered for developing as participatory budgeting scheme. The participatory budgeting framework and policy for Moray was approved at a meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee on 14 January 2020 (paragraph 16 of the minute refers). However due to the unprecedented circumstances any development work has come to a halt and if the recommendations are agreed, it would provide the necessary match funding for works in the coastal areas. The Participatory Budgeting paper also being considered at this meeting sets out alternative participatory budgeting proposals for 20/21.
- 3.9 For proposals in the country area, HIE indicated that they are considering providing the necessary match funding. If the Expression of Interest is successful, a further report will be submitted to Council on 6 October 2020 with full details for a stage II application submission by 14 October 2020.

- 3.10 This presents an opportunity to address increasing issues with mobile homes and disposal of waste and has the potential to create a 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).
- 3.11 Options currently being explored include charging mechanisms for the use of the campervan/motorhomes waste disposal facilities. This in turn would potentially incentivise community ownership of toilets where an additional income stream could be realised that could offset the costs of running the toilet.

#### **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 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. If the request to use this year's Coastal Community Fund allocation as match funding for the coastal works is approved, it would allow to seek further match funding for the works in the country side from HIE. Also the Findhorn Village Conservation Company will provide in kind contribution of value of land for the Camper van parking area and possibly cash contribution, details still to be confirmed.

Maintenance - The Chemical Waste Disposal Units will be installed at the outside of public toilets regardless whether they are operational or not and should not occur any ongoing maintenance cost. The toilet block at Findhorn will be maintained by Findhorn Village Conservation Company, which are in the process of working on a Community Asset Transfer. Any other monitoring and maintenance cost will be accommodated within the Environmental and Commercial Section exciting 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 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.

**(f) Property**

If the funding applications are successful any Chemical Waste Disposal Units will be installed at the outside of public toilets in the identified areas. It will also allow to 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 Head of Legal and Democratic Services, the Equalities Officer and the Democratic Services Manager have been consulted and comments incorporated into this report.

**5. CONCLUSION**

**5.1 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.**

**5.2 If the funding applications are successful it will allow 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.**

**5.3 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.**

Author of Report:

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