

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

RESOURCES COMMITTEE

18 February 2009

Agenda Item	
Report No	

Development of UHI Centre for History, Dornoch

Report by Director of Education, Culture and Sport

SUMMARY

This report outlines planned developments at the UHI Centre for History in Dornoch and recommends that the Council contribute £200k to the capital development from uncommitted Capital Discretionary Fund, subject to remaining funding being secured.

1. Background

- 1.1 The UHI Centre for History was launched in 2005, with Prof. James Hunter as its Director and hosted by North Highland College (NHC). Its core activities are the development and roll out of UHI's BA (Hons) degree in Scottish history, which is available at all UHI's partner colleges and undertaking a series of ambitious research projects. Currently, the Centre works out of a single room in NHC's Dornoch base. Given the extent of the ambitions the Centre needs more appropriate accommodation with space, particularly, for a library, which would have community and public access.
- 1.2 NHC has recently bought the former Burghfield House Hotel and six acres of adjacent land. The college is embarking on a £7.2million development project, comprising creation of a Centre for Hospitality and Tourism, refurbishment of the stable block as Centre for History's Headquarters, a conference centre and a new-build student residence. Funding for the first priority Centre for Hospitality and Tourism is in place and the second priority is the new accommodation for the Centre for History. The cost of the latter is estimated at £1.5million.
- 1.3 Prof. Hunter attended the ECS Committee on 13th November 2008, where he updated members on the background, aims and costs of the centre.

2. Project Funding

- 2.1 The Centre for History intends submitting an ERDF application, with a view to, if successful, having the new centre ready for occupation in September 2010.
- 2.2 The Centre needs to raise the necessary £900k match funding and asked the Council to consider making a contribution to the capital cost of the Centre for History's headquarters.
The Centre's submission suggests that the development would bring additional benefits by diversifying and expanding the Sutherland economy by -

- Creating a growing number of high quality jobs in Dornoch and attracting a growing number of under and post graduate students to Dornoch.
- Provision of summer and short courses, attracting participants from across the UK and overseas.
- Collaboration between the Centre and community groups and individuals across Sutherland and the wider Highlands.

2.3 With the active help of the UHI Development Trust, the Centre for History is in the process of mounting a fund raising campaign. The Centre anticipates that the total project costs of just over £ 1.5million might be met from the following sources:

ERDF	£ 555k	indicative
Trusts	£ 500k	indicative
Private/ business donors	£ 245k	indicative
Highland Council	£ 200k	requested

2.4 This £200k contribution could be made from the uncommitted Discretionary Capital Fund in the current financial year (2008/09), subject to conditions to be agreed by the Director or Finance and Head of Legal Services.

3. Links to the Highland Council Programme

- 3.1 The Council Programme commits that “We will work with the UHI and HIE to support the award of full University Title to include research degree awarding powers and ensure the development of its academic research capability as the basis of economic development.”
- 3.2 The development of the UHI Centre for History offers opportunities for partnership with the Highland Archive and Registration Centre and UHI Centre for History to be maximised, especially the opportunity for researchers to gain experience in and add value to the Highland Archive service.
- 3.3 There is also the opportunity to explore the development of a Sutherland Archive Spoke within the capital development of Centre for History, including possible benefits of savings through a joint capital project.

4. Recommendation

4.1 Members are asked to –

- Note the UHI Centre for History’s plans for development, subject to a successful application for ERDF and other funding.
- Agree the commitment of £200k in the current financial year (2008/09) from the uncommitted Capital Discretionary Fund, subject to conditions to be agreed by the Director of Finance and Head of Legal Services.
- Comment on the opportunities offered by the UHI Centre for History in implementing the Council’s Archive Strategy and other potential links.

Signature:

Designation: Director of Education, Culture and Sport

Date: 14th January 2009

Author: Ian Murray, Head of Community Learning & Leisure