

EVALUATION OF ALTERNATIVES

Comparison of Alternatives

As per the guidance for alternative authorities 4.9 p.7 *“The relevant authority must compare the benefits of the proposal in the request to the benefits of any alternative proposals, whether those come from the authority itself or anyone else, and consider how the potential benefits relate to the functions and purposes of the authority, and any other matters they consider relevant.”*

During the preliminary evaluation consideration was given to six alternatives as presented to AMPB in May 2017; all of which were related to discussions held with the Staffin Community Trust (SCT):

Alternative 1: Current Use (including ongoing works and budgeted proposals)

Capital programme – two relevant budget lines totalling up to £500k – last update to PDI in November 2016 & subject to on-going affordability.

For the avoidance of doubt, the ‘exciting project with potential to deliver significantly to a variety of Council priorities’ as reported to PDI and quoted in the Social Enterprise Plan (SEP), referred specifically to the opportunity for innovative collaboration and partnership working with the community and *not* to the ATR as submitted.

Alternative 2: Highland Council / SCT Collaboration & Partnership (including revenue sharing)

A revenue sharing model: an amalgamation of current Highland Council proposals and SCT ATR proposals for mutual benefit and for the sustainable delivery of long term wider public benefits. Revenue generated on site would be shared between THC and SCT in order to secure an integrated approach to the management and maintenance of the whole Storr site.

Alternative 3: Complete Transfer to Community

As per proposal submitted, but to include purchase of whole property, so removing from Highland Council all ongoing responsibilities for this property.

The SEP asserts that purchase of the whole would result in both economic and regulatory burden for the Trust, but fails to recognise the risk of such burdens to the future of the site if revenue generating capacity is separated from maintenance obligations, particularly in a climate of severe pressure on the public purse.

Alternative 4: Complete Lease to Community.

As per proposal submitted, but to include leasehold of the whole property, so removing from Highland Council all ongoing responsibilities for this property for a period of time (up to 99 years), but protecting the long term public interest through terms and conditions of lease and reversion to local authority at end of lease or in event of breach of terms and conditions.

Alternative 5: Partial Lease (‘arrival zone’) to Community

Lease ‘arrival zone’ only with a rental payable by the community to THC, so enabling THC to manage and maintain the remainder of the site. This option would offer better collaboration with shared goals for the benefit of the site. Also protecting the long term public interest through terms and conditions of lease and reversion to local authority at end of lease or in event of breach of terms and conditions.

Alternative 6: Skye Wide Community Group (Trust / THC)

As highlighted in the minutes of meeting between THC, HIE, COSS & SCT on the 28th January 2016, the Eilean a’ Cheò Ward Members *“have an interest in consideration of a wider Skye approach for mitigating issues of visitor management at tourist hot spots”*

Existing

known hot spots for visitor management include The Storr, Lealt, Kilt Rock, Quiraing, Duntulm Castle, Fairy Glen, Coral Beach, Neist Point, Fairy Pools, Elgol. As no such group is currently identified it might be for the Council to lead on such an initiative.

Ranking of Alternatives

Based upon evaluation of a red, amber, green assessment of the benefits claimed within the ATR and key additional benefits identified as preferred criteria that the Council should seek to transact with SCT on, as reported to the AMPB 19th April 2016.

First: A6 Island wide-approach

Second: A4 Complete transfer to community leasehold

Equal 3rd: A2 Partial freehold to community with THC/SCT revenue sharing mechanism

A5 Partial transfer to community leasehold

Fourth: A3 Complete transfer to community freehold

Equal 5th: ATR As submitted

A1 – THC current use i.e. no direct community involvement

The preferred alternative identified by the AMPB following consideration of the preliminary evaluation of the ATR was transfer of the whole site excluding the roadside layby on a long-term leasehold basis. So removing from Highland Council all ongoing responsibilities for this property for a period of time (anything up to 99 years), but protecting the long term public interest through terms and conditions of lease and reversion to local authority at end of lease or in event of breach of terms and conditions.

This alternative can be compared against all the benefits claimed within the ATR and include key additional benefits relevant to the functions and purposes of the Council in relation to the land that it owns at the Storr and the associated obligations.

The following table compares the claimed benefits of the Asset Transfer Request (ATR) as submitted against the preferred alternative.

Claimed Benefits of ATR Proposal	Alternative With Additional Benefits	Comments
Partial Transfer to Community (freehold)	Complete Transfer to Community (leasehold), without Roadside Layby	
	Protect public access	As a specific condition of the ATR requests that there is no economic development burden or claw-back rights on the site, Public Access could be affected.
1.8 FTE direct		Both could deliver this and control of the whole site could increase the opportunity for employment relating to maintenance of paths, boundary fences, deer-proof fencing, rabbit proof fencing & all associated gates. Conditions of lease could include Service level agreement for the Council to manage the parking Enforcement, using an income sharing model. This would have the benefit of charges being able to be enforced and an all year round presence.
2.0 FTE indirect		All options generate indirect benefits as footfall has increased year on year. The attraction is the Old Man of Storr not a car-park and toilets. The lease option is a more holistic approach that protects the maintenance and management of the site as a whole.
Training		This would be the same for both options.
Volunteering		This would be the same for both options.
Road Safety		The layby forms part of the adopted road and under the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 section 1 it's vested with The Highland Council as the Local Roads Authority. This places duties and powers upon the council to maintain the road (including verges, laybys etc). In terms of road safety, if the layby was to be transferred then THC would have significantly less control over road safety issues. The lease option would leave the road safety responsibilities with the Council.
Public Toilets		This would be the same for both options.
Community Empowerment		This would be the same for both options.
Tree Planting		This would be the same for both options. The Council has already committed funding to the additional beat up of trees required for the whole site.
Better Management of Environment		This would be the same for both options.
Increased indirect economic activity		All options generate indirect benefits.
Retaining people / families		This would be the same for both options.
Better visitor experience		This would be the same for both options. With potentially more benefit to the lease option as it would ensure a holistic approach to the management and maintenance of the whole site.
Employees on site		This would be the same for both options. The Lease would have the potential to have additional employment on site for the management and maintenance of the wider site.
All-abilities path		Site capacity issues applicable to all.
Surplus cash to community		This would be the same for both options. The amount of surplus available through the lease option may be less but by protecting the management and maintenance of the whole site it is less likely that there would be a negative visitor experience leading to a drop in visitor numbers. Conditions of lease could include Service level agreement for the Council to manage the parking Enforcement, using an income sharing model. This would have the benefit of charges being able to be enforced and an all year round presence.
	Protect public interest in perpetuity	As a specific condition of the ATR requests that there is no economic development burden or claw-back rights on the site, Public interest in perpetuity could be affected. Through terms and conditions of lease this could be protected.
	Management & Maintenance of the whole site	Only the lease option can realise this benefit which would ensure that the Council's stated aims for management of the Storr are fully met and that the preferred criteria for a mechanism in which to transact with SCT are also fully met.