

**The Highland Council**  
**Planning, Development and Infrastructure Committee**  
**4 November 2015**

Agenda Item	6
Report No	PDI 61/15

**Town & Countryside (Planning & Development) Capital Programme**

**Report by Director of Development and Infrastructure**

**Summary**

This report provides an update on capital allocations within the Town & Countryside Capital Programme to 2023/2024. These projects are recommended in support of the Council's 'Highland First' priorities including, in particular, projects with the potential for new ways of working with communities. The programme also supports the Service commitment to improve the benefits derived by communities from our countryside assets and facilities.

Members are invited to note the contents of the report and agree the proposed project allocations.

**1. Background**

- 1.1 The Highland Council's Capital Programme was presented to full Council on 12 March 2015 resulting in approval of a programme to 2023/24, future years however being dependant on the outcome of future Government spending reviews.
- 1.2 The Town & Countryside (T&C) programme is that part of the Council's Capital Programme formerly delivered by the Planning and Development Service and now integrated within the Development and Infrastructure Service programme.
- 1.3 Capital allocated to the T&C programme is as follows:

Year 1	2015/16	£2,317,000 [1]
Year 2	2016/17	£650,000
Year 3	2017/18	£700,000
Year 4	2018/19	£700,000
Year 5	2019/20	£700,000
Year 6	2020/21	£700,000
Year 7	2021/22	£700,000
Year 8	2022/23	£700,000
Year 9	2023/24	£700,000

[1] The 2015/16 figure includes underspend carried forward from 2014/15.

## 2. Current Context

2.1 Capital allocation within the T&C programme has generally been directed for investment in the following six project types:

- upgrade of assets within Development and Infrastructure Service portfolio of countryside sites;
- quality public space enhancements;
- sense of place projects - reinforcing special local character;
- town and village entrance environments and gateway features;
- access to and within the countryside; and
- interpretation and visitor signage

These project types have been agreed by successive administrations since first agreed through PED Committee in August 2011.

2.2 In the context of the current Administration the project types are now recommended to Planning, Development and Infrastructure (PDI) Committee Members as being of continuing importance and ongoing relevance in support of the priorities identified within the Programme for the Administration - Highland First. In particular, projects have strong potential to deliver against the following priority areas:

- realising the full potential of communities – involving and empowering communities in new and better ways including opportunities for partnership working and community land ownership;
- delivering positive rural impacts including investment in remote locations;
- enhancing town and village environments and contributing to development of the character and quality of the City environment;
- enabling best use of opportunities for European and other external funding;
- supporting the economic benefits derived from tourism through improvements in visitor experience and developing Highland as a world class destination;
- contributing to delivery of the Gaelic Language Plan - working in partnership with communities and through the provision of information to visitors; and
- contributing to health improvements through promotion of access to both countryside and urban networks.

Specific examples of how these priorities are supported can be found in **Appendix 2**.

### **3. Reporting Process**

- 3.1 Up to and including 2013/14 capital monitoring and project proposals for the T&C programme were presented at each PED Committee meeting. Following corporate Service restructure the capital reporting process has been adapted to allow for reporting to PDI Committee by the Development and Infrastructure Finance Manager on the whole of the corporate programme.
- 3.2 The manner of reporting at a detailed project level for the T&C programme is now proposed to be on an annual basis providing both an update on specific project progress and allowing PDI Committee members to approve recommended capital allocations for future years. This is the first such annual report to be presented to PDI Committee.
- 3.3 In addition to the PDI reporting process we will work to adapt the project identification processes in support of greater local decision making. It has already been proposed (PED January 2014) to undertake greater liaison with Ward Members. Action has been limited due to the impact of long term absences on staff resourcing, but a recent team restructure should enable implementation over the next twelve months.
- 3.4 Longer term the programme includes a generic allowance for T&C Community Initiatives - a stimulant for the development of new ways of working with communities and, in particular, intending to prioritise opportunities for communities to take a greater or lead role in the management of land and countryside facilities within the context of the six project types already identified above. Specific examples of potential opportunities can be found in **Appendix 2**.

### **4. The Town & Countryside Capital Programme to 2023/24**

- 4.1 Based upon outline business cases evaluated through the Council's capital planning process, firm project proposals up to and including 2015/16 were agreed by Planning, Environment and Development (PED) Committee on 18 January 2012.
- 4.2 **Appendix 1** provides a tabular summary of current and proposed projects within the T&C programme from 2015/16 to 2023/24 inclusive. Some projects are already established and underway based upon approval by prior committee. There has been some adjustment to the scheduling of projects to best reflect actual scope and progress to date.
- 4.3 As a result of the evolving changes to the capital reporting process within the new Service structure, it has been necessary to make a number of assumptions regarding the allocation of funds to projects in order to maintain progress with delivery. Such assumptions have been in liaison with both Service Director and Finance Manager and guided by the approved strategy for project types to be delivered within the former Planning and Development programme.

- 4.4 Taking this into account, Committee is asked to review the overall programme as now presented and agree the recommended project allocations to 2023/24. **Appendix 2** provides further information regarding each of the projects. The allocation of capital to projects as provided in **Appendix 1** and further described in **Appendix 2** is recommended to this committee for approval.
- 4.5 Projects have been grouped into four generic headings under which they will be amalgamated and reported within the corporate capital monitoring statement by Development and Infrastructure Finance Manager. These generic headings are: Town & Countryside Regeneration; Visitor Management; Misc. Assets, Bridges & Structures; Green Networks, Core Paths & Long Distance Routes.
- 4.6 Committee is asked to recognise that there is constant need to adapt the detail of capital allocations for a variety of reasons: to manage project over / underspends; to allow flexibility to take advantage of short term opportunities such as external funding; and to enable timely essential works to take place where safety is a consideration. Experience has shown that a rigid application of a fixed capital allocation to a particular project, made in advance of detailed project design or external income opportunities, is not always appropriate to the nature of the projects undertaken. Some flexibility within the programme allows the team to be responsive to such circumstances, whilst still delivering timely capital expenditure. Any essential adjustments to allocations will be agreed with the Director and Finance Manager.

## **5. Implications**

- 5.1 Resources:  
Projects are funded from the Highland Council Capital Programme with external funding secured in addition whenever possible. The scope of projects is tailored to the funds available and therefore there are no additional resource implications for the Council.
- 5.2 Legal, Equality, Risk and Rural:  
Potential legal, equalities, risk and rural impact implications vary due to the wide range of projects undertaken and are considered on a project specific basis as an integral part of the project planning process.
- 5.3 Climate Change / Carbon Clever:  
Opportunities and constraints are considered as an integral part of the project planning process.
- 5.4 Gaelic:  
Opportunities for the inclusion of Gaelic are considered as an integral part of the project planning process

**Recommendation**

The Committee is asked to note the contents of the report and agree the proposed project allocations.

Designation: Director of Development and Infrastructure

Date: 16 October 2015

Author: Ann Hackett, Principal Projects Officer

Background Papers: Appendix 1: Town & Countryside Capital Programme:  
2015/16 to 2023/24.

Appendix 2: Town & Countryside Capital Programme:  
Project Descriptions.



## APPENDIX 2

### TOWN & COUNTRYSIDE CAPITAL PROGRAMME: PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS.

#### **Inverness Castle North Tower £200k**

A contribution towards a larger project delivered by the Service's property team. This project will open up the Castle's North Tower as a tourist attraction and improve pedestrian access around the Castle grounds.

#### **Dell of Spey Aviemore (£90k)**

This popular site and water feature, in the heart of Aviemore, sits within the portfolio of countryside facilities. The site is in need of upgrade which will include lighting and resurfacing.

#### **Inverness Townscape Heritage £550k**

The Highland Council received a Townscape Heritage Stage 2 Pass from the Heritage Lottery Fund on the 24 September 2015. This project has been more fully reported to PDI Committee (18 February 2015) and annual reports will be provided.

#### **Storr Native Woodland (Staffin) £130k**

To date, this project has included the removal of exotic plantation forest, planting of nearly fifty thousand trees for native woodland restoration and substantial path upgrades providing access within this Council owned site and through the site to the Old Man of Storr. There will be ongoing costs to ensure establishment of these trees and there is the need to upgrade visitor signage and interpretation at this very popular site.

See also Storr Visitor Management below for further information on additional proposals for site improvements community partnership / potential community ownership.

#### **Kyle Steps (Kyle of Lochalsh) £30k**

Designs for the upgrade of steps at Kyle Prospect have been prepared and the Service is working with local CS staff for delivery by the DLO. Existing steps have been closed for a number of years due to safety issues and there was a strong desire within the community for upgrade to reopen this valuable pedestrian link between the Prospect and the village centre car park.

#### **Strathpeffer Spa Gardens £430k**

Substantial improvements have already been completed within the gardens including replacement of rustic fencing and path and handrail upgrades. This has improved overall safety and provided enhanced all-abilities access. At the request of the community a new access point has been installed at the west end of the garden which is expected to increase usage and enjoyment of this village centre site.

Proposals have been prepared for an historically consistent upgrade of the perimeter fence adjacent to the public road. A significant length of the railing along the A834 is leaning badly due to soft ground on the gardens side, which drops away steeply, and accumulated damage and repairs from traffic collisions over a period of years.

In future years, £300k has been allocated with a view to a major upgrade of the parking area which is falling into significant disrepair and functions very poorly in relation to current usage of the site. It is expected that delivery of this project will be dependent upon additional external funding and community partnership working. We are in liaison with Ward Members in order to identify an appropriate local delivery mechanism.

### **Approaching Inverness £170k**

This project aims to improve the quality, character and impact of entrances to and routes through the City of Inverness. The project steering group has identified options for delivery which will be presented to City of Inverness Area Committee for consideration. The options include 1) A9 final approaches – Longman roundabout and start of Longman Road. 2) Clachnaharry – various potential streetscape measures to complement emerging Muirtown and South Kessock Development Brief. 3) Telford Street roundabout.

### **Portree £13k**

Upgrade of steps to Bayfield car park and installation of visitor reception area. Project complete – allocation covers modest overspend carried forward.

### **Helmsdale £23k**

Upgrade of Bridgend Car Park and the provision of all abilities access to the Emigrant's Statue adjacent to the A9. Project complete – allocation covers modest overspend carried forward.

### **Nairn £130k**

A capital allocation of £486k in 2009/10 enabled external funding of £800k to be secured from Scottish Government Town Centre Regeneration Fund for the regeneration of the Nairn High Street. The sum of £131k remaining in the Service Capital Programme is the residual sum from completion of these works under budget. As the residual sum forms part of the bigger TCRF funding package there is a strong expectation that it should still be spent in Nairn for further regeneration works on or in close association with the High Street. Liaison with Ward Members regarding a suitable scope of works has, to date, proved inconclusive and dialogue is continuing.

### **Small Scale Facilities Upgrades £300k**

The Service manages a portfolio of in excess of 200 countryside sites including woodlands, car parks, picnic sites, paths, bridges and structures and over five hundred other minor structures and installations including signage, interpretation panels and seating. These sites are owned or leased by Highland Council and £300k has been allocated in future years in anticipation of essential upgrades across the portfolio.

The management of these sites supports a wide range of Council priorities, in particular investing in remote rural locations; supporting the economic benefits derived from tourism; increasing awareness of the Gaelic language (through appropriate use on information and interpretation facilities); and contributing to health improvements through access to the countryside.

It is anticipated that upgrades may be required at Lybster Park, Kingsteps Quarry (Nairn), Longman Bird Hide (Inverness), Noss Head (Wick) and Kyleakin public realm within the period of the programme, but this generic allocation allows flexibility and will enable a responsive approach to developing situations.

### **Town & Countryside Regeneration Community Initiatives £750k**

In recognition of the importance of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and the developing agenda for increased 'localism', £750k has been allocated to a generic heading Town & Countryside Regeneration Community Initiatives. This allocation is intended to enable the Service to develop new ways of working in partnership with communities for the delivery of projects for which there is a strong drive from within the community, coupled with evidence of both widespread community support and community capacity to deliver.

It is expected that the scope of such projects will fit within the six project types identified for the T&CR Capital Programme and that this capital can also be targeted in support of community initiatives to 'adopt' and deliver community ownership or management of sites within the Service portfolio of countryside facilities. There may be opportunities for participatory budgeting which will need to be considered on a project specific basis. Projects will be identified through close liaison with Ward Members and it is expected that suitable projects will be identified some years in advance of the years in which allocations have been included in the programme in recognition of likely long project development phases.

Projects delivered under this heading will have considerable potential to support the Council's priorities for realising the full potential of communities, empowering communities in new and better ways and including opportunities for partnership working and community land ownership. It is also very likely that the provision of Council funding for such projects will support the Council's priorities in enabling best use of opportunities for European and other external funding. This generic heading

offers the potential for an exciting new approach and development of different models for delivery of capital investment.

In addition to Storr Woodland and Strathpeffer Spa Gardens, which projects have been specifically described elsewhere in this Appendix, we are already aware of a number of other community initiatives which could develop into candidate projects of this type, for example: Ardgay Village Enhancements (Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust), Clachtoll Visitor Centre (Coigach Assynt Living Landscape Partnership), Muir of Ord Village Enhancements (Muir of Ord Community Hall & Facilities Company).

This generic heading offers the potential for an exciting new approach and development of different models for delivery of capital investment.

### **Community Woodland Upgrades £200k**

In addition to Storr Woodland and Strathpeffer Spa Gardens, which are described under separate headings, the Service manages a range of Community Woodland sites which are owned by Highland Council: Ellan Wood (Carrbridge), Loch Imrich (Newtonmore), Ralia Woodland (Kingussie), Feshiebridge Woodland, Tradespark Woodland (Nairn), Mill Pond and Leasgeary Woods (both Portree), Strontian Woodland, Daviot Woodland, Culloden Drive, Smithton Wood, and Foyers Wood. These are popular sites, in most cases for both locals and visitors and £200k has been allocated in future years to this generic heading intended to allow appropriate upgrades to woodland infrastructure including paths, information and interpretation infrastructure.

This investment will contribute to Council priorities investing in remote rural locations; supporting the economic benefits derived from tourism; increasing awareness of the Gaelic language (through appropriate use on information and interpretation facilities); and contributing to health improvements through access to the countryside.

### **Other Town & Countryside Regeneration Projects £100k**

An allowance of £100k has been allocated to this generic heading in the last year of the programme in order to allow the Service to respond to developing demand for T&CR projects within the context of the six project types to which this programme is targeted.

### **Aviemore Orbital £80k**

This is an important Core Path, popular with locals, and with a section forming part of the Speyside Way. It is proposed that path surfacing improvements will be carried out early in 2016.

### **Chanonry Point (Fortrose) £425k**

Chanonry Point has become a very popular site for dolphin watching, attracting around 150 thousand visitors each year and making it one of the 10 most visited attractions in Highland.

Building upon substantial community consultation since 2010, this project will upgrade the car park facility and create an improved visitor experience through the introduction of improved surfaces, improved vehicular circulation, disabled bays, seating, and a clear pedestrian route to the dolphin viewing area. There will be timber sleeper edging features, with some artist input, and an area with visitor information/ interpretation panels to encourage visitors to stay longer in the area.

Although the constraints of size and adjacent land ownership have prevented any additional parking, it is hoped that by marking the bays, they will be used more efficiently. It has also been an aim to remove the illicit parking on verges, which regularly causes congestion and disruption.

The programme has been set to avoid the busy tourist season, with an anticipated start date in early January, and completion by the Easter holidays.

### **Glen Nevis Visitor Centre (Fort William) £35k**

A contribution of £35k has been committed in support of the Nevis Landscape Partnership (NLP) for the upgrade of visitor interpretation facilities at Glen Nevis Visitor Centre. This project sits within a portfolio of projects for which the NLP has been successful in securing Heritage Lottery Funding of up to £1.8 million.

Glen Nevis Visitor Centre is owned by Highland Council but managed by High Life Highland. This project will be delivered by High Life Highland.

### **Mallaig Decking £70k**

Mallaig Decking is a seating / viewpoint area in the heart of Mallaig overlooking the harbour. Initiated by a request from the community through Ward Members, this project has delivered a complete refurbishment of the facility, including an extension increasing overall capacity by 40%. Highland Council worked in partnership with Mallaig Harbour Authority and the Community Council for delivery of these works which have also included restoration of existing street furniture and installation of benches, planters and community noticeboards. The project is nearing completion.

### **Dunnet Head & Dunnet Beach £118k**

This project provides all-abilities improvements and environmental upgrades at both Dunnet Bay and Dunnet Head, including improved all-abilities parking, removal of sub-standard steps and replacement with graded paths, other path upgrades, provision of cycle stands and decorative stone dyke work. The estimated completion date for is February 2016.

### **Plock of Kyle (Kyle of Lochalsh) £15k**

The Service is working with Kyle of Lochalsh Community Trust for the delivery of improved local signage for pedestrian access to the Plock Viewpoint. This contribution supports a successful application by the Trust to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the delivery of a wider package of community led projects in the area.

### **Smoo Cave Durness £25k**

This project will deliver path upgrades at the Smoo Cave site, which is owned by Highland Council and attracts in excess of 43000 visitors per annum to this remote rural area in north west Highland. This work builds upon prior investment in developing the site as a high quality visitor attraction.

### **Dubh Lochan Trail Forsinard £10k**

A £10k contribution to a £60k RSPB project for the installation of boardwalk for the Dubh Lochan Trail which is part of the wider Flows to the Future initiative.

### **Pictish Trail £30k**

The Pictish Trail is a tourist driving route extending from Inverness to Caithness and Sutherland. Installed by Highland Council some years ago, the trail has become dated and this project aims build upon past investment to develop the route for future users. It will seek to engage with other providers, such as local museums in order to maximise external funding opportunities with the potential to develop and deliver integrated information through the use of museums as hubs (e.g. providing internet access for downloading an app, route maps, leaflet distribution); new methods of promoting the route and making it more accessible and interesting to all age groups. The Service is currently consulting with stakeholders regarding scope of works for delivery in future years.

### **Wester Ross Visitor Hubs £361k**

An appraisal of opportunities for investment in environmental improvements was completed earlier this year, which process included widespread community and stakeholder consultation. Each of the thirteen facilities within the D&I portfolio of countryside sites were appraised, as were other key sites in the area. This project now proposes a first phase of delivery to develop a bespoke visitor shelter structure to be used for information, visitor orientation, interpretation or art work at key sites including Braemore Junction, Achnasheen and Kishorn.

There is potential for the visitor hub approach to be utilised more widely within this and other areas and it has potential to complement the North Coast 500 initiative and the Scottish Government Scottish Scenic Routes initiative. In recognition of this potential, additional allocations have been made in future years to enable the project to develop further.

### **Reiss Beach Access Upgrade £50k**

Reiss Beach is a popular destination for both visitors and locals, but presents challenging site conditions of extreme weather and erosion. This project will deliver accessible and safe beach access together with a general upgrade to arrival area.

### **Storr Visitor Management (Staffin) £400k**

This allocation is intended to make a substantial contribution to essential, significant visitor management improvements at Storr, which it is anticipated can be delivered through an innovative approach to working in partnership with the local community through the Staffin Community Trust. Whilst the allocation is insufficient in itself to enable delivery, it is intended to enable the community and Council to secure significant external funding.

Staffin Community Trust (SCT) has a strong interest in greater involvement at Storr as a 'gateway to Staffin' and a positive working relationship has been established between Highland Council (including Ward Members), SCT, Highlands & Islands Enterprise Community Assets Team and the Community Ownership Support Service. Members of the Projects & Facilities Team have undertaken a number of research trips together with representatives of SCT in order to explore partnership models for delivery appropriate to Storr and dialogue is continuing with a view to establishing a mechanism for joint delivery.

This is an exciting project with potential to deliver significantly to a variety of Council priorities, not only realising the full potential of communities, involving and empowering communities in new and better ways through both partnership working and community land ownership, but also delivering positive rural impacts in this remote location, enabling best use of opportunities for external funding, supporting the economic benefits derived from tourism through improvements in visitor experience and contributing to health improvements through promotion of access to the countryside.

Highland Council ownership at Storr Woodland comprises an 82 hectare site through which passes Core Path access to the Old Man of Storr as well as a more accessible circular path. Native woodland restoration is underway and information and interpretation infrastructure is due for refurbishment (see Storr Native Woodland above). Storr attracts in the region of 120000 visitors per annum. Allowing for an average daily visitor spend of £50 pppn, and given the fact that this is the major tourist attraction in this remote area, it is reasonable to say that the site supports a tourism spend in the region of of £6 million per annum. The site ranks third (after Quiraing and Neist Point) on Tripadvisor for 'things to do in Skye'.

There are no toilet facilities at Storr which is to the detriment of both the quality of the environment and the visitor experience.

Current parking provision at Storr is extremely inadequate. The small car park and roadside layby were supplemented in 2015 by an extension to the layby, so doubling the number of spaces from 23 to 46. Traffic survey indicates a peak parking demand approaching 80 cars with vehicle movements are frequently unsafe placing pedestrians at risk. Safety concerns are exacerbated by widespread verge parking which adds to the dangers for both drivers and pedestrians.

Whilst there has been significant past capital investment in this site, it is now recommended that further substantial investment is essential to manage the issues arising out of such high visitor numbers. The intention is not to increase the number of people visiting the site, but to adequately attempt to manage those who are visiting, particularly in respect of road safety and environmental health.

Preliminary investigations have been undertaken and proposals drafted for development of the former timber loading area into a new car parking area providing up to 76 additional parking spaces. Further investigations are underway in relation to these proposals which are complicated by extreme peat depths and slump topography. Early construction cost estimates for the likely preferred option are in the region of £500k.

Research is underway into the most cost effective approach for delivery of toilet facilities at Storr, these now being considered not just desirable, but absolutely essential. Although no cost estimates are currently available, these can reasonably be expected to be significant and with ongoing revenue expenditure implications for running costs.

### **Strathnaver Trail £20k**

The aspiration for this project is to work with the Strathnaver Museum staff and volunteers in Bettyhill to make improvements to the Strathnaver Trail that will attract more visitors to the area and make the trail a key local attraction. This might include the addition of new sites, developing new interpretation and upgrading infrastructure. There is potential to apply for LEADER funding to help support this project and the scope will be explored further for delivery in future years.

### **Foyers Viewpoint £150k**

This Council owned site attracts in excess of 60000 visitors per annum and is popular with both tourists and locals. Past investment has included visitor reception infrastructure, path upgrades, interpretation and viewpoint structures. The latter are fairly modest, limited in capacity and anticipated to require upgrade within the period of this capital programme.

This project is intended to complement existing facilities with a more dramatic visitor experience by the installation of enhanced viewpoint/s. The site is located on the busy tourist route south of Loch Ness and it is anticipated that this project may have

potential fit with Scottish Government Scottish Scenic Routes initiative, so enabling added value through external funding.

### **North Kessock Viewpoint £200k**

The existing 'portacabin' installation at the A9 northbound North Kessock car park, currently occupied by the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDCS), is coming to the end of its serviceable life. In addition, WDCS have intimated their intention not to renew their current tenancy of the property. The original purpose of this installation was to enable provision of a visitor information hub relating to dolphin watching in the Beaully / Moray Firth area.

This project is proposed to replace the existing installation with an alternative unmanned iconic viewpoint installation and visitor hub together with improved signage providing better linkage with the village of North Kessock located below. The intention is to provide a high quality visitor experience on this busy route north and it is anticipated that this may have potential fit with Scottish Government Scottish Scenic Routes initiative, so enabling added value through external funding.

### **Highland Scenic Routes £475k**

Members have previously been made aware of the Scottish Government Scenic Routes (SSR) initiative, a mobile exhibition of pilot projects also having been recently on display at Headquarters. With pilot projects now complete or preparing for installation, it is anticipated that the SSR initiative will launch more widely from 2016 onwards. Generic capital allocations have been made in future years to enable Highland Council to put forward appropriate proposals. The Service portfolio of countryside sites includes a number of locations which may have the potential for enhancement within the likely scope of the initiative.

Potential projects might be of widely varying magnitude from small scale 'elegant parking places' to iconic installations, but all would support the economic benefits derived from tourism through improvements in visitor experience and developing Highland as a world class destination. Projects delivered under this generic heading also have a high potential to contribute to Council priorities for positive rural impacts and enabling best use of opportunities for external funding.

The Service has undertaken considerable research in relation to models for delivery of the pilot projects and is currently instigating direct dialogue with Scottish Government regarding potential opportunities within Highland. Four sites believed to have high potential are discussed elsewhere in this Appendix (Storr, Wester Ross, Foyers and North Kessock), but there is considered to be wide potential elsewhere and this is a potentially exciting opportunity for projects to complement Highlands world class scenic quality.

### **Cairngorm National Park £100k**

An allowance has been allocated in future years to enable the Service to work in partnership with the Cairngorm National Park Authority in response to developing demands for capital investment within the Park within the context of the six project types to which this programme is targeted.

### **Other Visitor Management Projects £50k**

An allowance has been allocated to this generic heading in the last year of the programme in order to allow the Service to respond to developing demand for Visitor Management projects within the context of the six project types to which this programme is targeted.

### **Bighouse Bridge Upgrade (Melvich) £185k**

Highland Council is responsible for this structure which is currently in unsafe condition and has been closed to the public for some time. The bridge lies on a Core Path (SU19.05) providing access across the River Halladale at Melvich beach. The Service has appointed structural engineering consultants to develop detailed proposals for upgrade.

### **Ballachulish Inclined Plane £145k**

This project focuses on the Ballachulish Inclined Plane (Slate Arch) which is the last visible structural remnant of the Ballachulish slate quarry. The arch is a Scheduled Ancient Monument so of national significance, but currently in poor condition. The project will deliver urgent consolidation works in order to safeguard the monument and maintain it in a safe condition. In addition a range of activities for local people and visitors aimed at interpreting the inclined plane and its significance, including unified interpretation and orientation infrastructure; new interactive on-site interpretation aimed at families with young children and those with special needs; an oral history project; a traditional slate skills training workshop for local participants; and path upgrades to all abilities standard.

Close working with the local community has facilitated external funding towards this project from both Heritage Lottery (£88,100) and Historic Scotland (£77,897) towards overall project costs of £277K.

Of particular note in the context of Highland First is the relevance of the oral history project to the Gaelic language with the workshop attracting coverage from BBC Alba.

### **Glen Nevis Footbridge (Fort William) £150k**

An allocation of £150k has been made in support of Nevis Landscape Partnership (NLP) for the installation of a new all-abilities footbridge across the River Nevis in close proximity to the Glen Nevis Visitor Centre. This is a 50% (approx.) contribution to the total cost of the new installation and removal of the old structure which has reached the end of its serviceable life. This project sits within a portfolio of projects for which the NLP has been successful in securing Heritage Lottery Funding of up to £1.8 million.

The existing footbridge is owned by Highland Council, which is delivering this project and will take ownership of the new structure once installed. The new footbridge will provide enhanced access to the Ben Nevis path and will be an integral part of new all-abilities path provision in the vicinity of the River Ness.

#### **Coghill Footbridge Wick £505k**

Ownership of this substantial footbridge is unclear, it having been 'gifted to the people of Wick in 1893', but it is in significantly deteriorating condition. Following TECS agreement to adopt and thereafter maintain the bridge following upgrade, PED Committee (January 2012) allocated £120k capital towards upgrade. Technical options appraisal has subsequently identified the need for complete replacement of the structure as being the most prudent approach to long term capital investment. The Service has appointed structural engineering consultants to develop detailed proposals for a new four span structure, preliminary construction cost estimates now being £460k to £660k.

#### **Packhorse Bridge Carrbridge £50k**

The Service will explore the nature of work required to ensure the long term integrity of the Packhorse Bridge, Carrbridge, which is owned by Highland Council. The Service seeks to stimulate a community led initiative for the long term management of this iconic structure and the modest capital allocation is intended as 'seed' funding in support of such an initiative.

#### **Old Spey Bridge Grantown on Spey £50k**

The Service will explore the nature of work required to ensure the long term integrity of the Old Spey Bridge, Grantown, which is in partial ownership of Highland Council. The Service seeks to stimulate a community led initiative for the long term management of this structure and the modest capital allocation is intended as 'seed' funding in support of such an initiative.

#### **Other Miscellaneous Assets, Bridges and Structures £200k**

An allowance has been allocated to this generic heading in future years of the programme in order to allow the Service to respond to developing demand for capital investment in countryside assets, bridges and structures for which the Service is responsible.

#### **Millburn Road (Inverness) £50k**

Contribution to Millburn Road Active Travel Route. Project completed 2014/15 but costs to be drawn down 2015/16.

#### **Green Infrastructure £325k**

This allocation supports an application to the Green Infrastructure Fund for the delivery of the Council's 'Space by the Water' project.

### **Ardersier Path £52k**

Due for completion in 2015/16 in response to a Community Council request, this new high specification tarmac path links the bus turning circle and picnic site north of Ardersier and supports the development of A96 coastal and landward trails.

### **Long Distance Routes £325k**

Current expenditure is targeted to the replacement of two footbridges at Inverlochty on the Great Glen Way and essential upgrades on both the Speyside Way and West Highland Way. Allocations in future years recognise the inevitable need for additional works on these significant routes over time.

### **Other Green Networks, Core Paths & Long Distance Route Projects £100k**

An allowance has been allocated to this generic heading in future years of the programme in order to allow the Service to respond to developing demand for green network and access related projects within the context of the six project types to which this programme is targeted.

*Ann Hackett October 2015  
Principal Projects Officer  
Projects & Facilities Team  
Development & Infrastructure Service*