

Item 10 - Question Time

To the Leader of the Council

“What efforts are currently being made to maximise income from EU funding from capital project schemes?”

Response to Mr R MacWilliam

The European Structural Funds are designed to tackle “Investment priorities” which in Scotland saw the Scottish Government focus on Jobs and business growth and Investment. This limited the opportunities for the Council to put forward capital projects as only two of the investment priorities relate to capital projects and these do not allow support towards the Council’s capital programme prioritises of investment in the school estate, roads and bridges. Projects have therefore focussed on Electric vehicle charging, a local low carbon transport hub and Energy efficiency in the Council estate and Smart Mobility, Smart Waste and Open Data through the ERDF Eighth City initiative. A further bid has been submitted via the ERDF Natural & Cultural Heritage Fund for the Inverness Castle Development.

At present the Scottish Government are proposing reallocating some of the Highlands & Islands funding to the rest of Scotland on the basis that those areas are overcommitted and require funds. The Council is currently challenging this proposal as there are potential Highlands and Islands projects that could make use of this funding including capital projects that could be taken forward if some flexibility over the allocation of funds was permitted. The Council is working with partners to resolve these issues in order to maximise access for the Highlands and Islands to EU Funds.