

**City and Area of Inverness Economic Recovery Sub-Group
Thursday 21 January 2021 at 11:00am**

ACTION NOTE

Present:

Cllr Graham Ross (GR), Cllr Jimmy Gray (JG); Cllr Isabelle Mackenzie (IM); Cllr Bill Boyd (BB); Cllr Trish Robertson (TR); Cllr Janet Campbell (JC); Cllr Margaret Davidson (MD); Cllr Emma Knox (EK); David Haas (DH), Inverness City Manager; Allan Maguire (AM), Head of Development & Regeneration; Alison MacNeill (AMN), Senior Public Relations Officer; Mike Smith (MS), Inverness BID; Alan Rawlinson (AR), Visit Inverness Loch Ness; Malcolm Macleod (MM), ECO Infrastructure and Environment; Danny Gallagher (DG), Business Gateway Service & Dev Manager; Craig Baxter (CB), Planner; Douglas Hardie (DH), Bad Girl Bakery

	Items	Note/Action Agreed	Action For	Action Undertaken
1.	Welcome/Apologies for Absence			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GR welcomed Members and ran through the usual protocols to be adhered to during the meeting • NOTED apologies received from Stewart Nicol 		
2.	Business Gateway Digital Inclusion/Services – Danny Gallagher			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DG ran through a short presentation with Members informing them of the extensive services being offered through Business Gateway and the importance of digital inclusion in todays market • Business Gateway support local businesses in several ways. They hold webinars and workshops, tutorials and podcasts • With the COVID restrictions digital platform activity has increased with Business Gateway's total enquiries for this year sitting at 1562 • Numbers show that digital presents will be around for a long time • Most of Business Gateway staff are working remotely at present. Easiest way to contact Business Advisors through Bgateway.com chat box or at Highland@bgateway.com • NOTED JG concern some individuals and groups are still falling through the gaps and the need to look at a one-stop shop between Business Gateway and Council • DG advised everyone is encouraged to come to Business Gateway first and they will signpost if required • NOTED IM highlighted not everyone uses social media and questioned how groups that aren't on different communication platforms can engage. Post COVID it will be important to open the gateway to those businesses and engage with them • DG advised it is hoped Members will continue to help spread information to constituents about Business Gateway and the opportunities and support they can provide 		

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NOTED MD gave feedback on experience and advised possible 1-1 contact could help in ensuring individuals are more committed to process. MD also highlighted the disconnect with jobs on offer and what people are being directed towards • DG advised Business Gateway offer digital surgeries of 1 hour with a specialist • Thought there will need to be some kind of incentive for SME's 		
3.	Highland Food and Drink – Douglas Hardie, Bad Girl Bakery			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DH advised Members of the proposal for the Highland Food and Drink Trail • Concept to bring good quality businesses providing local product to the trail around Inverness • Looking to attract people in to Inverness to see what's on offer. Hospitality has been hard hit by the pandemic and the aim is to get people back • Looking at funding structure should be self-financing by year 3. Funding gap of around 50K dependant on uptake and route out of COVID • Feedback received back so far has been overwhelmingly positive • NOTED BB highlighted the importance of capitalising on the Ness Walk Area and protect is going forward. Northern Meeting Park creative opportunity of using asset • NOTED JG highlighted the huge success of the kiosk and the potential there is with the trail. Potential benefit for whole of Inverness • NOTED IM highlighted the possibility of apprenticeships and encouragement of entrepreneurial opportunities. Possible collaboration with Eden Court and Under Canvas. Opportunity to bring people towards river art piece. Also opportunity to look at local sponsorship for bins/seats etc that could help with possible funding • NOTED JC also highlighted the opportunity of using the Ness Walk Area and suggested possible opportunity and potential of using complimenting concepts such as sculpture etc • NOTED GR described the concept as fantastic with the opportunity once established to be extended across Council area. Principals will have to be established and fundamentals in place to help promote local businesses and opportunities 		

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DHaas advised they are working with DH, HIE and relevant Officers in Planning, Roads and Licensing departments to ensure the venture is properly supported and well placed to move forward 		
4.	Inverness BID Festive Period Update – Mike			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MS updated Members on pre-Christmas report and into the new year Bounceback 7 week campaign delivered by Highland News Media was a great success with positive feedback received 2-hour free parking at Rose Street was well received by Businesses Level 4 restrictions being implemented on 26th with businesses losing 7 days of busy trading was huge loss for retail With hospitality now in lockdown until at least mid-February there are concerns if Easter bounce will happen MS expressed thanks to the Council for their support in the closure of Hamilton Street to allow M&S the opportunity to trade safely in the run up to Christmas BID are trying to engage and support local independent businesses who are uncertain on what their position will be when things start up again MS highlighted Business Gateway Digital Boost would be an easier route and help more businesses to become more digital Focusing on marketing Inverness City Centre as a destination MS advised BID are supportive of decluttering of the High Street Project NOTED BID proposed the possibility of 2-hour free parking offer in January that was unable to be taken up by the public to be taken up again once the City Centre is reopened again following restrictions GR advised discussion has been had with Shane Manning who is looking at the figures to get an indication up to 26th December. If possible, would like to see MS suggestion encouraged by only if figures allow DH advised the Council are working closely with Inverness BID and meet regularly. Work is being done on a new campaign to target marketing in effective way NOTED MS expressed concerns with grants that funding won't be received until the end of January. AM advised closure grants are to be paid 4 weeks in arrears. Around 80% have already been processed and it is anticipated most 		

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		<p>will be paid out at the start of next week</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AM also advised they are still awaiting more guidance on the top-up grants. Hoped letters will be going out tomorrow or Monday for Taxi grants. Waiting to see the eligibility of other grants before the discretionary grants are pushed forward • NOTED thanks to Mike and BID for the huge amount of support for Businesses in the City • NOTED BB requested top of communication and marketing is that Highlands should be promoted as a healthy place and this should be emphasised • NOTED MS thanks to Members to have the opportunity to bring various elements forward to help assist in the recovery 		
5.	Spaces for People – Craig Baxter			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CB gave Members a brief update on the implementation of Spaces for People Project • Measures continue to be implemented to allow people to use active travel • Ness Walk/Bught one-way- this was to deliver a rapid temporary measure. Usage is being monitored and a permanent measure will be put forward in the future • Millburn Road Bike Lane- measures are currently temporary. Few issues have been experienced with queuing so it is now shared space until the Chieftan Hotel. A permanent measure will be put forward in the future • Academy Street- it is recognised the impact this has on the welcoming of the City. This is temporary. It is hoped there is enough space for people to move around safely. In discussions with Sustrans on delivering a permanent scheme. Looking at April review for funding • This will be presented at February CIAC to discuss next steps with Members • Castle 1-way System- significant use of space having taken away from some road use. Castle project expected to create visitor attraction it is how to support and embed businesses around it to capitalise footfall • Monitoring, feedback and evaluation is ongoing. Feedback from business community has been fairly negative • Once data has been broken down it will be presented to CIAC along with presentation 		

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are live petitions against the project. Also 2500 people asking Council to keep work done in place • Also secured Bus Priority Rapid Deployment funding so buses will use Fairline Park allowing more use of road space on Academy Street 		
6.	Notes of Previous Meeting			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was AGREED the notes of the previous meeting were an accurate record 		
7.	Matters Arising from Previous Notes			
		<p>AM gave an update on progress with projects in the City Centre:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academy Street- Retail units still to completed. Expected early February, delay due to supply issues • Castle Project- Proceeding well. PR announcement that planning application is now in for the main contract with aim to be onsite September. Fiona Hampton is arranging around Members briefing • Parrot Pines Site- archaeological excavations are now complete and progressing again • Victorian Market Development- Progressing well • Arnotts Building- Contract has been signed and contractor has started on site. Liaison between contractor and local business regarding Barron Taylor Street for deliveries to be at different times to minimise disruption • Chisholms Building- starting the rebuild, progressing well • NOTED BB request for in future if a project like the bus link is urgent to ensure priority. AM advised due to some issues outside the Councils control some delay was unavoidable in respect of this project <p>NOTED BB concerns regarding the Infirmary Bridge. GR advised an update will be available at W13(*and W14) WBM and that there is no imminent danger with work being done to establish funding. AM reiterated this advising work was being done behind the scenes on this</p> <p>NOTED GR and DH are looking into campervan facilities at a couple of locations and will be able to advise further at the next meeting</p>		

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8.	Date of Next Meeting			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NOTED the next meeting is to be scheduled for Monday 1st March at 10am. This longer period is to allow Officers time to progress during this challenging period		

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