

Agenda Item	5
Report No	TC/07/21

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Tourism Committee

Date: 16 June 2021

Report Title: Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund

Report By: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report updates Members on recent work in on projects in the Highland area that have been funded through the Scottish Government's Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund. It also provides an update on the position with a number of potential tourism infrastructure projects funding bids that might be put forward to the 4th round of the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund in summer 2021.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:-

- i. Note the current position with the Highland Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund supported projects, and
- ii. Note the tourism infrastructure projects that are currently being considered as potential bids to the 4th funding round that closes in summer 2021.

3. Implications

3.1 **Resource** - The Council employs a Tourism Projects Coordinator who liaises with project leads and submits all Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund applications and supporting evidence including for projects not being run by the Council. The costs of this post and activity are met from the Service budget. Where projects are led by the Council, the resources required are met by the services concerned.

3.2 **Legal** - There are no implications arising directly from this report, but all projects funded by the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund or other grants are the subject of a legal agreement between the grant awarding body and the Council. Similar legal agreements are in place between the Council and any third parties delivering projects.

- 3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural)** – there are no implications arising directly from this report. However, the delivery of the projects described are expected to produce positive benefits for communities as well as for visitors.
- 3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever** – there are no implications arising directly from this report. However, projects have been developed with elements of sustainability in mind and these require to be detailed in the applications for Round 3 Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund projects. Some elements of Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund supported projects will specifically focus on infrastructure that can help reduce climate change impacts.
- 3.5 **Risk** - There are no implications arising directly from this report.
- 3.6 **Gaelic** - There are no implications arising directly from this report. However, in keeping with the Council's Gaelic policy there can be Gaelic elements to some of the infrastructure projects described.

4. Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund

- 4.1 In October 2017 the First Minister Announced a £6m investment in a new Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund with the first round of awards announced in October 2019 and the second round following in June 2019. A further £3m of funding was made available for a third round in 2020 with awards announced in January 2021.
- 4.2 The three rounds to date have seen over £3.5m awarded to Highland tourism infrastructure projects with some of those projects delivered directly by the Council and others delivered by community organisations with the Council as a supporting partner.
- 4.3 Recently a fourth round of the fund has been announced with a closing date for applications of 10 September 2021.

5. Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund - Round 1 projects

- 5.1 The first round of the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund saw 6 Highland projects awarded funding with a total of just over £1.1m and a total project value of just over £1.6m. The current position with each of these projects is as follows:-

Project Location	Description	Status
Bealach Na Ba, Scenic Viewpoints	Six Scenic Viewpoints on the Bealach na Ba - led by The Highland Council.	Main construction complete; Landscaping / interpretation to be completed.
Blabheinn, Skye, Visitor Facilities	Compositing Toilets and Car Parking redesign to allow 30 vehicles - led by the John Muir Trust.	Project complete.
Old Man of Storr Visitor Facilities	Toilets and Motorhome Facilities at the Old Man of Storr - led by The Highland Council.	Project complete.

Glenfinnan Viaduct Car Park	100 Space Car Park and 10 Motorhome spaces - led by Glenfinnan Community Facilities Company.	Project complete
Lochinver motorhome Facilities – Phase 1	Motorhome Chemical Waste Facilities at Assynt Leisure Centre - led by Assynt Development Trust.	Project complete
Mallaig Tourism Facilities / Traigh Beach Toilets	Part 1 – Two composting toilets at Traigh Beach - led by the Road to the Isles Facilities Group	Project complete
	Part 2 - New Toilet build at Mallaig with added Motorhome Facilities - led by the Road to the Isles Facilities Group	Nearing completion

6. Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund - Round 2 projects

- 6.1 The second round of the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund saw another 6 successful projects awarded funding. These applications include a total grant award of just over £1.5m and a total project value of just over 2.5m.

Project Name	Description	Status
Isle of Eigg Visitor Facilities	Creating new Toilets and Showers, Interpretation and Signage at An Laimhrig - led by Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust	Construction underway
Glen Nevis Visitor Facilities	Installing Public Transport Access Facilities, Parking, Signage, Paths and Toilet Facilities at Lower Falls Car Park - led by Nevis Landscape Partnership	Grant Agreements Signed off, Construction starting in later in the year.
Portree Parking	Expansion of the Bayfield Car Park and provision of Motorhome waste and water facilities. Led by The Highland Council	Nearing completion
Cromarty ferry slipways and motorhome facilities	Part 1 -, along with improved slipways for the Cromarty - Nigg Ferry - led by Cromarty Community Development Trust	Project Complete
	Part 2 – Motorhome facilities including Hardstanding, Waste Disposal and Toilets - led by Cromarty Community Development Trust	Construction due to begin

Storr, Footpath Improvements	Creating an enhanced visitor access and landscape / habitat protection - led by The Highland Council	Project nearing completion
Glenfinnan Bridge	New Bridge to provide link from new car park to the Viaduct, avoiding the A830 - led by Glenfinnan Community Facilities Company.	Project Complete
Helmsdale Toilets and Motorhome Facilities	Upgrading current Highland Council Toilets and addition of motorhome facilities on nearby vacant land.	Finalising grant agreement
Glenmore Parking	Parking management and linking paths – led by the Cairngorms National Park Authority	Construction under way

7. Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund - Round 3 projects

- 7.1 The third round of the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund saw another 5 projects awarded funding. These approvals saw a total grant award of just over £800k (with one project still to be allocated a final funding figure) and a total project value of just over £1.5m.

Approved Projects		
Project Name	Description	Status
Glencoe & Glen Etive	Development of an overarching plan for improved visitor infrastructure and management on the routes along the A82 in Glencoe and in Glen Etive - led by the National Trust for Scotland.	Meeting grant conditions
Kinlochewe Tourist Facilities	New toilet facilities, motorhome parking and waste facility - led by Community Out West Trust.	Meeting grant conditions
Ardnamurchan Lighthouse Project	Increased visitor parking, better facilities for cyclists, interpretation and upgrades to paths at the Ardnamurchan Lighthouse complex - led by Ardnamurchan Lighthouse Trust.	Construction underway
Photographers Knoll Footpath – Old Man of Storr	496m of footpath at Old Man of Storr to Photographer's Knoll popular viewpoint and photographic location at the site.	Meeting grant conditions
Lochinver Motorhome Facilities – Phase 2	Installing a motorhome greywater disposal facility and resurfacing of the Assynt Leisure Centre car park for motorhome use.	Finalising grant agreement

As well as 5 approved projects a further 5 Highland projects were put on an approved waitlist; these would receive funding if any approved projects could not meet their conditions or if there was an underspend. However, the Highland Council are now awaiting news to see if additional funding will be made available by the Scottish Government to support all waitlist projects as well. The combined awards including the waitlisted projects would see a total grant award of over £1.6m and a total project value of over £3.2m.

Waitlist Projects	
Elgol Tourist facilities	New public toilets, realigned parking bays, 480m path linking the village to the parking and motorhome waste disposal facility in a village - led by Broadford and Strath Community Company.
Sleat Community Campervan Facilities	8 bay motorhome site with waste point, toilet and shower - led by Sabhal Mor Ostaig / Sleat Community Trust.
Dornoch Parking	Creation of a car and coach parking site which is 40m from the main square with 40 car parking spaces and 6 coach spaces - led by Dornoch Area Community Interest Company.
Loch Ness Visitor Facilities	<p>Foyers New toilet facilities and motorhome waste disposal point – led by Falls of Foyers Toilet Subgroup / Stratherrick & Foyers Community Council.</p> <p>Invermoriston Provision of motorhome waste disposal point and upgraded public toilets – led by Invermoriston Millennium Hall.</p>

Formally withdrawn from waitlist		
Kyle of Sutherland Visitor Facilities	Development of motorhomes facilities at South Bonar Bridge with 5 electric hook-up points and a motorhome waste facility, new toilets incorporating showers, a covered eating area and E-bike charging point - led by Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust.	<p>The project developed issues during the planning stage and was not in a position to achieve a positive planning decision given the SEPA guidance in relation to 1:1000year flood risk.</p> <p>The Trust will look to bring the project back to RTIF Round 4 if a solution can be found.</p>

8. Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund – Potential round 4 projects

- 8.1 As mentioned in 4.3 above, a fourth round of the fund has been announced with a closing date for applications in September 2021. However, organisations seeking an early contribution as a “design grant” had to apply by 19 May 2021. Approaches made in relation to this have given an early indication of some of the projects that might go forward as full applications in September. Those potential applications that the Council is aware of at present are:-

Location	Project	Status
Achmelvich	Improved parking and toilets	EOI Submitted
Duisdale, Sleat	Motorhome parking and waste facility	EOI Submitted
Isle of Canna	Improved welcome facilities and toilets	EOI Submitted
Ullapool	Creation of a Promenade and Visitor information Hub	EOI Submitted
Gairloch Beach Car Park	New toilets and motorhome waste facility	EOI Submitted
Stac Pollaidh	Expanded car park and new toilets	EOI Submitted
Glencoe	Active travel improvements to connect visitor centre and glen	EOI Submitted
Kilmuir, Skye (north of Uig)	Parking, EV charging, toilets and motorhome waste disposal	EOI Submitted
Kilt Rock	Car park expansion	EOI Submitted
Lairg	Motorhome parking and waste facility	EOI Submitted
Stoer / Drumbeg / Nedd	Motorhome parking and waste facility. EV charging	EOI Submitted
Glen Affric	Improved parking, toilets a& paths at Dog Falls	EOI to be submitted by August
Floddigarry, Skye	New car park and toilet facilities	EOI to be submitted by August
Loch Fleet	Improved parking and visitor facilities at Littleferry	EOI to be submitted by August
Kinlochleven	Motorhome Parking and facilities	EOI to be submitted by August
Sandwood Bay	Car park and toilets	EOI to be submitted by August
Portree, Bayfield	Car park expansion	EOI to be submitted by August
South Bonar - resubmission	Motorhome facilities and toilet block	EOI to be submitted by August

As the final deadline for Expressions of Interest to be submitted is not until 13 August 2021, it is anticipated that further community led projects are likely to come forward in the coming weeks. The Council is also considering whether further projects might be put forward for funding.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment

Date: 25 May 2021

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