

Agenda Item	10.
Report No	CP/13/22

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Communities and Place

Date: 17 August 2022

Report Title: Update on Service Enhancements from Visitor Management Plan Funding

Report By: ECO Communities and Place

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 As a response to the impact of the increase in visitor numbers following the lifting of the first lock down in 2020, money was allocated by the Tourism Committee in 2021/22 and 2022/23 to support communities deal with increased littering, additional demand for public services such as car parking and public conveniences and encourage responsible behaviour by visitors.

A Visitor Management Plan was approved by the Tourism Committee on 16 February 2022. The Committee papers can be accessed by this link:

https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/79627/item_3_-_location_action_plans_for_visitor_management

- 1.2 It recommended:
- I. An allocation of £190k to increase provision of comfort schemes and investment in public toilet improvements and;
 - II. An allocation of £220k for increased bin capacity and collections for key visitor sites.
- 1.3 This report updates Members in the implementation of these service improvements for the season 2022/23.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are invited to note;
- I. the VMP is not recurring funding;
 - II. the investment in public conveniences and waste services will be fully committed this year;
 - III. The enhanced public convenience service with 75 Council operated facilities, with infrastructure improvements for 40 facilities, 15 new comfort scheme providers now taking the total to 52 and support for a community group running portaloos;
 - IV. any new funding streams will be pursued.

3. Implications

3.1 Resource

The Council currently operates 75 Public Conveniences throughout the Highlands and has 37 Comfort Scheme agreements with local businesses and Community Groups.

Most of the additional funding for PCs has been committed (£158,474).

There has also been a successful bid to RTIF to upgrade the public toilets at Glencoe village, the total budget for the project is £110,000, £82,500 of RTIF Funding and £27,500 from the Visitor Management fund. The works to be completed are:

- Upgrade facility to modern fittings
- Inclusion of disabled access
- Installing energy efficient solutions/heating
- New baby changing facilities
- New drinks refill station

3.2 Legal

The Council does not have a statutory responsibility to provide or operate Public Conveniences.

There are no legal obligations to provide bins; the relevant duty is contained within the Environmental Protection Act 1990, Section 89 which is to ensure that all land in our direct control which is open to the air and to which the public has access is kept clear of litter and refuse, so far as is practicable.

3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural)

The VMP funding enables the Council to provide enhanced services during the visitor season, to take pressure off existing community facilities and reduce anti-social behaviour. The comfort scheme provides a monthly income for local businesses that become part of the scheme.

In the waste service, 9 additional seasonal posts have been created.

3.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever

The wider VMP recognises that most visitors to the Highland are vehicle based and the plan does attempt to reduce the environmental impact of these visits by reducing vegetation damage and active travel opportunities.

3.5 Risk

Communities have experienced anti-social behaviour by visitors with examples of wild toileting and littering being reported. This year-on-year funding goes some way to enable additional services to be implemented.

3.6 Gaelic

Any new signage required will be bi-lingual in keeping with the Council's policy.

4. Public Conveniences Current Service Provision

4.1 The £190k is split between:

- improving our current infrastructure £160,000
- expanding the comfort scheme £30,000

4.2 The Service has allocated funding to the following improvements:

- Supporting the community in Foyers £2,500
- Hand dryers purchase and installation at 35 sites £115,000
- Castletown painting £4,000
- Shower upgrades Ullapool and Aviemore £10,000
- Dunbeath doors £3,500
- Plumbing works at Ullapool £20,000
- Honesty box provision increased £5,000
- Glenmore demolish old PC and install new modular unit, joint project with Cairngorm National Park Association £60,000 from each party

4.3 In the absence of the Council being unable to fund any new sites, or invest significantly in improving existing sites, the comfort scheme provides a cost-effective and low risk solution to providing this essential service.

4.4 The 14 additional comfort schemes that operated over the season 2021/22 were well received by visitor and communities alike.

To date, for 2022/23 we have signed agreements with 15 seasonal providers, 11 that are signing up for a second year. Table 1 shows these schemes. This brings the total comfort scheme providers to 52.

Table 1

Facility	Ward Number	Address	Start Date
Sea View Hotel, John O'Groats	3	Seaview Hotel John O'Groats CAITHNESS	01/04/2022
Chocolates of Glenshiel	5	Ratagan House Glenshiel Kyle	01/04/2022
Glendale Hall	10	Glendale Hall 4 Lephin Glendale Isle of Skye	01/04/2022
Rum Enterprise	11	Ferry Pier ISLE OF RUM	01/04/2022
Portree Pier	10	Portree Pier Quay Street Portree Isle of Skye	01/04/2022
Traigh Beach	11	Traigh Beach, MORAR	01/04/2022
RSPB Forsinard Flows	1	Flows Field Centre Forsinard	01/04/2022

Lybster PC	3	Lybster PC Main Street Lybster	01/04/2022
Castle Moil Restaurant	10	Castle Moil Restaurant Kyleakin Isle of Skye	01/04/2022
Helmsdale Community Centre	4	Helmsdale Community Centre Dunrobin Street Helmsdale	01/04/2022
Loch Ness Hub	12	Drumnadrochit Tourist Information Car Park, DRUMNADROCHIT	01/04/2022
Salen, Acharacle	21	Salen Jetty Salen ACHARACLE Argyll	01/04/2022
Kinlochleven Community Trust	21	Unit 4A Kinlochleven Business Park Kinlochleven	01/04/2022
Ardnamurchan Natural History Visitor Centre	21	GLENMORE	01/04/2022
Invercassley Tearooms	1	Invercassley Tearooms Invercassley Castle Rosehall Lairg	01/07/2022

5. Waste Management Service Enhancements

- 5.1 The success of the Highland Council visitor management strategy for the Waste Management service is dependent on having the adequate resources to fit the seasonal pressures brought on by the influx of visitors to Highland.
- 5.2 In 2021 to 2022, the service resourced for eight Visitor Management Operatives (VMO) who were employed on a fixed contract basis, (May to October). The service also provided additional bins, bin stands and bin stickers.
- 5.3 Eight additional hired vehicles were provided for the VMO's work. The action plan included the VMO's performing litter picking, fly-tipping removal and emptying litter bins (including swapping full with empty bins). The VMOs worked in tandem with the refuse collection staff to coordinate emptying litter bins.

5.4 In the 2022 to 2023 season, the service has applied the same successful working plan with an additional Visitor Management Operative for the Black Isle. While visitor numbers appear down from the 2021–2022 season, the service is still experiencing similar Environmental issues in the known hotspot areas. The additional VMO employee introduced for the Black Isle has made a notable positive impact on A9 road verges (Kessock Bridge to Tore) and the known Back Isle hot spots.

5.5 2022-23 Waste Management Visitor Management Staff:

- North West Coast – Base is Lochinver
- West - Base is Ullapool
- Lochcarron
- Portree
- Brora/Golspie
- Fort William
- Aviemore
- Inverness – Loch Ness areas
- Black Isle

Designation: Allan Gunn, ECO Communities and Place

Date: 8 August 2022

Author: Caroline Campbell, Head of Community Operations and Logistics
Alan McKinnie, Strategic Lead, Waste Strategy and Operations

Background Papers:

[https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/79627/item_3 -
_location action plans for visitor management](https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/79627/item_3_-_location_action_plans_for_visitor_management)