

Agenda Item	8.
Report No	CP/22/22

## THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** Communities and Place

**Date:** 16 November 2022

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

**Report By:** Executive Chief Officer, 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.
- 1.2 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](https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/79627/item_3_-_location_action_plans_for_visitor_management)
- 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 facilitates, with infrastructure improvements for 40 facilities, 16 new comfort scheme providers now taking the total to 53, and support for 2 community groups running portaloos;

- IV. any new funding streams will be pursued;
- V. a number of the Council's 3-year comfort scheme contracts will be renewed in April 2023 and seasonal providers will form part of that review to ensure footfall and geographical coverage is reflected within the current budget.

### **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.

The funding for PCs has been fully committed.

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 of 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
- Supporting the community at Falls of Shin £1,000
- 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 funded by £65,000 from CNPA and £60,000 from VMP.

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.

Looking ahead, the Service will seek to identify funding that will enable the seasonal scheme to continue in 2023. This will include, for example, Ward discretionary funding and the Highland Coastal Communities Fund.

4.4 The 16 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 16 seasonal providers, 11 that are signing up for a second year. Table 1 shows these schemes. This brings the total comfort scheme providers to 53.

Table 1

<b>Facility</b>	<b>Ward Number</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Start Date</b>
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
Eden Court Theatre and Cinemas	13	Eden Court Theatre and Cinema Bishop's Road Inverness IV3 5SA	1/09/2022

4.5 8 old parking meters have been recommissioned into honesty boxes and installed at various locations and new low energy hand driers have been purchased and are currently being installed across 24 facilities.

4.6 Improvement works have also been scheduled or carried out with painting at Castletown, Portmahomack, shower upgrades at Ullapool and Aviemore, upgraded doors at Dunbeath and Gairloch and plumbing upgrades at Ullapool.

#### 4.7 **Joint project with CNPA – Glenmore PC**

The CNPA has awarded a further £5,000 towards this project, bringing their contribution to £65,000. The remaining £60,000 is funded by Highland Council from the visitor management fund. The project has been delayed due to issues with the drainage access which were discovered following pre demolition drainage surveys. A resolution has been found and work will continue to progress.

The new toilet module has been ordered with a 12-week expected delivery timescale.

The Project is being led by the Property and Housing Service who will provide updates on all project related matters to the Area Committee.

4.8 A report will be presented to this Committee in February 2023 highlighting the results of the survey carried out with comfort scheme providers at the end of the 2022 season.

It will also detail the review of comfort scheme providers whose agreements are expiring in March 2023, and more broadly all comfort schemes currently in operation, to ensure new agreements are put in place reflecting foot fall and geographical spread, to demonstrate best value.

### **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 Black 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: Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place

Date: 27 October 2022

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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)