

Agenda Item	4
Report No	LA/8/23

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Lochaber Area Committee

Date: 16 May 2023

Report Title: The Islands Emergency Cost Crisis Fund 2022/23

Report By: Executive Chief Officer, Communities & Place

1. PURPOSE/EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 introduced measures to meet the needs and improve the quality of life for island communities
- 1.2 Island communities already experience higher costs of living, high fuel costs, and a colder climate, which is further intensifying the impact of the cost crisis in island communities.
- 1.3 The Scottish Government has provided the Highland Council with grant funding to help alleviate the cost crisis in our island communities. This report sets out recommendations for distribution of the share of funding for W11 Caol and Mallaig (Small Isles).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members are invited to:
 - i. Note that the Council has received Islands Emergency Cost Crisis funding for 2022/23 to help alleviate the impacts of the cost crisis for island communities.
 - ii. Homologate decision that this funding be used to automatically make non-recurring cost crisis payments of £155 per eligible household by 28 February 2023 where the Council holds current bank details, in accordance with the eligibility criteria set out in section 4 of this report.
 - iii. Homologate decision to award capital grants to Isle of Muck and Isle of Canna

3. IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 **Resource** – Funding of £0.024 m is required and is deliverable within the grant amount available.
- 3.2 **Legal/Risk** – The proposed use of this fund satisfies the Scottish Government's conditions of grant as detailed in section 4 of this report.

3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural)** – The proposal to provide cost crisis payments to eligible households aligns with the Council’s commitments and duties relating to equalities, poverty, and rural factors.

3.4 **Climate Change/Carbon Clever** – There are no climate change/carbon clever implications arising from this report.

3.5 **Gaelic** – There are no Gaelic implications arising from this report.

4 The Islands Cost Crisis Emergency Fund

4.1 This Fund has been developed to specifically recognise and tackle the challenges faced by island communities. Local Authorities responsible for islands should use this funding:

- to target island areas only;
- to target immediate need and help those who are struggling due to the cost crisis; and
- for existing schemes and/or other new support where they feel the need is greatest.

4.2 To enable the share of revenue funding to be distributed promptly while also satisfying the requirements set out at paragraph 4.1 above, it is proposed to make a non-recurring cost of living payment of £155 per household to those in receipt of means-tested council tax reduction and those with a council tax liability who are receiving specified council tax exemptions at 16 January 2023. The categories of council tax exemptions for this purpose are Cared For, Care Leaver, those under 18 years, and those who are certified as having a severe mental impairment as defined in council tax legislation. The Council’s Service Delivery Team will identify all eligible households and make BACS payments automatically, thus removing the need for individuals to apply while also keeping administrative costs to a minimum.

4.3 Based on the proposed eligibility criteria set out in paragraph 4.2 above, 12 residents of the Small Isles would be eligible for an automatic non-recurring payment of £155 each, requiring a total budget of £0.002m.

4.4 In addition, capital funding of £22,000 is available. The Community Support Co-ordinator worked closely with each of the Small Isles to identify suitable projects. It was proposed to support the following:

- a) Isle of Canna - £10,000 - toward a replacement of the Community Shop storage shed, connection of electricity supply, and freezer storage.
- b) Isle of Muck - £11,853 – replacement back-up generator

4.5 Due to the timescales in which the funds had to be allocated, discussions were held with Local Members who were supportive of the proposed spend. Therefore, this report seeks Committee’s homologation of the capital spend element, as each grant is for £10,000 or over.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer, Communities & Place

Date: 6 April 2023

Author:

Sheila McKandie, Head of Revenues & Business Support