The Highland Council

Agenda Item	5.
Report No	CC/02/24

Committee: Caithness Committee

Date: 29 January 2024

Report Title: Community Regeneration Fund Assessment of Applications

Report By: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 Community Regeneration Funding is an umbrella term for a number of funds that are available for communities/organisations to access in Highland. It comprises elements of the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund along with the Highland Coastal Communities Fund and the Place Based Investment Programme, both of which are Scottish Government Funding streams to support economic regeneration and sustainable development in Highland. Area Committees are awarded devolved allocations according to approved formulae and decision making on which projects should receive funding sits with elected Members.

Within Caithness the following allocations are available for distribution in 2023/24:-

- Highland Coastal Communities Fund (capital/revenue);
- Place Based Investment Programme (capital); and
- UK Shared Prosperity (separate capital & revenue allocations)

Total funds available - £494,412.98 (this is a mix of capital and revenue from the individual funding programmes above).

1.2 Broad eligibility criteria for the fund is as follows:-

All projects are expected to be able to meet at least one of the following priorities:-

- economic recovery;
- community resilience;
- mitigating the impact of the climate/ecological emergency; or
- addressing the challenges of rural depopulation

Projects should be able to demonstrate that they are:-

- sustainable/viable:
- providing value for money;
- providing additionality; and
- able to evidence positive impacts and wide community benefit

- 1.3 In summary the position in Caithness at Area Committee on 29 January 2024 is as follows:-
 - Available Funding £354,412.98
 - Number of applications for consideration 14
 - Total value of grant requests £500,358.68

The available funding is less than the figure given in paragraph 1.1 above due to earlier approvals for funding awards and/or ring fencing of funds for priority projects.

- 1.4 To aid Members in their decision making, the following appendices are provided to this report:-
 - Appendix 1 Project application forms; and
 - Appendix 2 Caithness RAG Summary Spreadsheet

RAG status on key criteria is based on the application form and supplementary information provided during the application process. All applications presented are technically eligible – if any criteria are marked as red this does not indicate an eligibility concern but reflects the quality of information provided or outstanding requirements that will require technical conditions to be applied to any award of funding.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
 - i. Consider the applications presented and agree whether to approve, defer or reject the application. An approval of funding should detail the amount approved and outline any conditions of funding that Members wish to attach to the approval over and above the required technical conditions. A deferral would allow an applicant to resubmit the current application at a future date with updated information or for the project to be approved subject to further funding becoming available. A rejection would mean that the application will not proceed and any future application to the fund should be brought forward initially as a new expression of interest;
 - ii. **Agree** the approved CRF grant award for each application up to the value of the available area allocation; and
 - iii. If there is a balance of funding remaining, **agree** to ringfence remaining grant within the 2023/24 allocation to deliver area priorities identified through work to develop an area-based plan, subject to full applications being brought to a future committee meeting for consideration.

3 Implications

3.1 **Resource** - Caithness have available funding of £354,412.98. Applications under consideration total £500,358.68 therefore as the applications exceed the funds available, the committee will need to undertake a prioritisation process to agree the final funding awards.

- 3.2 **Legal** When managing external funding it is imperative that the risks to The Highland Council are assessed/mitigated and any back-to-back grant award letters with third parties, and financial claims management protect The Highland Council financial and reputational interests.
- 3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island)** The focus of the funding is economic recovery, regeneration and community resilience. Consideration on issues relating to equalities, poverty and rurality are dealt with on an individual basis for applications and covered in the technical assessments of projects.
- 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever Mitigation of the climate/ecological emergency is a specific aim of the CRF funds. All applicants are required to evidence environmental sustainability as referenced in the technical assessments.
- 3.5 **Risk** A balanced approach to risk is necessary when disbursing grant funds as sometimes it is necessary if a community led project is to proceed, to forward grant payment. Factors such as past knowledge of and project experience of the grant recipient, release of funds related to invoices/works completion certificates etc are considered in such assessments.
- 3.6 Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people) No risks arising directly from this report. Risks within projects are identified and managed on a project-by-project basis by the applicant organisation.
- 3.7 **Gaelic** Consideration given within individual project applications in line with the Council's policy.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

Date: 12 January 2024

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Background Papers: None

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Project Application Forms

Appendix 2 – Project Technical Assessments – RAG Summary

CRF ref	Organisation	Project title		Total project (cost F		:RF Capital C	CRF Revenue	Project start date		CRF %	Project Robustness	ingagement & upport	Meeting a need/demand	egacy & Exit trategy	equalities issues/ mpacts	ustainability /alue for Money	Natch funding	Meets Local Priorities	Additionality	Score
2124	Caithness KLICS SCIO	Staff Costs	Ongoing staff costs	£21,344.00	£11,244.80	an capital c	£11,244.80			53%	3	<u>ш ഗ</u>	3	2	З	3	3	3 3	2	28
	Durch anth Community		Deale consent of the existing playment at Dunbooth which is in your																	
2130	Dunbeath Community Centre	Dunbeath Playpark	Replacement of the existing playpark at Dunbeath which is in very poor condition with an all new castle themed all-inclusive playpark	£136,440.66	£28,940.66	£28,940.26		22/04/2024	20/05/2024	21%	1	3	3	2	3	3	3	3 3	3	27
2131	John O' Groats Development Trust	John O' Groats Hall Refurbishment	Renovation of male and female toilet facilities as well as the addition of disabled toilet facilities. New external fire doors and acoustic panelling will also be replaced, along with internal lighting to LED units, and the addition of a generator changeover switch.	£54,360.40	£25,000.00	£25,000.00		29/07/2024			2	3	3	3	3	3	3	2 3	3 3	28
		Volunteer Coordinator and Family	Continue to employee a volunteer coordinator, responsible for recruiting, supporting, and developing the volunteers. Also to purchase the building we lease, creating an environment where the community can connect, feel safe and access the correct and																	
2134	Home Start Caithness	Hub	right support, all in one place.	£97,796.00	£71,951.00	£68,336.00	£3,615.00	01/03/2024	01/03/2025	74%	2	2	3	2	3	3	3	2	2	25
			The Helping Hub Project is about repurposing perfectly good, but unwanted, items for use by those in our society who have the most need. The project will work with the motto of Repair, Reuse, Recycle. We want to collect unwanted items of clothing and other household items from people in the community and create a hub																	
2140	Thurso Community Cafe	Helping Hub	where those most in need can get free access to such items. Removal of the existing dangerous surface coating on Thrumster	£39,520.00	£27,520.00		£27,520.00	01/03/2024	01/03/2025	70%	2	2	3	1	3	2	2	2 2	2	21
2157	Thrumster Community Development Association	Thrumster Tennis Court Resurfacing	Tennis Court, preparation of the sub-base and application of a new surface coating	£28,500.64	£9,500.22	£9,500.22		06/05/2024	31/05/2024	33%	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	2 3	3	28
1160	Reay Golf Club	Reay Golf Club Greenkeeping and Coaching Facility	The project will create a purpose built steel-framed building to provide a new greenkeeping facility for Reay Golf Course, enhancing the club's ability to maintain and conserve the course for the benefit of members, the local community and visitors. The building is designed with space which to house an indoor practice and coaching area.	£233,690.00	£75,000.00	£75,000.00		01/01/2024	30/12/2024	32%	2	2	2	2	2	2	2		2	25
2168	Staxigoe Community		This application relates to providing access to the football pitch site in Staxigoe, with car parking and an extension to the pitch area bringing it to regulation size (including run offs), allowing it to be used for matches in the Caithness Amateur League. It also delivers a base for storage space to be built by the group and provides									2	2	3	3	2	2	3	3	
2218	Football Pitch	Pitch access and extension	equipment for ongoing maintenance of the pitch by the group.	£61,851.00	£33,871.00	£33,871.00		01/03/2024	30/09/2024	55%	2	3	3	2	2	2	3	3 3	3	26
220	Thurso on Board	Thurso on Roards Rusiness Blanning	Our vision is to create a much-needed community hub within a currently derelict regionally important historic building within the centre of Thurso. Our facility will provide much needed activities, training, and employment opportunities. To realise this vision we require support to develop the project including the preparation of a Business Plan, Activity Plan, Monitoring and Evaluation Plan and	C22 200 F4	CO FOO OO		co coo oo	01/02/2024	45/03/3035	200/	1	2	2	2		2	2			22
2230	Thurso on Board	Thurso on Board: Business Planning	other key documents to enable us to apply for capital funding. This project will enable the social, physical and creative development of young people in the Thurso area through a programme that includes: Youth Residential & Activity trips, Outdoor Learning sessions, Dance & Sports sessions, as well as a	£32,280.51	£9,500.00		£9,500.00	01/03/2024	15/02/2025	29%	2	3	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	23
256	High Life Highland Youth	Thurso Young People's Project 2024-	Nature & Arts Project that will culminate in a public exhibition at	C20 024 02	C20 024 02		C20 024 00	04/02/222	20/02/2025	4000/	_					2	2	2		25
2256	Development Thurso Association of Northern	25	the North Coast Visitor Centre ANTS wish to build on the success of the John o'Groats Trail by developing the 'North Coast Trail', which will extend westwards from John o' Groats, all the way to Cape Wrath. The John o'Groats Trail would, like to develop this route through the appointment of	£29,831.00	£29,831.00		£29,831.00	01/03/2024	28/02/2025	100%	2	2	3	2	3	3	2	2	3	25
2269	Trails Scotland	Embarking on the North Coast Trail	a North Coast Trail Development Manager.	£40,000.00	£20,000.00		£20,000.00	01/03/2024	01/03/2025	50%	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	20

	Association of Northern		Improvements to the JOG trail at the Forse section, specifically the installation of steps to address what is currently a steep and																
227	0 Trails Scotland	Stepping Up on the JOGT	difficult slope	£14,292.00	£8,000.00	£8,000.00	18/03/2024	20/04/2024	56%	1	3	3	3 2	2	3	3	3	3	26
			WHA have been investigating options to develop the Outer																
			Harbour which is not suitable for all year round berthing due to																
			wave climate during winter storms. To progress this we have to																
			make improvements to the existing harbour entrance as Phase 1 of																
			the project. Works will strengthen and better align the harbour																
			entrance for vessels using innovative modern methods and																
		Harbour Entrance Improvement	materials. This will future proof the ongoing fishing, leisure and																
227	4 Wick Harbour Authority	Works - Phase 1	offshore wind activities of stakeholders.	£876,730.00	£100,000.00	£100,000.00	01/03/2024	01/08/2024	11%	2	3	3	3 2	2	3	2	3	2	25
			The John O'Groats Mill is an unused B listed former watermill																
			currently on the buildings at risk register. This project will bring it																
			back to life for the benefit of the community, creating a new																
227	8 John O'Groats Mill Trust	John O'Groats Mill	heritage visitor attraction and community venue.	£4,847,802.00	£50,000.00	£50,000.00	01/03/2024	01/12/2024	1%	3	3	3	3 2	3	3	3	3	2	28

TOTALS £500,358.68 £398,647.48 £101,710.80

All projects are given a rating of red, amber or green against key assessment criteria. As part of the application paperwork applicants are made aware of the criteria for these. These ratings are then converted into scores as follows: Red = 1; Amber = 2; Green = 3. This allows a total score for each project to be provided. Ratings are based on information provided during the application process and are provided as a guide only.

All projects presented are eligible but if Members wish to approve projects that have red or amber ratings it would usually suggest that additional conditions will be attached to the award to address these concerns.