The Highland Council

Agenda Item	6
Report No	LA/22/24

Committee: Lochaber

Date: 12 November 2024

Report Title: Fort William Common Good Asset Register

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive - Corporate Assistant Chief Executive - Place

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report details the outcome of the public consultation that has taken place, under Section 102 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 in respect of the list of properties proposed to be included on the Fort William Common Good Asset Register.
- 1.2 This report also covers the process for publishing the asset register, management and administration arrangements for the Fort William Common Good Fund, including proposals for forward planning.

2 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. **Note** the contents of the 'Fort William Common Good Asset Register' in the format presented in Appendix 1;
- ii. **Note** the contents of the 'Fort William consultation on the asset register representations and responses' document in Appendix 2;
- iii. Agree to the publication of the Fort William Common Good Asset Register;
- iv. **Agree** to the re-classification of the properties included on the asset register and to the creation of the Fort William Common Good Fund;
- v. **Note** that the properties listed on the Fort William Common Good Asset Register will continue to be supported by the Council's General Fund, until such time as adequate income levels are available from the Fort William Common Good Fund to cover maintenance costs: and
- vi. **Note** that the creation of the Fort William Common Good Fund and its financial position, will be reported under the minutes of a future Highland Council meeting, given that all Members are custodians of all Common Good Funds in Highland.

3 Implications

3.1 **Resource** - There are some financial implications with establishing a common good fund for Fort William. Currently, all Common Good Funds in Highland bear a proportionate share of central support costs and where possible, manage and finance their own asset portfolios. The same would be expected of Fort William. Some of the identified properties are income generating, however it will take time to accrue enough reserves to allow the Fort William Common Good Fund to meet its financial obligations. In the interim, central support costs will need to be borne by the other established common good funds in accordance with the agreed formula, and maintenance costs will need to be continued from the Council's General Fund.

Although the assets listed on the Fort William Common Good Asset Register remain the property of the Highland Council, they must be held in a separate common good fund account. The re-classification of assets will result in income reductions for the Council's General Fund whilst at the same time, continued support will be required to help maintain the assets. This position however will need to form part of careful forward planning, to allow the Fort William Common Good Fund to accumulate adequate balances, discharge its asset duties, whilst ensuring the maintenance of common good properties are still supported appropriately.

All common good funds undertake quarterly and annual monitoring reporting to area committees. Whilst the Fort William Common Good Fund is being established, a report will be presented to a future area committee to update Members on its financial position and strategic plans on how the fund will be developed.

- 3.2 **Legal** Section 102 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 places duties on local authorities to establish and maintain a common good asset register. Guidance recommends that asset registers are subject to regular reviews which should take place at intervals of no more than 5 years. In addition, Section 104 of the Act stipulates that there is a need to undertake a consultation process before taking any decision to dispose of or change the use of common good assets.
- 3.3 **Risk** The initial risk associated with establishing a common good fund is the need to balance asset management requirements along with meeting liabilities. To mitigate this risk, the Council will need to continue to support the common good assets in Fort William where no income is available to do so. Where income can be generated, this must offset the liabilities that will be inherited with the assets.
- 3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** All common good properties will continue to be managed in accordance with existing Council policies regarding health and safety requirements.
- 3.5 **Gaelic -** No implications.

4 Impacts

4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.

- 4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.
- 4.3 This report deals with correcting the classification of property assets and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

5 Fort William Common Good Asset Register consultation

- 5.1 The public consultation on the list of assets proposed to be included on the Fort William Common Good Asset Register launched on 23 May 2024 and closed on 16 August 2024. The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 requires the response period to be open for at least 12 weeks. The consultation was publicised on the Council's website, social media pages and a press release was issued. Several community bodies including community councils were also informed directly.
- 5.2 3 community groups submitted 4 representations in response to the consultation. Queries were raised about the ownership of properties and whether other assets should be included on the list. In addition, questions were noted about technical aspects of managing common good assets and the fund. Appendix 2 details the representations received, and the responses made by Council Officers. This document will be published on the Council's website and a copy will be sent to those that submitted representations.
- 5.3 If Members agree with the content of the Fort William Common Good Asset Register, it will be published on the Council's website in the format presented in **Appendix 1.** It is important to highlight that the asset register is a living document, and properties can be added and removed as circumstances arise. Since the consultation period for example, the land beside Craigs Burial Ground has been identified as common good and included on the asset register.
 - The asset register will regularly be kept up to date and Members will be informed of any changes. A comprehensive review will also be conducted at intervals of no more than 5 years, from the date of the most recent publication.
- 5.4 The decision-making process to publish a common good asset register and set up a common good fund for Fort William is appropriate to take place at Area Committee level. This is in-line with governance procedures when managing common good assets in Highland. However as noted in 2.1 of the recommendations, an acknowledgement of the decision should also be reported to a future Highland Council meeting as a starred item, to reflect the fact that every elected Member of the Council are custodians of all Common Good Funds in Highland.

6 Actions upon or following publication of the Common Good Asset Register

6.1 If Members approve the recommendations noted in 2.1, the finance service will be instructed to proceed with setting up the Fort William Common Good Fund account. This will be in-line with other Common Good Funds in Highland with processes and procedures implemented for reporting and monitoring purposes. Given that at least one property has been identified to date as income generating (West End Car Park), quarterly monitoring of the fund will be reported to the Area Committee. An annual review and budget setting is unlikely to take place initially, until such time the fund has been established for at least 12-months unless there is anything specific to report in respect to any of the assets.

6.2 Strategy and forward planning meetings will take place involving Members and relevant Officers regarding the movement of assets from the Council's General Fund to the Fort William Common Good Fund. The Common Good Fund Policy contains an understanding that each fund will maintain its property assets. Some of the established Common Good Funds in Highland may have sufficient financial assets, income generating opportunities or adequate reserves to allow them to do so. This should also be the objective of the Fort William Common Good Fund. Therefore, such forward planning meetings will need to consider carefully the implications involved when managing common good assets, to balance the need to allow the fund to accrue sufficient income, alongside the need to meet its financial obligations.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate

Assistant Chief Executive – Place

Date: 29 October 2024

Author: Sara Murdoch, Common Goods Fund Officer

Paula Betts, Common Goods Fund Officer

Background Papers: None

Appendices: Appendix 1 - Fort William Common Good Asset Register

Appendix 2 - Fort William consultation on the asset register

- representations and responses.

$\frac{\texttt{COMMON GOOD FUND ASSET REGISTER FOR THE FORMER BURGH}{\texttt{FORT WILLIAM}}$

LAND AND BUILDINGS

Fort William was established as a Burgh of Barony in 1618. The Burgh underwent a number of name changes (Maryburgh, Gordonburgh and Duncansburgh) before becoming known as Fort William.

Name of asset	Location	Description
The Parade including:	High Street.	Area: 4046.86m² or thereby
Putting green and putting green	CAGUPRN: 130113413	Title deed: Feu Charter by Mrs. Cameron Lucy of
shed, peace monument (with bell	Bordered on the southwest by Parade	Callart in favour of Provost, Magistrates &
from former Town Hall), Sir Donald	Road, on the northwest and northeast	Councillors of the Burgh of Fort William registered
Cameron of Lochiel Memorial, war	by High Street and on the southeast by	17 June 1914.
memorial and sundial.	the rear of the properties Alexandra	The deed states that the land is disponed to be
	Hotel, Duncansburgh Church, Manse	held for "behoof of the whole body and community
	and Parade House.	of the said Burgh of Fort William." The deed
		contains a condition that the area of ground shall
		be forever held as "a pleasure ground for the
		residents of Fort William" and that no building shall
		be erected on the land other land of an ornamental
		character.
		Inalienable.
Foreshore, amenity land and part	Achintore Road.	Area: 10,290m² or thereby.
of West End car park.	Car park CAGUPRN: 130087702	Title deeds:
	Bordered on northwest partly by Mean	Feu Charter by Donald Cameron of Lock all in forcers of Proceed Manietrates
	Low Water Mark on foreshore and	Locheil in favour of Provost, Magistrates
	partly by area of reclaimed land acquired from Crown Estates in 1977	& Councillors of Burgh of Fort William
	which forms the car park extension.	registered 7 October 1904. Land between public road and High-Water Mark.
	Bordered on northeast by road leading	Disponed for "use and benefit of the
	to car park from A82 island, on	inhabitants of the said Burgh" and to be
	southeast by A82 leading to	converted into "an ornamental and
	Ballachullish and extending to a line	recreation ground for the use and
	opposite the southwestern edge of the	enjoyment of the inhabitants of the Burgh
	access road adjacent to the	of Fort William."
	southwestern border of the property	2. Charter of Novodamus and feu charter by
	known as Myrtle Bank.	Colonel Donald Walter Cameron of
		Locheil in favour of Provost, Magistrates
		& Councillors of Burgh of Fort William
		registered 8 June 1914. Confirms above
		deed and adds the adjacent part of
		foreshore up to Low Water Mark.
		Both deeds state that the areas of land are
		disponed for "use and benefit of the inhabitants of
		the said Burgh" and to be converted into "an
		ornamental and recreation ground for the use and
		enjoyment of the inhabitants of the Burgh of Fort
		William." In respect of the 1914 deed, it also states
		that it is desirable in the public interest for the Provost, Magistrates & Councillors to have control
		of that part of the foreshore.
		Inalienable.
		manenavie.

Alma Road/Victoria Road play	Alma Road/Victoria Road	Area: 9,900m² or thereby.
area	CAGUPRN: 130113122	Title deed: Feu Charter by Dame Ada Christina
alea	Located between Victoria Road	Cameron Ramsay Fairfax-Lucy in favour of
	(opposite Belford Hospital) on the	Provost, Magistrates & Councillors of the Burgh of
	northwest and Alma Road (opposite	Fort William registered 15 June 1937.
		1
	19-41) on the southeast and adjacent	Given as a Coronation Gift to the Burgh "for behoof
	to property known as Rhu Mhor on the	of the whole body and community of the said
	northeast and property known as Ardyne East on the southwest.	Burgh" to be used exclusively as amenity, pleasure, or recreation grounds.
	Ardylle East off the southwest.	Inalienable.
Crange Bood play area (includes	Crange Bood/Lundours Bood	Area: 950m² or thereby.
Grange Road play area (includes part of the car park)	Grange Road/Lundavra Road CAGUPRN: 130113123	Title deed: Disposition by Thomas Lawrie Brander
part of the car park)	Located in the triangular corner area	and Elizabeth Anne Brander in favour of The
	where Grange Road and Lundavra	Provost, Magistrates and Councillors of the Burgh
	Road meet.	of Fort William registered 16 September 1937.
	Rodu Meet.	Although there are no specified purposes in the
		deed it was gifted to the Burgh "for certain good
		causes and considerations." This makes it more
		likely than not to be Common Good.
		Inalienable by virtue of the public nature of the
		land use.
Amenity ground	Junction of Union Road and Fassifern	Area: 882m² or thereby.
Amenity ground	Road just before the road island.	Title deed: Feu Charter by Trustees of Dame Ada
	Narrow strip of sloped land between	Christina Cameron Ramsay Fairfax-Lucy in favour
	the 2 roads.	of Provost, Magistrates & Councillors of the Burgh
	the 2 roads.	of Fort William recorded 5 October 1960.
		Area of land is disponed "for behoof of the whole
		body and community" of the Burgh of Fort William.
		The deed also specifies that the area of land
		"should be preserved in all time coming as a
		pleasure or garden ground for the benefit of the
		people of Fort William" and is subject to the
		condition that it cannot be built upon and must be
		"used exclusively as a pleasure ground or garden in
		all time coming".
		Inalienable.
Amenity ground	Junction of Victoria Road and Hill Road	Area: 329m² or thereby.
Amenity ground	adjacent to the west border of the	Title deed: Disposition by Ben Nevis Distillery
	property known as Mulroy, Victoria	(Fort William) Ltd in favour of Provost,
	Road. The piece of land is a planted	Magistrates & Councillors of Burgh of Fort William
	area with a footpath running through	recorded 22 June 1960.
	it.	The deed is silent as to specific purpose and was
		sold to the Burgh under exception of a small area
		of land previously sold for road improvement.
		There is no indication in the deed that this piece of
		land was anything other than a general acquisition
		by the Burgh and appears to have only been used
		as amenity land. As it was not acquired for
		statutory purpose or held on a special trust it is
		considered to be Common Good and may raise a
		question of inalienability if its consistent use has
		been for public access amenity.
		·
	1	

Part of King George's Field (Town Park) includes cadet centre.

(original acquisition of Victoria Park 1931 and Mill Dam 1937 are now held on trust following a disposition by the Burgh to itself in trust in 1939 and, therefore, not considered Common Good) Belford Road, PH33 6BU

Two further acquisitions of land as additions to King George's Field:

- 1. Irregular shaped parcel of land bordered on the north by the existing King George Field and running westwards from a point 12 metres or thereby east from the south east corner of the tennis courts tapering to a point 21.5 metres south east of the property known as Rowan Cottage then running north east to a point 26.5 metres south of the start point.
- Irregular shaped parcel of land known as Whin Croft bordered on the northwest and southwest by King George's Field. Original north border was 37.5 metres south of Glen Nevis Place following the curve of that road. Then bordered on the east and southeast by Glen Nevis estate land. Area of 2,590m² was subsequently sold in 1974 (area south of northern border referred to above and to the west of Croft Road).

Total area: 20,850.00m² or thereby

Title deed area 1: Charter of Novodamus and Feu Charter by the Trustees of Dame Ada Christina Cameron Ramsay Fairfax-Lucy in favour of the Provost, Magistrates & Councillors of the Burgh of Fort William recorded 30 November 1950.

Area in this title – 3,173.4m² or thereby.

Title deed area 2: Charter of Novodamus and Feu Charter by the Trustees of Dame Ada Christina Cameron Ramsay Fairfax-Lucy in favour of the Provost, Magistrates and Councillors of the Burgh of Fort William recorded 20 August 1952.

Area in this title after $1974 \text{ sale} - 17,676.6 \text{m}^2 \text{ or}$ thereby.

The Cadet Centre is located on this land and leased out.

Both of these areas seem to have remained as amenity land. The original Feu Charter of Victoria Park in 1931 (subsequently King George's Field) was for the exclusive use of pleasure and recreation or for naval or military purposes (drilling of units). This and the additional area of Mill dam in 1937 we then contained in a trust disposition for the purposes of the National Playing Fields Association.

Although the two areas referred to above under **title deeds areas 1 & 2** were not expressly brought within the trust, they were acquired as additional areas for the playing fields and clearly for the purposes of recreation. As such they are assessed to be Common Good and inalienable.

Claggan Park Playing Field Including football pitch and Claggan Park grandstand.

Achintee Road, PH33 6TE.
CAGUPRN: 130113309.
Playing field bordered on the south west by Achintee Road, on the north west by the boundary of Willow Cottage and continuing in a straight line along land held on the Council's HRA account to wooded land not owned by the Council, on the north east by this wooded land and on the south east by land within the title of the former Achintee tip.
(Area of land this land and part of HRA land seems to have been sold for building of Willow Cottage.

Area: 26,305m².

Title deed: Feu disposition by The Trustees Corporation Limited in favour of Provost, Magistrates and Councillors of the Burgh of Fort William recorded 16 January 1969.

The title deed contains the condition that the land is not to be used for any purpose other than as a public recreation ground although the erection of pavilions of other buildings appropriate to a recreational use are permitted.

Inalienable by virtue of the public nature of the land use.

Area: 558.17m² or thereby Title deed: Disposition by Angus John Campbell of Dustaffnage and others, Testamentary Trustees of Dame Ada Christina Lucy or Cameron Ramsay Fairfax-Lucy in favour of Provost, Magistrates and Councillors of the Burgh of Fort William recorded 22 December 1951. Deed states "that the subjects hereinafter disponed should be preserved in all time coming as				
a pleasure or garden ground for the benefit of Fort William and district." Inalienable				
ART AND ARTIFACTS				
Description				
Silver double chain. Pendant is broadly oval in shape comprising a garland of thistles containing a banner surrounding a shield bearing an oak leaf and acorn design. Banner has relief lettering stating "A DH'AINDEOIN C'O THEIREADH E'". Pendant is engraved in the reverse – "Presented by Sir Henry and Lady Cameron-Ramsay-Fairfax-lucy				

The Fort William Common Good Fund is in the process of being re-established therefore, as yet there are no Annual accounts or

monitoring reports available.

FORT WILLIAM CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED LIST OF PROPERTIES TO BE INCLUDED ON THE COMMON GOOD ASSET REGISTER

REPRESENTATIONS AND RESPONSES

REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED	RESPONSES
The Parade Dear Sara Thank you for your e-mail and this is super news that this Common Good Fund is being progressed. I am Chair of the Fort William Town Team and just to let you know that the Putting Green Shed does not exist anymore. It was given to the FWTT to use as a gardening store and we replaced it with a larger more substantial building that we call the FWTT Hub on the same space. The FWTT Hub belongs to FWTT and therefore is not part of the Common Good Fund assets. If you could remove that from The Parade section that would be much appreciated. I also believe you may have a spelling mistake in the Description in The Parade at the end where it states, " that no building shall be erected on the land other land of an ornamental character." Should this read " that no building shall be erected on the land other than of an ornamental character."?	 Former putting green shed now replaced by Fort William Town Team with another building used as their Hub. This building is constructed on Common Good land. It is not subject to a separate title; therefore it takes its title from that of the land upon which it is constructed by virtue of the Roman Law principle of accession. This has been reconfirmed recently in the 2020 case of Mark Guild and Another against Angus Council.
Town Pier Dear Sara Thank you for your e-mail and it's great that the Common Good Fund is being progressed. I am also Company Secretary of Fort William Marina & Shoreline Community Interest Company (I have a few volunteer roles in the area!) and it would seem that you are missing the Town Pier from off the list of Common Good assets.	Town Pier The town pier was acquired from David MacBrayne Limited by Lochaber District Council in 1979. As this was after the abolition of the Burghs in 1975, it is not a common good asset. The provision of access rights in favour of the inhabitants was contained in the 1932 deed only. These rights were not repeated in the deed by which Lochaber District Council acquired the Pier nor was that acquisition referred to as being subject to the rights and conditions contained in the earlier deed Council. However, as Highland Council is the statutory successor to Lochaber District Council, it is a matter for the Council as owner to allow access over this land.

I attach the Disposition of the Town Pier from Fairfax Lucy to David MacBrayne in 1932 and then from David MacBrayne to Lochaber District Council in 1979. These show quite clearly that the sales were "subject always to the rights of the inhabitants of the Burgh of Fort William and others to the full, free and unlimited use and exercise of the sea beach and sea shore and free access thereto". This implies to me that the Town Pier should be included in the Common Good Fund list of assets.

Cameron Square

Dear Sara

We were also thinking that Cameron Square should be included in the Common Good fund. We understand that the land is actually owned by Mr Fairfax Lucy as we had to write to him to get permission to install the canopy in Cameron Square. The Highland Council just manage it for them. Cameron Square is the designated entertainment space in Fort William and therefore is key for the town and folk who live in it. We have copies of all the Sasine Register documents regarding Cameron Square, but they are pretty hard to read so I can send you copies if you wish to have them.

Questions from FITCC members and queries regarding some of the properties on the list:

- 1. Does a CGF come with a dowry to maintain the fund?
- 2. What is an asset and what is a liability?
- **3.** Is it advantageous to have a CGF?
- **4.** Are properties/assets from the old Town Burgh Council prior to 1975, to be researched for the list, not just agree on ones in public ownership today.
- **5.** What financial gain has been received from that era?

Properties:

- **1.** The Town Pier What about maintenance & repairs presently required?
- **2.** West End Car Park why only part should it not include the whole of the car park rather than a small area. How was the car park area defined?

Cameron Square

Cameron Square is not in Council ownership. Historically, a portion of the Square was held by the Council on 3 separate titles making up the area occupied by the Town Hall. Following the destruction of the Town Hall by fire, the entire area was sold in 1984 to Highlands & Islands Development Board.

Only land owned by the former Burgh of Fort William can be considered as Common Good land. As this land is no longer Council owned in any way, management use alone is not sufficient to categorise the land as Common Good.

Questions from FITCC members and queries regarding some of the properties on the list:

- Fort William will be a newly reactivated Common Good fund. As a result whilst property assets have been identified, it will not have an existing fund of revenue reserves. Moving forward it is hoped income will be generated for the fund by its property assets.
- 2. All heritable property (building/land) and moveable property (chains/art work etc) identified as Common Good are assets. Responsibilities for maintenance/repairs etc. are liabilities.
- Section 102 Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 places a duty on local authorities to investigate and establish Common Good asset registers. If the fund is able to generate income from its assets it may, in time, be able to be used to benefit the community.

- **3.** We would like to ascertain why the foreshore has been agreed by HC to be dismissed from the list and what financial transactions were undertaken with Fairfax Lucy.
- We would like to pursue and understand more of the background on An Aird.
- **5.** There are many other properties that we would wish to discuss to have clarity regarding what financial gain has been received over the years from these properties Some of them:
 - Viewforth Car park,
 - Jewson's yard,
 - Nevis Builders old yard,
 - Burgh yard Inverlochy,
 - Greenkeepers House,
 - Claggan Park.
 - Bank Street Depot

- 4. Any properties assessed must be on the basis that the Council still owns them. There may well have been property that should have been considered Common Good, but which has since been disposed of, but we cannot reopen or do anything about that transaction.
- 5. When Council property is recategorized as Common Good a pragmatic approach is taken. This means a line is drawn and no back accounting will be undertaken. For example if property sat on the general fund account it may have earned income that should have been paid to Common Good but would also have incurred liabilities. Back accounting may be too complicated and, in some cases, impossible due to elapse of time.

Properties:

- The Town Pier is not considered a common good asset therefore maintenance and repairs will fall under THC general funds/remit.
- 2. West End Car park The Common Good area was defined from the plan to the deeds of 1905 and 1914 that disponed that area of land to the Burgh. It represents 55% of the full area of the car park. The remaining 45% was acquired from Crown Estates in 1977 after the abolition of the Burgh and therefore, is not Common Good.
- 3. Foreshore it is not clear what is meant by the foreshore being agreed by Highland Council to be dismissed from the list. The title deeds for the Common Good part of the West End car park include a portion of foreshore from the edge of the car park extension to a point adjacent to the A82 opposite the south western border of the property known as Myrtle Bank.
 - The area of foreshore to the north east of the town centre pier was acquired by Highland Council in 2006. As this is after the abolition of the Burgh it is not Common Good.
- 4. An Aird site was acquired by the Burgh Council in 1958. Its use prior to acquisition had been as a refuse dump. By 1950's such provision could be considered to fall within the Council's statutory responsibility for town cleanliness. This would result in this land not being classified as Common Good. The land was subsequently reclaimed and has been used to create the shinty pitch and leisure centre.

5. Unfortunately, it will be an onerous task to ascertain historical information regarding the financial gain on the assets, however those that are identified as common good properties, the income will go to the Fort William Common Good Fund account.

Viewforth Car park – under Highland Council ownership however acquired for a particular purpose at different intervals primarily after 1975 after the abolition of the Burghs.

Jewson's yard – Located on North Road. Acquired by the County Council of the County of Inverness in 1953. Only land owned by the former Burgh of Fort William can be considered as possible Common Good land. As this was owned by the County Council it cannot be Common Good.

Nevis Builders old yard - no response required after querying the location.

Burgh yard Inverlochy - no response required after querying the location.

Greenkeepers House - no response required after querying the location.

Claggan Park – Identified as common good and included on the proposed asset register list.

Bank Street Depot – no response required after querying the location.