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| Agenda Item | 9b |
| Report No | CIA/42/25 |

The Highland Council

Committee: **City of Inverness**

Date: **17 November 2025**

Report Title: **Inverness Common Good Fund Grant Applications Over £10,000**

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

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report sets out the current applications for grant funding over £10,000 to be determined by Committee and updates the Committee of the recommendations made by the Inverness Common Good Fund Sub Committee.

2 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:-

- i. **Consider** the applications for funding detailed in Appendices 2 and 3; and
- ii. **Comment and Note** the recommendation to approve the application detailed in Appendix 4 noting that a final decision will be reserved for the City of Inverness Area Committee on 2 February 2026 once the Inverness Common Good Fund budget for 2026/27 is approved.

3 Implications

3.1 **Resource - ICGF** funding is provided by the Inverness Common Good Fund budget for 2025/26. Members are reminded that the Grants Budget was allocated £0.160m for Poverty and Inequality projects and £0.080m for all other requests. The 2025/26 ICGF budget also contained provision for £0.030m conference Support and £0.065m City Destination Projects. The Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee (The Sub-Committee) have taken steps to carefully assess each application as to which category it sits within to ensure an appropriate allocation of funds.

Noting the importance of the Blythswood application, funds will be drawn from the Winter Payments Budget, with the fall back that in the event of insufficient funds, reserves will be used.

3.2 **Legal** - There are no legal implications as a result of this report.

- 3.3 **Risk** - There are no known risk implications in respect of this report.
- 3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** - Consideration will be given to ensuring that appropriate standards are applied to any projects that are approved for grant support come at all in terms of Council policy.
- 3.5 **Gaelic** – Applications, if successful, will be required to meet expectations set by Council Policy in this regard.

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 A separate screening for impact for each project is not required, however applications applying to the ICGF must specifically show how their project or activity will help the Council meet its public sector equality duty, including how it may address any barriers and promote social inclusion. This supports the decision-making process.
- 4.4 Impact assessment screening was carried out in respect of the 2025/26 ICGF Budget including the grants funding categories. The outcome of this screening was detailed in the ICHG budget setting report to this Committee in February 2025.

5 Grant Applications

- 5.1 The current summary of funds available following the Sub-Committee meeting on 27 October 2025 is set out within **Appendix 1**.
- 5.2 **Appendices 2, 3 and 4** include details of current grant applications for more than £10,000. Members are invited to consider the applications detailed in sections 5.3 and 5.4.

5.3 Winter Payments Application

Blythswood Care (Appendix 2) – The Sub-Committee recommends approval of a grant of **£25,000** towards the Highland Foodbank Inverness 2026 to be drawn from the Winter Payments Budget. Noting the importance of the Blythswood application, funds will be drawn from the Winter Payments Budget, with the fall back that in the event of insufficient funds, reserves will be used.

5.4 Partnership Working Applications

- i. **Operation Respect Festive 2025 (Appendix 3)** - The Sub-Committee recommends approval of funding of £11,272 to be drawn from the Operation Respects Campaigns Budget.
- ii. **Inverness in Bloom – Community Grow Project (Appendix 4)** - The Sub-Committee recommends approval of a grant of £69,429 towards Inverness in Bloom 2026 noting that the final decision will be reserved for the City of Inverness Area Committee on 2 February 2026 once the Inverness Common Good Fund budget for 2026/27 is approved.

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|--------------------|---|
| Designation: | Assistant Chief Executive - Place |
| Date: | 28 October 2025 |
| Author: | David Haas, Senior Community Development Manager City of Inverness & South |
| Background Papers: | None |
| Appendices: | Appendix 1 – ICGF Resources available for allocation Appendix 2 – Blythswood Care Application Appendix 3 – Operation Respect Festive 2025 Appendix 4 – Inverness in Bloom – Community Grow Project Application |

APPENDIX 1

**Inverness Common Good Fund - Grants
Available Resource for Allocation**

£

Budget Balance Available

| | | |
|----------------------|---------|----------------|
| Poverty & Inequality | 160,000 | |
| Other | 80,000 | 240,000 |

Carry Forward from 2024/25

| | | |
|----------------------|-------|----------------|
| Poverty & Inequality | 66402 | |
| Other | 21031 | 87,433 |
| | | 327,433 |

| Committee Date | Category | Award | Total for meeting |
|---|-----------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| (Committed from previous financial years) | Grants < £10k | 38,683 | |
| | Grants > £10k | <u>48,750</u> | 87,433 |
| | | | 240,000 |

06/05/25 Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee

| | | | |
|----------------------|---------------|---------------|--------|
| Poverty & Inequality | Grants < £10k | 53,371 | |
| Other | Grants < £10k | <u>35,300</u> | 88,671 |

19/05/25 City of Inverness Area Committee -

| | | | | |
|----------------------|---------------|--------|--------|---------------|
| Poverty & Inequality | Grants > £10k | 63,880 | 63,880 | 87,449 |
|----------------------|---------------|--------|--------|---------------|

06/08/25 Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee

| | | | |
|----------------------|---------------|--------|--------|
| Poverty & Inequality | Grants < £10k | 42,444 | |
| Other | Grants < £10k | 2,750 | 45,194 |

27/10/25 Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee

| | | | |
|----------------------|---------------|--------|--------|
| Poverty & Inequality | Grants < £10k | 17,730 | |
| Other | Grants < £10k | 9,948 | 27,678 |

14,577

| | | | | |
|--|----------------------------------|--------|--------|----------------|
| Poverty & Inequality Grants | | | | 160,000 |
| 06/05/25 Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee | | | | |
| | Grants < £10k | 53,371 | 53,371 | 106,629 |
| 19/05/25 City of Inverness Area Committee | | | | |
| | Grants > £10k | 63,880 | 63,880 | 42,749 |
| 06/08/25 Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee | | | | |
| | Grants > £10k | 42,444 | 42,444 | 305 |
| 18/08/25 City of Inverness Area Committee | | | | |
| | Transfer from Other Grants | | 30,000 | 30,305 |
| 27/10/25 Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee | | | | |
| | Grants > £10k | 17,730 | 17,730 | 12,575 |
| Other Grants | | | | 80,000 |
| 06/05/25 Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee | | | | |
| | Grants < £10k | 35,300 | 35,300 | 44,700 |
| 06/08/25 Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee | | | | |
| | Grants < £10k | 2,750 | 2,750 | 41,950 |
| 18/08/25 City of Inverness Area Committee | | | | |
| | Transfer to Poverty & Inequality | | 30,000 | 11,950 |
| 27/10/25 Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee | | | | |
| | Grants < £10k | 9,948 | 9,948 | 2,002 |

Inverness Common Good Fund - Conference Funding Grants**Available Resource for Allocation**

£

| | | |
|----------------------------|--------------|--------|
| Budget Balance Available | | 30,000 |
| Carry Forward from 2023/24 | <u>9,600</u> | 39,600 |

Committee Date **Category** **Award** **Total for meeting****(Committed from previous financial years)** 9,600 **30,000****06/05/25 Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee**Grants < £10k 9,000 9,000 **21,000****06/08/25 Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee**Grants < £10k 8,688 8,688 **12,312****27/10/25 Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee**Grants < £10k 8,000 8,000 **4,312**

Inverness Common Good Fund - Partnership Working Grants

Available Resource for Allocation

£

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| City Desination Projects | 80,000 |
| Operation Respect - Community Safety | 11,000 |
| Operation Respects Campaigns | 25,000 |
| City Flowering | 75,000 |
| Budget Balance Available | 191,000 |

| Committee Date | Category | Award | Total for Meeting | |
|---|---------------|--------|-------------------|---------------|
| City of Inverness Area Committee 3 | | | | |
| February 2025 | | | | |
| City Destination Projects | Grants > £10k | 50,897 | | |
| Operation Respect - Community Safety | Grants > £10k | 10,750 | | |
| Operation Respects Campaigns | Grants > £10k | 14,804 | | |
| City Flowering | Grants > £10k | 77,144 | 153,595 | 37,405 |

06/08/25 Inverness Common Good Fund

Sub-Committee

| | | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------|-------|------|---------------|
| Operation Respects Campaigns | Grants < £10k | 4,970 | 4970 | 32,435 |
|------------------------------|---------------|-------|------|---------------|

City of Inverness Area Committee 18

August 2025 - Recommended for Approval

| | | | | |
|---------------------------|---------------|--------|-------|---------------|
| City Destination Projects | Grants > £10k | 20,000 | 20000 | 12,435 |
|---------------------------|---------------|--------|-------|---------------|

Homologated 27/10//25 Inverness

Common Good Fund Sub-Committee

| | | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------|-----|-----|---------------|
| Operation Respects Campaigns | Grants < £10k | 750 | 750 | 11,685 |
|------------------------------|---------------|-----|-----|---------------|

City of Inverness Area Committee 17

November 2025 - Recommended for

Approval

| | | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------|--------|--------|------------|
| Operation Respects Campaigns | Grants < £10k | 11,272 | 11,272 | 413 |
|------------------------------|---------------|--------|--------|------------|

**APPLICATION FORM TO APPLY TO
THE INVERNESS COMMON GOOD FUND FOR FUNDING**

| | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|---|
| Applicant organisation: | Blythswood Care | |
| Project title: | Highland Foodbank – Inverness | |
| Project location (inc. postcode): | 1 Glebe Street Inverness IV1 1RF | |
| Contact name: | | |
| Applicant Address (inc. postcode): | | |
| Email address: | | |
| Contact telephone: | | |
| Organisation Website: | www.blythswood.org | |
| Council Ward: (check guidance for link) | Inverness and South | |
| Does the main contact have any communication needs? E.g., textphone, sign language, large print? | | |
| Yes | | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

What type of organisation are you? (Please tick all that apply)

| | | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| Third Sector (voluntary or community) organisation | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Community Council | |
| Registered Charity If yes – Registration number | SC048001 | Company Limited by Guarantee If yes – Company Number | |
| Other - please specify | | | |

| | |
|---------------------------|---------|
| Amount applied for | £25,000 |
|---------------------------|---------|

| | |
|-------------------------------|---------|
| Start date of project: | Ongoing |
| End date of project: | Ongoing |

Project summary – please provide a brief outline of your project and the outcomes it will deliver. example:

- *Aims of the project and how you are going to do it*
- *Is this a new project/service or an additional activity to an existing project or service?*
- *Help with running costs or for a specific project or activity?*
- *Please include details of how you know there is a need for this project*
- *Who will benefit? It is important to state in your application how your project will benefit the citizens of the City of Inverness*
- **Please note** that the Council (ICGF) will be unable to provide any resources towards activities/items not specified on this form or supporting information

The Highland Foodbank was established in 2005 with the opening of its first centre on Madras Street, Inverness. To improve accessibility for clients in the Ness-side, Inverness South and Millburn Wards, a second centre was opened at Hilton Village in 2014. As the demand for foodbanks increased, we were storing and sorting food across four locations, leading to inefficiencies such as double-handling stock and requiring additional staff and volunteers. The decision was made to centralise operations and find a single location in Inverness to serve as the main storage facilities and be open to clients from Monday to Friday.

In September 2018, the Highland Foodbank relocated to Glebe Street, Inverness. Over the past five years, this central facility has streamlined operations, allowing more effective support for rural foodbanks across the Highlands. The value of this set up became even more apparent during the pandemic.

The Glebe Street Centre features a custom-designed lounge and meeting room, creating a relaxed environment for clients. Feedback from clients and referring agencies has been overwhelmingly positive, with a 100% preference for the new Centre over the previous locations.

The Foodbank provides emergency food supplies to local individuals facing financial crises. Clients come from a wide range of backgrounds, including those awaiting benefits, people on low incomes, and those who have recently been made redundant. Food donations are sourced from local community members, businesses, churches and schools.

Clients are referred to the Foodbank by over 100 partner agencies, including the Highland Council's Care Health and Social Care Service, Service Points, Housing Services, the Scottish Welfare Fund, local Citizens' Advice Bureaus, and the Women's Refuge.

The Foodbank Centre aims to create a welcoming space where clients can not only access food but also discuss their issues if they choose to. Staff can then signpost them to other appropriate agencies, as needed.

Usage of Highland Foodbank remains high – **3,170** people from the Inverness area were provided with food in financial year April 2023 to March 2024. This represents a **decrease of 17%** on the previous year, **28% of these were children**. For all our Highland Foodbanks combined, people fed during January to December 2024 was **5,434** which **represents a decrease of 15%** compared to 2023. The small decrease in numbers is due to extra Trussell Trust funding, which allowed us to employ a Citizens Advice Bureau advisor. They support clients earlier, helping resolve issues before a foodbank referral is needed.

The year 2024 has seen a steady stream of referrals due the ongoing cost of living crisis, with **2,072 people being fed from January to August** from our Foodbank in the Inverness area.

The £25,000 requested from the Common Good Fund will help cover the running costs of the Inverness project at the Glebe Street Centre, which continues to experience rising expenses. This funding will provide critical support for Inverness residents facing severe hardship.

Please give a summary of expected outcomes from your project.

Please include details:

- *How your project will continue beyond the period of ICGF support?*
- *How your project or activity will help the Council to meet its Public Sector Equality Duty?*
- *Will your project make a contribution towards the promotion of the Gaelic language?*
- **Please Note** *you will be expected to submit an Evaluation Report (a form will be supplied) at the conclusion of your project and prior to the payment of the final instalment of grant.*
- **Please Note** *If successful your grant will be valid for a period of six months from the date of the letter confirming Project Funding your award. Extensions can be applied for in writing if made within the period of validity.*

The service provided in Inverness by Highland Foodbank provides equitable support to individuals in the community facing financial crisis. Accessible to all in need, clients are referred by one of the local partner organisations, of which there are about 100. These include the Highland Council's Care and Learning Service, the Inverness Service Points, the Highland Council's Housing Services, the Scottish Welfare Fund, the local branches of the Citizens' Advice Bureau and the local Women's Refuge.

These partner organisations assess the needs of clients before referring them to the Foodbank.

The main centre has continued to provide an efficient streamlined provision with the majority of people coming from the local community. The management of all Highland Foodbanks is centralised from Glebe Street. Although, support is still extended to individuals who previously visited other locations, a review revealed that keeping the main base and staff in one location best serves the public, as attendance at other centres remained lower.

Due to the impact of the ongoing cost of living crisis, we anticipate the numbers using Foodbanks will continue to grow. However, the Foodbank has maintained a strong infrastructure to meet the demand so we expect that the project will continue to raise funds from donations to meet demands of the local community after ICGF funding has been exhausted. Additionally, food delivery services continue for those unable to visit a Foodbank centre, with demand for this service also expecting to increase.

Blythswood Care is in the process of establishing new governance for Highland Foodbank during the coming year. If we are successful with this application and a handover takes place during the year, any unspent grant will be transferred to the new organisation to ensure continuity of service (e.g. if a handover were to take place three months into the year and 3/12 of the grant had been utilised, the remaining 9/12 would be passed on to the new governance body). As is our normal practice, if successful, we will request 90% of the funding at the start of 2026 and 10% in September, but if governance transfers before September, the final 10% would be requested by the new body.

PROJECT COSTS

| Please provide a breakdown of how much your activities/project will cost splitting between revenue and capital expenditure. | Amount (£) |
|---|------------|
| Please Note grant recipients are expected to provide evidence of value for money. | |
| Staffing: This figure is the total salary costs of (a) the Foodbank Manager for Inverness and Nairn; b) the post of administrative assistant based at Glebe Street; c) Management and admin support at Head Office in Evanton; d) Foodbank Warehouse co-ordinator | £113,126 |
| Vehicle and transport expenses (including expenses of one year purchase costs of van for collecting and delivering food) | £10,000 |
| Cost of purchasing food when donated stocks of particular items run low (NB. This is funded by donations from the public earmarked for purchasing food) | £7,000 |
| Stationery, office expenses | £3,500 |
| Phones and wifi | £800 |
| Utilities cost | £7,000 |
| Glebe Street rent | £16,750 |
| Trussell Trust Fee (the franchiser) which covers resources, support and access to an online database for recording donations and distribution of food | £360 |
| Total Project Cost | £158,536 |

PROJECT FUNDING

| How will the project be funded? (What other organisations have you applied to?) | Amount (£) | Confirmed |
|---|------------|-----------|
| The annual costs of the Foodbank project, other than those which have been met by the Common Good Fund are met from the funds of Blythswood Care and from personal donations from individuals | £133,536 | ✓ |
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| | | |
| | | |
| Total Match Funding | £133,536 | |
| Total Inverness Common Good Fund Funding Requested | £25,000 | |
| Own Contribution | £133,536 | |
| Total Project Funding | £158,536 | |

If there is a shortfall in funding, how do you propose to fund it?

About your Organisation

| | |
|---|--|
| When did your Organisation start? | September 2005 |
| What geographic area does your organisation cover? Please note the Inverness Common Good Fund can only help with projects that bring direct benefit to the citizens of Inverness. | <p>The Highland Foodbank's parent organisation, Blythswood Care, was founded in 1966. Blythswood Care is committed to providing holistic care for people marginalised and in need, chiefly in Eastern Europe, Africa and India, but also through the Foodbank Project in the Scottish Highlands and South East Edinburgh.</p> <p>The Highland Foodbank was launched in 2005 with the opening of the Foodbank Centre in Madras Street, Inverness. The Foodbank exists to provide emergency food supplies to local people suffering financial crisis – these come from a wide cross-section of the community including people awaiting benefits, people on low incomes, and people who have been made redundant.</p> <p>The food distributed by Highland Foodbank is donated by members of the local community. The Foodbank has a Highland-wide reach but a majority of clients come from the Inverness Wards, where they contact the service at the Glebe Street Centre.</p> <p>The Foodbank Centre, staffed by trained volunteers who work with supervision from the warehouse supervisor and Foodbank Manager, seeks not simply to provide food, but to offer a welcoming, supportive environment where clients can feel comfortable, and, should they wish, can talk about their current issues <i>and be signposted to other appropriate agencies as required.</i></p> |
| What communities of interest (e.g. Young people, people with disabilities, people with an ethnic minority background etc.) does your organisation cover? | Our goal is to assist individuals impacted by poverty, exclusion, and loneliness, regardless of their age, stage of life, beliefs, or background |
| Is there a restriction on who can join your organisation? If yes please give details. | Highland Foodbank is not a membership organisation |
| Has your organisation received any funding from the Inverness Common Good Fund over the last 3 years. If yes please give details of when/what for/how much. | <p>Year 1: We received a £20,000 contribution to the general running costs of the project, including the Glebe Street Foodbank Centre and a contribution towards the salary of a part time Administration Assistant from the Inverness Common Good Fund in 2022/23</p> <p>Year 2: We again received a £25,000 contribution to the general running costs of the project, including the Glebe Street Foodbank Centre and a contribution towards the salary of a part time Administration Assistant from the Inverness Common Good Fund in 2023/24. The increase in funding reflected the increase in costs in running the Foodbank.</p> <p>Year 3: We received a £25,000 contribution to the general</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| | running costs of the project, including the Glebe Street Foodbank Centre and a contribution towards the salary of a part time Administration Assistant from the Inverness Common Good Fund in 2024/25. |
| <p>Has your organisation received any other funding from the Highland Council or any Common Good Fund over the last 3 years?</p> <p>If yes please give details of when/what for/how much.</p> | No |

Bank Details

| | |
|-----------------------|------------|
| Name of Bank | [REDACTED] |
| Account Name | [REDACTED] |
| Account Number | [REDACTED] |
| Sort Code | [REDACTED] |

Inverness Common Good Fund

Evaluation Form

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Organisation | Blythswood care |
| Project Name | <p>Highland Foodbank.</p> <p>This evaluation is for the 10% of the award that was retained to be released.</p> |
| Project Description | <p>The £25,000 granted has, and is, contributing to the total running costs of the Inverness element of the Project - the Glebe Street Foodbank centre and warehouse - and will allow the continuing employment of an administrative assistant (working the equivalent of three days per week) who is based at Glebe Street at an annual cost of £11,600.</p> |
| Original Outcome Expected | <p>The existing Foodbank operation will continue: the centralised Foodbank centre at Glebe Street will continue to serve clients, the food donations warehouse, administrative tasks, volunteer management and liaison with partner agencies will be maintained, and the administrative assistant will remain in post, allowing the Foodbank manager to focus on service development issues.</p> |
| Evidence of Outcome | <p>Evidence of a successful outcome will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistics of foodbank usage in Inverness & Nairn • Data on the number of food donations received • Statistics of food handled by the Glebe Street warehouse • Evidence of the number of partner agencies involved • Evidence of the number of volunteers giving their time • Evidence of regular contact with donors and potential donors • The administrative assistant will remain in post |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|----------|--------------------|---------|--------------------------------|---------|----------------|----------|-----------------|---------|------------------|---------|-------------|---------|---------|----------------|--------------|----------------|--------------------------------------|----------------|--------------|
| Breakdown of Final Project Costs and Funding (Final Accounts should be submitted) | <p>The figures for 2025, up to the end of August 2025, are as follows:</p> <table> <tbody> <tr> <td>£ 59,900</td><td>Total salary costs</td></tr> <tr> <td>£ 2,000</td><td>Vehicle and transport expenses</td></tr> <tr> <td>£ 2,000</td><td>Utilities cost</td></tr> <tr> <td>£ 11,165</td><td>Building rental</td></tr> <tr> <td>£ 1,255</td><td>Waste collection</td></tr> <tr> <td>£ 5,250</td><td>Other costs</td></tr> <tr> <td>£ 4,830</td><td>Repairs</td></tr> <tr> <td>£86,400</td><td>Total</td></tr> <tr> <td>£25,000</td><td>Minus award from HC Common Good Fund</td></tr> <tr> <td>£61,400</td><td>Total</td></tr> </tbody> </table> | £ 59,900 | Total salary costs | £ 2,000 | Vehicle and transport expenses | £ 2,000 | Utilities cost | £ 11,165 | Building rental | £ 1,255 | Waste collection | £ 5,250 | Other costs | £ 4,830 | Repairs | £86,400 | Total | £25,000 | Minus award from HC Common Good Fund | £61,400 | Total |
| £ 59,900 | Total salary costs | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| £ 2,000 | Vehicle and transport expenses | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| £ 2,000 | Utilities cost | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| £ 11,165 | Building rental | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| £ 1,255 | Waste collection | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| £ 5,250 | Other costs | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| £ 4,830 | Repairs | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| £86,400 | Total | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| £25,000 | Minus award from HC Common Good Fund | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| £61,400 | Total | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Marketing of Project | <p>The project will be marketed through regular communications with partner agencies and with local churches, schools and supermarkets. The Inverness Common Good Fund logo is used in communications, and press releases are sent out as appropriate.</p> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Numbers Attended | <p>From January – August 2025, 2,072 were given a three-day supply of emergency food from the Inverness Foodbank centre.</p> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| What Worked Well | <p>After over 20 years of development and experience the Inverness and Nairn Foodbank run smoothly and efficiently and have provided food to local people in times of crisis.</p> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| What could be improved upon | <p>We were fortunate to secure funding in 2019 to employ a warehouse manager and purchase dollies so that the operation is more efficient. We now have a dedicated person to organise and manage the stock and coordinate volunteers and with the dollies it is far more practical for moving crates. This continues and makes for a smooth operation. In time we will need to relocate beyond the term of our lease and we would ideally like premises with warehouse storage on ground level.</p> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Overall Assessment | <p>The project continues to meet real needs in the community, supporting people when they are facing financial hardship.</p> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

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| Agenda Item | 10 |
| Report No | ICGF/14/25 |

The Highland Council

Committee: Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee

Date: 27 October 2025

Report Title: Operation Respect Festive 2025 – Inverness and Area

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 The City of Inverness Area Committee has previously endorsed the planned activities of Operation Respect in the City Centre over several years.

The Inverness Common Good Fund Sub Committee (ICGFSC) is now asked to approve a part-contribution to the funding for activities for the Festive Project for Winter 2025, which will operate collaboratively with partner and statutory organisations from Friday 28th November 2025 until Saturday 3rd January 2025 covering the extent of the run up to and over the festivities into the New Year.

1.2 Operation Respect Festive 2025 will build on past successes by prioritising public safety and supporting improved mental health and wellbeing for vulnerable groups. As changing demographics and financial pressures from the cost of living and energy crises continue to impact communities, businesses, and service providers, a coordinated and collective response continues to be important.

The initiative's key priorities include reducing hate crime and violence against women and supporting individuals and groups at heightened risk of harm during and over the festive period. As more people use alcohol and drugs in private space and elsewhere the risk to them and to our communities is increased. The activities will promote safe spaces and reduce youth-related issues and antisocial behaviour across all age groups in the City Centre and surrounding areas.

1.3 Operation Respect is a community-based initiative aimed at ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all citizens, through a multi-agency approach which has proven highly successful over the years. The partnership includes key Statutory Agencies, Emergency Services, Third Sector Organisations, and local businesses.

Recognising that the challenges extend beyond the City Centre, the initiative continues to expand its efforts into wider communities ongoing. In response to the significant rise in youth-related antisocial behaviour and criminality over the past year, Operation Respect has implemented a range of interventions and resourcing to address these issues effectively however it is anticipated that resource and support will need to increase over time as incidents can and do increase over the festive period.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. Note the targeting of objectives for Operation Respect Festive 2025 on providing added community safety and public resource and reassurance whilst supporting measures to reduce the cause and effect of ASB and Criminality, and the emerging issues associated with the Cost-of-Living Crisis on people's physical and mental health and wellbeing;
- ii. Note that the total funding package directed towards Operation Respect Festive 2025 includes substantial direct Staffing and Resource contributions from our Partners at Police Scotland, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service, Scottish Ambulance Service, NHS Highland and City Centre Businesses via Inverness BID; and
- iii. Agree to recommend to the City of Inverness Area Committee on 17 November 2025 approval of funding of **£11,272.00** for **Operation Respect Festive (Winter) 2025**

3. Implications

3.1 Resource

As in previous years, provision has been made within the 2025/26 ICGF Budget for the expected Operation Respect Festive 2025. Therefore, avoiding the need to identify specific funding or use any underspend.

A breakdown of the Partnership expenditure and contributions are included in a table within the body of the Report, with the total funding liability for ICGF being **£11,272.00**

3.2 Legal

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

3.4 Risk

Failure to support the initiative could hinder the partnership's ability to provide safe spaces and responsive support in the City Centre during the festive period, potentially increasing vulnerability and antisocial behaviour.

3.5 Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)

There are no health and safety risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, processes, or personnel.

3.6 Gaelic

None

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 **Integrated Impact Assessment - Summary**

4.3.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment screening has been undertaken on 13/10/25. The conclusions have been subject to the relevant Manager Review and Approval.

4.3.2 The Screening process has concluded that there is a positive impact in relation to equalities, poverty, and human rights, with no impact identified for children's rights, data protection, rural communities, or climate change.

Members are asked to consider the summary in **Appendix 1** to support the decision-making process.

| 4.3.3 | Impact Assessment Area | Conclusion of Screening/Full Assessment |
|-------|----------------------------------|--|
| | Equality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children and Young People – <i>no impact</i> Children affected by disability – <i>no impact</i> Older adults – <i>Positive</i> |
| | Socio-economic | <i>no impact</i> |
| | Human Rights | <i>Positive</i> |
| | Children's Rights and Well-being | <i>no impact</i> |
| | Island and Mainland Rural | <i>no impact</i> |
| | Climate Change | <i>no impact</i> |
| | Data Rights | <i>no impact</i> |

5. **Background**

5.1 Noting the ongoing impact and consequences of the current Cost-of-Living and Energy Crises, and the previous policy direction given by Members, the Partnership Members and Statutory Agencies involved (ICSP) assess that the festive period this year will continue to have increased and potential risks in the following areas:

- People becoming more vulnerable to harm through loneliness and isolation.
- People becoming more vulnerable through uncontrolled or increased drug or alcohol use in private or public space.
- People not taking personal responsibility for their own and others safety and placing themselves and/or others at risk.
- Increased risk of crime or harm due to higher numbers of visitors coming into the area from across Inverness and Highland or elsewhere and greater need to create a safe and welcoming area in which to shop, entertain; relax and celebrate.
- Increased vulnerability caused by the ongoing Cost-of-Living and Energy Crises having an effect on affordability and choice to 'eat or heat' for many less fortunate individuals and who may need signposted to sources of added assistance or someone to talk to or help.

- Domestic Fire, Unintentional Harm, and Accidents within the Home caused by cooking, indiscriminate smoking, slips, trips & falls, and vulnerability.
- Added emphasis on Violence Against Women in the public arena and inside domestic and private space where weapons are readily available.

Continued efforts to reduce Youth Related Crime, Disorder and ASB through engagement and diversionary activity.

5.2 Festive 2025 this year are to:

- Close the gap between the time an agency becomes aware of a vulnerability (including due to drugs, alcohol, or mental health issues) and the time that a meaningful intervention is made by a support agency.
- Reduce the burden on Accident & Emergency and Ambulance Services by providing in situ, rapid response, via trained first responder medical provision in the City Centre during the Night-Time Economy hours at weekends and Events.
- Improved emphasis and response to reducing Violence Against Women and the need for added awareness of perpetrators to take personal responsibility and measures that reduce instances of violence and the fear of harm.
- Reduce the vulnerability of our communities to exploitation by organised criminals which has manifested in higher incidences of targeted fraud and cuckooing where mental health, drugs and alcohol dependency remain an issue.
- Reduce feelings of isolation or vulnerability through lack of contact and connection with others in the community. Ensuring anyone who is targeted because of their personal or protected characteristics can easily reach out for support.
- Offer support to those in society most affected or coming to the attention of Statutory and Charitable bodies. The festive period can be a particularly difficult and challenging period for many individuals for a number of reasons and previous years has identified some people who had not been linked with sources of help and who were at crisis point seeking help for the first time.
- Increase Fire Safety Awareness both Domestic and Non-Domestic as part of an early intervention strategy to promote greater community harm reduction.
- Promote Public Safety Education and Awareness through identified initiatives.
- Through partnership cooperation and a shared media strategy prevent the abuse of alcohol or drugs leading to a community safety issue whether it is in public or private space.
- Continue the Partnership response to tackling the Youth related Crime, Disorder and ASB occurring within the City centre and our neighbourhoods.

6. Festive period 2025- Proposed Initiatives

6.1 Scottish Ambulance statistics provided continues to show that demand for services over the festive period carries through from December and January and peaks as follows:

- Fridays and Saturdays – 1600 to 0200 hours
- Friday before Christmas ('Mad Friday')
- Hogmanay and 1st to 3rd January inclusive

With Christmas and New Year falling on a Thursday this year, this will extend the Festive Hospitality period adding to the normal weekend pressures on organisations and access to Services over the public holiday closures.

The provision of **MERT Highland First Aiders and the Harm Reduction Vehicle** resources in the City Centre at peak times at weekends will allow for quicker medical interventions and triage, reduce pressure on **Ambulance and A&E** resources who can be available for other calls and emergencies elsewhere and will enhance overall community safety during this busy period.

6.2 **Police Scotland** will continue to meet the daily challenges and target the key themes and areas of public concern such as Road Safety, Road Crime, Serious Organised Crime, Theft/Dishonesty, ASB & Disorder, Protecting Vulnerable People and Terrorism, Youth Related Issues and Public Order.

Through Operation Respect Festive 2025, there will be a window of opportunity created to direct additional resources towards hi-visibility targeted policing in the City Centre and our wider communities and provide a focus on the specific increased threats such as Fraud, Cyber Crime, Domestic Violence etc through Engagement, Education, and Encouragement to reduce the need for Enforcement and to raise awareness on how people can better protect and keep themselves safe.

Police, alongside other Partners, in Inverness will remain vigilant and respond appropriately to Youth Related and ASB issues as they occur within the City centre and our communities.

| Cost Implications | |
|--|-----|
| These costs will be borne by Police Scotland, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service and other Partners involved as part of the overall Operation Respect 2025 initiative. | N/A |

6.3 **Harm Reduction Response Vehicle**

This Vehicular Mobile Multi-agency response was developed in 2020/21 as a triage response unit with **police, ambulance and community psychiatric professionals** responding to calls from vulnerable people including where mental health is identified as an issue. The initiative continues to evolve, with a growing recognition of the interconnectedness of substance use, particularly drugs and alcohol and mental health issues in many cases.

The NHS Mental Health Services have fully committed to support this year's initiative, and the CPN/Addictions dual role will be conducted by suitably trained Nursing Staff who will have their own expertise and an overall awareness of both specialisms to be of service. This will provide improved capability for suicide intervention/prevention and other calls where drugs and/or alcohol is a factor.

The vehicle will be provided by **Scottish Ambulance Service** and will operate during the specified hours responding to calls where it is assessed that vulnerable people are at risk. A full risk assessment has been carried out on this and the initiative is ready to progress.

| Cost Implications | |
|--|-----|
| These costs will be borne by Police Scotland, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service and other Partners involved as part of the overall Operation Respect 2025 initiative. | N/A |

6.4 Distribution of Stay Safe Leafleting

Police Scotland's multi-faceted Stay Safe Campaign has been used to good effect in previous campaigns to deliver some key messages on keeping people safe and specifically for revellers during the Festive Party season. The messaging continues to be available on-line and via Police Scotland social media, however, as in previous years Inverness BID will produce and provide key "Party Safe" messaging online (>40K reach) and as a leaflet made available at appropriate locations and hospitality venues. This leaflet will be produced by Inverness BID in conjunction with Police Scotland at no cost to ICGF this year.

| Cost Implications | |
|--|-----|
| Inverness BID will cover the cost of 'Party Safe' campaign as part of the business contribution to the initiative. | N/A |

6.5 Drug, Alcohol and Other Referral Schemes

Partners continue to make early referrals to harm reduction services and there are a range of opportunities progressing. All three emergency services have regular contact with vulnerable people, and this will present the opportunity for early referral pathways where it is assessed as being potentially beneficial.

- Police – on detection of possession cases (or other contact where it is assessed as appropriate) officers will offer a direct referral to Highland Alcohol & Drug Advice & Support Services (HADASS) by passing details of how to contact them. Any positive engagement will be noted and included in the crime report.
- The Highland Third Sector Custody Link Project based within Police Scotland's Area Command Custody Suite at Burnett Road Inverness is a partnership between Police Scotland, The Highland Third Sector Interface, and the Highland Community Justice Partnership. The link workers engage with people who are taken into Police custody. Using a wide range of contacts with services across Highland the link workers offer support to help them to identify actions, access support and assistance to reduce the risks of reoffending, enhance their quality of life and improve their life chances.
- Scottish Fire & Rescue Service – Fire Officers make regular contact with vulnerable people in the community through their Home Safety Inspection visits and will seek to provide leaflets on the support services available to them.
- Scottish Ambulance Service – similarly paramedics have regular contact and can assess the need for early referral to services using leaflets to support their message.

- Highland Council – The Homeless Service, Social Care, and their involvement in the delivery of food parcels to vulnerable people provides an additional route for leaflets outlining support for drug and alcohol support services.
- Harm Reduction Response Vehicle – The Professional staff within the vehicle will refer persons on contact during the course of activity over the festive period.

| Cost Implications | |
|---|-----|
| These costs will be borne by the respective partners involved as part of the overall Operation Respect 2025 initiative. | N/A |

6.6 **Visible Patrolling/Pro-active Policing**

It is important that police remain proactive in detecting drugs offences and additional capability will be provided by the flexible policing team. The use of bikes alongside beat officers will increase their ability to cover ground quickly and access known areas of drug dealing and abuse.

In 2020, with grant funding from Inverness Common Good Fund, Police Scotland in Inverness sourced three additional bikes for this purpose. These continue to be used regularly to great effect since as part of the ongoing community policing visibility strategy and are integral to their work during Operation Respect Festive and other initiatives which has increased the capacity for the Hi-Viz festive period patrols in our City Centre and in our communities across Inverness.

This will feature highly in our Operation Respect Festive response to attending incidents, providing community safety and public reassurance to the people of Inverness.

Additional mobile patrols from Roads Policing will be sought to deter and detect drink and drug driving as well as targeting other road safety concerns through the 4 x E's of **Engage, Educate, Encourage and Enforce**.

| Cost Implications | |
|---|-----|
| This cost will be borne by Police Scotland as part of the overall Operation Respect initiative. | N/A |

6.7 **Intelligence Development**

A package to inform officers patrolling the area on hot zones of shoplifting, drug activity and other crime will be developed to better inform and target police resources.

| Cost Implications | |
|---|-----|
| This cost will be borne by Police Scotland as part of the overall Operation Respect initiative. | N/A |

6.8 **Safe Place/Safe Zone**

Mobile Welfare and Contact Units will be provided at key locations within the City Centre. These will be manned by Police Scotland and Scottish Fire & Rescue Service personnel and will not only act as places of safe haven for those vulnerable or in need of support but will also provide an identified rendezvous point for our volunteers from

the Street Pastors and MERT Highland First Aiders who will patrol the City Centre Streets and respond quickly to calls for assistance. The resource will be staffed on Friday and Saturday nights during Operation Respect Festive 2025 from 9pm to 4am.

The units will have facilities for power, heating and temporary care including until contact or support from family or friends or taxis can be organised to ensure people are able to travel home as safely as possible. This will also be an opportunity for further referral to other services should it be required.

Previous years has resulted in sometimes lifesaving interventions as well as serious incidents being prevented or identified reducing risk of greater harm. The service is professional, reactive, and fast, meaning that our communities are safer and better supported at times of crisis.

| Cost Implications | |
|--|--|
| This cost will be borne by Partners as part of the overall Operation Respect initiative. Inverness BID as part of the business contribution has facilitated resource for supply of emergency taxi and refreshments as may be required. | |

6.9 **Medical Support Provision – MERT Highland First Aiders**

As in the previous two years, MERT Highland First Aiders will again provide immediate weekend medical cover at venues or incidents within the City Centre. They intend to operate a minimum of 2 x First Aiders each Friday and Saturday nights, Christmas Eve and Hogmanay, between at least 2100hrs and 0300hrs over the identified days with the possibility of extended hours.

The First Aiders are fully trained professional NHS medics as well as advanced qualified first aiders with a wealth of knowledge and experience operating at Planned and Organised events, Sporting Events/Music Festivals and other venues as required.

Whilst MERT will primarily be on patrol, the team will co-ordinate their availability and attendance at incidents with the manned Safe Place/Safe Zone and Police via additional Shopsafe Radios that will be made available via Inverness BID as part of the business contribution. MERT will attend calls for assistance in support of the Scottish Ambulance Service and NHS Highland, offering First Aid Cover, Emergency Medical Support and Triage as required until Ambulance personnel arrive on scene as required.

| Cost Implications | |
|---|--------------|
| Provision of MERT Highland First Aiders over a minimum of 4 Weekends plus Xmas Eve and Hogmanay of extended hours | £1000 |
| Total Cost applicable to ICGF = £1000 | |

6.10 **Inverness Street Pastors**

Inverness Street Pastors already use bikes in some community patrols and will be available for support in response to requests from the Harm Reduction Response Vehicle. They will also patrol areas identified through the intelligence package with

suitable PPE and risk assessments being carried out. They will have direct communications with police using mobile phones or interoperability Shopsafe Radios (provided by Inverness BID as part of the business contribution).

Street Pastors will still offer regular volunteer patrols in the City Centre and in some of our communities regularly during the daytime across the week as resources permit as well as participating in late evening weekend patrols during the night-time economy periods as part of Operation Respect Festive 2025.

| Cost Implications | |
|--|------------------|
| See attached at Appendix 1 for a full breakdown on anticipated costs for Inverness Street Pastors involvement throughout Operation Respect 2025 Festive initiative. | £2,603.00 |
| Total Cost applicable to ICGF = £2603.00 | |

6.11 Inverness BID - Security Task Team

The Security Task Team is run and managed through Inverness BID. In previous years, Evaluation has provided that this service has proved very successful in supporting partners, and businesses as well as the public by providing a safe and enjoyable environment for those that use and frequent the city centre.

The intervention provides for Police Liaison and actively discourages crimes such as shoplifting and anti-social behaviour, as well as being a helpful resource to those vulnerable and less fortunate and to the public at large within the City Centre during peak day-time hours between 1130hrs to 1730hrs.

The joint funded Inverness BID Security Task Team will consist of 2 x trained SIA security personnel to be provided in the City Centre to support the public, partners, and businesses including the retail, hospitality, and licensed trade sectors.

This service is proposed to commence on Friday 28th November 2025 and will run up to Saturday 3rd January 2025, Monday to Saturday and on Sunday 30th November (recognised as the busiest shopping weekend in the calendar), and Sunday 21st December the last before Christmas. It is proposed that the Task Team service will be operational on Boxing Day to improve safety and reduce crime with a total of 33 operational days to maintain 2024 levels required.

| Cost Implications | |
|--|-----------------|
| The Security Task Team services will be deployed for a total of 33 days (Monday to Saturday plus three Sundays) between the given dates at a total cost of £10419.00 with Inverness City Centre BID contributing £2750 , | £7669.00 |
| Total Cost applicable to ICGF = £7669 | |

6.12 Taxis

Operation Respect Partners will work to promote the Inverness Taxis SafeKab (including SafeWalk) initiatives via their leaflets to ensure added security for those travelling home via this means of transport or on foot.

| Cost Implications | |
|--|--|
| Inverness BID will arrange for Inverness Taxis to provide SafeKab cards at Hospitality Venues at no cost to ICGF as part of the business contribution. | |

6.13 YOUTH RELATED ISSUES

In recent times Inverness has been suffering from an increase in Youth Related Anti-Social Behaviour, Disorder and Criminality, caused and perpetrated by a minority of young people across the City centre and in some of our communities.

Highland Council currently chairs the Operation Respect – Youth, a multi-agency partnership involving Inverness BID, Police Scotland, Highland Council services, SFRS, High Life Highland, Barnardo's Anchor Project, HTSI, and other statutory and third sector organisations. This ongoing initiative seeks to engage with young people who frequent the city centre to better understand the factors contributing to disruptive behaviour and, more importantly, to identify the types of activities, spaces, and resources that young people want to see in the city centre and their local communities. The group meets regularly to progress short, medium, and long-term priorities, and seeks to be working collaboratively with young people, businesses, and partners to create a safer, more inclusive city centre environment.

While resources will be allocated to youth-related issues as part of Operation Respect Festive, any future funding considerations for specific additional initiatives will involve discussions with our broader partners in youth services.

Recent pilot of Street Scene to develop further in the New Year but during the Op Respect Winter period, Police Scotland BID will host focus groups at Inverness Secondary Schools to ensure that ways we tackle this challenge is codesigned with young people ETC

| Cost Implications | |
|--|-----|
| Response to post activity Youth Related Issues will be subject to discussions by the wider Partnership and may require a separate application to ICGF or other Agencies. | N/A |

7 PARTNER AGENCIES

7.1 Whilst there are a number of organisations and individuals involved the main participants and contributors are:

- Police Scotland

- Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
- Highland Council
- Inverness BID
- NHS Highland
- Scottish Ambulance Service
- Inverness City Centre BID
- NHS Highland - Drug & Alcohol Recovery Service
- MERT Highland First Aiders
- Inverness Street Pastors
- HTSI
- Highland Drug & Alcohol Partnership

8. Total Support Required from the Inverness Common Good Fund

8.1

| Activity 2023 | BID | ICGF | Emergency Services | Street Pastors | MERT | Totals |
|-----------------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------------|----------------|------------|-----------------|
| Police Resources (Estimate) | | NIL | £120,000 (Nominal) | | | £120,000 |
| Ambulance | | NIL | £50,000 (Nominal) | | | £50,000 |
| Scottish Fire & Rescue | | NIL | £50,000 (Nominal) | | | £50,000 |
| Street Pastors | | £2603 | | | | £2603 |
| MERT Highland First Aiders | | £1000 | | | | £1000 |
| 4 x Rental Shopsafe Radios | £400 | | | | | £400 |
| BID Security Task Team | £2750 | £7669 | | | | £10419 |
| Leaflets Etc | £200 | | | | | £200 |
| Subtotals | £3350 | £11272 | £220,000 | NIL | NIL | £234,622 |

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 Operation Respect will be delivered (as in previous years) taking account of the changing dynamics including those affecting the Economy, Public Services and Quality of Life.

The provision of a SafePlace/Safe Zone in the evening will continue thanks to the provision free of charge of suitable mobile units and additional resources by Police Scotland, the Scottish Fire & Rescue Services and Inverness BID at key locations.

The operational objectives for Operation Respect Festive 2025 will address current needs and provide direct support to partner organisations, agencies, and charitable volunteers. This collaborative effort aims to assist the people of Inverness, Highland and our visitors by effectively targeting resources from the Inverness Common Good

Fund towards those most in need or at risk, reducing harm and improving safety and wellbeing to ensure the best possible outcomes for the community.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive Place

Date: 1st October 2025

Author: David Haas, Senior Community Development Manager, Inverness & South
Owen McManus, Community Safety Manager, Inverness BID

Background Papers:

Appendices:

- Appendix 1 – Integrated Impact Assessment
- Appendix 2 – Inverness Street Pastors Funding Request

Integrated Impact Assessment Screening

About proposal

What does this proposal relate to? Action or delivery plan

Proposal name: Operation Respect Festive 2025 – Inverness and Area

High level summary of the proposal: Operation Respect Festive 2025 will build on past successes by prioritising public safety and supporting improved mental health and wellbeing for vulnerable groups. As changing demographics and financial pressures from the cost of living and energy crises continue to impact communities, businesses, and service providers, a coordinated and collective response continues to be important.

The initiative's key priorities include reducing hate crime and violence against women and supporting individuals and groups at heightened risk of harm during and over the festive period. As more people use alcohol and drugs in private space and elsewhere the risk to them and to our communities is increased. The activities will promote safe spaces and reduce youth-related issues and antisocial behaviour across all age groups in the City Centre and surrounding areas.

Who may be affected by the proposal? Individuals with vulnerabilities due to drugs, alcohol, or mental health issues

People requiring emergency medical attention during night-time economy hours

Women and girls affected by violence or fear of harm

Perpetrators of gender-based violence (targeted through awareness and accountability)

Individuals vulnerable to exploitation by organised crime (e.g. fraud, cuckooing)

People experiencing isolation or targeted abuse due to protected characteristics

Individuals in crisis during the festive period, including first-time help seekers

Residents and businesses needing fire safety awareness

General public benefiting from public safety education and awareness

Young people involved in or at risk of crime, disorder, or antisocial behaviour

Statutory and charitable bodies responding to vulnerable individuals

Emergency services (e.g. A&E, ambulance) experiencing high demand

Community members attending public events or using city centre spaces

Start date of proposal: 28/11/2025

End date of proposal: 05/01/2026

Does this proposal result in a change or impact to one or more Council service? No

Does this relate to an existing proposal? No

Author details

Name: Mark Greig

Job title: Community Development Manager

Email address: Mark.Greig@highland.gov.uk

Service: Place

Responsible officer details

Name: David Haas

Job title: Senior Community Development Manager

Email address: David.Haas@highland.gov.uk

Sign off date: 2025-10-13

Equalities, poverty, and human rights

Protected characteristics

Select what impact the proposal will have on the following protected characteristics:

Sex: Positive

Age: Positive

Disability: Positive

Religion or belief: Positive

Race: Positive

Sexual orientation: Positive

Gender reassignment: Positive

Pregnancy and maternity: No impact

Marriage and civil partnership: No impact

Protected characteristics impact details:

Poverty and socio-economic

What impact is the proposal likely to have on the following?

Prospects and opportunities: No impact

Places: No impact

Financial: No impact

Poverty and socio-economic impact details:

Human rights

Which of the below human rights will be affected by this proposal? Other human rights will be affected

What impact do you consider this proposal to have on the human rights of people? Positive
Human rights impact details:

Equalities, poverty and human rights screening assessment

What impact do you think there will be to equalities, poverty and human rights? Positive impact

Is a Full Impact Assessment required? No

Children's rights and wellbeing

What likely impact will the proposal have on children and young people?

Which of the below children's rights will be affected by the proposal? No children's rights will be affected

Explain how the children's rights selected above will be affected:

Children's rights and wellbeing screening assessment

What impact do you think there will be to children's rights and wellbeing? No impact

Is a Full Impact Assessment required? No

Data protection

Will your proposal involve processing personal data? No

Data protection screening assessment

What change will there be to the way personal data is processed? No personal data will be processed

Is a Full Impact Assessment required? No

Island and mainland rural communities

Does your proposal impact island and mainland rural communities? No

Island and mainland rural communities screening assessment

What impact do you think there will be to island and mainland rural communities? No difference

Is a Full Impact Assessment required? No

Climate change

Does the proposal involve activities that could impact on greenhouse gas emissions (CO₂e)? No

Does the proposal have the potential to affect the environment, wildlife or biodiversity? No

Does the proposal have the potential to influence resilience to extreme weather or changing climate? No

Provide information regarding your selection above:

Climate change screening assessment

Have you identified potential impact for any of the areas above or marked any as not known? No

Is a Full Impact Assessment required? No

Appendix 2: Street Pastors

| Expenditure | Amount |
|--|---------------|
| Coordination of volunteers, patrols, partnership and community liaison, logistics, and training. | £1,389 |
| Consumables, e.g. first aid supplies, flip-flops, blankets, patrol phone credit | £250 |
| Shop-safe radio | £360 |
| Insurance | £264 |
| Support from our governing body (The Ascension Trust) [1] | £339 |
| total | £2,603 |

[1] Ascension Trust Scotland is the governing body for Scottish Street Pastors. In return for a membership fee of 15% on all our income, the trust provides services including national representation, training, discounted insurance, processing of applications to Disclosure Scotland, media services, sourcing of uniforms, management policies and guidelines, and general operational support.



**APPLICATION FORM TO APPLY TO
THE INVERNESS COMMON GOOD FUND**

| | | | |
|--|---|-----------|---|
| Applicant / Organisation: | Inverness BID | | |
| Project Title: | Inverness in Bloom - Community Grow Project | | |
| Project Location (inc. Postcode): | Inverness City Centre and Wider City | | |
| Contact Name: | | | |
| Applicant Address (inc. Postcode): | | | |
| Email Address: | | | |
| Contact Telephone: | | | |
| Council Ward (check guidance for link): | Central | | |
| Does the main contact have any communications needs? E.g., textphone, sign language, large print? | | | |
| Yes | | No | X |

What type of organisation are you? (Please tick all that apply)

| | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| Third Sector (Voluntary or Community organisation | | Community Council | |
| Registered Charity If yes Registration Number | | Company Limited by Guarantee If yes – Company Number | X |
| Other – please specify | | | |

| | |
|---------------------------|---------|
| Amount applied for | £69,429 |
|---------------------------|---------|

| | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Start Date of Project | 1 st December 2025 |
| End Date of Project | 30 th September 2026 |

Project summary – please provide a brief outline of your project and the outcomes it will deliver. *example:*

- *Aims of the project and how you are going to do it*
- *Is this a new project/service or an additional activity to an existing project or service?*
- *Help with running costs or for a specific project or activity?*
- *Please include details of how you know there is a need for this project*
- *Who will benefit? It is important to state in your application how your project will benefit the citizens of the City of Inverness*
- **Please note** that the Council (ICGF) will be unable to provide any resources towards activities/items not specified on this form or supporting information

Background and Context

Inverness BID Limited is a not-for-profit company established in 2008. The organisation coordinates a number of projects and initiatives which support the overall development and improvement of Inverness City Centre.

Since 1993, floral displays have been a visible and welcoming feature hosted in the heart of the centre and surrounding areas. The project was originally coordinated by Highland Council, with Inverness Common Good Fund support. Since 2009, Inverness BID has coordinated the displays at the initial request of Highland Council.

Over time, the project has grown to include other surrounding areas with there also being some privately funded displays supported in addition and as part of the wider programme. BID and City Centre traders contribute financially directly and in addition, in-kind alongside ICGF support.

The displays are carefully designed and sited to maximise visual impact, to enhance and reinforce successful placemaking, and to ensure cohesion across the city. The arrival of the displays each summer is now a recognised event, valued by residents, businesses, and visitors alike.

The project is undertaken in partnership with the Botanic Gardens run by Highlife Highland and the sub-contractor who undertakes the siting, removal, maintenance and watering under the management and coordination of the programme partners.

Link to Botanics Video: [Nursery&Potting Cutdown 1x1 on Vimeo](#)

Project Aims

The **Inverness In Bloom – Community GROW Project** combines the provision of floral displays with extensive wider community benefits generated through the valued GROW initiative at Inverness Botanic Gardens (Highlife Highland).

The project aims are to:

- 1. Enhance Inverness's identity and placemaking** – providing attractive, colourful streetscapes which encourage active travel, improve civic spaces, and strengthen community pride and wellbeing in the city.
- 2. Support employment and inclusion** – The growing activity involved in the project helps to sustain 5.6 FTE jobs, 2.5 FTE supported employment roles targeted at creating pathways and opportunities for individuals with Additional Support Needs (ASN) or other disability or health conditions to take part in preparation of the plants.
- 3. Deliver education and skill development** – The project enables **40** ASN learners and other disadvantaged volunteers to gain practical horticultural experience and qualifications such as the coveted Grow & Learn Award in a structured and safe environment that supports skill building for future employability. The Floral project also involves participation of an additional 30 volunteers who regularly deliver over 150 hours of activity per week.
- 4. Promote physical and mental health wellbeing and enhance social connection** – offering volunteering opportunities, dementia-friendly pilot sessions, and Friday afternoon youth sessions for ASN/ASD participants in 2026 by way of a pilot programme will add to the wide range of community benefits already supported.
- 5. Contribute to sustainability** – operating a circular model with composting and reuse of materials from the project supporting wider operation of the gardens; peat-free growing, and pollinator-friendly planting as well as initiatives for community food growing, the project exemplifies best practice in these important areas.

Project Delivery (2026)

If the application herein is supported, Botanic Gardens (Highlife Highland) will be the main funding beneficiary as has been the case in previous years to enable this important work and project to be executed.

The HLH Botanic Gardens Team will oversee the design, propagation, and basket planting from November through June. Each October, the Team also coordinates composting and recycling to ensure the project is delivered as sustainably as possible, with strong green credentials.

Elected Members were given a tour of the operations in May 2025 and the feedback received included how wide and impressive the initiative is in scale and in respect to the extensive work which is undertaken behind the scenes which has a marked wider community benefit.

The role of Inverness BID will be to coordinate and manage the floral displays across the City Centre and Wider City, including in planning, siting, management, administration, invoicing and facilitating ongoing maintenance and remedial actions as required.

The main partners are supported also by the work of an experienced sub-contractor for erection/removal of displays, maintenance work, and bi-weekly watering as well as ensuring H&S compliance.

Equipment for the displays (baskets, brackets, tubs, etc.) was originally purchased via the Common Good Fund and remains its asset.

Evidence of Need

- **Community demand:** BID member and visitor surveys consistently (2022 and 2025) have found that floral displays have an approval rating between 90-100%.
- **Inclusion gap:** The GROW Project supports ASN individuals who have limited access to equivalent pathways. Without the project, opportunities for confidence building, independence, and skills development could not be supported.
- **Volunteer engagement:** The project involves 30 regular volunteers contributing 150 hours weekly for the project duration.

The direct feedback from **Grow Volunteer Gardeners** highlights the benefits to skills development, physical and mental wellbeing, improved confidence and enhancing social connections that the project as part of the wider community benefits delivers:

Volunteer Experiences:

“Volunteering at the Botanics has played a huge part in my recovery after my stroke. Working with plants has been therapeutic, and the skills I’ve learned here have given me the confidence to take on other gardening opportunities in the community.”

“When I first moved to the area I didn’t know a soul. Since joining the Gardens as a volunteer, I’ve met people of all ages and backgrounds. It’s given me friendships, a real sense of belonging, and the feeling that I’m contributing to something positive for Inverness.”

“Volunteering here has improved my health and wellbeing. Being outside, active, and part of a team has given me structure and purpose each week.”

“I’ve gained new skills in horticulture and teamwork that I never expected. It’s boosted my confidence and even opened up career opportunities I would not have thought possible before.”

“The Gardens are such a supportive environment. No matter your ability or background, you’re welcomed and valued. That makes a huge difference – not just to the volunteers, but to the wider community that benefits from the projects we deliver.”

Participant outcomes: ASN learner volunteer gardeners also describe the benefits and their sense of achievement:

“It is good and really interesting. There’s a pattern for the hanging baskets to follow, and I enjoyed dealing with all the different plants. The thing that was really nice was the outcome. The design of it all was so colourful and it looked great.”

“I loved washing the pots, and potting the wee plants.”

“Who needs to go to the gym when you can come here and do this?” (on emptying tubs and baskets)

"I think everyone really likes helping out in different parts of the site. Working on the nursery project is fast and it's great work experience to be able to offer people at Grow a taste of this work."

"I love my work. We all empty and reuse the potting material when it comes back in to grow on seeds and seedlings for our vegetable plot and tomato tunnel."

Environmental need: Peat-free planting saves c.25m³ of peat annually, and surplus produce supports Inverness Foodstuff to help address food insecurity.

Beneficiaries

The project delivers broad direct and indirect wider community benefits across the city:

- **Residents** – improved public realm, active travel encouragement, civic pride, and enhanced overall community wellbeing.
- **People with ASN/ASD, or other mental or physical impairments** - supported volunteering, training, and structured activities to help build skills, confidence and social connections.
- **Local businesses** – welcoming and positive city profile.
- **Visitors** – a welcoming and memorable experience of Inverness.
- **Environment** – biodiversity support, sustainable practices, and reduced peat use.
- **Economy** – a key wider benefit of the project is the impact the displays have on the Inverness brand including via our many visitors which can encourage new, longer or repeat stays helping to support local employment and enterprise.

Visitor Impact

With the Inverness Castle Experience opening in 2025, there is scope and potential that the project can be extended in subsequent years to optimise making a focus and feature of this key area.

The displays are extremely well received by our visitors with it being a regular occurrence that the photos and images of Inverness which are shared with family and friends following a trip via social media include for example the florals and castle as a backdrop. This is important as studies have shown that recommendations from family and friends can be a key driver of new trip generation to the benefit of our community and local economy.

August 2025 Visitor Feedback:

"We were only here for the day but wish we had longer. The hanging baskets made the whole city centre look brighter and more welcoming. Even the rain didn't spoil it."

"The colours of the flowers were stunning like a rainbow running through the city. Inverness is our favourite port so far and everyone we met was so friendly and the city looks so clean and beautiful."

"We took our photos of the flowers on the bridge. They were stunning. We can't wait to come back to see the Castle and go to Loch Ness."

"This is our second trip and it's even more stunning than we remembered. The people are so helpful, and the baskets made the whole experience feel special. I love that the city takes pride in its appearance.."

Academic research also confirms that urban florals deliver tangible community benefits beyond their visual impact including to reduce stress, improve mood, and enhance overall wellbeing.

By sustaining Inverness's community floral programme, the project makes a direct contribution to the improved health and quality of life of residents and visitors.

Evidence also shows that street greenery as part of placemaking strategies encourages walking and cycling by making routes more attractive and comfortable with strategically placed displays along key city routes therefore supporting active travel uptake.

Ensuring a positive and lasting impression of the Capital of the Highlands moreover assists with civic and commercial visits to help our city put its best foot forward when hosting events.

An additional benefit of the project is that as well as the baskets, the monies granted also supports bedding flowers in a number of areas which otherwise could not be supported.

Proposals for 2026

The applicant and partners recognise that the Inverness Common Good Fund is facing significant financial pressures.

In 2025 the City Centre and Wider City arrangements were supported at a combined value of £77,144 for over 600 displays. For 2026 the project partners have built in a 10% reduction, and the current application therefore seeks an ICGF contribution of **£69,429** to account for this position.

The location plan for the 2026 programme is still to be finalised and will be developed and agreed collaboratively by Highland Council Ward and Area Managers, Inverness BID and High Life Highland.

Given budget constraints, and reduction in baskets, if the application is supported, priority will be given to maintaining floral displays at key civic and visitor locations including Castle Street, Bridge Street, Bank Street, High Street, the Victorian Market, Church Street, the Town House, Ness Bridge, Cavell Gardens, Stephen's, Ardross Street, and other prominent sites within the city centre.

Alongside this, and separately 45 privately funded displays were also hosted in 2025. It is anticipated this figure will reduce to under 40 displays in 2026.

Inverness BID propose to contribute in-kind financial support in the form of administrative support valued at £5,554 (equating to the same pro-rata % as in 2025) and will in addition administratively manage and coordinate the project in its entirety for any costs incurred in all administrative areas over and above this allocation, as has been the case in previous years.

Final decisions will be required on which baskets in the wider city can be hosted within any budget constraints going forward for 2026.

Where displays are not supported through the ICGF allocation, there is scope for local Ward funds to be used should communities wish to retain specific features.

Conclusion

The **Inverness In Bloom – Community GROW Project** provides visible value through floral displays and deeper, lasting community benefit through volunteering, employment, education, inclusion, wellbeing, economic enhancement and sustainability.

By continuing to support this project, the Inverness Common Good Fund will ensure that Inverness not only looks its best, but also delivers tangible community, social, economic, and environmental outcomes for its residents and visitors alike.

Please give a summary of expected outcomes from your project.

Please include details:

- *How your project will continue beyond the period of ICGF support?*
- *How your project or activity will help the Council to meet its Public Sector Equality Duty?*
- **Please Note** *you will be expected to submit an Evaluation Report (a form will be supplied) at the conclusion of your project and prior to the payment of the final instalment of grant.*
- **Please Note** *If successful your grant will be valid for a period of six months from the date of the letter confirming Project Funding your award. Extensions can be applied for in writing if made within the period of validity.*

Outcomes

How the project will continue beyond ICGF support:

The Inverness In Bloom – Community GROW Project is a long-established initiative with a proven record of delivery since 1993.

Continuation is underpinned by:

- Annual financial and in-kind contributions from Inverness BID and local traders (2026 matched contributions confirmed at £5,554 to maintain previous % contribution).
- Ongoing partnership with High Life Highland (Inverness Botanic Gardens), whose operations integrate the GROW Project into their wider educational and environmental programmes.
- Volunteer and community involvement, which ensures continuity and local ownership of the project.
- This blended funding and delivery model will enable the project to remain viable in future years, while continuing to seek efficiencies through economies of scale.

NB: In the event that an acceptable Visitor Levy model be agreed at a later date, this project may be eligible for consideration for support via this alternative funding stream and at the current time, supporting its continuation, albeit on a reduced scale for 2026 could moreover ensure that this option can in due course be fully scoped and if viable, pursued for long term continuation and sustainability.

Contribution to the Council's Public Sector Equality Duty:

The project directly supports the Council's duties to:

- **Eliminate discrimination** – by providing supported employment and volunteering opportunities for individuals with Additional Support Needs (ASN), who may be Neurodivergent, have dementia, and/or other health or disability conditions which may be barriers to social life participation is directly supported.
- **Advance equality of opportunity** – through accredited training (Grow & Learn Award), structured learning, and skill development that improves employability and independence for ASN participants is a key benefit and would not otherwise be possible.
- **Foster good relations** – by creating inclusive volunteering opportunities where individuals of all ages and backgrounds and abilities can work together, enhances social cohesion and reduces isolation. Improved wellbeing can further in turn reduce demand on our health services.

Monitoring and Reporting:

Inverness BID and partners commit to submitting an Annual Report on completion, in line with ICGF requirements and in addition to a dedicated Annual Elected Members Briefing.

This will include:

- Quantitative data (e.g. numbers of volunteers, ASN participants, hours contributed, visitor feedback).
- Qualitative evidence (case studies, participant and volunteer testimonials).
- Financial monitoring to demonstrate effective use of funds and matched contributions.

PROJECT COSTS

| Please provide a breakdown of how much your activities/project will cost splitting between revenue and capital expenditure, Please Note grant recipients are expected to provide evidence of value for money. | Amount (£) |
|---|---|
| Inverness BID: Project Co-ordination: Administration, Personnel, Overheads, FCR | £5,554 |
| Highlife Highland: Botanic Gardens. Grow Project, associated costs, + plants, propagation, watering. 501 Units x £111. | £55,611 |
| Sub-contractor: Installation and removal of displays, inspection, survey, maintenance and remedial action. Additional or replacement brackets, painting and other works as may be required. | £13,950 |
| NB: Any privately funded displays are self-sustaining and so not included in the ICGF programme budget. | Total Project Cost £74,983 |

PROJECT FUNDING

| How will the project be funded? (What other organisations have you applied to?) | Amount(£) | Confirmed |
|---|----------------|-----------|
| Inverness BID Ltd | £5,554 | Yes |
| Total Own Contribution | £5,554 | Yes |
| Total Inverness Common Good Fund Funding Requested | £69,429 | |
| Total Project Funding | £74,983 | |

If there is a shortfall in funding, how do you propose to fund it? Any shortfall in funding would require a further reduction in numbers of displays which could reduce overall community benefit.

About your Organisation

| | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| When did your Organisation start? | 1 st April 2008 | | |
| What geographic area does your organisation cover? |  | Academy Street Academy Street Arcade Bank Lane Bank Street Baron Taylor's Street Bridge Street Castle Street Castle Wynd Church Lane Church Street Drummond Street Eastgate Eastgate Shopping Centre | Falcon Square Falconer Building Fraser Street High Street Inglis Street Lombard Street Manse Place Margaret Street Market Brae Market Close Market Hall Millburn Road Post Office Avenue |
| What communities of interest (e.g. Young people, people with disabilities, people with an ethnic minority background etc.) does your organisation cover? | Inverness BID runs a number of other projects and events which in addition to the business community further benefits young people (Street Scene), people with disabilities (training and accessibility guidance), we have helped develop and support the No Place for Hate Campaign as part of Operation Respect and via this project direct beneficiaries via the highly regarded Grow Project will support individuals with learning disability, mental or physical disability or other health conditions as well as older people and others with a protected characteristic which may be disadvantageous. | | |
| Is there a restriction on who can join your organisation? If yes please give details. | Yes. All BID Levy Payers are eligible for membership. Associate Members can opt in. | | |

| | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| | |
| Has your organisation received any funding from the Inverness Common Good Fund over the last 3 years? If yes please give details of when/what for/how much. | Yes please see attached Appendix A. |
| Has your organisation received any other funding from the Highland Council or any Common Good Fund over the last 3 years? If yes please give details of when/what for/how much. | Yes, £300 towards the NPFH campaign. |

Bank Details

| | |
|-----------------------|------------|
| Name of Bank | [REDACTED] |
| Account Name | [REDACTED] |
| Account Number | [REDACTED] |
| Sort Code | [REDACTED] |