

Agenda Item	18
Report No	LA/18/26

The Highland Council

Committee: Lochaber

Date: 26 January 2026

Report Title: Fort William Common Good Fund – Putting Green Shed Options

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report presents options regarding the potential future use of the Putting Green Shed (“the Shed”) which is a Common Good Fund (CGF) asset located on the Parade in Fort William.

2 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. **Consider** options for the potential future use of the Fort William Common Good Fund Putting Green Shed; and
- ii. **Agree** the next steps for the potential future use of the Fort William Common Good Fund Putting Green Shed.

3 Implications

3.1 **Resource** – Should commercial use be pursued it is estimated this may require initial investment of c.£9,000. A modest rental income may be achieved of £2,500 per annum, resulting in an estimated 3.6-year payback period on the estimated initial investment. Should community non-commercial use be progressed investment may not be required.

3.2 **Legal** - The application of funds will fall within the competency guidelines set out both in statute and in common law in relation to Common Good Funds. The application of funds will comply with all financial regulations.

3.3 **Risk** – Fort William Common Good assets are currently managed by Highland Council. Due to this CGF being established for only a short time it is important to note the longer-term operational costs and liabilities are not yet fully understood and it would be prudent to build reserves to ensure liabilities can be covered.

3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** - None

3.5 **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 the proposed budget. The conclusions have been subject to the relevant Manager Review and Approval.

4.3.2 The Screening process has concluded that there are currently no direct impacts, there may be positive impacts in relation to equalities, socio-economic, human rights, children's rights and wellbeing, mainland rural communities and climate change depending on the ultimate use of the Shed.

4.3.3 Impact Assessment Area	Conclusion of Screening/Full Assessment
Equality	<i>No impact</i>
Socio-economic	<i>No impact</i>
Human Rights	<i>No impact</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 The Fort William Town Team, who fundraised for, constructed, and used the Shed, are disbanding and the Shed is expected to become vacant. No formal lease or agreement was in place, although the group had been advised to formalise its use. The Fort William Town Team has expressed a preference for the Shed to be transferred to another community organisation.

6 **Asset Overview and Considerations**

6.1 The Shed is a CGF asset, legally owned by the Highland Council/Common Good, with Members acting as custodians.

6.2 The Shed may be suitable for community or commercial use, subject to several key considerations:

- Licensing: Commercial use would require a Street Trader’s Licence and Highland Licensing Committee approval due to its location in a Street Trading Exclusion Zone.
- Utilities: The Shed lacks electricity and water, limiting its suitability for food-related or service-heavy uses. It is estimated that it will cost circa £3,000 to install electricity and a similar cost to install water (total cost = c.£6,000).
- Planning: It is currently permitted for equipment storage use; any change of use would require planning consent.
- Statutory Consultation: Any change of use would also require Common Good Fund consultation (cost = c.£3,000)
- Environmental Health: Food-related use would require installation of water and electricity.
- Sustainability: A solar panel was installed to the Shed (CRF funded) - grant conditions are likely transferrable.

7 Options for Consideration

7.1 Following consultation with various officers within the Council it is suggested Members may wish to consider two options for the future use of the Shed:

Option 1: Community Non-Commercial Use – Transfer to another community organisation

Option 2: Commercial Use – Either private sector or Third Sector trading activity (e.g. bike hire, storage, arts and crafts sales, trading arm of a charity)

8 Evaluation of Options

8.1 This table compares options 1 and 2 across key criteria. The table is designed to highlight key considerations such as community benefit, financial implications, and potential risks.

Considerations	Option 1: Community Non- Commercial Use	Option 2: Commercial Use
Potential Income	Low	Medium (£2,500/year)
Potential Cost	Low	High (c.£9,000)
Community Benefit	High	High
Regulatory Requirements	Low/Medium	High
Deterioration of the Shed	High	High
Alignment with CGF Principles	High	High

9 Option 1 Analysis: Community Non-Commercial Use

9.1 Option 1 strongly aligns with the Fort William Town Team’s preference for a handover to a community group. This option has the potential to actively support community initiatives and maintain the shed as a valuable resource for community use.

- 9.2 An advantage of Option 1 is the avoidance of additional infrastructure costs, presuming community non-commercial use would not require installation of electricity and water services. Furthermore, the regulatory requirements for community non-commercial use are potentially significantly lower compared to those associated with commercial operations, reducing administration and potential delays.
- 9.3 It is important to note that if the Shed's use was to change from storage to another purpose, a formal CGF consultation would be required, with an estimated cost of up to £3,000. Additionally, planning permission for a change of use (permission is in place for use as storage) may also be necessary, which could introduce further time and cost implications.

10 Option 2 Analysis: Commercial Use

- 10.1 Exploring the potential for commercial use of the shed, including opportunities for third sector trading, presents both benefits and challenges. One of the primary advantages is the ability to generate a modest income stream for the CGF, estimated at approximately £2,500 per year.
- 10.2 Option 2 could also contribute to supporting local enterprise and economic activity within the area. However, several considerations would require to be addressed before progressing. Any proposed commercial use would require appropriate licensing and planning approvals, which could introduce additional complexity and timescales. Additionally, it is anticipated that a full Street Trader's Licence would be required and as the shed is situated within the Street Trading Exclusion Zone, it may restrict certain types of activity and limit flexibility in its use.
- 10.3 The current lack of electricity and water significantly constrains the Shed's utility for commercial purposes. Installing these services is estimated to cost in the region of £6,000. In addition, a CGF Statutory Consultation would likely be necessary, incurring further costs of approximately £3,000. Taken together, the total investment required to prepare the Shed for commercial use is estimated at around £9,000.
- 10.5 Based on the projected income for commercial use, the payback period for c.£9,000 investment would be approximately 3.6 years. It is also important to note that the Shed's remaining service life may be limited, which could reduce the ability to generate income in the medium to long-term as well as reduce the attractiveness to potential commercial tenants and impact the viability of this option.

11 Summary

The Shed has potential to deliver ongoing value to the Fort William community. Two options have been identified for its future use: Community non-commercial use or commercial use.

Commercial use may provide a modest revenue stream for the Common Good Fund; however, this option is likely to necessitate substantial upfront capital investment, compliance with regulatory requirements, and carries uncertainty regarding long-term financial viability.

Community non-commercial use, closely aligned with the original intended purpose of the Shed, reflects the preference articulated by the Fort William Town Team, who were instrumental in its fundraising, construction, and utilisation. This option is anticipated to offer a cost-effective solution with community benefit and comparatively lower administrative and regulatory obligations.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive – Place

Date: 17 December 2025

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Background Papers: None

Appendices: None