

Agenda Item	11
Report No	CIA/43/26

The Highland Council

Committee: City of Inverness Area

Date: 17 August 2026

Report Title: Inverness Burial Grounds Commutation Fund

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update of the current position of the Inverness Burial Ground Commutation Fund and asks Members to approve a feasibility study, to be undertaken in partnership with Inverness City Heritage Trust, for the City Centre Burial Grounds at a cost of up to £20,000. Members are also asked to approve works to repair and enhance the fencing at Tomnahurich Cemetery, with a budget of up to £50,000.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:-

- i. **Note** the current position of the Inverness Burial Ground Commutation Fund;
- ii. **Approve** a feasibility study for works to the Inverness City Centre Burial Ground's in partnership with Inverness City Heritage Trust at a cost of up to £20,000; and
- iii. **Approve** works to repair and improve the fence at Tomnahurich Cemetery at a cost of up to £50,000.

3 Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** – It is proposed that the fencing project at Tomnahurich Cemetery is funded up to £50,000 from Commutation Fund.

In partnership with Inverness City Heritage Trust, the feasibility study is proposed to be 50% funded from the Commutation Fund, at a cost of up to £20,000 with Inverness City Heritage Trust contributing the remaining 50%.

- 3.2 **Legal** – The Council has a statutory responsibility to comply with its obligations to maintain burial grounds.

- 3.3 **Risk** – No implications noted.
- 3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** – The safety of staff and visitors in burial grounds is a statutory obligation for local authorities.

- 3.5 **Gaelic** – No implications noted.

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 As the feasibility study is not anticipated to result in any adverse impacts, and the proposed fence refurbishment works at Tomnahurich are expected to deliver only positive outcomes, an impact assessment is not considered necessary at this stage.

5 Background

- 5.1 The Burial Ground Commutation Fund is a historic fund to support the maintenance, improvement and enhancement of burial grounds within the Inverness area. As a result, it provides an additional source of investment for burial grounds beyond standard operational funding.
- 5.2 Investment income and, where appropriate, capital resources have been used over time to support cemetery maintenance and enhancement projects that fall outside the scope of routine revenue-funded operations.
- 5.3 In recent years, funding has been used to support cemetery path improvements, wall repairs, tree and vegetation management, mausoleum conservation projects, lair levelling, drainage upgrades and a range of health and safety works arising from national cemetery safety reviews.
- 5.4 Governance of the fund is provided through The Highland Council, with oversight exercised by the City of Inverness Area Committee. Investment arrangements and expenditure plans are reviewed through the Council's committee reporting process.

6 Current Position

- 6.1 As of 31 March 2026, the balance of the fund was shown to be £1,553,243, with available capital funds of £356,655 and revenue funds of £569,294.

7 Inverness City Centre Burial Ground Feasibility Study

- 7.1 It is proposed that a feasibility study is commissioned to determine how the green space provided by the burial grounds within the city centre, including Chapel Yard, Old High and Greyfriars, can be best utilised and enhanced. These burial grounds are located within the Inverness Riverside Conservation Area (CON30).
- 7.2 The study will seek to identify regeneration opportunities and develop a longer-term vision for the use of these spaces whilst recognising their sensitive nature and significant historic and cultural heritage. Using a place-based approach, the study may consider conservation and repair requirements, stakeholder consultation, environmental sustainability measures and opportunities to enhance the visitor experience to the sites.
- 7.3 The project will be undertaken in partnership with Inverness City Heritage Trust (ICHT). It is proposed that the feasibility study be funded on a 50:50 basis, with contributions from ICHT and the Commutation Fund, at a cost of up to £20,000 from the fund. Subject to approval, the study will be procured through a competitive tender process managed by ICHT. A copy of the Invite to Tender document can be viewed within **Appendix 1**.
- 7.4 If approved, the findings and recommendations of the feasibility study will be presented to a future committee for consideration.

8 Tomnahurich Cemetery

- 8.1 It is proposed that improvement works are undertaken to the boundary fence surrounding Tomnahurich Cemetery. The existing railings on Glenurquhart road are in need of major repair with approximately 200 metres needing to be replaced and approximately 300 metres requiring refurbishment, along with entrance gates and surrounding walls.
- 8.2 The works are required to address the ongoing deterioration of sections of the boundary fence. Repainting, repairs and replacement of damaged sections will protect from further degradation and maintain the appearance and integrity of the cemetery boundary.
- 8.3 The estimated cost of the works is estimated to be up to £50,000, which it is proposed will be met from the Commutation Fund, if approved.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

Date: 27 July 2026

Author: John MacLean, Bereavement Services Manager
Rachel Robertson, Project Coordinator

Background Papers: CIA/035/16

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Invite to Tender document (ITT)

Invitation to Tender (ITT)**Consultant Team Appointment****Inverness City Centre Burial Grounds Regeneration Project
Feasibility Study and Options Appraisal****1. Introduction**

The Highland Council (THC) and Inverness City Heritage Trust (ICHT) are jointly seeking to appoint a suitably qualified Consultant Team to undertake a Feasibility Study and Options Appraisal for a proposed heritage-led regeneration project focused on the three historic burial grounds within Inverness city centre.

1.1 Vision Statement

The project seeks to reposition the historic burial grounds of Inverness as connected historic landscapes which celebrate the city's history, support biodiversity and wellbeing, improve public understanding of the historic environment, and contribute positively to the identity, attractiveness, and vitality of Inverness city centre.

2. Background

Inverness City Centre contains three historic burial grounds of considerable historic, architectural, archaeological, and cultural significance:-

- Chapel Yard Cemetery
- Old High Church Burial Ground
- Greyfriars Burial Ground

The project seeks to explore how the burial grounds can contribute more positively to the city through a coordinated programme of conservation repair, interpretation, environmental enhancement, and public engagement. It is to be a pilot for ICHT's 'Story of Inverness' interactive interpretation and storytelling project. This will be a multimedia experience which uses technology such as laser scanning, AR and VR along with traditional means to examine the history of the city.

2.1 Strategic Policy Context

The project aligns with local and national policy objectives relating to heritage conservation, city centre regeneration, placemaking, climate resilience, tourism, biodiversity and community wellbeing.

The project supports:-

- The Highland Council Inverness Strategy
- Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan
- Inverness City Centre Development Brief
- Historic Environment Scotland's 'Our Past, Our Future' strategy
- Scottish Government priorities relating to place-based regeneration, climate resilience and sustainable tourism.

2.2 Site-Specific Priorities

Chapel Yard Cemetery:-

- Forbes Mausoleum repair and interpretation
- Repairs to other selected monuments
- Biodiversity enhancement
- Wider site interpretation and storytelling
- Promotion as public green space

Old High Church Burial Ground:-

- Visitor experience improvements
- Tourism and interpretation opportunities
- Links to wider city-centre regeneration

Blackfriars Burial Ground:-

- Landscape enhancement
- Biodiversity opportunities
- Interpretation and storytelling

2.3 Funding Context

The project has been identified by The Highland Council and Inverness City Heritage Trust as a strategically important city-centre regeneration initiative with strong alignment to local and national policy objectives.

The purpose of this commission is to establish a robust and deliverable framework capable of supporting future phased delivery and external funding applications.

Consultants should therefore demonstrate an understanding of funding-led heritage regeneration projects and identify realistic opportunities for phased delivery, partnership working and external funding support.

3. Inverness City Heritage Trust

Inverness City Heritage Trust is an independent charity based in Inverness. The Trust works in partnership with Historic Environment Scotland, The Highland Council and local communities to deliver projects focused on conservation, heritage-led regeneration, interpretation and community engagement.

4. Conservation Philosophy

The project should adopt a conservation-led and minimum intervention approach, ensuring that the historic, archaeological, commemorative and ecological significance of the burial grounds is protected and enhanced.

5. Project Outcomes

The appointed Consultant Team will be expected to explore and develop proposals capable of delivering:-

- Identification of priority conservation repairs
- Enhanced visitor experience and tourism offer
- Improved biodiversity and environmental quality
- Interpretation and storytelling opportunities
- Community engagement and participation
- Climate resilience and sustainable heritage management

6. Consultant Team

The Consultant Team should include, where appropriate:-

- Conservation Architect or Building Surveyor
- Heritage Consultant / Archaeologist
- Interpretation Specialist
- Community Engagement Specialist
- Ecologist / Biodiversity Specialist

7. Scope of Works

The Consultant Team will undertake:-

- Baseline assessment
- Conservation and repair assessment
- Interpretation and visitor experience assessment
- Greenspace, biodiversity and climate resilience assessment
- Accessibility and inclusion assessment
- Community and stakeholder engagement
- Funding and delivery strategy.

8. Required Outputs

The Consultant Team will be required to produce:-

- Feasibility Study
- Options Appraisal
- Concept proposals and illustrative material
- Indicative cost estimates
- Funding and delivery roadmap.

9. Stakeholders

Stakeholders may include:-

- The Highland Council
- Inverness City Heritage Trust
- Inverness BID
- Historic Environment Scotland
- High Life Highland
- VisitScotland
- Local community groups
- UHI Inverness
- Environmental and biodiversity groups

10. Pricing and Fee Proposal

Tenderers are requested to provide a detailed fee proposal for delivery of the commission.

Fee submissions should include:-

- Breakdown of costs by discipline
- Daily rates
- Estimated staff days
- Anticipated expenses
- VAT where applicable
- Indicative payment schedule

Tenderers should clearly identify any exclusions or assumptions within their pricing proposal.

11. Tender Submission

Tender submissions should include:-

- Detailed methodology
- Programme
- CVs of key personnel
- Examples of relevant previous work
- References