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## NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

28 September 2021

### Cabinet

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**Title:** Islands Infrastructure Fund

**Purpose:** To seek approval for the expenditure of the anticipated Islands Infrastructure Fund in 2021/22.

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that Cabinet:

- i) Notes that a funding award will be forthcoming from the Scottish Government's Islands Infrastructure Fund for 2021/22;
- ii) Agrees to the proposal for the expenditure of this award including
  - o Upgrade of the car park at the Mountain Rescue Centre in Brodick on the Isle of Arran;
  - o Upgrade of a series of lay-bys at strategic locations on the Isle of Cumbrae; and
  - o Implementation of a series of recommendations identified by the Islands Connectivity Study; and
- iii) Due to the requirement to financially commit funds by 31 March, 2022 provides delegated authority to the Executive Director (Place) to agree amendments to the expenditure proposal in consultation with the Portfolio Lead Elected Member as required.

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### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Scottish Government has committed to the investment of £30m in delivering the National Islands Plan over the next five years. This funding will be delivered through the Islands Programme.
- 1.2 The £9m investment planned for the current year includes a £6.2m Islands Infrastructure Fund. This is being apportioned across the island authorities to support delivery of the National Island Plan objectives. Confirmation of an award is anticipated in the coming weeks and requires to be financially committed by 31 March 2022. This report seeks approval for the proposal for the expenditure of the allocation informed by the Fund's objectives and criteria, Regeneration Delivery Plan and Local Transport Strategy.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 The National Islands Plan (2019) identifies a series of objectives to improve outcomes for island communities across Scotland. This was developed following the introduction of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018. The Plan outlines how objectives and strategies to improve outcomes for island communities are underpinned by four key values of fairness, integration, environmental protection and inclusiveness. It identifies thirteen Strategic Objectives and the key actions to deliver on these.
- 2.2 The Implementation Route Map sets out how the priorities will be delivered over the lifetime of the Plan. It identifies the methods to be used to monitor progress and how the Plan will be delivered over the short, medium and long-term. This recognises that strong collaboration and partnership between Scottish Government, local authorities, island communities and stakeholders are required to support delivery.
- 2.3 The £9m investment in 2021/22 includes the formation of a £6.2m Islands Infrastructure Fund. This aims to sustain, strengthen, enhance or develop transformational and critical infrastructure projects based on local priorities whilst supporting delivery of the National Islands Plan. £1.2m has been allocated to two critical island infrastructure projects, Kerrera Track upgrade and the Fair Isle Bird Observatory rebuild.
- 2.4 £5m of this Fund will be directly awarded to Local Authorities in 2021/22 based on specific delivery criteria to support the implementation of local infrastructure priorities. The direct allocations will be apportioned using a 25% road length and 75% population allocation model agreed by COSLA Leaders. The draft criteria and objectives for the Fund are outlined in Appendix One. Further engagement with island Authorities is envisaged to inform the approach to the Fund going forward.
- 2.5 An application was submitted to the UK Government's Community Renewal Fund for the development of an Islands Connectivity Study in June 2021. The outcome of this is anticipated in Autumn 2021 and if successful would complement the proposals presented for the Island's Infrastructure Fund. The project aims to establish the requirements for low carbon, active and sustainable travel on the islands. This will prepare a feasibility and scoping study informed by extensive consultation on the:
  - Requirements for electric vehicle (EV) and e-bike infrastructure on the islands to support EV uptake and active travel;
  - Potential for the creation of Low Carbon Hubs on the islands and establish the requirements thereof; and
  - Potential for a Mobility as a Service (MaaS) project to support active and sustainable travel on the islands and establish the requirements for the practical application of MaaS in an island context to support community renewal and the visitor economy.
- 2.6 The proposals for the expenditure of the Islands Infrastructure Fund potential allocation have been informed by the Fund's objectives and criteria, Regeneration Delivery Plan and Local Transport Strategy. These aim to deliver on local priorities within the Fund's timescales. The following projects are proposed on this basis:

- Upgrade of the car park at the Mountain Rescue Centre in Brodick on the Isle of Arran;
- Upgrade of a series of lay-bys at strategic locations on the Isle of Cumbrae; and
- Implementation of a series of recommendations identified by the Islands Connectivity Study.

2.7 The proposals aim to deliver on local infrastructure priorities which meet the criteria and objectives and for which financial commitment is achievable within the Fund timescales. Priorities for future years of the Fund will be identified through the Islands Connectivity Study, the forthcoming Island Plans for Arran and Cumbrae, the review of the Local Transport Strategy and the annual review of the Regeneration Delivery Plan actions. These will be informed by extensive consultation with island communities and stakeholders.

### **3. Proposals**

3.1 It is proposed that Cabinet:

- i) Notes that a funding award will be forthcoming from the Scottish Government's Islands Infrastructure Fund for 2021/22;
- ii) Agrees to the proposal for the expenditure of this award including:
  - Upgrade of the car park at the Mountain Rescue Centre in Brodick on the Isle of Arran;
  - Upgrade of a series of lay-bys at strategic locations on the Isle of Cumbrae; and
  - Implementation of a series of recommendations identified by the Islands Connectivity Study; and
- iii) Due to the requirement to financially commit funds by 31 March, 2022 provides delegated authority to the Executive Director (Place) to agree amendments to the expenditure proposal in consultation with the Portfolio Lead Elected Member as required.

### **4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty**

#### **Financial**

4.1 The cost of the proposal will be met by the forthcoming allocation from the Scottish Government's Island Infrastructure Fund in the financial year 2021/22. This requires to be financially committed to relevant projects in line with the Fund's criteria by 31 March 2021.

#### **Human Resources**

4.2 No implications.

#### **Legal**

4.3 The car park and lay-bys identified for upgrade are within Council control. The legal implications of the Island Connectivity Study works will be considered through their development. Legal agreements will be developed on a project by project basis as required with support from Legal Services.

### **Equality/Socio-economic**

- 4.4 The proposal will assist in meeting our socio-economic duty as set out in the Fairer Scotland Duty and will assist in reducing economic, social and physical decline and reduce socio-economic disadvantage in the identified areas.

### **Environmental and Sustainability**

- 4.5 The proposal aligns with the agreed Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy.

### **Key Priorities**

- 4.6 The proposal will contribute to achieving the Council Plan priority outcomes and will contribute to the ambitions for: an inclusive, growing and enterprising economy; North Ayrshire to be well-connected with effective infrastructure; and for a sustainable, vibrant, welcoming and attractive environment.

### **Community Wealth Building**

- 4.7 The proposal will contribute to the delivery of the Community Wealth Building Strategy.

## **5. Consultation**

- 5.1 The proposal was informed by North Ayrshire's Regeneration Delivery Plan and Local Transport Strategy. Elected Members were consulted on the development of the Regeneration Delivery Plan and Local Transport Strategy. Cabinet approved the submission of the Community Renewal Fund application on 15 June 2021. Further consultation will be undertaken with Members to inform the priorities for the Island Connectivity Study.
- 5.2 Engagement has taken place with a range of Council Services to identify priorities, establish deliverability within the timescales and confirm the suitability of the proposals for the Fund.

RUSSELL McCUTCHEON  
Executive Director (Place)

For further information please contact **Louise Kirk, Senior Manager (Regeneration)** , on **01294 3244766**.

### **Background Papers**

North Ayrshire Local Transport Strategy (2015)  
North Ayrshire Regeneration Delivery Plan (2021)  
National Island Plan (2019)

## Appendix One – Islands Infrastructure Fund Criteria

The draft delivery criteria and objectives of the Islands Programme and the Islands Infrastructure Fund are summarised as follows. These are currently being finalised by Scottish Government:

The National Islands Plan can be found [here](#) and its strategic objectives are:

- To address population decline and ensure a healthy, balanced population profile
- To improve and promote sustainable economic development
- To improve transport services
- To improve housing
- To reduce levels of fuel poverty
- To improve digital connectivity
- To improve and promote health, social care and wellbeing
- To improve and promote environmental wellbeing and deal with biosecurity
- To contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation and promote clean, affordable and secure energy
- To empower diverse communities and different places
- To support arts, culture and language
- To promote and improve education for all throughout life Implementation
- To support effective implementation of the National Islands Plan

The draft overall objectives of the Islands programme are:

### Empower

- Strengthen happy, healthy, thriving island communities
- Empower community action around need
- Support demographically balanced populations

### Enhance

- Create more on island economic opportunities
- Build a green recovery
- Demonstrate island capability as climate change leaders

### Accelerate

- Local implementation of NIP
- Deliver transformation in partnerships
- Build a cross sector framework for future investment

The current draft criteria for the Islands Infrastructure Fund:

- To meet the overall objectives of the Islands Programme
- To link directly to at least one of the National Islands Plan Strategic Objectives
- To ensure transformational impact against place based priorities to accelerate local growth
- To align with local critical infrastructure priorities and potential to collaborate with other place based investment opportunities to maximise benefits
- To demonstrate project readiness, collaborative and partnership delivery models, project viability and long term sustainability