



**COMMUNITY REGENERATION PARTNERSHIP**

Joint Report by Chief Executive and Chief Officer, Economic and Community Regeneration

**PURPOSE**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek agreement of the Comhairle's priority projects for the Community Regeneration Partnership with UK Government.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 2.1 In Autumn 2024, it was confirmed that the Outer Hebrides would receive £20m UK Government funding through a Community Regeneration Partnership (CRP). A Report to Policy and Resources Committee of 5 February 2025 outlined the process and timetable for the allocation of this funding.
- 2.2 The implementation timetable outlined previously remains on track, with fieldwork scheduled for week beginning 12 May 2025, during which a team of UK Government (UKG) officials will carry out stakeholder engagement and research across the Outer Hebrides. This will inform the CRP direction and UK Government decisions on investment.
- 2.3 The Comhairle has an opportunity to put forward priority projects for consideration. A list of potential capital investments has been developed, reflecting the position of the Comhairle that priority would be given towards investment of this funding in Uist and Barra. The suite of proposals at section 7.2 of the Report includes community-led heritage projects, pier and harbour investment, economic development infrastructure, and sports facilities, with a significant allocation proposed for roads and causeway infrastructure, offering a good thematic and geographical mix. An Outer Hebrides-wide Housing Investment Fund is also proposed.
- 2.4 CRP funding must be committed during 2026/27. Projects which are deliverable within the timescale, offer a fit with UKG 'national missions' and local strategic priorities, and which have a positive cost/benefit ratio are essential. There is, therefore, no guarantee that the Comhairle's preferred projects will be selected, as other projects may emerge through the fieldwork exercise which offer a better fit with the UK Government's requirements for the CRP funding. Officers will carry out further work to develop the information available on the Comhairle's priority projects in advance of the fieldwork.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 **It is recommended that the Comhairle agree the proposed priorities for Community Regeneration Partnership funding, as set out in paragraph 7.2 of the Report.**

Contact Officer:	Malcolm Burr, Chief Executive Anne Murray, Chief Officer, Economic and Community Regeneration
Background Papers:	Report to Policy and Resources Committee, February 2025

## IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The following implications are applicable in terms of the Report.

Resource Implications	Implications/None
Financial	Report covers £20.25m funding from UK Government.
Legal	None
Staffing	None
Assets and Property	Proposes investment in infrastructure owned by the Comhairle.
Strategic Implications	Implications/None
Risk	None
Equalities	None
Corporate Strategy	Supports the Corporate Strategy 2022-2027 ambition to strengthen the local economy.
Environmental Impact	None
Consultation	Consultation with officers in Economic Development, Regeneration, and Assets and Infrastructure, has informed the proposed list.

## BACKGROUND

- 5.1 In March 2024, it was announced that the Comhairle would receive £20m of UK Government Levelling Up Partnership funding. It was agreed by the Comhairle on 1 May 2024 and 12 February 2025 that priority would be given to investment in Uist and Barra. Following an initial meeting with UK Government representatives, the announcement of the UK Government Election placed the process on pause. In the Autumn 2024 Budget it was confirmed that the Outer Hebrides would continue to receive this funding, which has been re-badged as a Community Renewal Partnership. Discussions with UK Government regarding next steps in the process resumed shortly before the end of the year and key milestones for the coming period have emerged.
- 5.2 The implementation timetable outlined previously remains on track, with fieldwork scheduled for week beginning 12 May, during which a team of UKG officials will carry out stakeholder engagement and research across the Outer Hebrides. This will inform the CRP direction and decisions on investment.
- 5.3 The Comhairle has an opportunity to put forward priority projects for consideration. A list of potential capital investments has been developed, and endorsement of these is now being sought. It has previously been agreed by the Comhairle that priority would be given to investment in Uist and Barra. The suite of proposals are believed to provide a reasonable thematic and geographic balance, and include community led heritage projects, pier and harbour investment, and community sports facilities, with a significant allocation proposed for roads and causeway infrastructure. An Outer Hebrides wide Housing Investment Fund is also proposed.

## PROCESS AND TIMETABLE

- 6.1 The Investment Plan will need to be approved during 2025 /26 for investments that can commence during 2026 / 27. A broad timetable is therefore as follows:
- Scoping / Desktop Research – Beginning April 2025
  - Fieldwork visit – w/c 12 May 2025
  - Presentation to Members – w/c 2 June 2025
  - Development and Agreement of Proposals – July 2025
  - Announcement of Funded Projects (subject to Business Case) – July 2025
  - Business Case Work Commences – July 2025

- Approval of Investment Plan by Comhairle and UK Government – September 2025

6.2 The Comhairle are the Accountable Body for the funding, which will be transferred upfront on agreement of the Investment Plan by both parties. In addition to the £20m capital funding, there is also £250k revenue funding available. The allocation and clearing of this spend will be agreed through the same process as that for the main capital investment.

## INVESTMENT PROPOSALS

- 7.1 UKG officials have indicated that they are willing to consider potential projects that the Comhairle may wish to put forward for consideration in parallel with the fieldwork exercise.
- 7.2 A list of potential capital investments has been developed, and is shown in the table below, and agreement of these is sought. Proposals reflect the previous Comhairle decision that priority be given to projects in Uist and Barra, a decision of which UK Government is supportive.

Investment	Description	Proposed CRP Allocation (£m)
Uist and Barra Roads and Causeway Resilience Programme	Range of options to be priced and prioritised within available budget. For example, dualling single track road sections on Western Isles spinal route - stretch from lochdar to Loch Bee, South Uist. 4.2km; reinforcement of two vulnerable sections on Berneray Causeway, North Ford Causeway resilience - reinforcement of the bridge sections, dealing with vulnerable and flood prone areas on the roads network.	9,000,000
Outer Hebrides Housing Investment Fund	Grant and revolving loan fund supporting individuals and organisations to access finance and leverage further investment to address challenges with build cost, land acquisition and site services and also allowing investment in existing stock to improve energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty. Focus will be on filling gaps in existing schemes and financing mechanisms.	3,500,000
Vatersay Harbour Marine Development Zone	New harbour to improve and expand the current marine facilities of Vatersay, regenerate the area, create a more sustainable marine economy, engage in more employment opportunities and bringing benefit to the whole community of Barra and Vatersay. Further exploration needed on total project costs, current stage, scalability and phasing.	2,000,000
Carinish Heritage Centre, Isle of North Uist	North Uist Community Heritage Centre at the former Sgoil Chàirinis / Carinish School. Renovate and develop the premises to create a vibrant heritage hub as an open access resource for artefact and document collections; research, digital and genealogical facilities, and as an active hub for Gaelic and heritage learning, activities and events.	1,500,000
Ionad Eilean na h-Òige, Comunn Eachdraidh Eirisgeidh, Isle of Eriskay	Phase 3 of Ionad Eilean na h-Òige project - development of museum, café and meeting room in former Eriskay School. Phase 1 complete and a fully funded Phase 2 is currently out to tender. The project will offer educational, cultural, and recreational opportunities for both residents and visitors, benefitting all age groups. The building's multifunctional design will facilitate community activities and gatherings, promoting social interaction and cohesion, reducing social isolation, and enhancing mental wellbeing.	1,500,000
Ardveenish Harbour, Isle of Barra	Resilience investment into existing facility - replacement of timber piles, etc.	1,500,000
Covered 3G Sports Facilities, Daliburgh	Construction of all-weather, covered, 3G sports facilities at Daliburgh. Potential 50% funding already in place.	1,200,000
West Camp - Masterplan & Land Acquisition, Benbecula	Transfer of land at West Camp from MOD ownership following site clearance to provide for mixed use site including housing, business units, particularly focused on STEM opportunities. CRP investment likely to cover Masterplanning exercise and costs of land purchase / transfer.	500,000

Total	20,700,000
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- 7.3 Should Members agree to the recommendations, further work will take place by officers to develop short Project Summaries that can be supplied to UK Government in advance of the fieldwork. This will allow any risks to be identified around areas such as total project costs and sources of match funding, value for money, deliverability and timescale, or other dependencies which would be disadvantageous in the context of this funding stream.
- 7.4 All funding requires to be committed during 2026/27 and will be subject to business case development and approval by UK Government. The Comhairle's identification of priorities will not preclude other investment from being considered by UKG as part of the fieldwork exercise. Officers have provided advice to UKG regarding their fieldwork, to ensure that balanced community and partner input is secured.

## CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The suite of proposals is believed to provide a reasonable thematic and geographic balance, and include community-led heritage projects, pier and harbour investment, and community sports facilities, with a significant allocation proposed for roads and causeway infrastructure. An Outer Hebrides wide Housing Investment Fund is also proposed.
- 8.2 The timescales for agreeing the Investment Plan and delivery of the funding remains challenging. It is vital that the projects identified have limited dependencies, can proceed within the required timescale and demonstrate the required level of economic impact.
- 8.3 It should also be noted that UKG perceive the CRP as essential to development of UK Government's enhanced understanding of the islands' economies, opportunities and structural challenges. Aside from the specific significant funding that will be invested, there is therefore scope for further and wider benefits through better-informed policy and decision making.