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ALL SYSTEMS GO AS INVERNESS CITY-VISION GETS GO AHEAD





The City of Inverness Partnership is delighted at receiving the go ahead for its plans to spend £3.1 million over the next three years on a programme of improvements, including four major projects aimed at making a real difference to the appearance of the city and how it functions. The Partnership, a grouping of eight key agencies, successfully produced a Vision Statement to draw down the funds from the Scottish Executive's Cities Growth Fund.

An early meeting will be called to devise a programme action plan, including a timetable for development.

Partnership Chairman Councillor Alison Magee, Convener of The Highland Council, said: "This is really excellent news from Andy Kerr, the Minister for Finance and Public Services, who told me he was very impressed with the quality of our submission. We will now get down to the business of implementing the actions in our City Vision."



Provost Bill Smith, Inverness, echoed Mrs Magee's delight. He said: "We have a very exciting programme of action which will enhance the city in the short term. We also have longer term plans to ensure Inverness develops as a regional centre and contributes significantly to the Scottish economy."

£500,000 has been set aside for each of the four main projects with spending to be phased over three years. They are: -

-  Upgrading of the landscaping, walks and public grounds around the Castle, the Riverside and proposed Cultural Quarter;
-  Creation of a "Wired City" – with a "real time" public information system and the installation of broadband in social housing schemes;
-  Improvement of the streetscape and building conversion in Castle Brae, High Street West and the North Castle Tower;
-  Installation of a waste management scheme for the city centre and the development of a Recycling Innovation Zone.

On top of this, the eight partners in the Partnership have set aside £100,000 each as contributions to eight key projects, while £300,000 is to be deployed for vital feasibility studies to promote dialogue and implementation of the City-Vision.

It will also provide support for: -

-  further development of commuter rail services, linking Inverness with the wider sub-region; and
-  the Merkinch Social Inclusion Partnership Project.

The Council will also be responding in detail to a consultation document being issued by the Executive on the creation of Business Improvement District Schemes.

Meanwhile, the programme of environmental improvements in the city centre continues with the refurbishment of the Market Brae Steps and the installation of the first of 20 new city centre seats. This continues the £1 million upgrade of the High Street, between the Town House and Stephen's Brae, which has seen much of the pedestrianised surfacing replaced. The final phase of this work will go ahead in September. Plans are also being prepared for the refurbishment of Stephen's Brae.

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The City Partnership comprises representatives from The Highland Council, the Highlands and Islands Enterprise network; the Highlands and Islands of Scotland Tourist Board, Inverness and District Chamber of Commerce, Inverness City Management Initiative and the University of the Highlands and Islands Millennium Institute.

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