

# North Lanarkshire Council Report

## Enterprise & Growth Committee

approval  noting

Ref PH/DG

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## 2019/20 Vacant And Derelict Land Fund

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### Executive Summary

Since 2006, North Lanarkshire Council has received funding through the Scottish Government's Vacant and Derelict Land Fund (VDLF) Programme to support the remediation and re-use of long-term vacant and derelict land sites within North Lanarkshire.

This capital fund has set criteria and guidance which restricts the type of activity it can be spent on. Moreover, as it is only awarded on an annual basis, difficulties associated with the regeneration of vacant and derelict sites require that most of the projects supported through this fund are phased over a series of programmes.

Subject to the approval of the Scottish Government's proposed 2019/20 budget and a VDLF Local Delivery Plan (LDP), North Lanarkshire Council has been awarded £2.886M through the 2019/20 VDLF Programme. The deadline for submission of this LDP was 31 January 2019 although it was highlighted within this bid that proposals included remained subject to approval by the Enterprise and Growth Committee.

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### Recommendations

It is recommended the Committee:

- (1) Note the 2019/20 VDLF allocation made to North Lanarkshire as part of the proposed 2019/20 Scottish Budget; and
- (2) Provide approval for the project proposals outlined in North Lanarkshire's 2019/20 VDLF LDP submission as outlined in section 2 of this report.

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### Supporting Documents

**Council business plan to 2020**

The capital proposals incorporated within North Lanarkshire's VDLF Programmes aim to support a number of outcomes of NLC's Business Plan by: helping establish new business infrastructure that creates employment and training opportunity; supporting activity which has helped create

community assets and promote participation; and by using VDLF as a mechanism for stimulating capital investment in North Lanarkshire.

## **1. Background**

1.1 The VDLF is a ring-fenced capital grant allocation which provides financial support from the Scottish Government to assist with the regeneration of registered vacant and derelict land (V&DL) sites across selected local authority areas.

1.2 Funding provided through the VDLF Programme is subject to the submission (and approval by the Scottish Government) of a LDP which sets out local authority investment proposals to meet the objectives of the VDLF Programme. These objectives are to:

- tackle long term vacant and derelict land (and in particular sites which have been registered as vacant or derelict for at least 15 years);
- stimulate economic growth and job creation;
- develop a diverse sustainable environment with a focus on temporary and permanent greening; and
- support communities to flourish and tackle inequalities

1.3 There is a range of activity which this fund cannot support including: major infrastructure works, retail and housing projects.

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## **2. Report**

2.1 Subject to the approval of the proposed 2019/20 Scottish Budget, North Lanarkshire Council has been awarded £2,886,000 VDLF Funding for spend in 2019/20. This funding will be subject to the Scottish Government's approval of a 2019/20 LDP for North Lanarkshire. The deadline for submission of this bid was 31 January 2019 (although proposals outlined in this bid remain subject to committee approval).

2.2 Project proposals and VDLF allocations submitted as part of North Lanarkshire 2019/20 LDP include the following:

- Ravenscraig Civic Greenspace: as approved by Enterprise and Housing Committee in November 2018, £1.2M of VDLF funding has been sought to help meet the funding gap for the development of a new civic greenspace at Ravenscraig that will act as a draw for ongoing investment and development at this key regeneration site.
- Business and Industry: where £1.4M of VDLF funding has been sought to enable the redevelopment of vacant and derelict land for new business use and promote private sector investment opportunity. This includes:
  - £800,000 for the potential acquisition and remediation of a derelict site that would allow Fusion Assets (NLC's arms-length property development company) to undertake enabling works needed to

support the expansion of the Bio-city complex at Chapelhall and in-turn meet growing demand for specialised workspace for hi-tech incubator and growth companies at this site; and

- £600,000 for advanced infrastructure works that would support Fusion Assets to bring forward the continued industrial redevelopment of Link Park at Newhouse Industrial Estate.
- Community Allotments: where £286,000 of this available funding has been sought to develop a new community allotments scheme (site still to be identified) that replicates the success of previous VDLF supported community allotments and gardens schemes at Viewpark Gardens and Kirklee Road, Mossend.

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### **3. Equality and Diversity**

#### **3.1 Fairer Scotland**

The VDLF Programme and the project proposals outlined in North Lanarkshire's 2018/19 LDP are very much focused on promoting a fairer Scotland and inclusive growth and will do so by:

- promoting environmental equality through land remediation;
- enabling investment that will create and improve access to new and better employment opportunity; and
- creating infrastructure that will allow all of North Lanarkshire's communities to have improved access to leisure, learning, health, community and employment opportunity.

#### **3.2 Equality Impact Assessment**

An Equalities Impact Assessment will be prepared for each individual project to be taken forward through the 2019/20 VDLF Programme as part of the Council's approved Project Management process.

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### **4. Implications**

#### **4.1 Financial Impact**

The VDLF is a capital fund and no match from the Council's Capital Programme is required to support the implementation of any of the proposed VDLF projects outlined in this report (unless gap funding cannot be secured for the Ravenscraig Greenspace Project either through this VDLF Programme or other external funding sources such as Scottish Natural Heritage managed 'Green Infrastructure Fund').

Moreover, most of the projects supported through the Council's VDLF Programmes have been developed to secure commercial returns and/or be managed through a third party (including ALEOs and community groups). As such, these projects, in general, have limited revenue implications for the Council.

However, whilst the development of Ravenscraig Civic Greenspace forms an important part of the masterplan for this strategic regeneration site, the management of this asset will have ongoing revenue implications for the Council. It is proposed that this in part will be minimised through low maintenance design and incorporation of sports facilities which will be managed/maintained separately as part of the facilities offered at Ravenscraig Sports Centre. Nevertheless, it is envisaged that the maintenance of this asset will have some ongoing revenue implications which will need to be met through NLC revenue budgets although this may be partly off-set by contribution from the wider Ravenscraig development.

#### **4.2 HR/Policy/Legislative Impact**

The VDLF offer made to the Council from the Scottish Government is regulated through a formal block grant agreement with statutory terms and conditions. In order to ensure that third party grant recipients (such as Fusion Assets) comply with this agreement, NLC's Legal Services issue separate legal agreements to grant recipients to ensure that all grant terms and conditions are re-assigned.

The Council maintain responsibility for monitoring compliance with this agreement and retaining all financial records for each project across the full clawback period of this grant (6 years following the completion of project grant spend).

#### **4.3 Environmental Impact**

The implementation of North Lanarkshire's VDLF programmes has had significant positive environmental impact across this local authority area for a number of years. For example, over the last 10 years this fund has:

- helped remediate over 37 ha of vacant and derelict land within North Lanarkshire for business, greenspace and community use;
- helped improve another 30 ha of vacant and derelict land within North Lanarkshire for future business and commercial use;
- supported a range of innovative sustainability projects such as BRE Innovation Park at Ravenscraig and the Biomass Storage Facility at Strathclyde Country Park; and
- funded a range of community environmental projects such as the development of bespoke community allotments at Viewpark Gardens and Kirklee Road in Mossend as well as the development of an outdoor BMX pump track and wildflower meadow in Craigneuk (Wishaw).

#### **4.4 Risk Impact**

Where grant funding for any given VDLF programme is not spent or legally/contractually committed before financial year end, the Council require to seek Scottish Government approval to carry-forward any un-committed funding (and potentially remain liable for repayment of such grant funding until this approval is granted).

To mitigate this risk, early approval of project proposals is sought to allow a development programme to be put in place to ensure that grant spend timescales are met.

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**5. Measures of success**

- 5.1 Achieve the successful completion and full VDLF spend for all approved projects outlined within this report.
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