

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: INTEGRATED GRANTS PROGRAMME - FIRST YEAR UPDATE

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Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to report progress on the first year of the Integrated Grants Programme and to seek the Board's view on whether to change our current practice of requiring applicants to find at least 10% of the funds for their project.

Recommendations

That the Board:

- notes the status of the programme and delivery outputs for the end of financial year 2005/06;
- notes progress made in pooling public funds to grant aid Park related activities; and
- agrees to maintain the current practice of requiring applicants to find at least 10% of the funds for projects.

Executive Summary

In 05/06, we committed funds to 66 projects worth £341,000 against a two year target of between 125-170 projects worth £717,000.

We now estimate that overall we will fund 100 projects worth £500,000. This shortfall is principally due to lower than expected demand.

We have managed to attract £50,000 for SNH to co-finance projects in 06-07 under the schemes for Interpretation, Outdoor Access and Biodiversity.

We have considered the merits of requiring community groups to find 10% of the funds for their applications and concluded that there are no compelling reasons to alter the programme at this stage.

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Background

1. In June 2005, the Board agreed to run a grants programme over 05-06 and 06-07, and approved £315,000 of the CNPA's money towards this. It requested staff to report back on the outcome of the programme in 05-06 and consider further whether to change the requirement for applicants to find at least 10% of the cash for projects rather than contributing in kind.
2. Currently the only part of the Programme to offer 100% funding, and therefore no contribution in cash or in-kind from applicants, is the Biodiversity scheme. This is designed to overcome our experiences to date in getting community groups to undertake biodiversity focused projects. It contains a cocktail of funds from public sector bodies.

Progress to March 06

3. We estimated in June 05 that the programme would support between 125-170 projects worth £717,000. Reporting progress to the Board in December 05, we noted that we had already approved 26 projects worth £77,000 and that this was likely to rise to 45 projects worth £150,000 by the end of March 06.
4. Now that the financial year is complete, we can report that we have committed funds to 66 projects worth £341,000. Of this, the CNPA will fund £125,000, LEADER+ £102,000, and the balance of £114,000 is from other public bodies and community funds. A list of projects to which we have already committed funds is contained at Annex 1.
5. Of particular note to date is the high take-up for Marketing and Events, Investing in Communities and Cultural Heritage funds, and that the majority of proposal are still coming from the north and the west of the Park.

Prospects for 06-07

6. It is very difficult to predict future demand, but based on enquiries and commitments to date, we estimate that by the time we close the door to new applications in October 06, we will have supported 100 projects worth about £500,000. This is some way short of our original estimate but reflects the actual demand for applications that meet the criteria.
7. The main development for 06-07 is that we have managed to attract an additional £50,000 from SNH to co-finance projects under the schemes for Interpretation, Outdoor Access and Biodiversity. This replaces the LEADER+ funds available in 06-07, and complements funds from other public bodies already committed to the Biodiversity scheme.

10% Cash Contributions

8. A number of community-focused grants schemes accept contributions in kind as part of the match-funding for projects. In a typical case, community members would contribute the labour to build a village hall. This would be given a financial value as the community's contribution to a project, thus releasing cash from a grant scheme to buy the materials.
9. The main attraction of this approach is that it releases communities from the need to raise cash, whilst at the same time ensuring a high level of community input into the project. One option therefore is to change the criteria of the current Programme to allow in-kind as opposed to cash contributions.
10. The other option is keep the Programme as it is. The arguments in favour of this approach are that there has been little demand for this approach (although some demand may be hidden); the programme has only 5 months to accept new applications; projects funded to date generally already have a high level of community input; and this would be more expensive to administer, more so in officer time than having a significant additional cash cost.
11. Overall, we do not think that there is sufficient demand from communities to merit the changes to procedures over the remaining 5 months, and therefore recommend that we do not change the requirement for applicants to find 10% of the funds for their projects at this stage.

Consultation

12. The information and issues highlighted in this paper are the result of open and collaborative management across the CNPA, including staff responsible for each scheme meeting for a monthly review of all proposals and highlighting areas for improving our service. We have also taken into account feedback from customers as well as discussions with other public sector agencies.

Policy Context

13. The grants help deliver a number of goals within the Corporate Plan for 05-08.

Delivering Sustainability

14. On a project specific basis, all proposals that are submitted to us are developed with their sustainability in mind.

Delivering a Park for All

15. We have sought to publicise the availability of these grants widely and encourage a good uptake from across the Park and from all sections of the local communities. We

accept that this is a gradual process and are making every effort to proactively reach all potential community applicants. All projects are expected to demonstrate that they are inclusive.

Delivering Economy, Effectiveness and Efficiency

16. The Programme has been designed to deliver economy, effectiveness and efficiency by bringing together different funding sources around a broad range of areas within which the public sector in the area gives grants. We assure this emphasis through regular internal monthly coordination and review meetings with those concerned. In addition, we are building upon strategic partnerships with related public sector agencies, in the development, appraisal and implementation of project grants.

Implications

Financial Implications

17. We originally allocated £315,000 over two years from the CNPA budget - £155,000 in 05-06 and £160,000 in 06-07. We currently estimate that our spend for 05-06 will be about £50,000; and that in 06-07 it will be about £190,000.
18. The lower than expected spend overall reflects the fact that demand has been lower than expected as reflected in our estimate of the total number and value of projects we will support. The uneven spread between the two financial years is caused by the fact that many of the projects we have committed to, have yet to spend and claim their money.
19. These figures assume that we continue to require at least 10% cash contributions from applicants. If we begin to accept in-kind contributions, our spend this year could increase by up to £10,000; and we would need to find 0.1 FTE to develop and explain the criteria, and 0.1 FTE administrative support to manage the extra processing required.

Presentational Implications

20. This Programme has been well received by stakeholders, both customer communities and partner public agencies. Media coverage has been satisfactory, with some work still needed to ensure that funding bodies are mentioned in articles concerning projects.
21. The Grants Pack has been praised for clarity and simplicity of materials, despite some confusion over application forms for small and medium grants. While we have issued a further 100 or so since December, there is now sufficient awareness of the Programme and use of the web based materials to cater to customer needs.

Implications for Stakeholders

22. There are still funds available for community groups to access for projects, and we do not think that maintaining the 10% cash requirement is a significant barrier to them.

Next Steps

23. Later in the year, we will bring forward a paper reviewing the activity and impact of the two years of the Integrated Grants Programme.
24. Separately, we are beginning to consider the role of grants to third parties, including community groups, as a tool to deliver the Priorities for Action; and the possible role of the CNPA in leading, facilitating and running schemes.

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