



For Discussion

Title: Cairngorms Leader and Community Led Local Development Funding

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Purpose

This paper presents the latest delivery updates on the Cairngorms LEADER Programme and voluntary and charitable giving activities as managed by the Cairngorms LEADER Local Action Group Trust (Cairngorms Trust). This update focuses on the ongoing work to seek replacement LEADER funding to support Community Led Local Development (CLLD).

Recommendations

The Performance Committee is asked to review the delivery updates presented with this paper and consider:

- a) whether the programmes of activity are making the expected contribution to the Cairngorms NPA's agreed strategic outcomes;
- b) whether the delivery updates suggest any strategically significant impacts on the Cairngorms NPA's agreed performance objectives;
- c) whether any material impacts on the Cairngorms NPA's strategic risk management and mitigation measures arise from assessment of programme delivery.

Performance Dashboard

Performance Measure	Rating	Commentary
Finance: Deliver Cairngorms LEADER Programme, maximising use of resources made available	Blue (Complete)	Programme concluded 31 December 2021, with final project LEADER spend at 95% of allocation and total project expenditure at 168% of allocation after accounting for match funding levered into projects.



Performance Measure	Rating	Commentary
Audit: clean closure of LEADER Programme including monitoring and evaluation of performance indicators	Blue (Complete)	All project records finalised. No matters arising with respect to LEADER closure over last 8 months. Suggest this can now be closed as an element of performance monitoring.
Policy: secure future Community Led Local Development (CLLD) of equivalent value to LEADER Programme allocation	Amber	Final allocation of £320,000 secured from national allocation of £7 million for 2022/23. Initial allocation of £225,000 for 2023/24. No long term or multi-year commitment in place, and funding allocations to CLLD areas remaining well below previous LEADER Programme values.
Policy: Develop and implement voluntary giving mechanisms through Cairngorms Trust	Amber	This remains a challenging area of work. Cairngorms Trust is seeking to reinvigorate the stakeholder group advising on the development of voluntary giving approaches while continuing to trial and test approaches.
Finance: increase voluntary giving returns within Trust's future funding profile to a level which sustain costs of infrastructure and return meaningful surpluses for investment.	Red	Current level of returns over period of COVID restrictions well below targeted levels.
Policy: operation of charitable mechanism an effective element of NPPP priority delivery	Green	The capacity to work in partnership with an independent charity covering the Cairngorms has been a crucial element in successful delivery of Green Recovery Funding; in securing resource for CLLD made available over the last three years; and in community engagement in delivering local priorities. The use of the charity mechanism to establish the Cairngorms Youth Local Action Group as a delegated grant awarding body has received national prominence and now features as an exemplar approach in Scottish Government CLLD guidance for 23/24.



Strategic Background

1. The National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP) for 2022 to 2027 includes the following objective:
 - a. B7 Community-led Planning and Development: Communities have up to-date community action plans and are supported by a community-led local development funding programme, delivering the National Park Partnership Plan.

This objective has an associated action of: develop and administer a new community-led development funding stream, which is being taken forward through the work covered by this paper.
2. The Park Authority's Corporate Plan agreed by the board in March 2023 includes the following relevant strategic objectives associated with this aspect of the NPPP:
 - a. Direct activity by the Park Authority: act as accountable body or other supporting role as required to underpin delivery of CLLD in Cairngorms.
 - b. Indirect activity supported or resourced by the Park Authority: influence strategic development of national focus on and design of CLLD to secure an adequate level of resourcing which continues to focus on Cairngorms NP as an administrative boundary.
3. Strategic risks of relevance to consideration of performance of the programmes of work considered by this paper are:
 - a. A1: Resource risk remedial mitigation: Continuing to support "delivery bodies" such as Cairngorms Nature, Cairngorms Trust in securing inward investment.
 - b. A11.1 Strategic Risk on Resourcing: Role as Lead / Accountable body for major programmes (e.g. LEADER, Landscape Partnership) has risk of significant financial clawback should expenditure prove to be not eligible for funding, while CNPA carries responsibilities as employer for programme staff.
 - c. A11.2 Strategic Risk Resourcing: the end of major programme investments (Tomintoul and Glenlivet, LEADER) requires significant ongoing staffing to manage audit and legacy which the Authority finds difficult to resource.
 - d. A12.2 Strategic Risk on Resourcing: future community led local development funding currently delivered through LEADER, together with wider funding previously from EU structural and agricultural sources is lost



and creates a significant gap in our capacity to deliver against our development priorities.

- e. A28 Strategic Risk on Staffing: delivery of key outcomes is impacted by staff turnover, particularly in project teams.

Performance Overview: Delivery Against Strategic Expectations

4. What While the Scottish Government has approved a budget for CLLD in excess of £11m for the current year, only around £6.7m of that total has been released to date while Scottish Government officials assess the level of financial pressures across the breadth of the Scottish budget. This position, combined with a large rural area rejoining the CLLD rural funding landscape with a newly formed Local Action Group and taking an allocation from available 2023/24 funds, has resulted in an initial allocation of CLLD funding for Cairngorms which is lower for the current year than the 2022/23 allocation. The Cairngorms Trust and its support team were successful in securing additional allocations through the course of the previous year and we hope to be able to again secure further funding as the year progresses.
5. The allocations over this and last year, at £0.545m over a two year period still falls well short of average annual funding levels required to achieve the objective as securing CLLD funding levels equating to the previous LEADER Programme levels of between £2m and £3m over a 5 to 6 year period. The funding also continues to operate over a single financial year rather than a long-term programme, which constrains planning time and capacity for applicants to develop and refine project ideas. Nevertheless, the funding increase does support an increased scale in CLLD activity. This work has also allowed the Cairngorms 2030 Heritage Horizons Programme approach to community grant schemes to be developed and tested through “live”, funded approaches rather than solely through policy development.
6. The Trust continues to receive small value voluntary donations each quarter. Funding has been made available to the Trust to reinvigorate the voluntary giving scheme over the course of 2022/23 and 2023/24 with an objective of establishing whether there is potential for such an initiative to generate a level of return in the medium to long term which would become self-sustaining and provide meaningful levels of investment in the Trust’s charitable objectives. The Trust is



seeking to reinvigorate an advisory group of stakeholders established to advise on this area of its work.

7. The collective work of the Cairngorms Trust and Park Authority in this area of activity is to an extent leading the way for development of approaches to CLLD in Scotland. Our decision to incorporate the Local Action Group (LAG) some years ago as a Scottish Incorporated Charitable Organisation (SCIO) is now a highlighted aspect of good governance within the Scottish Government's policy documentation. Similarly, our decision to establish the Youth LAG, and to do so within the Trust's charitable structure, is also now reflected as an exemplar approach by Scottish Government's CLLD guidance.

Conclusions: Performance Overview and Matters Meriting Strategic Review

8. There are no matters of strategic significance which merit escalation at this time in the opinion of senior managers leading the Cairngorms NPA's linkage to the areas of activity covered by this paper and associated reports.

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