



## For Discussion

**Title: Cairngorms Trust and Community Led Local Development Update**

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### Purpose

1. This paper presents an update on the work of the Cairngorms Local Action Group Trust ('the Cairngorms Trust') and the collective work of the Cairngorms Trust and the Park Authority in Community Led Local Development (CLLD) activity.

### Recommendations

2. The Performance Committee is asked to consider:
  - a) Whether the programmes of activity are making the expected contribution to the Cairngorms National Park Authority's agreed strategic outcomes.
  - b) Whether the delivery updates suggest any strategically significant impacts on the Cairngorms National Park Authority's agreed performance objectives.
  - c) Whether any material impacts on the Cairngorms National Park Authority's strategic risk management and mitigation measures arise from assessment of programme delivery.

### Performance Dashboard

3. Assessment of the delivery of work being taken forward by the Cairngorms Trust and in development of Community Led Local Development (CLLD) within the Cairngorms National Park against key performance measures is presented in the following table. The overall assessment and risk rating against these measures is presented as compared to the previous rating last reported to the Committee in September 2024.



Performance Measure	Prior Rating	Current Rating	Commentary
Finance: Deliver Cairngorms LEADER Programme, maximising use of resources made available	Blue (complete)	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.
Audit: clean closure of LEADER Programme including monitoring and evaluation of performance indicators	Blue (complete)	Blue (complete)	All project records finalised. No matters arising with respect to LEADER closure over last 18 months. Some potential for EU audit remains until 10 years following programme closure.
Policy: secure future CLLD of equivalent value to LEADER Programme allocation	Red	Green	While no long term or multi-year commitment is in place, funding allocations to CLLD of £320,000 and £403,000 over prior two years approached previous LEADER Programme values at an annual equivalent level. Funding for 2024/25 to date has also now exceeded £400,000 with additional allocations of funding provided by Scottish Government late in the financial year.
Policy: Develop and implement voluntary giving mechanisms through Cairngorms Trust	Amber	Amber	This remains a challenging area of work both in terms of capacity to progress and results of initiatives. Cairngorms Trust has reinvigorated the stakeholder group advising on the development of voluntary giving approaches while continuing to trial and test approaches.



Performance Measure	Prior Rating	Current Rating	Commentary
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	Red	The Cairngorms Trust's revised business plan agreed by the Trust board in August 2024 targets increasing voluntary giving returns to £30,000 by 2026/27. A voluntary giving partnership group has been reformed to help drive this, including Park Authority, Trust, community and Cairngorms Business Partnership (CBP) representatives. However, tests of various voluntary giving mechanisms continue to highlight the difficulty of raising significant funds in a crowded voluntary giving sector.
Policy: operation of charitable mechanism an effective element of National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP) priority delivery	Green	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 2023/24. The Trust is now trialling a similar model with a black and ethnic minority lived experience group.



## Strategic context

4. 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.
5. This objective has an associated action to develop and administer a new community-led development funding stream.
6. 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 National Park as an administrative boundary.
7. Delivery of these NPPP and Corporate Plan actions to date is covered by this paper.

## Strategic risk management

8. Strategic risks of relevance to consideration of performance of the programmes of work considered by this paper are:
  - a) Public sector finances constrain capacity to allocate sufficient resources to deliver the corporate plan. A mitigation of this risk is to continue to support bodies such as the Cairngorms Trust to secure inward investment.
  - b) Risk of Cairngorms 2030 match funding not being secured. Anticipated CLLD funding to be secured by the Cairngorms Trust totalling £1.25 million is incorporated as match funding.



9. These strategic risks are declining at this time, given the funding position secured for 2024/25 budget and 2025/26 financial year allocations and improved level of CLLD financing which matches our target levels.
10. There are no matters of strategic significance which are assessed to merit escalation at this time in the opinion of senior managers leading the Park Authority's linkage to the areas of activity covered by this paper and associated reports. We recognise the current risk of a reduction in financial allocations for CLLD in 2025/26. This position remains in development and will continue to be monitored.
11. The Cairngorms Trust, working with the Park Authority as its Accountable Body, has successfully secured funding of over £400,000 in support of CLLD activities for each of 2023/24 and 2024/25. This builds on a total of £320,000 in 2022/23. Annual CLLD resources have reached levels of funding which approach the equivalent annual values available in previous multi-year LEADER programmes of between £2 million and £3 million over a five-to-six-year period.
12. There is some risk of these prior year levels not being achieved for 2025/26 while final allocations for the coming year remain to be confirmed, other than for resource support for staff time of officers which coordinate local CLLD programmes. Initial indications suggest a total allocation approaching £350,000 will be made available, although the funding to establish grant support to community projects is expected to be almost entirely capital funding for the coming year. As a consequence of the capital funding to be made available, there is a risk that CLLD funding from Scottish Government will not support the continued operation of the Youth Local Action Group (Youth LAG). Representations on this position have been made to the relevant policy teams within Scottish Government, while the Park Authority's budget, which will be presented to full board on 28 March, includes some provision to sustain key aspects of Youth LAG operations.
13. The lack of confirmed, or at least indicative, multi-year funding remains a key limitation in our support of CLLD activities. Community groups are not able to plan and develop their project proposals over the long term without facing the risks of finances not being available in future years. This acts to prevent support to significant 'step-change' projects in local communities.



14. The Trust continues to receive small value voluntary donations each quarter. The Trust has reinvigorated an advisory group of stakeholders established to advise on its work in development of voluntary giving schemes. This remains a very difficult area to develop. The Trust's business plan to 2027 targets an increase in donations to £30,000 each year by the end of the business plan period.
15. 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 Charitable Incorporated 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.
16. Around £75,000 has been spent annually over the last couple of years by the Park Authority and Cairngorms Trust in partnership, in support of the development and operation of the Youth LAG and to support the wider operation of the Cairngorms Youth Action Team (CYAT). This has covered coordinator costs of around £30,000 (a self-employed contract), a fund for distribution of grants, and meeting / residential costs supporting the engagement of the young people and development of the Youth LAG / CYAT, together with supporting the wider operational work of the CYAT as part of the Park Authority's learning and engagement activities.
17. The Trust is now trialling a similar model to that established with the Youth LAG with a black and ethnic minority lived experience group, working through a lived experience group to deploy a small initial grant fund totalling £6,500 to support projects within that community in the Cairngorms.

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