

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR INFORMATION

Title: LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP PROJECT

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Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to inform the Board about the outcome of our 'Expression of Interest' application to the Heritage Lottery Fund as part of the agreed Stage 1 application process for the Landscape Partnership Project.

Executive Summary

At the March meeting of the Board it was agreed that:

“the Cairngorms National Park Authority should submit a Stage 1 application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a Landscapes Partnership Project on October 1st.”

In order to kick start the process the Heritage Lottery Fund require potential applicants to submit an 'Expression of Interest' application which describes in general terms the scope of the proposed Landscape Partnership Project. An application was duly submitted and the Heritage Lottery Fund has made the following comments:

- (a) the area chosen is too large
 - (b) the Landscape Partnership Project process is being streamlined and a new process will be in place towards the end of this year
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LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP PROJECT – FOR INFORMATION

Introduction

1. Following the Board meeting an Expression of interest was completed and submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund. The application reflected 6 of the agreed priorities for action ie:
 - a) Integrating Public Support for Land Management
 - b) Conserving and Enhancing Biodiversity and Landscapes
 - c) Supporting Sustainable Deer Management
 - d) Providing High Quality Opportunities for Outdoor Access
 - e) Making Tourism and Business More Sustainable
 - f) Raising Awareness and Understanding of the Park
2. The lead partner would be the Cairngorms National Park Authority and an initial proposed partnership included:
 - a) Forestry Commission for Scotland
 - b) The 4 local authorities
 - c) The 3 Enterprise companies
 - d) Scottish Natural Heritage
 - e) Association of Cairngorms Community Councils
3. It was proposed that the project would be synthesised and delivered though a Steering Group reflecting the diversity of the area. It was felt that a LEADER+ type approach would be most suitable using the emerging new LEADER Group being set up to deliver the Scottish Executive's 'On the Ground' initiative (rather than set up yet another Steering Group).

The Heritage Lottery Fund Response

4. Following the submission of the 'Expression of Interest the External Funding Officer met with Heritage Lottery Fund staff including the UK Co-ordinator of Landscape Partnership Projects.
5. In principle The Heritage Lottery Fund staff was content with the above as an outline proposal.
6. However they did express serious concerns about the area covered by the application. Although it was stressed that whilst a pan-Park approach was preferred by the Cairngorms National Park Authority the area covered by any application would be confined to the Straths and Glens – ie Strath Don, Strath Spey, Deeside, and the Angus Glens. The Heritage Lottery Fund is anxious to target their limited budget into as small an areas a possible in order to make a real difference rather than seeing it 'lost' over a very wide area.

7. Heritage Lottery Fund staff intimated that an application on the current basis would be a “high risk strategy” and strongly advised against such a course of action. For comparison the Forest of Wyre Landscape Partnership Project covers an area of 2600 ha and the Isle of Bute Landscape Partnership Project covers an area of 19000ha. The area of the CNP is 380,000 ha and the Straths and Glens alone cover an area roughly one sixth of that ie 63,000ha.
8. One other significant point raised by Heritage Lottery Fund staff regarding the Landscape Partnership Project programme was that it was to be streamlined for the next round of applications in September. The Heritage Lottery Fund advised that it would be sensible for the Cairngorms National Park Authority to apply to the new programme which although delaying the application by 6 months would in fact result in a similar decision date. A series of workshops is being held over the summer and the Heritage Lottery Fund is strongly recommending that any potential applicant for a Landscape Partnership Project attends.
9. The amount of money available is also a real issue. At the last Heritage Lottery Fund Trustees’ meeting £15.4M was applied for out of a budget of £9m and some £12-20M was waiting in the wings for the next round. Indeed one Stage 1 pass project failed to obtain a Stage 2 pass – such was the demand and quality of projects.
10. Typically the Heritage Lottery Fund allocates some £8M per annum for all Landscape Partnership Project schemes in the UK.
11. HLF guidance as it currently stands would therefore require the Cairngorms National Park Authority to look for a part of the park on which to focus. The whole philosophy of the Cairngorms National Park Plan is to join up areas, join up communities and manage the park as a integrated landscape. In order to arrive at a single appropriate scale of landscape would require a considerable amount of work to ensure the various parameters were fairly applied. Choosing a major area of Caledonian pinewood would seem an appropriate choice. On the other hand one might for example choose a degraded landscape for a Landscape Partnership Project where the injection of funds would make a real difference both to the landscape but also to the community.

A Development Grant

12. In order to assist in the decision making process on the above there is, as part of the Landscape Partnership Project process, the opportunity to apply for a Development Grant of up to £50k over a 6 or 12 month period which may include employing a person to undertake the following work:
 - a) Building partnerships
 - b) Recording the landscape
 - c) Assessing the character of the historic landscape
 - d) Developing a landscape conservation strategy
 - e) Understanding the needs and interest of different groups

- f) Identifying training needs
 - g) Preparing specialist reports
13. The closing date for such an application would be 1st September with a decision given by July 2008.

The Emerging EU Funding Programme

14. The other aspect to be brought into the equation is the availability of the new EU funding streams of the Lowlands and Uplands and the Highlands and Islands ERDF Programmes to assist with the implementation which may complement or substitute for Heritage Lottery Fund monies. This will be better known in the early autumn but early indications are that the Lowlands and Uplands Programme will include priorities which address such opportunities as “new tourism products” including “wildlife/wilderness tourism and small scale tourism infrastructure”.
15. Similarly the Highlands and Islands Programme seeks “to maximise the economic and social benefits of tourism and the regions environmental and cultural heritage”.

The Next steps

16. Thus over the next few months the External Funding Officer will:
- a) Attend the Heritage Lottery Fund workshop on the new Landscape Partnership Project;
 - b) Pursue the possibility of securing an Landscape Partnership Project development grant of £50k;
 - c) Clarify the relevance of the incoming EU ERDF Programmes to our National Park Plan needs; and
 - d) Report back to the Board in September on a proposed way forward.

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