



## 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 Committee is asked to consider:
  - a) Whether the programmes of activity are making the expected contribution to the Park Authority's agreed strategic outcomes.
  - b) Whether the delivery updates suggest any strategically significant impacts on the Park Authority's agreed performance objectives.
  - c) Whether any material impacts on the 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 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 June 2023.

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.



Performance Measure	Prior Rating	Current Rating	Commentary
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 eight 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	Green	Red	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. However, funding for 2024 / 25 to date has been limited to £250,000 with a second phase of funding paused pending current Scottish Government budget review processes
Policy: Develop and implement voluntary giving mechanisms through Cairngorms Trust	Amber	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	Red	Current level of returns over period of Covid-19 restrictions and immediate aftermath of that remains below targeted levels. 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.
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.



## **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 NPPP.
5. 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.
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.

## **Strategic risk management**

7. 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 Community Led Local Development (CLLD) funding to be secured by the Cairngorms Trust totalling £1.25 million is incorporated as match funding.
8. These strategic risks are escalating at this time, given the recent funding restrictions notified by Scottish Government (SG).
9. Beyond highlighting escalation of existing recognised risks, 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.



## Supporting information

10. The Cairngorms Trust, working with the Park Authority as its Accountable Body, has successfully secured additional funding of over £400,000 in support of CLLD activities for 2023 / 24. This builds on a total of £320,000 in the prior year. 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.
11. However, there is some significant risk of these prior year levels not being achieved for 2024 / 25. The Cairngorms Trust is waiting on the outcome of a bid for £58,000 in support of the Youth Local Action Group's work and on a potential allocation from a second tranche of funding to support CLLD grant awards to community groups. Current funding totalling around £250,000 including cover for staff salaries has been received and available funds fully committed to support community led and generated projects. The current year funding level does at least remain in line with expected match funding levels for Cairngorms 2030 activities.
12. The lack of confirmed 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.
13. The most recent update presented by the Trust Manager to the Trust's board meeting of August 2024 is presented at Annex 1 to this report. This report gives a flavour of the recent activities of the Cairngorms Trust to Committee members.
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 has proven to be a very difficult area to develop and impacted significantly by the Covid-19 pandemic and the wider focus on recovery from that by communities and businesses in recent years. 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 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.

**David Cameron,**  
**Deputy CEO and Director of Corporate Services**