
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR INFORMATION

Title: UPDATE ON CAIRNGORMS LEADER PROGRAMME

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Purpose

This paper updates the Board on the development of the Cairngorms LEADER Programme for 2014 to 2020.

Strategic Context

Establishment of the Cairngorms LEADER Programme 2014 to 2020 and consequent delivery of the Local Development Strategy over that period contributes toward National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP) Strategic Outcome 1 – A sustainable economy supporting thriving businesses and communities, and the NPPP 5 year outcome that communities will become more empowered and able to develop their own models of sustainability. This work also completes NPPP work programme 4c – establish a Cairngorms LEADER fund from 2013 as part of the next LEADER programme.

The Cairngorms LEADER Local Action Group (CLAG) is also recognised as one of the key partners in delivery of Rural Development Priority 4 “Support communities through capacity-building specifically focussing on the most fragile communities to deliver transformational change” set out in the draft Corporate Plan 2015 to 2018, separately presented to this meeting of the Board for consideration.

Recommendations

The Board is requested to:

- a) Note the update on development of the Cairngorms LEADER Programme for 2014 to 2020;**

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Strategic Policy Considerations

1. The aim of LEADER is to increase the capacity of local rural community and business networks to build knowledge and skills, and encourage innovation and co-operation to tackle local development objectives. LEADER supports community owned actions with investment from the European Union. It is based on the principles of Community Led Local Development. It is part of the Scotland Rural Development Programme, which is a European investment programme for rural development in Scotland. In addition, LEADER links local action with European and Scottish Government priorities.
2. The Board has previously endorsed the Local Development Strategy and business case for delivery of the Cairngorms LEADER programme prepared by the CLAG, and agreed to act as the Accountable Body for Cairngorms LEADER with provision of £70,000 annual support toward the management of the programme.

Local Development Strategy Feedback from Evaluation Panel

3. Feedback from the Scottish LEADER evaluation panel on the CLAG's Local Development Strategy and business case was received on 14 December. Overall, feedback was primarily focused on matters of presentation, with some requests for additional information or further explanations on points of process and governance. There were no points of substance raised on the proposed strategic objectives of the LDS. The objective of the LEADER team is to resolve these various points of clarification by early March.

LEADER Timetable

4. We understand that following acceptance of the points of clarification, the CLAG will receive confirmation of its LEADER funding allocation and can commence delivery of the Strategy. We expect that the launch of the Cairngorms LEADER programme will be around June 2015.

LEADER Programme Priorities

5. The CLAG has agreed that the first two priorities for roll-out of the LEADER Programme in the Cairngorms will be:

- a) Theme 2: Grow the economy of the Park by strengthening existing business sectors, supporting business start-ups and diversification, and increasing the number of workers employed in the Park.
 - b) Theme 5: Protection and enhancement of the National Park landscape, wildlife and local heritage
6. These themes will form the priorities for the first two years of the programme, with the rationale that many of the other themes and outcomes will also be delivered indirectly through an initial focus on these two themes. Delivery against themes and outcomes will be monitored on an ongoing basis using the agreed monitoring and evaluation framework, with future decisions on priorities taken on the basis of the evidence of achievements made across the Local Development Strategy outcomes.
7. The full range of themes and outcomes in the Local Development Strategy can be found at: <http://www.cairngorms-leader.org/userfiles/file/draft%20lds%20and%20business%20plan/140930%20Cairngorms%20LDS%20Final.pdf>

Development of National LEADER Programme

8. The Cairngorms LEADER Team has been drawn on fairly heavily to assist in development of Scottish Government's national LEADER Programme. Our LEADER Manager, Alice Mayne, and LEADER Supervisor, Janette MacLeod, in particular have been heavily involved in developing the Co-operation and Information Technology workstreams within the national programme. Janette has also been seconded to Scottish Government for 2 days per week over the final quarter of this year to assist in the development of technical guidance to be used nationally by all Local Action Groups. David Cameron has also been involved in the development of a Service Level Agreement to operate between Scottish Government and all Accountable Bodies.
9. The support offered to the Scottish Government team will hopefully help progress national initiatives as quickly as possible and hence support the opening of local LEADER programmes.

CLAG Development

10. Following various open and focused recruitment activities, the CLAG has now secured 10 members drawn from:
- a) Association of Cairngorms Communities;
 - b) Cairngorms National Park Authority;

- c) Individual business people, including some cross-representation of Cairngorms Business Partnership and the Cairngorms Economic Forum;
 - d) Land Management interests including Scottish Land and Estates;
 - e) Scottish Natural Heritage, including cross-over with SRDP;
 - f) Skills Development Scotland
11. In terms of equalities, the current representation of the CLAG is 6 male and 4 female.
12. At the time of writing, a further 2 potential candidates have been identified and will be meeting with CLAG members at the next meeting on 20 March.
13. In the lead up to opening of the programme, we are currently identifying key training and development activities to undertake with CLAG members, for example in the fields of State Aid, and Charitable Regulations in the context of the incorporated charitable entity (Cairngorms Local Action Trust) being established.
14. We have also run a very successful partnership meeting with representatives of various organisations involved in the economic development sector. This has helped further refine the CLAG's niche in delivery of economic development and diversification under theme 2 of the Local Development Strategy.

2007 to 2013 LEADER Programme Closure

15. In addition to the development work on the new LEADER Programme, the team have also successfully managed the file review, closure and Scottish Government Monitoring and Accreditation Unit review of the previous Cairngorms LEADER Programme. All projects within the 2007 to 2013 Cairngorms LEADER Programme have now been paid. The team is currently in the process of finalising archiving of the programme.

Strategic Risk Management

16. Support for the development and implementation of a new LEADER Programme for the 2014 to 2020 period is a key mitigation for the strategic risk identified by the Authority that "communities within the National Park do not ... engage in delivering the NPPP" (strategic risk register, risk #8).
17. Similarly, the work acts as a key mitigation to strategic risk #16, that community capacity and leadership is not adequate to fully engage in delivery of the NPPP.

18. The strategic risk that the climate change agenda is not fully adopted into development and delivery of policies and projects also has direct mitigation through the inclusion of climate change as a key strand of activity for delivery through the LDS.
19. Furthermore, in supporting the CLAG's pursuit of the delivery of the six themes set out in the Local Development Strategy, there is a potential for a number of further more indirect mitigations to the Authority's strategic risks, in particular:
 - a) #17: role of the National Park and importance of it is not recognised by young people (key strand of LDS is to improve engagement with young people as an under-represented participant group within LEADER in the Cairngorms)
 - b) #18 and #28: "public may not be fully signed up for a low carbon economy" (low carbon is again a specific strand of activity identified within the LDS)

Implications

20. There are no new implications arising from the development of LEADER in the Cairngorms to report at this time.

Success Measures

21. Final approval of the LDS and LEADER Business Plan by the Scottish Government as the Managing Authority for LEADER in Scotland remains the first success measure for this programme.
22. The level of allocated funding to the Cairngorms LAG in comparison with national budgets and previous allocation levels will represent a further measure of success.
23. The CLAG has developed a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework to measure the outputs gained from LEADER investment in the Cairngorms, monitor progress made against the LDS themes and also establish the contribution made to the national outcomes for LEADER established by Scottish Government. The key indicators included in this programme monitoring and evaluation framework, supplemented by project specific indicators, will provide the means of measuring the success of the programme.

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