

Cairngorms 2030 Communities Fund Panel

Reference document

This document brings together questions raised by the Panel with the responses provided by Involve and the Park Authority. It acts as a reference you can return to at any point in the process. It is updated after each session.

Information and slides from previous sessions can be viewed online:

<https://cairngorms.co.uk/communities-fund-resources>

If there is a question not answered here, or if anything in this document is unclear, please contact Involve or the Park Authority and we will respond as quickly as we can. We will bring this information to future sessions.

Cairngorms 2030 Communities Fund Panel Reference document	1
1. Community priorities and the funding landscape	2
2. Fund management and logistics	4
3. Who lives in the Cairngorms National Park	5
4. Cairngorms 2030 programme	5
5. Our panel process and decision making	8
6. Participatory process (what we are designing together)	9
7. Language and terminology	10
8. Further reading and resources	12

1. Community priorities and the funding landscape

Question	Response
<p>What does the research say about what people want?</p>	<p>An overview of the community action plans can be read online. These set out priorities identified by communities across the National Park area. View them here: cairngorms.co.uk/ourwork/community-action-planning</p>
<p>What is currently funded and what is not? What are the gaps in the funding landscape by geography, age, and other characteristics?</p>	<p>The Park Authority can provide data on funds it directly manages, but does not hold statistics from other funding bodies covering the area.</p> <p>All currently available funding via the Park Authority can be seen at cairngorms.co.uk/living-and-working/funding-opportunities</p> <p>The Park Authority does not currently gather applicant data on protected characteristics. It can identify which funded groups specifically target under-30s or work with people with protected characteristics, but cannot report on specific demographic data across the full funding landscape.</p>
<p>What are the failed proposals and why? What kinds of projects consistently struggle to get funded?</p>	<p>This is a tricky one to answer, as with a variety of funding options, a project type that struggles in one fund may succeed in another, and the Park Authority are one funder in a very complex space.</p> <p>Projects that span multiple years often struggle to get funding, and funding for “core costs” like a project officer are also difficult.</p> <p>What is harder to quantify is those projects that don’t even get in contact with us, because of either real or perceived barriers.</p> <p>One identified gap is a light-touch, risk-accepting grant process for early-stage organisations or individuals.</p>
<p>Are there particular gaps in</p>	<p>Local authorities provide youth work as a</p>

youth work funding?	<p>discretionary service and may be able to speak to provision in specific areas.</p> <p>There is an explicit widening participation element within Cairngorms 2030, and a 10% EDI allocation within the fund.</p>
Can we have information on the geographic distribution of people and funding? Which places have fewer applications and why?	<p>A map of towns and villages in the National Park with further information on each can be found at cairngorms.co.uk/map. Geographic funding data broken down by community area has been compiled by the Park Authority. Population data from the most recent census is included in section 5 of this document.</p>
Is there a risk that well-organised or resourced communities will capture a disproportionate share of the fund?	<p>Yes, this is a real and important risk. It is one of the central design challenges the Panel will need to address in Sessions 5 to 7 when it works on eligibility and decision-making. The fund design should actively consider how to make the process accessible to communities with less capacity, fewer contacts, and less experience of applying for funding. This may include lighter-touch application routes, proactive outreach, or support for applicants who need it.</p>
If funding processes already exist in the Cairngorms, why design a new one?	<p>Existing funding processes were largely designed by public sector organisations based on their own experience. This process is designed from the experience of communities themselves, including people with little or no previous experience of community funding. Two smaller-scale pilots in the Cairngorms, the Youth LAG and Park for All, both independently arrived at the same process: application form, review panel, funding distributed. The lessons from those pilots informed the greater investment of capacity and time in this larger programme.</p>

2. Fund management and logistics

Question	Response
What are examples of how funding decisions are made and scored?	The Park Authority's grant process flowchart is available to view at the session. We will make this available on the resources page.
What is the minimum grant amount that is administratively workable?	<p>Generally, funding bodies set a minimum in the region of £500 to £1,000. This is primarily for capacity reasons on both sides.</p> <p>However, very small grants can be high-impact for early-stage organisations and this is a recognised gap in the current landscape.</p> <p>If the Panel wished to include a small grants pot, the Park Authority has indicated a maximum of £50,000 for that pot and is willing to continue that conversation.</p>
What guidance is available for applicants and grantees on applications and reporting?	Application guidance and reporting requirements are available on the resources page. These will be developed further as the Panel agrees the fund design.
What flexibility is there in the National Lottery Heritage Fund rule that projects over £10,000 must provide three competitive quotes? In rural settings, could one quote with good reason be accepted?	This question has been referred to the National Lottery Heritage Fund directly. A response will be shared with the Panel when received.
Can public money support a business that is struggling financially?	Public money cannot support a for-profit business simply to keep it operational. However, if an organisation is trying something new or different, or if a business is investing in genuine innovation rather than covering ongoing losses, there may be a case. Legacy and sustainability form part of most grant application and scoring processes.

3. Who lives in the Cairngorms National Park

The table below shows the age distribution of National Park residents from the most recent census. The makeup of the Communities Fund Panel has been designed to reflect this distribution alongside a range of other factors including geography and background.

Under 16	16 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65 to 74	75+
2,619	1,048	1,586	1,942	2,550	2,958	2,628	2,208
14.9%	6.0%	9.0%	11.1%	14.5%	16.9%	15.0%	12.6%

For a full map of towns and villages in the National Park:

cairngorms.co.uk/map

4. Cairngorms 2030 programme

This fund sits within the Cairngorms 2030 programme. Anything funded with the £1m must have a connection to the programme themes. We are guided by an overarching vision of people and nature thriving together. Read more about C2030 programme: <https://cairngorms.co.uk/what-we-do/cairngorms-2030>

Question	Response
What is being done to reach net zero across the Cairngorms, and how far off is the target?	Reaching net zero across the National Park is a long-term transition rather than a single action. Progress depends on coordinated activity across land use, transport, communities and business. The Park Authority is working with Small World Consulting to establish a carbon baseline and track progress, with an updated assessment due by the end of the programme. Based on current modelling, net zero is within reach provided activity continues at scale. Progress is being driven through large-scale landscape action, including peatland restoration and woodland expansion to store carbon, alongside work to reduce emissions through more sustainable travel and

	<p>everyday choices. The Communities Fund plays an important supporting role by enabling community led projects that contribute to reducing emissions locally. This may include practical improvements and behaviour change initiatives that help people adopt lower carbon lifestyles.</p> <p>Taken together, landscape scale action and community led change will deliver the shift required, ensuring progress towards net zero is both system wide and locally owned.</p>
<p>What techniques are farmers being supported to use? How is awareness being built between farms and communities?</p>	<p>The Cairngorms 2030 future farming programme supports land managers to transition towards more sustainable, climate-resilient and nature-positive approaches. This is delivered through advice, training, pilot activity and funding. Current activity includes support for improved soil and grassland management, low-input farming, habitat and biodiversity work, and more integrated land use that balances food production with nature recovery. One innovative approach being tested is the use of GPS-enabled collars for cattle grazing, which can help manage livestock movement without physical fencing, supporting habitat connectivity. The programme also helps farmers explore business resilience and diversification, and runs events and demonstrations to connect communities with farming activity. Further information including an interview with farming partner David Toovey is available on the Park Authority website.</p>
<p>How is the programme reaching a broad cross-section of people, including older people, children, and people with different mobility needs?</p>	<p>Accessibility across different ages and abilities is a core principle of Cairngorms 2030. As an example, the cycle-friendly Cairngorms project is improving access to cycling for different groups, including bike buses for children, community rides, one-to-one support for disabled riders, and practical bike maintenance sessions. Through the SPIN project, bike safety check sessions have been delivered across eight Strathspey villages, up to 50 bikes have been</p>

	<p>refurbished, and secondary schools in Kingussie and Grantown-on-Spey have received support to maintain their bike fleets. Infrastructure improvements in development include community cycle hubs, on-street e-bike charging, bus stop enhancements, and HiBike facilities in Aviemore. The programme is also working with partners to improve transport access and reduce isolation for people facing barriers due to mobility, geography or income. This is an area the Panel may wish to consider further in the fund design.</p>
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5. Our panel process and decision making

Question	Response
Will we be agreeing and making decisions separately or as a whole group?	Decisions are made by the Panel as a whole group where possible, then using votes where necessary. The facilitation is designed to ensure every voice is heard before decisions are called.
As we develop a more comprehensive understanding through the process, can we revisit a decision if new information comes to light?	The process is designed to build knowledge in a deliberate sequence so that decisions are made at the right moment. If significant new information emerges that materially changes the picture, Involve and the Park Authority will consider how to handle that with the group.
What do we do when there are trade-offs or competing priorities? Can the Park Authority give us a steer, or tell us when there is no steer available?	Where trade-offs arise, the Park Authority will be clear about what is fixed and what is flexible. Where there is no steer, that will be stated explicitly. The facilitation is designed to support the group to work through competing priorities rather than avoid them.
How will the strongest voice be prevented from winning the argument?	This is a facilitation responsibility. Involve uses structured approaches throughout the process to distribute participation: silent individual activities before group deliberation, explicit space for less-supported views, and gradients of agreement rather than straight votes. The group agreement sets shared expectations about how we work together.
How are we going to absorb the amount of information that needs to be understood?	The sessions are designed to introduce information progressively rather than all at once. Each session builds on the last. Reference materials including this document are available to read at your own pace between sessions. If anything is unclear, please flag it and we will address it. Within the group, we recognise that people will have different preferences on the amount of information and detail they want to view.

6. Participatory process (what we are designing together)

Our task is to design a new participatory funding process. This is a process where the people affected by how the money is spent are given power to decide how it is allocated. This might look different to other approaches to funding. The links below are provided to give a starting point for you to explore what already exists.

Case examples and comparable participatory funding processes

Involve will present more information in Session 4. These will be selected to show a range of approaches.

Participatory Budgeting (PB) in Scotland

<https://pbscotland.scot>

Participatory Grant Making (PGM)

<https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/insights/grantmaking-practice/grantmaking-practice/participatory-grantmaking-practice>

Participedia - Case Examples

https://participedia.net/search?selectedCategory=case&tools_techniques_types=manage

See examples tagged as 'manage and/or allocate money or resources'

Self-directed learning:

Course on participatory budgeting and grant making (Fife College)

<https://www.fife.ac.uk/courses/browse-courses/participatory-budget-and-grant-making/>

This course is fully-funded if you are currently volunteering or working in the community, please make sure to state this in the Supporting Information page of your application

7. Language and terminology

Word or phrase	Meaning in the context of this fund
Carbon baseline	A measurement of how much carbon is currently being emitted or stored across a given area, used as a starting point for tracking progress towards net zero.
CLLD	Community Led Local Development gives local communities the power to tackle their own local challenges.
CLV	Community Led vision fund was established in 2022 by the Park Authority in partnership with Cairngorms Trust, using Scottish Government rural communities funding. The fund supports inclusive community-based activity to meet Scottish Government priorities. Annual fund by financial year.
CYAT	Cairngorms Young Action Team are aged 16 – 30yrs from all over Scotland, who want to get involved in the future of the Cairngorms National Park
CYLAG, Youth LAG	Aged 16 to 30 these young people form a full sub-group of the Cairngorms Trust Local Action Group. They design and distribute funds for young people and young-person led activity in the Cairngorms. They also form a network with other YLAGs from across Scotland. Their membership is drawn from the Cairngorms Youth Action Team.
EDI	Equality, diversity and inclusion. In the context of this fund it refers to ensuring the fund is designed and delivered in a way that is accessible to and reflective of the full range of communities in the Cairngorms, including those that are often overlooked by funding processes.
EOI	Expression of interest. A project idea, normally including a budget and some

	structure, that precedes a full application. It allows for comment and advice before a full application is invited. It's a useful tool to help the project without a large amount of work from an applicant being wasted on a full application.
In-kind	In-kind describes costs contributed to a project free of charge. This could be paid staff time donated by the applicant, expertise provided without charge, a space or asset lent to the project at no cost, or a contribution from a partner organisation.
Intervention rate	The value of a grant against the total project cost. Example: a grant of £50k in a £100k project would be a 50% intervention rate
LAG	Local Action Group. A LAG is a decision-making body made up of community members and local stakeholders who decide how a fund is distributed in their area. The Youth LAG was a pilot participatory funding process run in the Cairngorms before the Communities Fund.
Land manager	Someone who manages land, which in the Cairngorms context typically means farmers, crofters, estates, and foresters. Land managers make decisions about how land is used, which affects habitats, water, carbon and biodiversity across the National Park.
Match funding	Funding that the project has in addition to any grant we might award that will help to complete the total value of the project
Nature positive	An approach to land use or development that leaves nature in a better state than it was found. This goes beyond avoiding harm to actively improving habitats, biodiversity and ecological health.
NLHF	National Lottery Heritage Fund. NLHF is providing the £1 million that the Panel is designing this fund to distribute. Some of the rules governing how the money can be used come from NLHF's grant conditions.

Participatory funding	A participatory funding process is one where people affected by how money is spent are given power to decide how it is allocated. We recommend you explore the links in section 5 and we will explore further in session 4.
Peatland restoration	Peatland is a type of wetland that stores large amounts of carbon. When peatland is damaged or drained, it releases carbon into the atmosphere. Restoration involves rewetting and stabilising degraded peatland to stop carbon loss and allow the habitat to recover.
SCIO	Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation. This is the legal form for Scottish charities that provides limited liability and corporate status.

8. Further reading and resources

- Session materials, slides and outputs:
cairngorms.co.uk/communities-fund-resources
- Community action plans:
cairngorms.co.uk/ourwork/community-action-planning
- Map of the National Park: cairngorms.co.uk/map
- Cairngorms Trust funding information
<https://cairngormstrust.org.uk/apply-for-funding/current-funds/>