

Cairngorms 2030 Communities Fund Panel

Post Session 6 – Survey Responses

The purpose of this survey was to capture your individual views on key elements that still need to be developed for the fund. Your responses will inform the discussion at Session 7. You were asked to choose between a number of options on specific questions, and also given open text space to share any wider reflections, feedback, or questions about the Panel process.

The survey was open from 23 to 27 May.

11 out of 17 members of the panel responded.

Unedited and anonymised survey responses are [available to view](#).

Summary of your responses

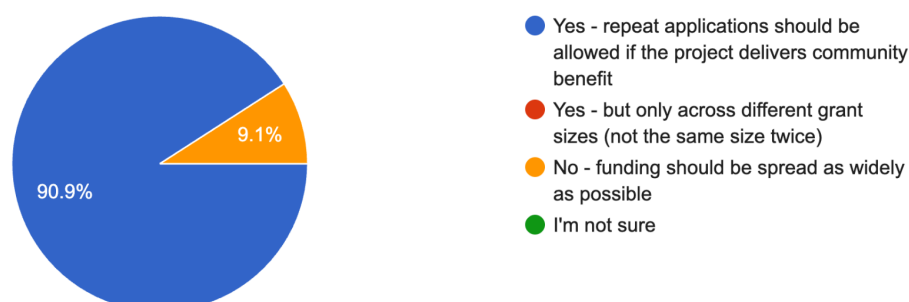
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Eligibility & repeat applications

There was near-unanimous agreement (10 of 11) that **repeat applications should be permitted**, provided a project delivers genuine community benefit. One respondent preferred spreading funding as widely as possible by restricting repeat applications. Several noted the importance of not being too prescriptive with eligibility criteria, while offering clear guidance to applicants.

Should applicants be able to apply to the fund more than once?

11 responses



Comments on eligibility more broadly

- **Excluding large organisations:** One respondent felt the fund should not be available to governmental bodies or large NGOs, preferring it to support individuals, smaller organisations, and community groups.
- **Age of applicants:** One respondent stated that applicants should be at least 16, though they noted this would not exclude younger people, who could have an application submitted on their behalf.
- **Transparency:** One respondent called for open publication of all applications, both successful and unsuccessful, as part of a transparent process.
- **Avoiding over-prescription:** There was a view that eligibility criteria should not be overly prescriptive. Guidance on who is most likely to be eligible is preferable to rigid rules, so that less typical applicants are not ruled out but may simply have a lower chance of success.
- **Match funding and eligibility:** One respondent suggested match funding could be a requirement tied to specific eligibility criteria; another described 'preferred but not essential' as appropriate wording.

Match funding

Opinion was split, with no clear consensus.

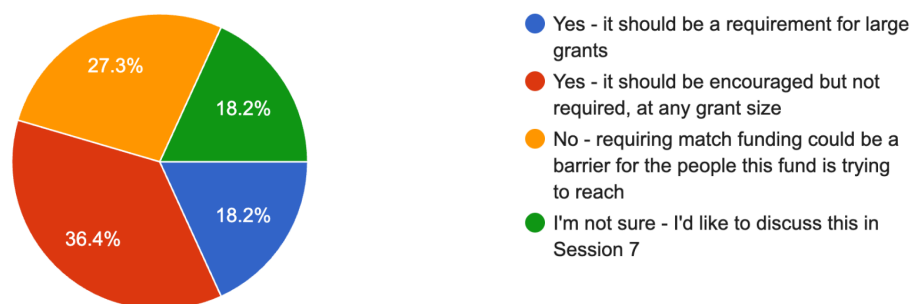
Breakdown of views

- **4 respondents** supported match funding being encouraged but not required at any grant size
- **3 respondents** opposed match funding, citing it as a potential barrier for under-resourced applicants. One respondent who opposed match funding named "dehumanisation of the funding process" as a concern.
- **2 respondents** felt it should be a requirement specifically for large grants
- **2 respondents** were undecided and wished to discuss it further

Several noted that match funding could signal commitment from applicants and improve the likelihood of success, while others were concerned it would exclude the very people the fund is trying to reach.

Do you think match funding has a role in this fund?

11 responses



Meaningful community benefit

Respondents described meaningful benefit in varied ways, reflecting a range of priorities.

Themes

- **Tangible benefit to people and place** – projects that make a noticeable difference to those living in, working in, or connecting with the Cairngorms, whether that benefits one person or a whole community

- **Legacy and lasting impact** – developing and passing on skills and knowledge; improving access to people, places, and facilities, or addressing an unmet need in the community
- **Alignment with Cairngorms 2030 themes** – sustainability, wellbeing, inclusivity, travel, energy, climate, and the arts
- Projects assessed on what they demonstrably deliver, with **clear and tangible evidence of benefit**
- Benefit that is felt across a **range of communities and demographics**, not just the larger settlements like Aviemore and Braemar

Other views

- One respondent described meaningful benefit simply as bringing people to the Cairngorms for work or pleasure
- Community benefit should be validated through discussion and research, including surveys

Geography in decision-making

Respondents broadly agreed geography matters, though views on how to address it differed.

Themes

- Broad concern that smaller communities are under-represented and may lack capacity to access funding without support
- The outreach and application stage was seen as a critical point to build geographic diversity
- Geographic spread of the £1M should be tracked and evidenced as a measure of success

Other views

- Tiered model with local panels divided by area, feeding into a central panel
- Representation from each ward of the park at both application and decision-making stages
- A single diverse central panel is more practical than coordinating localised input at decision-making stage
- The value of making the full £1M visibly available to any deserving project across the park, as a signal of geographic openness

- There was one dissenting view that geography should not feature in decision-making at all. If the public have a heavy vote, more populous areas will dominate regardless of project merit. This respondent preferred decisions based on merit, with limited public input as a steer

Panel membership going forward

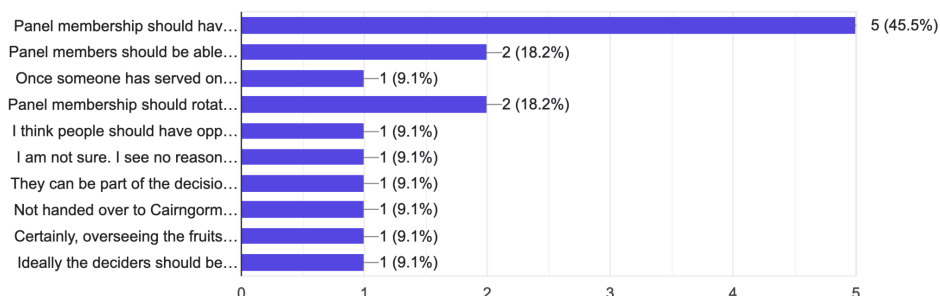
The most common view (5 respondents) was that **panel members should have the option to remain involved in decision-making**.

Other views

- Two supported **regular rotation** to bring in fresh perspectives
 - Linked points:
 - if deciders are paid, restrict repeat service; if unpaid, no restriction needed
 - but rotation should include people from within and outside the main Cairngorms communities (such as Aviemore and Braemar)
- Two felt members should return only in a **non-voting, advisory capacity**
- **Panel members should step back** entirely after serving, to avoid bias and negative public perception; also expressed concern that some individuals might use ongoing involvement to unduly influence others
- Decision-making should not be handed to CNPA for filtering or awarding
- Panellists for medium and large grants should be **paid and selected for demographic representativeness**
- Future panellists should have relevant skills and no conflict of interest with applicants.

What role do you see for members of this panel on an ongoing basis? Please select all that apply.

11 responses



Decision-making priorities

Themes

When weighing up applications, respondents most commonly pointed to:

- **Community impact and benefit** – breadth, depth, and longevity
- **Legacy** – whether the project will continue giving back
- **Geographic spread** – avoiding the fund being concentrated in larger, better-resourced communities
- **Equity and access** – benefits to marginalised groups, people who live in the park, and those who may not otherwise be able to access it
- **Evidence and feasibility** – clear delivery plans, measurable impact
- **Alignment with Cairngorms 2030 themes**

Other views

- The fund should prioritise the biggest benefit to people or an area, not necessarily the largest number of beneficiaries
- Community decision-making should come after applications have passed initial CNPA and/or local panel screening, not as a first-stage filter
- One respondent proposed a structured yes/no rating system modelled on HR recruitment criteria
- Environmental sustainability and carbon impact should be an explicit priority
- People who have stood for elected roles (community councils, CNPA ward representatives) have demonstrated accountability and should have a role in decision-making

Application information requirements

Respondents continue to broadly support a **proportionate approach**, with requirements scaling up by grant size. They want to keep the process accessible and human, particularly for smaller grants. Shared views were:

- **Small grants:** Basic personal details, a clear description of the project, how it benefits the community, and amount requested. Flexible formats welcomed (written, video, voice note)
- **Medium grants:** As above, plus a timeline, evidence of organisational structure, and some indication of prior funding or project experience
- **Large grants:** Full business plan, detailed budget and spend profile, constitution or equivalent, named responsible individuals, and evidence of how the project is distinct from existing provision.

Reporting and accountability

Themes

Respondents supported reporting requirements that are **proportionate**. They also supported keeping reporting accessible and avoiding unnecessary bureaucracy, especially for smaller grants.

- **Small grants:** a short written or video testimonial; simple evidence of implementation
- **Medium grants:** financial accounts with receipts; a brief running diary or progress log
- **Large grants:** staged progress reports (e.g. at 6, 12, and 24 months), with more prescriptive requirements; some form of audit

Other views

- one-to-one catch-up meetings with one or two panellists as a progress check-in
- quarterly reports, with panel members invited to see the finished result
- agree upfront on lump sum vs instalments, who manages the money, and the monitoring cadence
- no requirement to obtain quotes for work should apply at medium grant level

What success would look like

Themes

- Funding spread **geographically** across the whole national park, not concentrated in larger settlements
- A **wide variety of project types**, including some unexpected or innovative applications
- Projects still **running and delivering benefit** years after the grant
- **Skills and knowledge passed on** within communities
- More people **feeling confident to apply** in future rounds

Other views

- the £1M should be fully spent
- people and businesses improving and bringing ideas and visitors to the park

- the fund as a positive showcase for CNPA's community-facing approach and Cairngorms 2030 goals
- carbon-zero impact, with community surveys and interviews used to evidence outcomes
- full transparency – all applications, successful and unsuccessful, published openly
- What failure would look like: little real benefit delivered; most of the fund spent in a few geographic areas; money going primarily to recipients who had already received grant funding before

What would put applicants off

Themes

- A sense that the fund **isn't for them** – need for clear worked examples showing the range of eligible projects
- **Overly complex or bureaucratic** application processes
- **Match funding requirements**
- **Lack of support** from CNPA staff through the process
- Not knowing the fund exists

Other views

- feeling the qualifying criteria don't fit, or that applying isn't worth the effort
- doubt about whether a project would succeed or whether they could see it through
- feeling the idea isn't good enough to receive funding
- too much information required upfront
- CNPA filtering and awarding grants