

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

STRATHARDLE – AGRICULTURAL DAMAGE DUE TO DEER IMPACTS/COMMUNITY BASED INTERVENTION AND TRIAL

Introduction:

Cairngorms National Park Authority (“the Park Authority”) invites Expressions of Interest (Eoi) from those interested in receiving public grant funding support for the provision of deer processing larders in Strathardle, Perthshire.

Background:

As part of Cairngorms2030 (C2030) development phase West Grampian Deer Management Group (WGDMG) developed a Strategic Land Management Plan (SLMP) aimed at addressing climate change and biodiversity loss.

The SLMP process identified serious agricultural damage taking place on farmland along Strathardle due to incursions of large numbers of red deer resulting from an increase in population, particularly in East of Tilt range within WGDMG, together with displacement due to land-use change. Helicopter based counts carried out by NatureScot in March 2022 identified Strathardle average of 28 deer/sq. km. (10 landholdings, totalling 120 sq. km. and 3340 deer), with local densities as high as 47 deer/sq. km.

Damage is taking place across infrastructure (fences, stone dykes), over-grazing on in-bye grassland and forage left out for domestic stock. Loss of grazing has resulted in forced reductions in cattle and sheep numbers. There may be a relationship between increased deer numbers and the health condition of the sheep flock.

Post-Brexit it has become more difficult to gain access to the traditional markets for Scottish wild venison in France and Germany. Game dealers have been unable to process the volume of carcasses, the dealer price of wild venison has plummeted. An increased cull without the ability for more local processing capacity/outlets would lead to carcasses being buried underground: an unsatisfactory situation from a deer welfare, ineffective use of locally sourced food supply and public perception viewpoint.

C2030 delivery phase is designed to provide focused interventions and trial approaches aimed at achieving outcomes that address climate change and biodiversity loss as well as delivering wider community benefit. The Park Authority in its lead role in delivering the C2030 Programme is therefore inviting expressions of interest from any individuals, businesses or organisations interested in engaging in solutions to these issues along the lines of the proposed trial outcomes set out in the following section.

Proposed Trial Outcomes:

The Park Authority, in conjunction with WGDMG, proposes a community driven outcome including the public grant financing of community 'hubs' in the form of deer larders, ideally at each end of Strathardle, where farmers and land managers could bring their culled deer for processing.

Outcomes are sought that:

- Address agricultural damage through supporting a reduction in deer densities in this geographic area.
- Provide a mechanism for wild venison to enter the food chain.
- Donate some venison to community/charitable outlets.
- Contribute towards climate change and biodiversity loss mitigation through supporting reduction in deer densities in the area.
- Deliver wider community benefits which may include for example: new jobs, upskilling (training) of staff, increased access for land managers and businesses to deer carcass processing facilities to help address environmental/agricultural damage caused by deer, improved inclusivity, tourism benefits, contributions to public health and wellbeing, climate conscious communities, donations or other benefits direct to communities.

Expression of Interest should cover:

The focused intervention and trial, and public grant financing is intended to run till end 2030.

In summary, your proposals should establish the grant support required to initiate and run your planned activities; how your plans will be sustainable over the period to end 2030 without the need for additional grant support; and the community benefits that your plans will deliver.

- Organisational structure (name, location, who would own/maintain the larder/infrastructure, legal status of applicant/grant recipient e.g. individual, limited company, charitable entity).
- An outline business case setting out your proposed solution with costings covering capital cost, supply chain cost, operational costs of your proposals, and plans for any income recovery to secure delivery of your proposals over the trial period.
- An indication of the grant funding sought. A capital cost of c£65,000 per installed larder is envisaged.
- Clear indications of the community benefit(s) that you plan to deliver.

Please note the request at this stage is for expressions of interest and outline business case/proposals to allow informed conversations to take place with you on your

proposals and to help our staff provide feedback to you in developing a full proposal and grant application. Interested parties should submit proposals by Friday 14 June to Mike Cottam at the address provided below.

Further information on the Cairngorms 2030 (C2030) Programme is available at:
<https://cairngorms.co.uk/working-together/cairngorms-2030/>

Further information on the C2030 Project that will support grants awarded under this initiative is available at: <https://cairngorms.co.uk/working-together/cairngorms-2030/#landscapes>

The Park Authority will make grant awards to those proposals which are assessed as establishing the most effective outcomes for supporting increased capacity for processing deer carcasses and delivering venison into markets, and that are supported by robust, risk managed, value for money business cases with clear demonstration of wider community benefit.

Subsidy Control Act 2022 (SCA).

Public grant funding will be classified as a subsidy under the Subsidy Control Act 2022. Any respondent to this EoI needs to confirm that they can accept a grant as a subsidy within their three-year Minimum Financial Assistance allowance of £315,000.

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