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Investing in a Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Future

Horizontal Themes Guidance

Green Infrastructure Fund

Guidance for Applicants

July 2016



Disclaimer

Applicants should be aware that as the Green Infrastructure Fund is a new programme, the guidance will be reviewed as the programme evolves and therefore may be subject to change. The European Union and Scottish Ministers reserve the right to amend the National Rules and SNH reserves the right to amend the published guidance during the period of the programme. Decisions to fund Projects will be based on the availability of funding, how well the project matches the Green Infrastructure Fund priorities and its contribution to outcomes as part of the whole Strategic Intervention. These priorities may change during the course of the Strategic Intervention to take into account gaps in meeting priorities in previously funded Projects and not to fund at all. The Scottish Government reserves the right not to award any support at all under this programme.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose

The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) is an outcomes and results-driven investment programme. It is designed to ensure that investment results in defined impacts for communities. The 2014–2020 ERDF strategy and programmes are designed around strategic interventions. These are large scale programmes of work which will be managed by Lead Partners – organisations who have a demonstrated capacity to manage strategic interventions and comply with the audit responsibilities for the funds. SNH is the lead partner for the Green Infrastructure Strategic Intervention, which is being delivered through the Green Infrastructure Fund.

The purpose of this document is to set out the high level outcomes we are seeking to achieve through delivery of the Green Infrastructure Fund. It describes the vision we are trying to achieve. In doing so, we have drawn on SNH’s strategic intervention Lead Partner application to The Scottish Government, and have reviewed drivers and policy for each of the outcomes.

1.2. Background

Under the 2014-20 Programme, we intend to deliver a minimum of 15 substantial projects across Scotland that improve or create at least 140 hectares of urban green infrastructure by 2023. SNH has been approved as Lead Partner for the period up to 2018, during which time we intend to deliver a minimum of 8 projects. A mid-term review in 2018 will take place before further approvals to 2020.

The Green Infrastructure Strategic Intervention will be delivered through a Challenge Fund. A summary of how the Challenge Fund will operate is provided in the [Challenge Fund Overview and Summary](#).

1.3. Summary

The Green Infrastructure Strategic Intervention will create better places and enhance the quality of life of urban dwellers, regardless of social, economic or cultural background or physical ability, by improving the quality, accessibility and quantity of green infrastructure in our major towns and cities. The Green Infrastructure Strategic Intervention is targeted at urban areas in Scotland that have a deficit of good quality greenspace, and suffer from multiple-deprivation and an excess of vacant and derelict land. Communities in these areas will benefit through the improvement and creation of green infrastructure that will help to deliver successful multi-functional places, address inequalities, provide opportunities for better health and support sustainable economic growth.

Our ambition is to raise people’s satisfaction with the quality of their green infrastructure in urban areas, bringing it more into line with satisfaction levels at the national average. Green Infrastructure includes the ‘green’ and ‘blue’ features of the built environment that can provide benefits and contribute to the quality of life in urban areas.

The objectives of the Green Infrastructure Strategic Intervention are to:

- improve the quality, accessibility and quantity of green infrastructure in major towns and cities;
- provide increased and better opportunities for people to improve their health and well-being;
- address inequalities through the creation and improvement of greenspace for communities in areas of multiple deprivation and/or for communities living in proximity to vacant and derelict land;
- provide increased opportunities for people to experience and value nature and promote greater use of greenspace by local communities; and
- contribute to economic regeneration, providing benefits to people and businesses by investing in green infrastructure.

The Horizontal Themes of environmental sustainability, equal opportunities and social inclusion will be delivered through the selection and implementation of the projects as well as SNH's management of the Green Infrastructure Strategic Intervention and Fund. The following guidance aims to help applicant consider how to build in the horizontal themes through design of their applications.

2. Environmental Sustainability, Social Inclusion and Equal Opportunities

2.1. Outcome

The following is the outcome associated with the Horizontal Themes, as presented in the [Blueprint for Green Infrastructure](#):

People feel confident and empowered to use their greenspace and to be involved in, or influence, its management.

The environment in which people live and the prosperity that they enjoy have significant impacts on their health and well-being. The way greenspace and places are planned, managed and used ensures that they provide a wide range of environmental benefits to local communities and helps them feel more secure and resilient. Barriers to advancement economically, socially and in outdoor workplaces are reduced for disadvantaged groups.

All sectors within communities feel empowered and confident to use their local greenspaces. Greenspaces and places are designed and managed so that everyone feels welcome and that there is something for them. All sections of local communities have opportunities to get involved with and use their local greenspace in ways that suit them. The whole community feels more in control of their local environment, more influential and better connected.

Enjoying the outdoors has become more common and is part of our culture. Communities are involved in management of their local greenspace, contributing to developing an outdoors culture.

2.2. Requirements

Project applications should set out how you will deliver against and monitor, evidence and report on the Horizontal Themes. You should not only consider what policies, procedures and resources will be in place, but also explain how these will make a positive difference to the outcomes for different groups represented in the local community.

Environmental Sustainability

The aim for this horizontal theme is to promote the sustainable use and conservation of Scotland's environmental assets by enhancing the role of environmental sustainability in economic and social development.

Improving the quality of local communities' environment, supporting actions which reduce the adverse impacts of climate change and improving the biodiversity of the urban environment, are at the heart of the Green Infrastructure Strategic Intervention. Delivering improvements in local greenspace and to local green infrastructure will help communities and neighbourhoods become more sustainable through improvements to:

- local physical environments and consequently increasing environmental benefits and services;

- local economic performance through increased place attractiveness, and individual confidence and skills; and
- improvements to communities' social coherence and identity.

Projects should explain how environmental sustainability has been taken into account in the design and delivery of the application. This should cover the following:

- Resource efficiency – particularly improving the efficient and ethical procurement and use of energy, water, and raw materials, and increasing application and use of renewable energy;
- Environmental impact – particularly the ways in which the application contributes to the enhancement or protection of the environment and seeks to minimise negative impacts (such as pollution); and
- Local sourcing – particularly support for local sourcing initiatives and activities aimed at diversification within the local economy, as well as the efficient use of local public transport and local community transport services.

The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Scottish Project Programme (Land Use Consultants, 2013) concluded that the Green Infrastructure Strategic Intervention would have positive effects for environmental sustainability across all SEA topic areas as result of improving urban green infrastructure. In particular, the assessment considered that there would be:

- strong positive effects on biodiversity and habitat networks;
- strong positive effects on people's health and well-being by improving the quality of and access to greenspaces and the urban environment;
- positive support for adapting to the adverse effects of climate change and mitigating air pollution through the provision of greenspace and opportunities for active travel;
- positive effects on flood management;
- positive effects on soil by restoring derelict land;
- positive effects on cultural heritage and landscape through improvements to the urban landscape setting; and
- positive effects on the sustainable use of natural resources through the support for ecosystem services that improvement of green infrastructure would bring.

There is increasing evidence of the link between greater physical activity - in the form of green exercise - and better physical & mental health and in turn to a more productive workforce. Improving health and social outcomes by encouraging use of the environment for cultural activity has indirect effects on employability and the local economy, including reduced demand on health and social care services.

Increased community engagement and involvement may lead to increases in spiritual or religious enrichment, cultural heritage (and appreciation of it), recreation and tourism, and aesthetic experience. Engagement with nature may also lead to understanding and appreciation of the benefits nature gives us and the role functional ecosystems play in sustaining life and human well-being.

Therefore, we will make a positive difference to environmental sustainability within urban areas through selecting projects that will:

- create and enhance greenspace and networks of green links;
- improve the quality and accessibility of greenspace;
- improve ecosystem value, restoring habitat and creating wildlife corridors;
- restore vacant and derelict land for greenspace use including community food growing;
- create urban greening of streets;
- create green infrastructure to provide natural solutions to manage surface water and mitigate flood risk; and/or
- use events, volunteering and green skills training to engage local communities with green infrastructure and the natural environment.

We will ensure that applicants have appropriate environmental policies and that sustainable construction and procurement processes and policies promote locally sourced materials and services. Where applicable, applicants will be required to show how proposed projects comply with the Public Bodies Duty under Part 4 of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act.

Social Inclusion

This horizontal theme aims to ensure that economic growth and tackling exclusion go hand in hand to help people overcome multiple barriers to securing their wellbeing and realise their full potential. The selection of projects will be targeted at applications that benefit areas of multiple-deprivation and areas that have limited access to good quality greenspace, and projects must provide evidence of these benefits as part of their application.

Scotland's most deprived areas suffer from multiple negative outcomes. People living in areas of multiple deprivation often have poorer quality environments and therefore reduced ecosystem services, which can have a disproportionate impact on the poor, deprived and vulnerable in society. Poor and degraded local environments are associated with health inequalities, and poor quality local green spaces have an adverse impact on people's perceptions and use of the outdoors. The results of the Scottish Household Survey show that people who live in the most deprived areas are more likely to have less local green space close to where they live, are less likely to visit the outdoors or local green space and are likely to be the most dissatisfied with their local green space. They are therefore less likely to experience the acknowledged benefits of spending time outdoors for physical and mental health and well-being. These same areas often suffer from low economic growth and the poor quality environment can be a barrier to attracting inward investment.

Investing in green infrastructure provides a wide range of benefits including improving people's health, creating better places, supporting economic growth and providing opportunities for community engagement in their local environment. The environment in which people live and the prosperity that they enjoy have significant impacts on their health and well-being.

Increasing ecosystem function and resilience increases the ecosystem services or benefits that communities derive from their environment. Improving the environmental function in areas of concentrated multiple deprivation will therefore reduce inequalities. For example, it may reduce the probability of negative health outcomes of vulnerable people as a result of poor air quality, higher temperatures, and the probability of damage to property from

flooding. Including users of green infrastructure in the management of their area is likely to increase social cohesion and make the green infrastructure project more successful.

Good quality green infrastructure can make a significant lasting contribution to improving the health and well-being of communities by:

- increasing physical activity levels by providing places for play, exercise and sport;
- providing somewhere to relax, unwind and take time out from the stresses of a busy world;
- bringing us back in touch with the natural environment;
- creating opportunities for people to meet and interact socially; and
- creating a sense of purpose by providing opportunities for volunteering, community participation, skills training or learning.

An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) was undertaken for the Green Infrastructure Strategic intervention overall, and one will also be carried out for each project. The EqIA is currently being updated to reflect social inclusion work which has been carried out, and will be accompanied by an Equalities Action Plan, setting out specific actions to be addressed as part of delivery of the Green Infrastructure Fund.

Therefore we will make a positive long lasting difference to social inclusion in urban areas through selecting projects that will:

- target areas of multiple deprivation and areas that have limited access to good quality greenspaces;
- improve health and well-being by promoting participation and improving the quality of greenspace close to where people live;
- engage with communities at the design stage and involve them right from the start;
- continue to engage with local communities through events and provide opportunities for volunteering and training to promote the use of and participation in local greenspaces.

Reducing inequalities can be achieved by unlocking the potential of people and the land, supporting sustainable growth, stronger community resilience and focusing action and resources on communities that are disadvantaged and suffering from multiple negative outcomes. Projects should therefore, where appropriate:

- demonstrate the social inclusion aspects of your project;
- describe how your project will reconcile a commitment to social inclusion with a focus on improving the competitiveness and attractiveness of the programme area; and/ or
- describe how the project will aim to reduce inequalities between the least advantaged communities and the rest of society.

Equal Opportunities

This horizontal theme aims to increase opportunities for all groups, and to prioritise and adapt support for groups facing particular disadvantages to participation.

As SNH and almost all of the delivery partners are anticipated to be public sector organisations, the development and delivery of the Green Infrastructure Strategic

Intervention will consider the role of individuals with protected characteristics as part of carrying out the Public Sector General Duty in relation to eliminating unlawful discrimination.

SNH has undertaken an EqIA for the Green Infrastructure Strategic Intervention, which identified positive effects across all topics and as a whole will provide significant benefits for local communities and protected characteristics groups. This EqIA is currently undergoing an update, with work already carried out to improve accessibility to the Green Infrastructure website in conjunction with the impact assessment. An Equalities Action Plan will also be produced, which will detail actions to be addressed by the Green Infrastructure Team in order to increase opportunities for all groups.

As Projects are developed in more detail, the impact of interventions on equalities issues will become more apparent and applicants will be expected to produce their own EqIAs which will be more specific to their local communities. We will require evidence of the applicants' EqIA in the selection of Projects, and this should be specific to the application.

The United Nations sees community participation as an important tool in its Sustainable Development Goals – particularly Goal 5 Gender Equality and Goal 10 Reduced Inequalities. Good community engagement is an important element of the Green Infrastructure Strategic Intervention. Adhering to best practice will ensure that protected characteristic groups (such as young mothers) which commonly are missed in consultation will be empowered to express their needs. As a result they are more likely to value and use the greenspaces improved as part of the Green Infrastructure Strategic Intervention.

The nine Protected Characteristics specified within the Equality Act 2010 are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion and belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Projects should have a positive impact on all members of society as green infrastructure created in local communities will be accessible to all regardless of age. Project applications are encouraged to provide local people and groups with protected characteristics with opportunities for training, skills development and volunteering. For example, young people are the largest unemployed group in Scotland today. We will look for applications to offer young people opportunities to engage in projects for training, apprenticeships, skills development and volunteering.

Projects are required to be scoped and designed to be as inclusive as possible, to increase participation in training and volunteering opportunities by disabled people and ensure that there is equal opportunity to access and participate in greenspaces.

Gender Mainstreaming should be reflected in the development and delivery of Projects. Applicants will be encouraged to ensure that engagement of female participants is

considered to develop more balanced gender equality in land-based skills, including considering the particular needs of lone parents.

Applicants are encouraged to involve representatives from different racial or religious groups in the local area, to ensure that the green infrastructure established is culturally relevant, helps to break down barriers between communities and offers opportunities to reflect local cultures.

Projects should:

- describe how you have taken account of, and reflected, the diverse needs of the target group(s) in the development and delivery of your project. It is also important to demonstrate how those needs have been identified ;
- describe any particular focus given to one or more of the nine protected characteristics: (i) age (ii) disability (iii) gender (iv) sexual orientation (v) transgender (vi) race and ethnicity (vii) religion and beliefs (viii) marriage and civil partnership (ix) pregnancy and maternity, and describe any potential barriers to access or participation and state how you intend to overcome these barriers.

We are looking for applicants to provide strong evidence of the above points, specific to the project they are proposing. Evidence must be provided of which protected characteristic group will be impacted by the project, how they has been identified, and what elements of the application will specifically target and aim to provide benefit for these groups. Applications which present having 'no impact' on protected characteristics as a positive will be viewed less favourably than those able to demonstrate the above.

3. Delivering against the Horizontal Themes

3.1. Applicants

It should not be necessary to design specific measures to deliver the Horizontal Themes. However, the design of project applications should take into account the need to deliver against the Horizontal Themes. For example, ways in which you might mainstream the Horizontal Themes with your application are:

- In providing the evidence of need for your Project, you should set out how the application will address particular social or environmental problems, and in particular how delivery of the Project will help tackle the wide range of potential inequalities;
- In planning how you engage with your communities over green infrastructure improvements, you should consider how you will engage harder to reach and excluded groups, and ensure that you take account of particular needs of target groups within the community; and
- In considering the physical green infrastructure improvements and their multiple benefits, it is helpful to consider how the application will meet best practice on environmental sustainability, such as climate change adaptation.

These examples are not definitive and we will look for innovation in and justification for the approach taken.

3.2. Lead Partners

Lead Partners are required to develop an annual sustainable development action plan outlining their objectives for environmental sustainability and how they plan to achieve these. This will be monitored and reported against as part of the European Structural Funds Audit.

Lead Partners are required to develop an annual equality action plan outlining their objectives for equality across the relevant protected characteristics and how they plan to achieve these. This will be monitored and reported against as part of the European Structural Funds Audit

SNH is committed to promoting diversity and equality for our employees, the users of our services and in our role as participants in caring for and enjoying Scotland's nature. We welcome diversity and value and build on the differences individuals bring.

If you need the guidance, application and claim forms in a different format or language, and do not have the resources within your organisation, please let us know and we will arrange for their translation.

Gaelic is an important part of our heritage and we will have a Gaelic version of our website. Gaelic versions of our publications are available on request. We do not have fluent Gaelic speakers in our Green Infrastructure Fund team at present. We want every application to be treated equally, so we will only accept applications in English.

4. Monitoring and Reporting

Please see the Green Infrastructure Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Guidance for advice on how to plan for monitoring and reporting against the Horizontal Themes. This should be integrated into your Project Monitoring and Evaluation Plan.

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