



European Union



The Scottish Government

Riaghaltas na h-Alba

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European Regional Development Fund
Investing in a Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Future

Overview and Summary

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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Purpose

The purpose of this guidance is to set out broadly how the Green Infrastructure Strategic Intervention will operate. The Strategic Intervention will be run through a Challenge Fund – The Green Infrastructure Fund – by providing funding through a competitive selection process for eligible activities for a small number of strategic projects. Further detailed guidance will be made available on our website when the Green Infrastructure Fund opens for submission of applications.

Why?

Urban green spaces or green connections can be thought of as “green infrastructure” because simple things like trees, greenspaces and watercourses, in addition to their ecological function, can provide valuable services to people. Improving green infrastructure enhances shelter, access and travel options, sustainable urban drainage, pollution mitigation and food production – as part of a wider urban ecosystem. Working in this way, our urban environment can host enhanced habitats for wildlife and create attractive places for people, which can in turn bring benefits for people’s health and wellbeing.

The Green Infrastructure Strategic Intervention will improve the quality of our urban fabric through investment in green infrastructure, based on an understanding of the way the urban environment works and the benefits it brings to people, and involving people in decisions about their environment.

The Scottish European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) [Operational Programme](#) identifies that the Green Infrastructure Strategic Intervention will help to make Scotland’s cities more attractive and environmentally sound places in which to live and invest. It contributes to thematic Objective 6 “preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency”.

European Structural and Investment Funds provide European Union Member States with financial assistance to deliver the EU2020 strategy of Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth, increasing economic activity and employment across the EU.

European Structural and Investment Funds comprises:

- European Regional Development Fund;
- European Social Fund;
- Cohesion Fund¹;
- European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (Scottish Rural Development Programme);
- European Maritime and Fisheries Fund.

¹ Scotland does not currently receive Cohesion Fund assistance.

The 2014-2020 ERDF is structured around specific themes known as Strategic Interventions and administered by Lead Partners. The Green Infrastructure Strategic Intervention has been approved with Scottish Natural Heritage as the Lead Partner.

What?

The Green Infrastructure Fund aims to deliver a minimum of 15 projects across Scotland that improve or create around 140 hectares of urban green infrastructure by 2023. SNH currently has approval as Lead Partner for the period up to 2019, in which time we intend to deliver a minimum of 8 projects. For the purposes of this intervention, 'urban' is defined as per the Scottish Government's urban/rural classification and includes large urban settlements with a population of 10,000 people or more.

Our aim, through implementing the Challenge Fund, is to create better places that enhance quality of life for urban residents by improving the quality, accessibility and quantity of green infrastructure in Scotland's major towns and cities. Creating and improving multifunctional urban green infrastructure will contribute to delivering successful places, addressing inequalities and promoting better health and wellbeing.

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 wellbeing;
- 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;
- contribute to economic regeneration, providing benefits to people and businesses by investing in green infrastructure.

These high level objectives are explored further in the Green Infrastructure Blueprint.

Projects funded under the Green Infrastructure Strategic Intervention will reflect the thinking in Scottish Government's "[Green Infrastructure: Design and Placemaking](#)" national guidance in order to maximise the benefits that green infrastructure can provide. Applications will be expected to show good fit with national and local policy and strategy.

To receive funding, applications must be of a strategic scale with a significant impact. Total project eligible costs must be a minimum of £650,000; there is no maximum level, but we will be looking for a suite of projects across urban Scotland.

Green Infrastructure projects must:

- improve the quality and accessibility of greenspace through creation of new, additional functionality in existing or new natural and semi-natural habitats; and/or
- improve the environmental quality and performance or increase provision of ecosystem services through creating or retrofitting urban greening, particularly where water and

urban climate management benefits are integrated and links between greenspaces are established or re-created; and/ or

- support greater participation in use or management of greenspace, increase physical activity, volunteering or understanding of nature among a more diverse range of the population by providing new accessibility to greenspace, developing a wider range of greenspace uses, or supporting participation, involvement and promotion activities; and/or
- increase economic attractiveness and health benefits by reducing the impact of derelict land and increasing opportunities for active recreation; and
- reduce inequalities by supporting disadvantaged groups to benefit from greenspace and green infrastructure by targeted improvements, activities and engagement.

Priority will be given to projects which:

- benefit larger urban areas, i.e. settlements with a population over 10,000;
- address an identified need (through a strategy, Masterplan, Charette or similar);
- demonstrate a significant impact;
- benefit areas with high levels of multiple deprivation;
- remediate areas of vacant & derelict land.

We expect all projects to engage with local communities as an integrated part of their activities in order to promote the participation of people in greenspace. Our aim is to raise people's satisfaction with the quality of green infrastructure in urban areas from 74% to 80% by 2023, bringing it more into line with average satisfaction levels (currently 82%).

In designing projects, it will be essential that consideration be given to how each element contributes towards delivering the planned outcomes. Delivering against the horizontal themes (social inclusion, equal opportunities and environmental sustainability), and deploying meaningful community engagement, will be core to successful applications. Innovation is also core to ERDF funding and we will be looking for projects that can demonstrate innovation through design, implementation and/ or monitoring and evaluation.

The ERDF is outcomes-orientated, and therefore it is not possible to be explicit about which activities will be eligible or deliver the agreed outcomes for any specific project. All projects will be context-specific. However, the following Table provides examples of the types of activities we may fund for successful Green Infrastructure projects. The outcomes are explored in the Blueprint.

Table 1 Examples of Activities

Examples of Activities

- Create accessible new multifunctional greenspaces in areas of identified deficiency;
- Improve public greenspaces identified as being of poor quality;
- Use integrated habitat networks to bring nature into urban areas, improving ecosystem function, restoring habitats and creating wildlife corridors;
- Enhance or restore the biodiversity of public parks or nature reserves as part of improving a network;
- Develop green corridors that connect habitats within the urban area and from urban to peri-urban areas;
- Urban greening of streets, including planting street trees to provide shade and cooling,

improve ambient air quality, reduce the rate of run-off, and link greenspaces;

- Planting street trees and vegetation, greening buildings;
- Surface water management, river restoration and mitigation of flood risk through naturalised sustainable urban drainage schemes that provide treatment of surface water run-off and help manage urban diffuse pollution, and improvements to the permeability of the public realm e.g. green roofs, green walls, rain gardens, ponds, swales;
- Restore water courses, e.g. re-naturalise river corridors to improve the physical habitat, amenity and biodiversity value;
- Improve the quality and accessibility of green networks – e.g. greening public realm links between publicly accessible green spaces, e.g. creating incidental green spaces, remediate and restore vacant and derelict land in urban and peri-urban areas to green end use;
- Improve greenspace for exercise, health and wellbeing, active play facilities, promoting the use of greenspace for physical activity;
- Local food production in urban areas e.g. allotments, community gardens, orchards;
- Community engagement and involvement through events, volunteering and green skills training.

Note that we will consider land purchase only exceptionally, where it is a small, integral part of the Green Infrastructure project and would not delay implementation of the main deliverables. We will consider each case separately in consultation with the Scottish Government.

How?

The Green Infrastructure Strategic Intervention will operate as a Challenge Fund, providing a contribution of up to 40% of eligible costs in Lowland and Upland Scotland and 50% in Highlands and Islands. The overall Strategic Intervention is valued at £15,000,000 to 2023, with up to £8,250,000 to be spent by 2019 against total eligible spend of a minimum of £20,625,000.

Our Project and Funding Officers will be available during the support period to provide advice on eligibility, although they will not be able to give you detailed advice on development of your projects. Please note we will close this support period a week before the closing date to allow us to prepare for the selection phase.

Assessment of applications will be completed in two broad stages: eligibility and then quality assessment. We will select the best projects, based on a range of agreed assessment criteria, which meet the Green Infrastructure outcomes, and deliver value for money. We will be looking for a balance of outcomes across the Green Infrastructure Strategic Intervention, as well as evidence of need, geographic spread, innovation, deliverability, fit with strategy and policy and a clear framework for monitoring, evaluating and reporting on results.

The ERDF is a fund of last resort, so you will need to have identified all the necessary match funding in advance, even if some is pending approval. We cannot accept the following as match funding: European funding of any kind; corporate and private sector funding; and in-kind contributions. Match funding for successful applications will need to be confirmed before approval to start is given. It should be noted that additional funding for the activities supported by ERDF after approval will reduce the ERDF contribution proportionately, so

additional funding needs to be associated with an increase in budget or for something not supported by ERDF.

Note that if your costs reduce, the ERDF contribution will reduce accordingly. For example, if you apply for £600k against £1.5m eligible costs (40%), but your actual eligible costs end up as £1.3m, ERDF funding will be reduced by £200k giving you a grant of £400k.

When?

We intend to run the Green Infrastructure Strategic Intervention through a number of Challenge Fund rounds. At present, SNH has been approved as Lead Partner up to mid-2019, and we expect to continue this role, subject to the mid-term review planned to take place in 2018.

The following table (Table 2) is indicative only and will be subject to review of our processes and programme performance, demand by applicants and the quality of applications during early rounds. Please note that the financial end date for Phase 1 is December 2018 regardless of which Round you apply to.

Table 2 Indicative timescale for the Green Infrastructure Strategic Intervention

Phase	Round	Activity	Date
1	1	Open for applications	15 January 2016
		Deadline for applications	1 April 2016
		Decision	June 2016
	2	Open for applications	June 2016
		Deadline for applications	31 October 2016
		Decision	January 2017
	3	Open for applications	February 2017
		Deadline for applications	April 2017
		Decision	June 2017
2	1	Open for applications	June 2018
		Deadline for applications	August 2018
	2	Open for applications	April 2019
		Deadline for applications	June 2019

Table 3 provides an indicative planned timetable for the first application round to the first claim point and should be used as a guide only. SNH reserves the right to amend this timetable.

Table 3 Indicative timetable for Round 2 Green Infrastructure Fund

Stage	Date	Activity
Applications and support	01 June 2016 – 24 October 2016	Open for submission of applications Support meetings
Closing date	31 October 2016	Deadline for applications
Assessment and selection	November 2016 – January 2017	Assessment panel meets Scrutiny panel meets Managing Authority acceptance
	January 2017	Intention to approve (Procurement process can start at applicant's own risk)
	February 2017	Implementation meeting

		Contract agreement
	Late February 2017	Final authorisation by the Scottish Government
	Early March 2017	Approval to Start issued (Work must not start before approval issued)
	April 2017 onwards	Delivery of approved projects
	Mid June 2017	First Quarterly report and claim
	Mid August 2017	First payment

This timescale will be subject to review and is likely to change as we progress through the assessment and selection steps. We will keep applicant organisations informed of any substantive changes to the timetable, but recognise the necessity of achieving spend in time for December 2017 payments.

The Approved Purposes of the project must have been achieved by the end of December 2018. Annual monitoring of results will be required up to 2023 and data retention to 2030.

Who? Eligible Applicant Organisations

Before submitting applications for support, organisations must first establish whether they are eligible to apply for funds. If you are not already a Registered Organisation and think you could qualify, please contact us and we will discuss requirements and next steps.

Applicant organisations are responsible for all aspects associated with implementation, monitoring and reporting on projects. This includes application submission, acceptance of grant, project implementation including cash-flow management, submission of claims, monitoring and reporting progress, monitoring and verification visits and the retention of project documentation for the prescribed period. This includes records confirming that any procurement complied with the ERDF procurement guidance² and maintaining a full audit trail vouching expenditure incurred and defrayed. Reclaim for defrayed costs of ineligible activities or State Aid breaches would be made against the applicant organisation. Such responsibilities are onerous. Organisations therefore require significant and sufficient administrative and financial capacity.

There are two main categories of eligible applicant organisations as follows:

- **Public Sector**
- **Voluntary or Charitable Organisations** - While these may be eligible to apply directly for funds, careful consideration will be given to the nature and capacity of organisations to carry out projects. In certain circumstances, organisations may require a 'sponsor' to vouch for the applicant, accept contingent liability for the project and, crucially the grant and ensure proper implementation, reporting and accounting.

The following are not eligible:

- **Private Sector** - This may be taken to be organisations established and operating for profit where these profits accrue to shareholders, partners or sole traders. This

² <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Business-Industry/support/17404/EuropeanStructuralFunds/ProgrammeDocumentation/Publicprocurementguidance>

includes companies acting in the public interest (e.g. privatised former public utilities, Abellio, Network Rail).

Further information

The Green Infrastructure Strategic Intervention application form and guidance will build on and comply with the Scottish Government's current guidance and documents on the [Scottish Government European Structural Funds web pages](#). The National Rules and the guidance on these pages is a good place to start planning your application.

These three documents may be of use to you:

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0048/00487277.pdf> - National Rules - Please bear in mind that the National Rules covers guidance for both ERDF and ESF. Our guidance will be specifically aimed at what is eligible for the Green Infrastructure Strategic Intervention.

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/2014/working/wd_2014_en.pdf - ERDF - Monitoring & Evaluation guidance

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0048/00485792.docx> - Project application form – please note we will **not** ask applicants to complete this form, but we will include all of the questions in our own forms which are available to view on this website from January 2016.

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Scottish Natural Heritage
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba

All of nature for all of Scotland
Nàdar air fad airson Alba air fad