



European Union



The Scottish Government

Riaghaltas na h-Alba

EUROPE & SCOTLAND

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

Conflicts of interest policy and guidance for applicants

Green Infrastructure Fund

Guidance for Applicants /
Grantees

September 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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Conflicts of Interest Policy

It is an EU requirement that none of our processes are compromised by a conflict of interest.

To ensure we are compliant with EU legislation and also with Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) Internal Audit, all members of the Green Infrastructure team and the Performance Management Board will complete Declaration of Interest (DoI) forms as part of the assessment and selection process for the Green Infrastructure Fund.

In addition to the annual SNH Conflict of Interest updates (which is a corporate requirement), the Green Infrastructure team will complete DoI forms for Support and Assessment Phases (one per person involved per Project whether there is a conflict of interest or not) at the following junctures:

- each time a Project and Funding Officer is allocated to give support and advice to a potential applicant;
- once for all other Green Infrastructure team members during the Support Phase;
- at the start of assessment, before moderation and before Scrutiny Panel meetings – for all panel members, advisors and members of staff involved;
- any member of staff involved in monitoring or claims / payments to awarded projects who has not already completed a DoI form.

Completion of a DoI, whether or not there is a conflict of interest, ensures conflicts of interest were not forgotten about or considered. Having the DoI form gives a clear decision-making trail for audit purposes.

All SNH staff understand that if they breach the conditions covered by the SNH Conflicts of Interest policy, they will be liable to SNH's disciplinary procedures.

Each DoI form will be filed, logged and kept until 31 December 2030. The Green Infrastructure Audit and Compliance Officer will also review the DoI forms and ensure they are linked to the relevant staff's internal SNH record if there is a conflict.

Scrutiny Panel members must declare any interest in any application no later than the start of the Panel Meeting. If the Scrutiny Panel or Performance Management Board takes any decisions which could reasonably be seen as giving rise to a conflict of interest, principally over grants to organisations, but also any commercial relationships, the Chair of the meeting makes sure at the outset that disclosure is made and that the member withdraws, if necessary, while the relevant item is discussed. Or, if acceptable, the member can remain in the meeting but does not do or say anything that encourages, supports or promotes the case.

Guidance as to what constitutes a conflict is covered by the SNH policy but in principle it is common sense. A conflict of interest is a set of circumstances that creates a risk that professional judgement or actions regarding a primary interest (SNH) will be unduly influenced by a secondary interest. The test we will apply is to ask whether a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably consider that such an interest could influence our actions or decisions. If in any doubt, we will always err on the side of caution and declare it. Examples might include family or close friend connections, ex employer etc. There is no need to declare an interest if it is so remote or insignificant that it could not reasonably be taken to fall within this test. For the purposes of this policy a conflict of interest is an actual, apparent or potential conflict of interest

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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