



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

Customer Care Statement

Guidance for applicants

Green Infrastructure Fund

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. Purpose

The Green Infrastructure Fund is managed and administered by the Green Infrastructure Fund Team within Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). This Customer Care Statement is aimed at organisations that are delivering, or are thinking about delivering, projects using ERDF Green Infrastructure Fund funding. It sets out what you can expect us to do for you.

We believe that good customer care means our joint investment in Green Infrastructure is more likely to be successful. We welcome feedback, both positive and negative, as a way to improve.

2. Green Infrastructure Fund Operating Principles

Our principles are fairness, transparency and equality of opportunity for applicants. This means that we will behave in a clear, open and consistent manner.

We aim to design our services based on a shared understanding of your needs and our ability to:

- take responsibility;
- be accessible and have courteous staff;
- be responsive and reliable;
- keep you informed;
- provide accessible, understandable information;
- where we cannot meet your needs, explain why not;
- address any problems as soon as possible.

3. Keeping you up-to-date

We have developed, and will keep under review, a communications plan. Under this, we will ensure that we keep our partners and stakeholders informed and up to date with the latest Green Infrastructure Fund developments. We will make full use of the internet and social media, including:

Green Infrastructure Fund Website - We will review our website and Frequently Asked Questions once a week as a minimum.

Twitter – we will use @SNH_Tweets for broadcast messages.

Email – we will use an email list for applicants (potential and awarded) for news relevant only to those organisations, e.g. information about technical difficulties. If you wish to unsubscribe from the mailing list please send an email with the subject UNSUBSCRIBE to greeninfrastructure@snh.gov.uk.

4. Working with you

This section outlines how you can expect us to work with you, including how quickly we will deal with your enquiry.

4.1. Enquiries

We have prepared a set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) that you may find helpful. The FAQs will be updated regularly and may result in revision of guidance documents.

If the FAQ link does not help you, email is the best way to make contact with us because our team works from offices across Scotland. Our central email address is: greeninfrastructure@snh.gov.uk.

You will get an email within two working days letting you know who is dealing with your enquiry. That email will give you the specific contact email, phone and mobile numbers for the Project and Funding Officer dealing with your enquiry. The Project & Funding Officer will need to declare any interests at this point. Unless agreed otherwise, this Project & Funding Officer will be your main contact throughout your project from pre-submission to closure.

If you need to make contact by phone please call 01463 725000 and leave a message along with your preferred contact number.

If you want to write to us, our team's postal address is

Green Infrastructure Fund
Great Glen House
Leachkin Road
INVERNESS
IV5 8NW

We will aim to respond as quickly as possible, although response times may reflect the complexity of your enquiry. In any case our response should be within 20 working days and if we cannot achieve this, we will contact you and give you a reason why a final response will take longer than this time. We expect a high number of enquiries during the first round and that may affect our response times.

4.2. Applications

We will set an 'open period' when application forms are available and we will accept submission of applications. We will announce when we are open to applications on the Green Infrastructure Fund website and via @SNH_Tweets. The table below 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.

Stage	Date	Activity
Open Period and Support Phase	01 June 2016 – 28 October 2016	Open for submission of applications Support meetings
Closing date	28 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 Scottish Government

Implementation	Early March 2017	Approval to start issued (Work must not start before approval is issued)
	April 2017 onwards	Delivery of approved projects
	Mid June 2017	First Quarterly report and claim
	Mid August 2017	First payment

We will only accept applications submitted on the form created by us specifically for the Green Infrastructure Fund. The form is available to view on our website, but you will need to request a writeable form from our central email address. Before we send it we will check that your organisation is an eligible body for ERDF funding, and we will complete certain sections of the form so that it is specific to you and non-transferable.

We will only accept submissions by email to greeninfrastructure@snh.gov.uk. Do not send your application to anybody else on the Green Infrastructure Fund Team. If you do, your email will be deleted without being opened and you may miss the deadline. If your application includes documents that are larger than can be sent by email we will send you a link to a folder in SNH's Objective Connect that complies with UK data protection laws. We will accept your application provided the covering mail to greeninfrastructure@snh.gov.uk arrives and the documents are uploaded before the deadline.

4.3. Deadlines

Deadlines are absolute and will be strictly applied. We will only accept late submissions in exceptional circumstances, such as extreme weather events or significant failure of **our** IT system.

4.4. Claims

We will deal with your claims as described in this [link](#). Claims should be submitted according to the claim schedule agreed in your Delivery Contract.

4.5. Change to projects

Once a contract is agreed, changes to projects will only be accepted with prior written agreement and will follow the process described in the [Change Guidance](#).

5. Separation of Duties

We will ensure separation of duties in the support, assessment, selection, monitoring and claims processes. This means that we will keep a record of all contact with applicants throughout support, assessment and selection and delivery phases of the Green Infrastructure Fund. We will ensure that we separate functions within the team and work with other SNH and partners' staff to provide fair and transparent decision-making.

If you need advice from SNH about the natural heritage in relation to your project, or need a representative on a steering group, please contact your local SNH office. The Green Infrastructure Fund team cannot provide this service but we encourage you to contact our colleagues in your local SNH area office.

6. Declaration of interest

All Green Infrastructure Fund staff will declare any conflict of interest we have with any of the applications or applicants. This will be recorded on our staff files and in the project files.

7. Support Phase

The first step in your application process is to confirm that your organisation is an eligible body and able to apply for European Funds. Once that has been confirmed, you will be provided with a writeable application form and assigned to a Project & Funding Officer.

Each applicant will be assigned to one of the two Project & Funding Officers as the first point of contact with the Green Infrastructure Fund team. Advice will be restricted to eligibility, application, selection, claims processes and added value. We will follow up phone calls with an email summarising the discussion. If questions raised are relevant to the Fund as a whole an edited question and our answer will be posted on our FAQs page.

If your assigned Project & Funding Officer is not available for periods of more than three working days please contact the Green Infrastructure Fund team via the central email address.

7.1. Support meetings

The Support Officers are available for support meetings and site visits. Site visits and support meetings will be attended by a Support Officer and administrator or another member of SNH staff who will observe the meeting and help keep an accurate record of the discussion. The purpose of the site visit and support meeting is to allow you to explore the outcomes and activities you propose and to discuss monitoring, evaluation and reporting. Support Officers will provide as much help as they can to ensure that your application can be successful. However, they may not be able to give definitive advice on eligibility of activities because these will be case specific and relate to the outcomes you are seeking to achieve.

In order to maintain a separation of duties, the Head of the Green Infrastructure Fund and the Green Infrastructure Project Manager will not be involved in site visits or meetings during Support Phase, and will not be able to give advice about eligibility or ineligibility of an application.

The record of the site visit and support meeting will be sent to you to review and agree within five working days of the site visit.

We will close the Support Phase on 24 October 2016 to enable us to prepare for the selection phase. No advice will therefore be available between 24 October and 28 October 2016.

7.2. Open Meeting

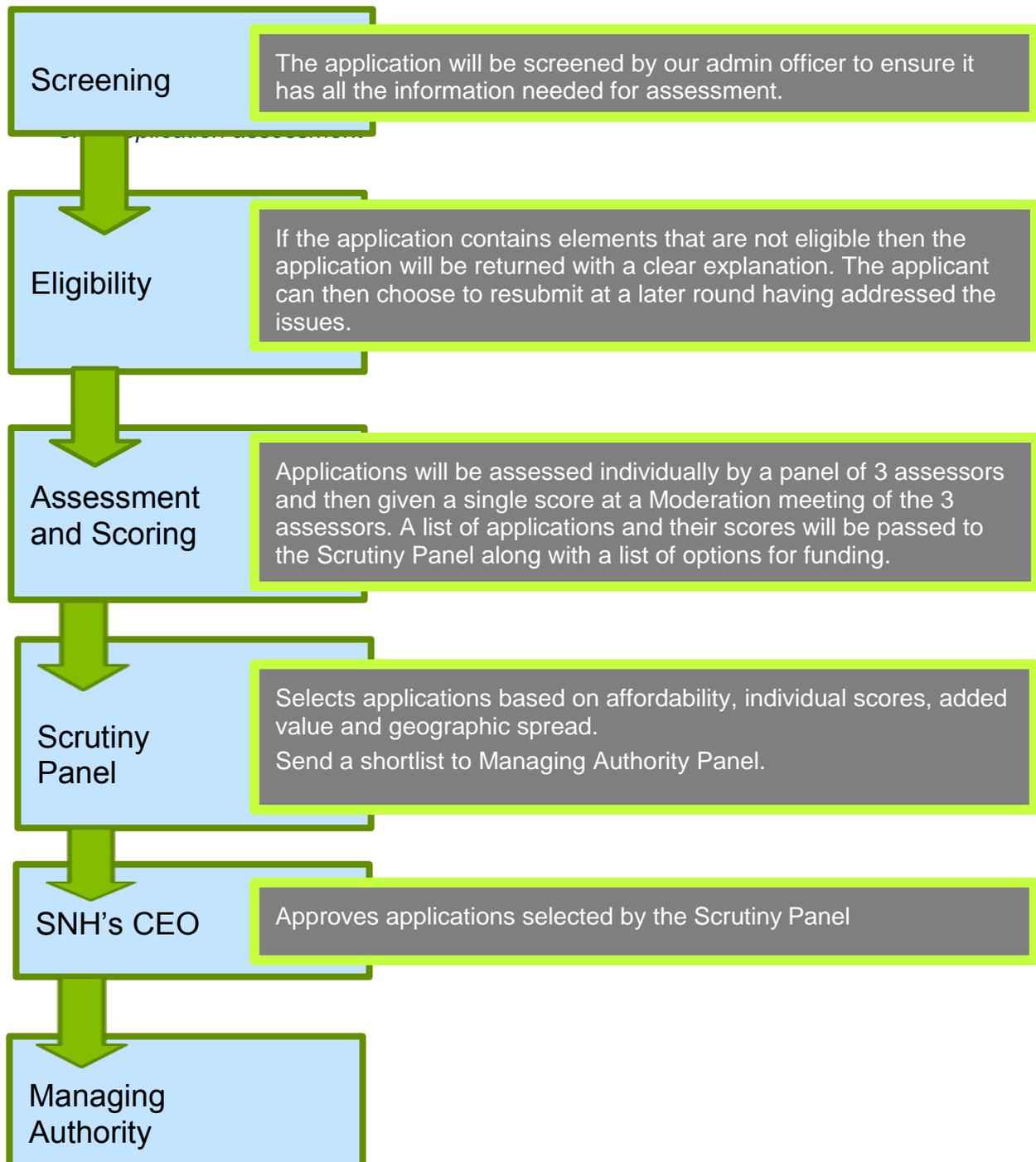
We intend to host at least one open meeting during the Support Phase of the Green Infrastructure Fund. The purpose of this event is to allow us to discuss with potential applicants the mechanisms and outcomes of the Fund and to address any questions about

the guidance. It will not be possible to discuss individual applications at this meeting or to answer any questions on eligibility of individual projects.

8. Selection of Projects

This section outlines what you can expect to happen during the assessment and selection of projects. Further detail is given in the [Green Infrastructure Fund Assessment and Selection Procedure](#).

Figure 1 - Summary of assessment and selection stages



Your application will be assessed by three people independently against the [ERDF National Rules](#) and [Green Infrastructure Fund Eligibility Guidance](#). They will then meet to agree an overall score. The Project & Funding Officer who has been your primary contact during the support phase will not be involved in assessing your application.

8.2. Guidance library

Assessors will use the following guidance to assess your application:

- [National Rules](#)
- [Eligibility Guidance](#)
- [Blueprint for Green Infrastructure](#)
- [Policy Background](#)
- [Horizontal Themes Guidance](#)
- [Monitoring & Evaluation Framework](#)
- [Communication Toolkit](#)
- [Community Engagement Guidance](#)
- [Risk Management Guidance](#)

8.3. Assessment Panel

The Assessment Panel for an application will be made up of the Head of the Green Infrastructure Fund, a relevant independent contact and **one** of the following – the Green Infrastructure Project Manager or the Project & Funding Officer that was **not** your primary contact.

The Assessment Panel will score applications, using the [Green Infrastructure Fund Assessment and Scoring Form](#). A paper will be produced by the Head of the Green Infrastructure Fund and submitted to the Scrutiny Panel, summarising the assessment results.

8.4. Scrutiny Panel

The Scrutiny Panel will review the assessment process and ensure that due process has been followed. They will then consider the eligible projects together, their scores and cumulative fit with the Strategic Intervention outcomes and horizontal themes, and draw a conclusion on which applications to submit to SNH's CEO, taking into account geographic spread, risk and total eligible costs.

Scrutiny Panel members will be selected for their experience, skill, independence, professionalism and commitment to delivering the Green Infrastructure Fund. All Scrutiny Panel members will be required to complete a declaration of interest form when they join the panel and for each application. Where they have a conflict of interest they will be required to leave the room for the duration of the discussion on that application.

Dates for Scrutiny Panels will be posted on the [news page of our website](#).

8.5. Approval and authorisation

It is likely that from the submission deadline to us sending an Intention to Award letter will take **at least** 40 working days.

The decision of the Scrutiny Panel on which applications to submit to SNH CEO will be final. We will only reconsider decisions if there has been a failure of the assessment and selection process. You may be disappointed if we turn down your application for funding, but you cannot use the complaints procedure to appeal against our decision if we have followed our decision-making process correctly. Please note that the Managing Authority reserves the right not to fund any applications, regardless of our recommendation.

8.6. Intention to Award or Decline and Implementation Meeting

Following the Scrutiny Panel meeting and if we intend to award you ERDF Funding, we will send you an Intention to Award letter and you will be invited to attend an Implementation meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss:

- Terms & Conditions;
- Non-material changes;
- Reporting, monitoring and evaluation expectations (measures etc);
- Financial forecast;
- Claim Cycle – deadlines, etc;
- Terms for paying contractors, etc;
- Claim Process and evidence we require (evidence of defrayment etc);
- Change Process;
- Contacts with for Finance and Procurement representatives;
- Communications and Marketing, including a press release.

Note that at this stage your approval will still be subject to the investment decision by SNH's CEO and you must not start any promotion or communications activities. You may start procurement at this stage, although this will be at your own risk.

Letters declining to fund a Project in this funding round will be sent on the same day as the Intention to Award letters.

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

We cannot overstate how important it is to measure and evaluate the impact of your project. Guidance on monitoring, evaluation and reporting is provided in our [Monitoring & Evaluation Framework](#) and guidance is also provided by the European Commission ([EC Guidance for Monitoring and Evaluation - ERDF](#)).

The success of monitoring and evaluation will depend on the commitment of both SNH as Lead Partner and grantees. The level of investment in green infrastructure afforded by the Green Infrastructure Fund is an innovation for ERDF and it is imperative that the impact, successes and challenges of its implementation are clearly recorded and made available for others to learn from.

We will work with you to harmonise, as far as reasonable, your reporting with your other funders and your other activities. All grantees are required to report against a selection of the measures and indicators, however grantees are free to design their own measures to supplement our selection and are asked to provide justification for data and metrics chosen. We suggest you read our [Green Infrastructure Fund - Monitoring & Evaluation Framework](#), and discuss your ideas with your Project & Funding Officer.

The guidance includes details on the specifications for GIS, photograph and video files.

10. Site visits and meetings

You may want your Project & Funding Officer to visit sites during construction or post construction as part of evidence of progress. We may agree to this if we think it adds value to your reporting.

To maintain transparency and fairness between applicants, an agreed record will be kept of the site visit and all significant generic questions and answers arising from site visits will be published on our website.

11. Data and information

11.1. *Personal Data*

We will manage data according to our [Green Infrastructure Fund - Data & Information Guidance](#), which complies with the *Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011* and the *Data Protection Act 1998* in relation to the handling of personal data about individuals.

11.2. *Projects Data*

Data and information held by SNH will not ordinarily be exempt from Freedom of Information requests and the Environmental Information Regulations.

11.3. *Copyright and Intellectual Property Rights*

We may want to use your project as a case study on our website or other publication. If we select your project we will ask your permission first if we want to use text from your application or reports, and we will credit images to your organisation.

Where we commission the collection of data, SNH secures the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and has unrestricted use and distribution rights. Where the collection of data is part-funded by us, we will seek to share the IPR. If the IPR is to be retained by another organisation we will:

- expect unrestricted user rights, with distribution to third parties referred back to the other organisation;
- expect to create derived products.

Therefore, in terms of the submitted data and information from grantees, SNH should ensure that the IPR is shared. SNH as Lead Partner and Scottish Government as Managing Authority should be given unrestricted user rights to and rights to create derived products of all Green Infrastructure spatial data, photographs, videos, monitoring and measuring data submitted by grantees.

11.4. *Monitoring & Evaluation*

The data and information collected as part of monitoring progress against the indicators and measures may be used by us and/or Scottish Government in reports, case studies and publicity material. Therefore, it is important that grantees ensure all participants and staff that feature in the data are aware of this and have given the appropriate consent for their details

to be shared. The Scottish Government have created a consent form which projects can download and use for this purpose (see page 20 - <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0047/00474927.pdf>).

12. Equality and Diversity

We are 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.

The Green Infrastructure Fund will help deliver the three horizontal themes of the European Structure Funds: Equal Opportunities; Social Inclusion; and Environmental Sustainability. How well these three themes would be delivered will be part of our selection criteria.

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 will only accept applications in English so that all applications can be treated equally.

If you have feedback on what we could do better or what we already do well please contact us.

13. Performance Reporting

We will monitor our performance within the scope of our [Monitoring & Evaluation Framework](#). There will be three strands to monitoring and evaluation of the Green Infrastructure Fund Team performance: process management and achievement of milestones; compliance with the Fund governance, including our management of finance, data, procurement and publicity and community engagement; and how well the Green Infrastructure Fund Team deals with its external contacts. This will be described in more detail in our [Monitoring & Evaluation Framework](#).

14. Complaints and Compliments

We're committed to providing you with an excellent service and your views and feedback are really important to us. We may send you a short on-line survey about our service as a way of improving our service.

If something goes wrong or you are dissatisfied with our services, please tell us so we can try to put things right for you. If you have any complaints, compliments, or comments, we will be using SNH's complaints procedure which is governed by the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman. Follow this link:

<http://www.snh.gov.uk/contact-us/complaints-and-customer-care/>

Making a complaint will not affect your chances of receiving funding from us in the future.

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Nàdar air fad airson Alba air fad