Green Infrastructure
making places for people
a' cruthachadh àitichean do dhaoine

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

Frequently Asked Questions

Green Infrastructure

Community Engagement Fund

Guidance for Applicants

March 2017

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 Operations and not to fund at all. The Scottish Government reserves the right not to award any support at all under this programme.

Version Control

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Contents

Disclaimer 1

Version Control 1

Frequently Asked Questions 5

Purpose 5

Background 5

1. What is Green Infrastructure? 5
2. How much funding is SNH receiving from ERDF for community engagement? 5
3. What do you hope to achieve through the Green Infrastructure Community Engagement Fund? 5
4. How many projects are likely to be funded? 5
5. Will all the projects be in the Central Belt? ..... 5~~6~~

Funding Structure 6

1. Is the funding all through the ERDF, or are Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and/or others contributing some funds as well? 6
2. ERDF is a “gap funder”. What does that mean? 6
3. Have you spoken to other potential match funders? 6
4. Securing match funding, especially 40%, from partners will be a challenge. Is there any scope to extend timescales for delivery? 6
5. Is the 60% match funding requirement hard cash? 6
6. Our project is capital, but we are required to do some community engagement. Can the Green Infrastructure Community Engagement Fund pay for the community engagement? ..... 6~~7~~
7. The cost models for the Green Infrastructure Community Engagement Fund differ from other EU funds. Why is this so? 7
8. Recognising that private sector match funding is ineligible, can funding come from corporate foundations? 7

Eligibility 7

1. What kinds of projects will be funded? 7
2. Are capital activities eligible? 7
3. What proportion of capital works is acceptable? 7
4. Can applications cover more than one location? Or, can projects in different locations link together to form one application? 7
5. What urban/rural classification maps will you be using? ..... 7~~8~~
6. Is there are risk of disallowing some activities after we have been offered a contract and projects have completed construction? 8
7. Will you tell us if a project is not eligible so we do not waste time on an application? 8
8. Can we apply for funding for two different projects? 8
9. Can we apply for funding for projects that are next to each other? 8

10. Does the 10,000 population threshold need to be a single settlement, or could smaller towns have their populations aggregated? 8
11. My project is not in a top Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) area, but will serve communities from such areas. Is this eligible? 9
12. How can top 15% SIMD areas be identified in settlements with populations of 10,000 people or greater? 9
13. What is the minimum spend? 9
14. Can we still apply at this stage if we are not sure if our organisation is registered as an eligible body to apply for European funding with Scottish Government? 9
15. Can applications come from partnerships? 9
16. Why are partnerships ineligible to apply? 9
17. Private organisations are not eligible for funding. Can activities happen on their land? 9
18. What are the criteria for a charity to be an eligible body? 10
19. Will you fund staff? 10
20. How are staff costs funded? 10
21. We have applied to other funding organisations. Will we need to rewrite supporting documents or can we use the same as submitted to other organisations? 10
22. There are some essential costs that would seem to be ineligible. Do we have to absorb this cost? 10
23. Does all of the project work need to be new? 10
24. Is there a list of approved suppliers that we need to procure goods and services? 11
25. What happens if we can't secure all match funding? 11
Evidence, monitoring and compliance 11
1. How long will we have to keep information on our project? 11
2. When do we need to show measurable outcomes? 11
3. What evidence do we need to provide for volunteers taking part? 11
4. What are the 'badging' requirements for projects? 11
5. Do procurement regulations apply across the whole of my project/s? 11
6. Presumably you know how this Fund compares to other funders in terms of monitoring. Would you advise a smaller community group to apply? 11
7. Could you say a bit more about monitoring and evaluation beyond 2019? 12
Process 12
1. Are templates available to help us prepare our application submission e.g. finance, project profiles etc? 12
2. What will the scoring process be? 12
3. Who decides if our project gets funding? 12
4. When are funding decisions expected? 12
5. To give us an indication of how much risk we would be taking by putting work into an application,what was the success rate of Round 2 of the Green Infrastructure Fund? 12
6. When do we actually have to have the project finished? 12

7. What is the deadline for our final claim?.....13
8. I disagree with the decision not to fund our project. How can I get you to reconsider? 13
9. Is a nil return acceptable in a quarterly forecast/claim? 13
10. Would payment against a claim be contingent on the report accompanying the claim? 13
11. What would be the risk to the grantee of not delivering all of the outputs?.....13
12. What is involved in the claims process?.....13
13. Will there be a second round for the Community Engagement Fund? 13
Communication 13
1. Will there be opportunities to learn from each other?.....13
2. Can you send a list of who is participating today? .....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**~~14~~

Frequently Asked Questions

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to answer questions that have been asked by potential applicants to ensure that everyone has access to the same information. Some of the questions have been identified by the Green Infrastructure Team and included as guidance. Reference should be made to the full suite of Green Infrastructure guidance documents in the Green Infrastructure Community Engagement Fund Application Handbook.

Background

1. *What is Green Infrastructure?*

Green Infrastructure is planned greenspace and water that uses the natural environment to provide environmental and quality of life benefits. It includes parks, woodlands, street trees, play spaces, allotments, community growing spaces, playing fields, road verges, swales, green walls and living roofs, rivers, streams, wetlands and sustainable drainage, active travel and recreational routes.

It is best planned into development from the start, but can also be retro-fitted to existing areas.

2. *How much funding is SNH receiving from ERDF for community engagement?*

Scottish Natural Heritage has been approved as Lead Partner for the Green Infrastructure Strategic Intervention under the 2014-20 European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Programme. In 2016, we launched two Challenge Funds (the Green Infrastructure Fund, Lowlands and Uplands and the Green Infrastructure Fund, Highlands and Islands) to support capital improvement works in urban environments. The Green Infrastructure Community Engagement Fund, launched in early 2017, is a related but additional fund that will provide £0.5M of ERDF funding. With match funding, this will deliver £1.2M worth of community engagement projects in our cities and larger towns.

3. *What do you hope to achieve through the Green Infrastructure Community Engagement Fund?*

We want people to value, use and enjoy their greenspaces, and through this to feel happier, healthier and better connected to their communities. We expect this to lead to inequalities in health and opportunity being reduced, and an increase in how people value and understand what nature does for them. Green Infrastructure can also help people develop skills and have the confidence to seek and sustain jobs. How many projects are likely to be funded?

We intend to deliver between 10-15 community engagement projects across Scotland.

4. *Will all the projects be in the Central Belt?*

No, any town with a population of more than 10,000 is eligible for funding and we hope to achieve a spread of projects throughout Scotland.

Funding Structure

1. *Is the funding all through the ERDF, or are Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and/or others contributing some funds as well?*

ERDF will provide up to 40% of the funding for successful projects in the Lowland and Uplands area (LUPS) and up to 50% for projects in Highlands and Islands (H&I) area. The rest of the match funding must be confirmed by applicants before we can issue a Delivery Contract. The additional funding cannot come from other European Community funding sources.

SNH is not able to match fund projects.

2. *ERDF is a "gap funder". What does that mean?*

Being a gap funder means we are a funder of last resort and any contribution from the Green Infrastructure Community Engagement Fund should be the minimum amount required to allow your project to proceed. In your application, you will need to demonstrate why you consider the Green Infrastructure Community Engagement Fund to be an appropriate funding source and identify the match funding you have secured. We will not confirm our funding until all the other funds have been confirmed.

If you are not able to deliver on all the aspects of your project, we will expect you to maintain your investment and we will reduce our funding to match the new level. For example:

	Original Cost model	Revised cost model
Eligible cost	£120,000	£100,000
Match funding	£80,000	£80,000
ERDF funding (gap)	£40,000	£20,000

3. *Have you spoken to other potential match funders?*

Yes, we have strong links with other major funders in Scotland and they are aware of the objectives and timescales relating to the Green Infrastructure Community Engagement Fund.

4. *Securing match funding, especially 40%, from partners will be a challenge. Is there any scope to extend timescales for delivery?*

Not at present. We recognise that timescales are extremely tight but the Scottish Government currently requires project delivery to have been completed by 31 December 2018.

5. *Is the 60% match funding requirement hard cash?*

Yes, in-kind contributions cannot be used to match against this Fund.

6. *Our project is capital, but we are required to do some community engagement. Can the Green Infrastructure Community Engagement Fund pay for the community engagement?*

Yes, but the community engagement element would need to make sense as a stand-alone project, and we would only pay for 40% of the community engagement costs with the rest having to come from match funding. The budget for capital work could not be used to match against a grant from this Fund.

7. *The cost models for the Green Infrastructure Community Engagement Fund differ from other EU funds. Why is this so?*

The ERDF National Rules explain what cost models are available for use in the 2014-2020 programme. Of these, direct staff costs + 15% and procurement are the two options for use by applicants to the Green Infrastructure Community Engagement Fund.

8. *Recognising that private sector match funding is ineligible, can funding come from corporate foundations?*

This may be possible, as such funds are likely to be classed as charitable. However, you should consult us so that we can check each specific case with Scottish Government.

Eligibility

1. *What kinds of projects will be funded?*

Project applications must relate to green infrastructure and demonstrate how the project meets the requirements set out in in the National Rules guidance regarding eligibility: http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0050/00503459.pdf

Green Infrastructure includes the "green" and "blue" (water environment) features of the natural and built environments that can provide benefits and contribute to the quality of life in urban areas. Our Eligibility Guidance sets out examples of eligible and ineligible activities.

2. *Are capital activities eligible?*

Capital works are not the main objective of the Green Infrastructure Community Engagement Fund, but if such works are essential to achieve a specific outcome, and they are a small proportion of the project costs then we will consider requests on a case by case basis.

3. *What proportion of capital works is acceptable?*

No limit has been set as we do not want to be prescriptive. However we advise that capital elements should not form the main focus of projects. We will be happy to advise on specific cases

4. *Can applications cover more than one location? Or, can projects in different locations .link together to form one application?*

We can consider applications which address a number of discrete locations across a community or a number of settlements, provided your project benefits populations in communities of more than 10,000 which meet our SIMD criteria (see below). There must be a clear rationale given for why more than on location has been included.

5. *What urban/rural classification maps will you be using?*

We will be using the most up-to-date 6-fold Urban-Rural classification using 2013-14 data from the Scottish Government. If you think that this data is out of date for your application then you must present evidence to support your assertion.

6. *Is there a risk of disallowing some activities after we have been offered a contract and projects have completed construction?*

Yes, there is some risk to SNH and to you as a grantee because EU auditors have the right to scrutinise data and information relating to your project until 2030. Eligibility criteria are set out broadly in the National Rules and specifically in the Green Infrastructure Community Engagement Fund Eligibility guidance. As an applicant, you have a responsibility to ensure that what you apply for is eligible for funding. If you are applying for Green Infrastructure Community Engagement funding, we will help you reduce this risk by carefully assessing your application for eligibility and if you are awarded funding we will agree terms with you in a Delivery Contract and review your quarterly claims and supporting evidence before payment. As a grantee, it is your responsibility to ensure that you are fully compliant for Audit.

7. *Will you tell us if a project is not eligible so we do not waste time on an application?*

Yes, and if the project is borderline your SNH support officer will advise you on which parts to remove to make it eligible. They can do this because they will not subsequently be involved in the assessment of your application.

Changing your application on the advice of your support officer does not guarantee your project will be funded because the Green Infrastructure Community Engagement fund is competitive and projects are subject to our assessment and scoring process.

8. *Can we apply for funding for two different projects?*

Yes you can. There is no upper limit on the number of applications you can make, but applicants must make sure that there is no overlap in outputs to avoid double funding.

You may wish to consider aggregating your projects into a single application if the outcomes are the same and/or they complement each other. We will be happy to advise.

9. *Can we apply for funding for projects that are next to each other?*

This is possible but you will need to be careful to avoid double funding. This covers not just physical overlaps on the ground, but also potential interactions between projects working with the same communities and between other activities in receipt of European Structural Funds.

10. *Does the 10,000 population threshold need to be a single settlement, or could smaller towns have their populations aggregated?*

The smallest settlement where activity funded by the Green Infrastructure Community Engagement Fund can happen is 10,000. Smaller settlements cannot be aggregated to meet the 10,000 threshold.

11. My project is not in a top Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) area, but will serve communities from such areas. Is this eligible?

Yes, but the key point is to ensure that there is a clear link to communities in the targeted SIMD areas and that the benefits that will be generated as a result of the project can be clearly demonstrated.

12. How can top 15% SIMD areas be identified in settlements with populations of 10,000 people or greater?

Hovering over a data zone in the simd16 interactive map brings up its statistics on the right hand side of the screen. One of the figures is the overall rank. The 15% threshold is 1046.

13. What is the minimum spend?

SNH has determined the following minimum amounts:

- the total project eligible costs must be a minimum of £50,000 and a maximum of £120,000.
- the minimum threshold for grant is 10% of total project cost.
- as mentioned earlier, the maximum threshold for grant is 40% for the Lowland and Uplands area (LUPS) and 50% for projects in Highlands and Islands (H&I) area.
- The maximum grant we can award therefore is £48,000 for most of Scotland, and £60,000 in the Highlands and Islands.

14. Can we still apply at this stage if we are not sure if our organisation is registered as an eligible body to apply for European funding with Scottish Government?

If you are not sure if you are registered as an eligible body, please contact us and we will check on your behalf. You will need to be confirmed as eligible before we issue an application form to you.

15. Can applications come from partnerships?

No, partnerships in the traditional sense are not eligible to apply as the application must come from one single organisation, and all expenditure must be made and claimed by that one organisation. However, if a partnership is legally constituted, it may be eligible to be the applicant. Please contact the Green Infrastructure team if you wish to discuss this.

16. Why are partnerships ineligible to apply?

The National Rules say that one organisation must be the main applicant, with all monies flowing through the same bank account. It may be possible to work with partners, but there must be an agreement on who will be the lead applicant.

17. Private organisations are not eligible for funding. Can activities happen on their land?

Projects can relate to any type of publicly accessible greenspace. Projects that relate to private spaces such as residential gardens, privately managed housing estates or schools where access by the general public is restricted are not eligible for inclusion.

Please note that applications for work in and around sites which have received funding from other elements of the Green Infrastructure Fund are unlikely to also receive funding from the Community Engagement Fund.

18. What are the criteria for a charity to be an eligible body?

If the applicant is a charitable body they need to be registered as an eligible body with the Scottish Government, have the capacity to manage cashflow and project management experience for this scale of project and prove it is a registered charitable body. In certain circumstances, we may require a 'sponsor' to vouch for the applicant if they are a voluntary or charitable organisation.

19. Will you fund staff?

Yes, we can fund staff for delivery purposes. Dedicated staff can be full or part-time, but must spend 100% of their funded time on your ERDF funded Green Infrastructure project.

20. How are staff costs funded?

Only two cost models should be considered – Procurement and Direct Staff Cost (salary, NI and pension contributions etc) + 15% (expenses). We expect that most activity will be procured. All staff posts (full and part time) need to be recruited by open competition and 100% of their time allocated to projects.

A mix of these two cost models could be used, e.g. one project manager recruited and facilitators procured.

21. We have applied to other funding organisations. Will we need to rewrite supporting documents or can we use the same as submitted to other organisations?

If you have submitted supporting documents to other funding organisations which fulfil our purposes you can submit these but you must follow our guidelines on labelling and referencing them. A checklist of mandatory supporting documents and how to reference these is included in the Application Form guidance.

22. There are some essential costs that would seem to be ineligible. Do we have to absorb this cost?

This depends on scale but in certain circumstances it may be possible to include e.g. small value equipment costs within the 15% staff cost allowance, as this means that no evidence needs to be provided along with the claim. However for any costs which cannot be covered within this allowance, then compliance with established public sector procurement procedures should be demonstrated at all times.

23. Does all of the project work need to be new?

Yes, you do need to show that the project work is stand alone and is new in some way, e.g. extending a proven project idea into a new area. It may be that your organisation has wanted to develop a project for some time, but has not had the final piece of funding. The project does not have to be a completely new idea.

24. Is there a list of approved suppliers that we need to procure goods and services?

No. You simply need to follow the tendering process e.g. obtaining quotations from several different suppliers and be able to demonstrate value for money. Please see the ERDF National Rules and the GICEF Procurement Aide Memoire for further details.

25. What happens if we can't secure all match funding?

We would not offer a Delivery Contract until match funding has been confirmed. In situations where match funding cannot be confirmed, SNH reserves the right to withdraw their offer of funding.

Evidence, monitoring and compliance

1. *How long will we have to keep information on our project?*

The length of time information needs to be kept for audit is laid out in the National Rules and will be part of your Delivery Contract. You will need to keep records until 31 December 2030 which is the end of the Audit and Compliance period.

2. *When do we need to show measurable outcomes?*

Outputs, which flow directly from the approved activities, must be delivered within the lifetime of the project. Milestones towards delivering these outputs should be identified on your application form and will be confirmed in your Delivery Contract.

Outcomes and their associated results must be delivered and evidenced by 2023 and may be audited up to 2030.

3. *What evidence do we need to provide for volunteers taking part?*

You will need to provide numbers of volunteers with home postcodes, the number of volunteer hours attributed to the project, broad details that provide evidence of impact on the outcomes and horizontal themes of your funded project and how you will measure the impact of the volunteer's contributions.

4. *What are the 'badging' requirements for projects?*

We have produced comprehensive guidance on branding in our Communications Toolkit. You are advised to become well acquainted with the Green Infrastructure Fund and ERDF National Rules on branding because compliance will be strictly monitored.

5. *Do procurement regulations apply across the whole of my project/s?*

Yes, we will require evidence of compliance as a whole and by each individual activity.

6. *Presumably you know how this Fund compares to other funders in terms of monitoring. Would you advise a smaller community group to apply?*

The monitoring requirements for all ERDF interventions are onerous. A small community organisation should certainly consider the commitment they would be making, and would

need to be able to demonstrate at the time of application what plans they have in place to be able to meet all monitoring, audit and compliance requirements.

7. *Could you say a bit more about monitoring and evaluation beyond 2019?*

There are two types of monitoring. The first is for claims and is relatively straightforward. The second is for achievement of desired outcomes. Some of the outcomes may not become apparent for several years, but you could demonstrate your project is travelling in the right direction. If your organisation wishes to continue monitoring the impact of your project beyond 2019 then we would be interested in receiving a copy of your findings.

Process

1. *Are templates available to help us prepare our application submission e.g. finance, project profiles etc?*

Yes, all available templates will be issued to all applicants who request an application pack from us. Your designated Support Officer will also be able to offer advice on anything you are not sure about.

2. *What will the scoring process be?*

Our scoring criteria and assessment process is published on our website in our Assessment and Selection Procedure and our Eligibility and Assessment Scoring Forms guidance.

3. *Who decides if our project gets funding?*

Applications are assessed for eligibility and quality by an independent panel of 3 assessors per application. The highest scoring eligible applications are considered by a Scrutiny Panel with members selected for their experience, skill, independence, professionalism and commitment to delivering the outcomes of the Green Infrastructure Fund and Green Infrastructure Community Engagement Fund. The Scrutiny Panel will decide which applications should be recommended for funding and pass them to the CEO of SNH for approval. This process is explained in more detail in our Assessment and Selection procedure guidance.

4. *When are funding decisions expected?*

We will close to applications at midnight on Monday 17 April 2017. A decision to fund projects is anticipated in June 2017, with grantees being able to begin work from summer 2017.

5. *To give us an indication of how much risk we would be taking by putting work into an application,what was the success rate of Round 2 of the Green Infrastructure Fund?*

We had seven applications and we recommended five for funding. However, the eligible budget of applications to the Green Infrastructure Community Engagement Fund is much lower so we expect that it may attract more applicants. We aim to fund 10-15 projects.

6. *When do we actually have to have the project finished?*

The approved purposes of the project need to be completed by 30 December 2018 and all financial transactions must be defrayed by 30 June 2019.

7. What is the deadline for our final claim?

The final claim date will be 31 March 2019.

8. I disagree with the decision not to fund our project. How can I get you to reconsider?

The recommendations by the SNH CEO about which projects to fund are final. If you think that there was an error in how we processed your application then speak to us in the first instance. If this fails to satisfy your concern you can complain using the SNH complaints system.

9. Is a nil return acceptable in a quarterly forecast/claim?

Yes, reporting will be required every calendar quarter. If you have not defrayed any expenditure we would expect that to be confirmed and, we will still require you to submit your quarterly progress reports. This is explained in more detail in our Monitoring and Evaluation guidance.

10. Would payment against a claim be contingent on the report accompanying the claim?

Yes, there will need to be a satisfactory progress report with each claim.

11. What would be the risk to the grantee of not delivering all of the outputs?

We expect all of the agreed **outputs** to be delivered, unless otherwise agreed in advance through our Change Process. If there is slippage in implementation let the Green Infrastructure Team know as soon as you have identified the risk. If you do not deliver all the outputs without an agreed change, there is a risk that you will not be able to claim all of our grant.

12. What is involved in the claims process?

You will need to submit your quarterly progress reports with financial reports on defrayed expenditure at calendar year quarters to draw down your grant. Further details are in our Claim Process Overview.

13. Will there be a second round for the Community Engagement Fund?

That will depend on how many applications we get in this round and if there are any funds remaining. If we do run a second round it would open in the summer of 2017 and the deadline for the completion of successful projects would still be 31 December 2018.

Communication

1. Will there be opportunities to learn from each other?

We will be organising events at which our projects can share experiences. We will also showcase projects through the Green Infrastructure and SNH websites and through attending other events.

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Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba
All of nature for all of Scotland
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