

Item: 16

Policy and Resources Committee: 26 November 2019.

North Isles Landscape Partnership Scheme.

Report by Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure.

1. Purpose of Report

To consider eligibility of projects funded by the North Isles Landscape Partnership Scheme in applying for grants from the Community Development Fund, and other Council funding.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is invited to note:

2.1.

That, in 2015, the North Isles Landscape Partnership Scheme was established, with a total projected budget of up to £4,524,211, subject to a full funding package being secured, and comprises the undernoted partners:

- Orkney Islands Council.
- Highlands and Islands Enterprise.
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.
- Scottish Natural Heritage.

2.2.

That, in September 2017, the Council resolved that funding of up to £282,260 be allocated from the Strategic Reserve Fund towards the delivery phase of the North Isles Landscape Partnership Scheme.

2.3.

That, to date, funding up to the value of £4,080,904 has been confirmed in respect of the overall budget for the North Isles Landscape Partnership Scheme, with the balance of £363,307 yet to be secured.

2.4.

That the current £1,000,000 tranche of the Community Development Fund, which was approved in June 2016, has an uncommitted balance of £434,192 available for community groups to apply for, in a time when match funding is becoming increasingly difficult to secure.

2.5.

That one of the principles of the Community Development Fund is that assistance should not be approved to any project which could be subject to financial assistance from any other Council service.

2.6.

That some of the capital projects which have provisional funding allocations from the North Isles Landscape Partnership Scheme are being delivered by community groups based in the North Isles.

2.7.

That community groups have historically sought project funding from the Community Development Fund.

2.8.

That existing and potential future funding streams that the Council provides or administers could be eligible to provide match funding to some of the projects from the North Isles Landscape Partnership Scheme.

It is recommended:

2.9.

That the current cap on Council funding towards the North Isles Landscape Partnership Scheme, referred to at paragraph 2.2 above, be removed.

2.10.

That community-led projects which have provisionally secured part-funding from the North Isles Landscape Partnership Scheme be considered eligible to seek co-funding from other Council funding streams, including the Community Development Fund.

3. Background

3.1.

The North Isles Landscape Partnership Scheme was established in 2015 by a Collaboration Agreement, comprising the Council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and Scottish Natural Heritage, for the purpose of developing a programme of interventions to conserve and raise awareness of the unique cultural identity and history of Orkney's North Isles and to improve the appeal of the North Isles as a place to live, work and visit.

3.2.

In September 2017, the Council resolved that funding of up to £282,260 be allocated from the Strategic Reserve Fund towards the delivery phase of the North Isles Landscape Partnership Scheme. That sum represents approximately 6% of the total Partnership funding.

3.3.

The suite of projects earmarked for funding support during the 5-year delivery of the North Isles Landscape Partnership Scheme includes projects involving the development of recreation facilities, restoration of heritage facilities, and enhancement of community facilities. In such projects, which are scattered throughout the North Isles, community groups will often be the main delivery body.

3.4.

The various projects described at section 3.3 above would normally be eligible for Community Development Fund support, in order to help secure match funding.

3.5.

As one of the principles of the Community Development Fund is that assistance should not be approved to any project which could be subject to financial assistance from any Council service, it might be considered that projects which are part-funded by the North Isles Landscape Partnership Scheme should be excluded from the Community Development Fund on the basis of the Council's delivery role and financial contribution to the Partnership.

3.6.

The Council provides and administers various funding streams, which cover capital and revenue costs. These funding streams provide, amongst others, support to projects involved in Archaeology, Cultural Heritage, Economic Development, and Events and Festivals. The Council also has responsibility to administer various funding streams on behalf of the Scottish Government, as well as other agencies. Historically, such funds have varied in criteria and timescales, but are often available to projects being co-ordinated by local community groups.

4. Funding of the North Isles Landscape Partnership Scheme

4.1.

Following successful grant funding bids to the Heritage Lottery Fund and Historic Environment Scotland, coupled with funding commitments from the other Partners, a total funding package of £4,080,904 has been secured to date towards a project budget, at the time of application, of up to £4,524,211. The largest funder, at £2,829,200, is the Heritage Lottery Fund (now titled the National Lottery Heritage Fund).

4.2.

As is common with Landscape Partnership Schemes nationally, a funding deficit existed at the time of the application. It is anticipated that the existing deficit of £363,307 will be secured by additional funding from a range of sources on a project by project basis. Should the remaining funding not be secured, project delivery will be curtailed. Similarly, should additional funding beyond the current identified gap be achieved, the North Isles Landscape Partnership Scheme could increase in scale, allowing additional benefits to be achieved during its lifespan.

5. Community Development Fund

5.1.

The Community Development Fund, and its predecessor, the Community Development Fund for the New Millennium, have supported a wide range of development projects involving recreation, heritage, and community facilities.

5.2.

Historically, other externally funded programmes delivered by the Council have contributed valuable funding towards community-led projects which have also been in receipt of Community Development Fund support. These programmes, often matching Community Development Fund support at a pound for pound rate, have also helped to secure additional external funding enabling fully funded projects to be realised.

5.3.

As the future of some of these external programmes is now uncertain, there are concerns that community groups will struggle to take forward projects due to a lack of eligible match funding. Other funds are available for community groups to apply for, however such funds are often over-subscribed or only provide small grants, which takes longer to build into a funding package that can be supported by the Community Development Fund.

5.4.

One of the principles of the Community Development Fund is that assistance should not be provided to any project which could be subject to financial assistance from any Council service. The Council did approve a contribution of up to £282,260 to the North Isles Landscape Partnership Scheme. However, the North Isles Landscape Partnership Scheme is not itself a service “department” but a separate, distinct project, with the vast majority of the funding coming from external sources, in particular the Heritage Lottery Fund. It is therefore proposed that this principle should not apply to projects delivered by the North Isles Landscape Partnership Scheme.

6. Other Council Funding Streams

6.1.

The Council continues to provide various sources of funding for local businesses, community groups and other organisations to apply for. The Council is also often tasked with administering various funds on behalf of other bodies. In many cases, this will be the Scottish or UK Government, however there have been, and may be other occasions in the future, where additional bodies wish to use the Council in order to disseminate funding locally.

6.2.

Some of the various funds available from the Council provide support to projects involved in various fields including (but not limited to) Archaeology, Cultural and Heritage, Economic Development, Events and Festivals. External funding, which the Council administers on behalf of other agencies, will often have varying criteria but usually have cross-over themes including community led local development and economic prosperity.

6.3.

Some of the various funds available from the Council have the potential to be applied for as match funding to projects delivered by the North Isles Landscape Partnership Scheme. Also, as the North Isles Landscape Partnership Scheme will be running until 2022, there is potential for future funds which the Council may administer to be applied for as match funding as well.

7. Links to Council Plan

7.1.

The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Council Plan strategic priority theme of Quality of Life.

7.2.

The proposals in this report relate directly to Priority 5.3 – Implementation of the North Isles Landscape Partnership project.

8. Links to Local Outcomes Improvement Plan

The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan priorities of Strong Communities and A Vibrant Economy.

9. Financial Implications

9.1.

In July 2016, £1,000,000 was allocated to the Community Development Fund, with £100,000 ring-fenced for Community Councils, leaving £900,000 in the new allocation of which £465,808 has been allocated, leaving £434,192 unallocated.

9.2.

The Council has also contributed £282,260 from the Strategic Reserve Fund towards the delivery costs of the North Isles Landscape Partnership Scheme. This represents approximately 6% of the estimated programme costs.

9.3.

The report recommends that applications to the Community Development Fund from projects earmarked for North Isles Landscape Partnership Scheme funding be accepted and presented to the Community Development Fund Sub-committee for consideration. The current cap on Council funding towards North Isles Landscape Partnership Scheme projects would therefore be exceeded.

9.4.

Applications to other Council funding streams from projects earmarked for North Isles Landscape Partnership Scheme funding could also be accepted and reported to the appropriate Committee for consideration.

10. Legal Aspects

If grant assistance is to be provided by the Council, on a case by case basis from the Community Development Fund, or any other fund administered by the Council, a legally-binding agreement will require to be entered into between the Council and the recipient setting out the terms on which the funding is being provided.

11. Contact Officers

Gavin Barr, Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure, extension 2301, Email gavin.barr@orkney.gov.uk.

Roddy Mackay, Head of Planning, Development and Regulatory Services, extension 2530, Email roddy.mackay@orkney.gov.uk.

Jackie Thomson, Development and Regeneration Manager, extension 2507, Email jackie.thomson@orkney.gov.uk.

Stuart Allison, Economic Development Manager, extension 2514, Email stuart.allison@orkney.gov.uk.

Alister Brown, Economic Development Officer, extension 2512, Email alister.brown@orkney.gov.uk.