

The Highland Council

Caithness & Sutherland Area Committee – 10 February 2015

Agenda Item	11.
Report No	CS/09/15

Landfill Communities Fund

Report by Director of Community Services

This report invites Members to note an application for Highland Council Landfill Communities funding

1. Background

- 1.1 Landfill Operators, including The Highland Council, pay a tax to the Government on every ton of waste that they dispose of in a landfill site. The Landfill Communities Fund (LCF) allows the landfill operator to offset 5.1% of their landfill tax liability and gives a 90% tax credit against their donations to organisations who deliver Environmental Objectives, and are registered with ENTRUST, the Government regulator for the LCF.
- 1.2 The Highland Council removes the need to register with ENTRUST by employing E B Scotland a 'Distributive Environmental Body'. This means that E B Scotland register the projects in the Council's name and undertake all regulatory and administrative responsibilities.
- 1.3 The Highland Council, as a Landfill Operator, distributes its Landfill Communities Fund to local biodiversity conservation projects with a maximum contribution of £10,000 to any one project annually, subject to approval by the appropriate Area Committee as agreed by Members when they considered report COM/03/14 to the Community Services Committee on 15 May 2014.

2. Applications for Consideration

- 2.1 Members are invited to note the following application to the Highland Council Landfill Communities Fund. The details of the project are set out in the Appendix.
- 2.2 **Munsary Peatlands: Improving the visitor experience**
Plantlife, the wild plant conservation charity, own and manage Munsary. The project will rebuild a Caithness built dry stain dyke at the reserve and produce a trail guide leaflet to try and increase access to the reserve by the local community.

3. Project Costs and Recommendations for Allocation of Funding

3.1 The table below details the total project cost, the amount requested, and the proposed allocation.

APPLICATIONS	TOTAL PROJECT COST	AMOUNT REQUESTED	RECOMMENDED ALLOCATION
Munsary Peatlands: Improving the visitor experience	£20,605	£9,914.5	£9,914.5
TOTAL	£20,605	£9,914.5	£9,914.5

4. Implications

- 4.1 There are no resource implications arising from this report.
- 4.2 There are no legal implications arising from this report.
- 4.3 There are no equality implications arising from this report.
- 4.4 There are no climate/Carbon Clever implications arising from this report.
- 4.5 There are no risk implications arising from this report.
- 4.6 There are no Gaelic implications arising from this report
- 4.7 There are no Rural implications arising from this report

Recommendation

Members are invited to approve the application.

Designation: Director of Community Services

Date: 5 January 2015

Author: Neil Downie

Background Papers: Appendix

Appendix

Name of Project: Munsary Peatlands: Improving the visitor experience

Applicant: Plantlife

Background: Munsary Peatland nature reserve (1,238ha) is a vital asset in the geographic area that is of international importance. Plantlife, the wild plant conservation charity, own and manage Munsary. The project will rebuild a Caithness built dry stain dyke at the reserve and produce a trail guide leaflet to try and increase access to the reserve by the local community.

Project Description: Work has been undertaken at Munsary over the past 10 years to improve the conservation status of the peatland and we have established grazing of the in-bye area (15.28ha). However, the addition of cattle plus increasing numbers of deer has put a strain on the existing drystone dyking and fencing. Sections of the dyke have crumbled, causing difficulties in containing cattle within the stone-walled park. We need to restore a 900m section of collapsed drystone dyke (which is 1m wide by 1.5 m high and encloses 5.07 hectares of grassland) using a local specialist craftsman. Repairs include bridging, replacing stones using local stone and installing fence wires above the wall to deter deer. The advantages of drystone dyking are that it is a permanent structure, can withstand Munsary's harsh openness, requires minimal management, and offers shelter for cattle. A nature trail is already in place with interpretive signal posts. Through this project we want to produce a nature trail guide leaflet. This will be available at www.plantlife.org.uk which received 229,899 unique visitors in 2013. Links will also be made to other partner websites. We will also promote it through local networks, our e news and membership of over 7500 supporters. 1000 paper copies will be distributed to local tourist information and other visitor attractions.

Key Costs: Drystone Dyke wall repairs and new gates: £17,977 (based on quotes); Munsary trail leaflet design and printing: £842; Travel and Subsistence from Plantlife Scotland HQ in Stirling for project Management site visits x2 and 1 visit for trail guide: £505; Staff time to deliver the project and administration and overheads: £1,281. Total: £20,605

Amount Requested: £9,914.5

Other Funding sources: Caithness and North Sutherland Fund have pledged £9,409.5 to be released if 100% funding is secured. Plantlife are providing £1,281 in staff costs. Applications to the E.ON Campster Fund and the Highland Council Ward Discretionary Fund were unsuccessful.

Timescales: Start date dependent on securing funding. Completed within 12 months.

Benefits provided: The project is important for the sustainable conservation of this site which is of international importance for its blanket bog habitat and associated species (SSSI, Special Protection Area, Special Area of Conservation, proposed World Heritage Site, 'Ramsar' wetland of international importance). Restoration of the dyke is crucial to make the park stockproof again for grazing management, to reassure visitors to the reserve that the cattle are securely contained, and for the cultural preservation of a Caithness-built drystone dyke. Grazing by cattle opens up

the sward and creates the right conditions for ground-nesting birds and for a greater diversity of wild plants to grow as food- plants and nectar and pollen sources for a range of invertebrates. The target bird species are: Golden Plover, Dunlin and Snipe. Other species of importance include Short-eared Owl, Greenshank, Curlew, Lapwing and Skylark, with Hen Harrier and Merlin hunting voles in the grass. A diverse ground flora, with associated invertebrates provides a firm basis for the local biodiversity food web. Cattle grazing on the reserve can provide the ground conditions to make this more sustainable.

The nature trail guide will be the first time that we have printed reserve materials to distribute and it will allow us to reach new local audiences. Many locals are not aware of Munsary and it will promote the existence of the reserve to residents and visitors alike, and provide information on the nature value of this part of Caithness.

The repairs to the drystone dyke will restore this integral part of Caithness's built heritage and landscape adding to the attractiveness and uniqueness of the area.