

The Highland Council

Resources Committee – 25th February 2015

Agenda Item	10
Report No	RES/11 /15

Carbon CLEVER Community Grant Fund

Report by Head of Policy and Reform

Summary

This report asks Members to consider and agree the proposed arrangements for localising the Carbon CLEVER Community Grant fund in 2015/16.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Carbon CLEVER Community grant fund (CCCGF) contributes to the Council's programme commitment to achieve a carbon neutral Inverness in a low carbon Highlands by 2025 by providing financial support to communities implementing innovative projects which tackle climate change.
- 1.2 At a meeting of the Highland Council in June 2014, Members approved the development of the £200,000 CCCGF. It was agreed that applications under £10k should be submitted to Area Committees for approval – and that a list of approved applications should be submitted to the Resources committee on a quarterly basis so that the Committee could take an overview of how the funds were being committed.
- 1.3 On reflection, it is proposed that the fund would benefit from further localisation, with each Area committee having a fund allocation. Funding decisions would be taken at Area Committees, with an annual update of the decisions made across the region as part of the report to Resources Committee on progress with the Carbon Management Plan.
- 1.4 This report seeks to establish the process for assessing applications, the timetable for dealing with applications, and the distribution of funds.

2. Grant Fund Criteria & Assessment of Applications

- 2.1 At Resources Committee in August 2014, Members agreed that the CCCGF should follow The Highland Council Single Grants and Discretionary Funding application process. It was further agreed that in order to align the fund with the aims of Carbon CLEVER, applications will be assessed on how well they met the key principles of Carbon CLEVER:
 - Carbon emission reduction
 - Leadership
 - Engagement
 - Value for money
 - Economic benefit
 - Raise awareness and promote behaviour change
- 2.2 Appendix 1 sets out the proposed weighting of the application criteria. Reducing carbon emissions and community engagement are vital to achieving

a low carbon Highlands by 2025. This has been reflected in a higher weighting. Applications would also undergo a technical assessment which will result in a pass/fail.

- 2.2 It is proposed that the full £200,000 fund be made available in the first round of funding.
- 2.3 There are two options in respect of closing dates for applications. The first would be a single closing date of 24th June 2015 for all applications, with recommendations then made to the next relevant Area Committee. This is the simplest option, but has the disadvantage of introducing significant delay between application submissions and the funding decision, particularly for projects in Inverness; Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey; and Skye, Ross & Cromarty. The second option would be for a variable closing date, based on the Area Committee timetable. Closing dates would fall six weeks prior to the relevant Area Committee (Appendix 2).
- 2.4 Applications will be assessed in the climate change team and with advice from the appropriate Ward Manager. A recommendation paper will then be prepared for consideration at each Area Committee.

3. Distribution of Funds

- 3.1 In sizing the fund for each Area Committee to allocate, it is proposed this reflects local electoral and area governance arrangements and is based on the number of elected Members in each Area Committee. This distribution is shown in Appendix 3. This will provide a mechanism to ensure that the fund benefits projects across the whole Highland region.
- 3.2 Discussions with partner organisations suggest that the fund will be fully subscribed, which could lead to recommended projects going unfunded. Where there is a shortfall in funding, it is suggested that applicants are sign posted to other sources of funding. This might include Ward Discretionary budgets. The fund criteria set out in Appendix 1 also favour applications where other sources of funding are identified.
- 3.3 In the event of an underspend, applications made later in the financial year could be considered at Area Committee. There is also scope to carry forward underspend to the next financial year if Members agree that as advantageous to the fund, the Area and the overall capital programme.

4. Implications

- 4.1 Resource Implications: An allocation of £200,000 from the £1 million per annum Carbon CLEVER capital budget allowance for the CCCGF was agreed at a meeting of The Highland Council in June, 2014.
- 4.2 Climate Change/ Carbon CLEVER Implications: Through the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 and as a signatory to Scotland's Climate Change Declaration, The Highland Council has a duty to encourage and work with others in the local community to take action to adapt to the impact of climate change, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to make public its

commitment to action. Through the CCCGF, the Council will be supporting local communities in taking practical steps to mitigate against climate change. Successful applications and projects will also reinforce and support the aims of Carbon CLEVER.

- 4.3 Rural Implications: The CCCGF will be open to community groups and organisations throughout the Highlands. Applications will be approved by Members at Area Committees, ensuring that the fund benefits the whole Highland region.
- 4.4 Gaelic Implications: The CCCGF follows the Council's policy on signage and branding. The application form seeks to assess project contributions to the promotion of the Gaelic language.
- 4.5 Risk Implications: The CCCGF will require careful management and monitoring to ensure that the application process and award of funding is open and transparent. This will reduce any risks associated with the fund. It is proposed that the process is reviewed following final awards, and that any improvements identified should be incorporated into the administration of the fund in 2016/17.
- 4.6 Legal Implications: The Highland Council has an obligation to support national efforts to reduce carbon emissions to meet the targets set out in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. Accounting rules relating to spending of capital grants to third parties will be implemented.
- 4.7 Any changes required to the scheme of delegation following the Committee decision will be considered at a future Council meeting.
- 4.8 Equalities Implications: To ensure that the grant is accessible to all groups of people, support will be available throughout the process. Applications will be screened on a case-by-case basis for equalities implications. Projects which are granted funding will be required to have necessary equality policies in place, and this will be outlined in award notices.

Recommendations

Members are asked to agree:

1. The Carbon CLEVER Community grant fund assessment criteria (Appendix 1)
2. Whether to have a single or variable closing date for applications (Appendix 2)
3. The delegation of decision making to Area Committees for all applications, with the Scheme amended at the next opportunity
4. The funding allocations to Area Committees based on local electoral and area governance arrangements (Appendix 3)
5. The proposals for dealing with any potential underspend (paragraph 3.3)
6. That the process is reviewed and improvements incorporated for 2016/17.

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CARBON CLEVER COMMUNITY GRANT FUND – ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Purpose

Applications will be invited from community and third sector organisations to develop and implement capital projects which will directly support the aims of the Carbon CLEVER initiative. Priority will be given to projects which reduce carbon emissions and involve a high degree of community engagement.

1. Key Criteria for Applications to the Carbon CLEVER Community Grant Fund

Criterion 1 – Carbon Reduction (High Weighting /10)

Projects and activities must lead to a demonstrable reduction in carbon dioxide emissions in communities. The application form should clearly identify the project's carbon reduction aims and how this will be measured.

Criterion 2 – Leadership - (Medium Weighting /5)

Projects should demonstrate community leadership in maximising carbon emission reduction.

Criterion 3 – Engagement (High Weighting /10)

Projects will be assessed on efforts to engage with the community. It should be demonstrated in the application form that communities have been consulted prior to application, and a sample of those who are going to be directly impacted by the proposed project should be involved in the project's development.

Criterion 4 – Value for Money (Medium Weighting /5)

Projects will be assessed on value for money. Weighting will be given to projects which draw in or have in place additional or match funding.

Criterion 5 – Economic Benefit (Medium Weighting /5)

Projects will be assessed on the economic community benefit that can be achieved through implementation of the project. Applications should provide clear projections of expected benefits.

Criterion 6 – Raise Awareness & Promote Behaviour Change (Medium Weighting /5)

Projects will be expected to have a sustainability legacy and positively influence a move towards low carbon behaviours in the community.

2. Technical Assessment (pass or fail)

Applications must demonstrate that projects will lead to a reduction in carbon emissions and this will be a condition of funding.

As a capital grant fund, projects will only be eligible for funding if they concern: the acquisition or creation of a new asset; or the enhancement of existing assets. Projects must provide a benefit for a period of more than one year.

The technical assessment will enable a judgement to be made on the applicant organisation's governance, experience, track record and capacity to deliver the project. This will be assessed by Council Officers and will cover the single grant process requirements.

Appendix 2

Option 1 - Applications and Assessment Process (single closing date)

25 February 2015	Resources Committee agree criteria and application process.
w/c 2 March 2015	Official call for applications, publication of assessment criteria and publicity of the fund
24 June 2015	Closing date for applications submitted via the Council's Single Application Form and logged on the Sharepoint website
w/c 29 June 2015	Officer assessment of applications
w/c 3 August 2015	Draft award recommendations presented as required to the Skye, Ross & Cromarty (5 August 2015), Lochaber (25 August 2015), City of Inverness (10 September 2015), Caithness & Sutherland (16 September 2015), and Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey (23 September 2015) Area Committees.

Option 2 – Applications and Assessment Process (variable closing dates based on Area Committee timetable)

25 February 2015	Resources Committee agree criteria and application process.
w/c 2 March 2015	Official call for applications, publication of assessment criteria and publicity of the fund
w/c 24 June 2015	Variable closing dates for applications submitted via the Council's Single Application Form and logged on the Sharepoint website, 6 weeks prior to next Area Committee i.e. Skye, Ross & Cromarty (24 June 2015), Lochaber (14 July 2015), City of Inverness (30 July 2015), Caithness & Sutherland (5 August 2015), and Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey (12 August 2015) Area Committees.
w/c 29 June 2015	Officer assessment of applications
w/c 3 August 2015	Draft award recommendations presented as required to the Skye, Ross & Cromarty (5 August 2015), Lochaber (25 August 2015), City of Inverness (10 September 2015), Caithness & Sutherland (16 September 2015), and Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey (23 September 2015) Area Committees.

Carbon CLEVER Community Grant Fund Distribution

Total fund value - £200,000. This equates to £2,500 per Member.

Caithness & Sutherland – Proposed Annual Allocation £40,000 (total)

Wards 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 (16 Members)

City of Inverness – Proposed Annual Allocation £65,000 (total)

Wards 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20 (26 Members)

Lochaber – Proposed Annual Allocation £17,500 (total)

Wards 12, 22 (7 Members)

Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey – Proposed Annual Allocation £20,000 (total)

Wards 19, 21 (8 Members)

Skye, Ross & Cromarty – Proposed Annual Allocation £57,500 (total)

Wards 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 (23 Members)