

**The Highland Council**  
**Caithness & Sutherland Area Committee**  
**26 May 2015**

Agenda Item	<b>8.</b>
Report No	<b>CS/15/15</b>

**Landfill Communities Fund**

**Report by Director of Community Services**

This report invites Members to approve 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 approve the following application to the Highland Council Landfill Communities Fund. The details of the project are set out in the Appendix.
- 2.2 **Caithness and Sutherland Green Gym®**

The project, called Caithness and Sutherland green Gym, aims to provide a range of environmental learning activities, opportunities to engage in a healthier lifestyle, empower participating communities, strengthen partnerships, an improved environment and delivery of a range of practical conservation outcomes.

### 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.

<b>APPLICATIONS</b>	<b>TOTAL PROJECT COST</b>	<b>AMOUNT REQUESTED</b>	<b>RECOMMENDED ALLOCATION</b>
Caithness and Sutherland Green Gym®	£11,200	£10,000	£10,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	£11,200	£10,000	£10,000

### 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: 30 April 2015

Author: Neil Downie

Background Papers: Appendix

## Appendix

**Name of Project: Caithness and Sutherland Green Gym®**

**Applicant: The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) Scotland**

**Background:** TCV's purpose is to "Work together with people and communities to transform their health, prospects and outdoors places for the long term." This is our leading goal in the Strategic Business Plan 2013-16, with Green Gym identified as the core activity that will help us achieve our purpose.

TCV Green Gym transforms people's quality of life and wellbeing whilst also improving the local environment for the community. Participants take part in a three to four hour weekly programme of practical outdoor activity, such as planting trees, building footpaths and creating community gardens. A social prescription model is used, where medical and mental health organisations refer people to the programme, which can be tailored to meet specific health and social objectives for participants. People can also self-refer and all participants are regarded as volunteers making an important contribution to their community and green spaces.

Evaluation work undertaken by TCV and partner agencies shows that:

- 100% of participants, surveyed across the UK agree that taking part in the Green Gym has benefited their mental health, boosting self-esteem and confidence through learning new skills and completing new tasks
- Volunteering has a greater effect on the most deprived who show the most change as a result of their experience, including a significant positive change in the way they engage with their community
- Projects which involve residents in improving local green spaces have been shown to result in greater social and community cohesion, and an increased feeling of safety in the community
- Working out in green spaces is a great way to relieve stress and can help to combat depression

By joining the Green Gym participants will become more active physically and develop new social skills and connections. This will help them to make positive decisions about their own health and wellbeing. People will connect with nature and other people, and through these connections, become better equipped to cope with mental health and other issues. People will be part of intergenerational groups helping to overcome social isolation and exclusion, boosting confidence for all generations, as well as improving self esteem by providing a regular sense of

achievement. People will learn new skills while undertaking practical conservation activities within their local green spaces increasing their potential to find work. All of this contributes to enhance personal resilience of the local community.

**Project Description:** Given the distances involved between the biodiversity work sites identified to date it is proposed that the focus of Year 1 activities be in the Caithness area in order to maximise referral partnership arrangements around the main settlements of Wick and Thurso and, correspondingly, the number of local beneficiaries. The opportunity exists to allocate a portion of activity sessions to the Lochinver – Assynt area (e.g. a 10 week Discover Green Gym) where a number of project tasks have been identified including removing regenerating spruce tree saplings from the Culag Community Woodland and marram grass planting to stabilise erosion at Clachtoll and Balchladdich. A monthly programme of activity will be produced and widely distributed, as a promotional tool, to ensure any new volunteers are able to join in. The project activities known to date can be summarised as follows:

- **Small Blue Butterfly Habitat Restoration, Castlehill, Castletown ND1968** - scarifying the ground to remove bishop weed, rose bay willow herb and mosses and open up for kidney vetch. Additional Kidney Vetch plug planting activities.
- **Newtonhill Woodland, Wick, Caithness** – working with The Friends of Newtonhill and HRC Rangers to carry out ongoing maintenance work and support planned habitat creation work such as building a substantial bug hotel and a new wildflower meadow.
- **Wick River Giant Hogweed (in particular Bilbster and Lower Gillock areas)** – Giant Hogweed has invaded the banks of the Wick riverside. Although control has taken place over the last two years, seeds are still growing and further work is required to control this invasive plant.
- **Controlling regenerating invasive plants at Loch Fleet NNR , By Golspie, Sutherland** - Cutting and removing invasive plant species throughout the NNR.
- **(TBC) Himalayan Balsam Control, Strath Fleet, by Golspie, Sutherland** - Survey and control invasive non-native species from colonising Mound Alderwoods SAC (Internationally important for wet woodland habitat).

#### **Key Costs:**

**£1200:** Caithness and Sutherland Green Gym<sup>®</sup> Development – 2 days @ £300 (office based – Munloch - research and promotion) and 2 days @ £300 (In situ partner referral Green Gym taster /Information days – Wick/Thurso and Golspie areas)

**£9,600:** 32 weekly sessions @ £300/session. This cost includes provision of Green Gym trained TCV staff member, instruction, crewbus/transport, tools and comprehensive insurance. Some additional TCV led preparatory and development

activity will also take place, at no additional charge, to facilitate a quick and effective commencement of this project.

**£400:** Publicity allowance to cover the design and production of project publicity leaflets.

**Total Project Cost: £11,200**  
**Amount Requested from LCF: £10,000**

**Timescales:** project will take place between May 2015 and March 2016.

**Benefits provided:**

The proposed outcomes of the Caithness and Sutherland Green Gym programme will include:

- Provision of a range of environmental learning activities across the project area
- Providing opportunities to engage more people in a healthier lifestyle, increasing fitness and confidence as well as reported improvements in mental wellbeing and reduced feelings of isolation
- Increased levels of physical activity amongst participants who are not meeting the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) recommendations for physical activity, who are obese and/or have physical or mental health problems. Enable participants to meet the CMO's guidelines for physical activity, and to sustain their activity at this level.
- Ensure the participating communities feel sufficiently informed and empowered to continue working in a sustainable structure and format
- Strengthen partnerships through making local connections with other local community, environmental, health and educational establishments (statutory and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector)
- An improved environment will provide a safer, more attractive and pleasant place to live as well as enhancing accessibility and biodiversity in across key sites around Caithness and Sutherland.
- The participating community members will have benefited from the health improvements environmental volunteering can bring and will be inspired to continue growing and improving their community
- Delivery of a range of practical conservation outcomes in line with local Greenspace/Neighbourhood/Biodiversity strategy targets.

**Other Funding sources:**

TCV Scotland will source the additional 10% third party funding from Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH).