

## CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY FINANCE COMMITTEE

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### FOR DECISION

**Title:** Expenditure Proposal: Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust Training Project

**Prepared by:** David Cameron, Corporate Services Director

#### **Purpose**

To present an outline of an expenditure proposal for consideration following recent discussion with the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust (COAT) Manager.

To seek approval to the commitment of £15,000 to the project each year, commencing 2011/12, for three years until 2013/14.

#### **Recommendations**

- a) The Committee is asked to consider the outline expenditure proposal set out in this paper;
- b) The Committee is requested to approve commitment of £15,000 to the project each year, commencing 2011/12, for three years until 2013/14;
- c) The Committee is asked to note that a more complete project proposal document will be circulated at a future date to give more information on the delivery of this project and to update on its progress through funding application rounds.

#### **Executive Summary**

1. The COAT Manager is currently pursuing an opportunity to apply for European Social Fund (ESF) funding to support a training project focusing on the development of skills associated with path building and maintenance.
2. This training project would complement the training element of the Mountain Heritage Project already underway and which has received positive media coverage for the Trust and the National Park.
3. The ESF Programme is presently offering intervention rates of up to 70% of eligible project costs.
4. The outline COAT project involves total annual expenditure of £120,000 each year for 3 years. At 70% intervention, the bid for ESF funding would represent £84,000 of funding toward the project total.

5. The Trust Manager has requested funding of £15,000 from the Authority to support this bid, with the remaining £21,000 to be sought from other funding partners.
6. If successful, this level of funding would represent leverage at a ratio of 1:7 to the Authority.
7. Commitment to fund the project will of course result in a forward commitment of £15,000 into budgets for 2012/13 and 2013/14. In attracting funding into the National Park at 7 times this level, this relatively small forward commitment does appear justifiable at this time.
8. The project aims to train 6 trainees per year in a range of skills related to path development and maintenance. Trainees would have the opportunity to train toward a fully accredited Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) level 2, and over the 8 month training period will also receive a wage at national minimum wage level. Over three years the project will therefore provide 24 training places.
9. Development of this project in tandem with delivery of the training element of the Mountain Heritage Project also begins to establish rural skills training as a key individual strand of the Trust's future business plans rather than an add-on element to some projects.
10. The project proposal has already received approval at ESF Stage I. The Trust Manager is therefore now seeking commitment from funding partners in order to take a formal project proposal through subsequent ESF stages.
11. Funding Commitment from the Authority is sought at this stage in order to give more solidity to the funding package and help move the project forward in attracting the remaining funding required. The commitment would also help support the project through remaining, interim assessment rounds. The final bid will be submitted to the ESF managing authority by the end of October at the latest.
12. A fuller project proposal will be circulated to Committee for information at a future date.
13. For transparency in terms of governance, I note here that this paper has come forward from me in my capacity as a Director of the Trust and following one of my regular progress meetings with the COAT Manager. As a result of the emergence of the project opportunity during the summer holiday period, it has not been possible to bring the paper forward through the Access Team in the normal way. As I have no decision making authority on the Finance Committee, there is no conflict of interest in terms of decision making on the proposal.

**DAVID CAMERON**

**11 August 2011**

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