



Caithness Environment Forum
Meeting Held in the
ERI Seminar Hall, Castle Street, Wick
on Thursday 18th February 2010 at 2.30pm

Present:

Cllr Robert Coghill (Chairperson)
Alistair Swanson
David Barclay
David Glass
Dieter Tuerlinckx
Dr Kathleen McDougall
Ken Butler
Koreen MacDougall
Paul Castle
Tom Kellett
William Bruce

In Attendance:

David Shearer, Assistant Administrator - Caithness Partnership

1. Welcome & Apologies –

Apologies were received from:

Tom Sayles, Stephen T Fraser, Cliff Beck, Brian Mutch.

2. Minutes of meeting held on 14 November 2008

The minutes of the meeting held on 14th November 2008 were approved as a true record of the proceedings.

3. Matters Arising

Newton Hill Update.

Dieter Tuerlinckx stated that a meeting was held with Wick High School and pupils will be involved in developing the site on a monthly basis. A meeting with the Forestry Commission is to take place in March to confirm their approval. Dieter also stated that there has been some interest shown from the Mod who wish to hold an event at Newton Hill.

4. Greenspace Audit update.

David Barclay reported to the forum that the Open Space guidance produced by The Highland Council produced is now available from THC website and is for new open space provision as apposed to a review of existing open space provision. David explained that the document is mainly to ensure developers and planners understand how to work through open space provision as per Scottish Government guidance. David further explained that a component of this was the Greenspace Audit and that the marking out of this audit is still to

(Draft for approval at next scheduled meeting)

be finalised. David stated that progress of this and other plans such as the Coastal Zone Management plan can be monitored from The Highland Council Website website.

5. Caithness Environmental Grant Scheme 2010-2012

Koreen MacDougall explained to the forum that this small grants scheme is aimed at small groups that may not ordinarily go through the process of applying for funding but perhaps have a project that comes under the natural heritage theme. Koreen further explained that the scheme is jointly funded by LEADER and SNH with a funding pot of £40k over a three year term. The maximum grant offer will be £6k with applicants contributing a minimum 10% in kind contribution. Koreen stated that her role as fund Manager is to promote the scheme and assist with the application process in partnership with Tom Kellett to ensure applications are eligible. Koreen further explained the conditions of the fund as stated in the schemes conditions document annex 1ⁱ and 2ⁱⁱ.

6. Caithness Environment Aims and Objectives.

A discussion took place on the forums role in the past which had been mostly involved with the Greenspace Audit in which the forums role has now finished. It was also acknowledged that although the forum had not perhaps met regularly, it was a beneficial body to call on when an environmental issue arose.

It was agreed that the Caithness Environment forum will meet on an as and when required basis when any environmental issues developed.

It was agreed that a sub group be formed to assess the applications received for the Caithness Environmental Fund. The following members of the forum were selected to form the decision making sub group who will each be granted one vote:

David Glass	Caithness Biodiversity Group
Paul Castle or Dieter Tuerlinckx	THC Park Ranger
Tom Kellett	SNH Area Officer
William Bruce	Caithness Local Access Forum
Alistair Swanson	NFU
Cllr Robert Coghill	Chairperson
Koreen MacDougall	Fund Manager (no vote granted)

It was agreed that forum members are invited in attendance to the subgroup meetings where their expertise is required.

It was agreed that applications submitted should be sent out in advance to the subgroup members to allow due consideration of the merits of each individual application. It was agreed that applications should be submitted two weeks in advance of the subgroup meeting.

7. A.O.C.B.

David Barclay noted the success of the Friends of Newton Hill group and the role of the Caithness Environment Forum in helping them achieve their objectives in securing the Newton Hill Croft from the Forestry Commission.

David Barclay reported that HIE have appointed a consultant to evaluate the coastal path at John O Groats along the coastline and recommended that the forum monitor the progress on coastal access rights at the John O Groats area.

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David Barclay provided an update on the Core Paths Plan for Highland stating THC is awaiting response from the Scottish Government on the submitted plan and stated that there were no major issues identified in the Caithness Core Paths plan.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Caithness Environment Forum is to be agreed when required.

ⁱ ANNEX 1

**CAITHNESS PARTNERSHIP
ENVIRONMENTAL FUND 2009-2011**

The above project, involves the setting up of a small grants scheme for community and voluntary groups with start up funding from SNH totalling £20,000 in value.

The Scheme will be jointly funded as follows:

Funder	Total
Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)	£29,000
LEADER (assumes a 50% intervention rate)	£20,000
Caithness Partnership	£6,000
Totals	£55,000

The actual funds available for distribution will not be less than £40,000 over three years.

This offer is subject to the following conditions:

- (1) That all the projects funded will be undertaken in accordance with the guidance given in **Annex 2**.
- (2) The maximum grant offered under this scheme will be £6,000. 100% grants will be possible from the Fund, however, applicants will be expected to have an “in kind” or cash contribution equating to a minimum of 10% of the total project cost.
- (3) SNH’s contribution will be paid according to the claim schedule in the grant offer letter.
- (4) The Caithness Partnership can add additional funding to the Environmental Fund but must inform SNH of any significant changes (>10%) to the funding contributions of Highland LEADER and the other possible project partners.
- (5) The Fund, as defined in Annex 2, will deliver environmental projects within Caithness and is available to voluntary, geographical or interest based groups.

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Where projects will clearly deliver priorities within Annex 2 there will be no need for prior consultation with SNH before offering funds. However, the Caithness Partnership will consult SNH in cases where SNH's advice could add significant value to project design, where there are concerns or doubts about the fit of the project with the above guidance, where there are risks to project delivery, or in other cases of doubt. Therefore, the amount of consultation and comment required prior to offering funds for projects will be limited to significant issues of concern or potential conflict. The Fund Manager (see below), in consultation with the SNH Project Officer, will be ultimately responsible for all such decision making.

The fact that SNH are represented on the **Caithness Partnership Environment Group**, the group which will be deciding the small grant awards, should ensure that these arrangements work effectively.

(6) The Caithness Partnership will discuss and agree with SNH, before the launch of the Environmental Fund, a variety of methods of promoting this scheme as widely as possible.

The Environmental Fund and grants awarded by it will be publicised by press releases on a case by case basis.

Any press releases or other public statements about the project will only be issued following agreement with the partners. The SNH's Press Office can assist with the sending of prepared press releases to relevant journalists, papers, etc.

All publicity about the scheme, both to internal audiences and to prospective applicants, will clearly explain that the grants scheme is supported by funding from SNH, and hence that SNH cannot provide any further co-funding towards projects funded through this scheme.

(7) In order to avoid 'double funding', the SNH contribution to this scheme should not be used to fund organisations who receive 'framework' or 'core' funding from SNH. The main organisations in this category are Caithness Partnership, NTS; RSPB; JMT; BTCV; SWT; and North Highland Forest Trust.

SNH funds will not be used to support initiatives that contribute towards delivery of a group or organisations statutory duties or a planning requirement.

In addition, all Fund applicants should be asked to clearly state whether their project is already part funded by SNH. If it is, the SNH contribution to this grants scheme should not be used for further project funding.

(8) The SNH contribution to this scheme will not be used to fund projects which are part-funded by Land Managers Options or Rural Priorities within the Scotland Rural Development Programme.

(9) In the event that The Caithness Partnership fails to undertake the works referred to in clauses (1)-(8) and (10)-(13) SNH shall be entitled to withhold or demand full repayment, or such part as SNH deems appropriate, of their contribution.

(10) In the event of any claim in respect of any debt, liability, breach of contract, act or omission being made by any party other than the partners ("a third party claim") against either or both SNH and The Caithness Partnership, the partner whose act or omission caused the third party claim (by virtue of that partner incurring a debt, liability and / or that partner's negligence, breach of contract, act or omission or otherwise), shall free, relieve and indemnify the other Partner against any liability, costs, claims and expenses arising out of such third party claim.

(11) Caithness Partnership and SNH agree that, in conducting the project and in publicising its work, full recognition will be given to the support of all contributing parties.

Individual projects funded by the grants schemes should also acknowledge the support of all contributing partners wherever appropriate.

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(12) Ownership and copyright of all outputs from this project e.g. final reports, data sets etc will be jointly owned by The Caithness Partnership, SNH and other funding partners. Copies of any such final reports and data produced by successful applicants will be supplied to SNH.

(13) A brief end of year report will be provided to SNH summarising the key elements of projects approved for funding under this scheme. These key elements will include applicant details, a project description, project outputs, project location, total project costs, and grant awarded.

Reports will be supplied on progress to the meetings of the Caithness Partnership Environment Group.

(14) The following Caithness Partnership and SNH staff will take the lead roles in this project, and close contact should be maintained throughout.

Caithness Partnership : Environmental Fund Manager	Koreen MacDougall
Caithness Partnership Environment Group : SNH Representative	David Glass
	Paul Castle /
	Dieter Tuerlinckx
	Tom Kellett
	William Bruce
	Alistair Swanson
	Cllr Robert Coghill

ii **ANNEX 2**

The Caithness Environmental Fund will cover two key areas, “involvement” and “biodiversity”.

Involvement: We want to encourage more people to get involved with the natural heritage.

The Caithness Environmental Fund will:

- raise awareness and understanding of the natural heritage, and of how it adds to our quality of life;
- increase opportunities for children and adults to actively learn and care about our natural heritage through first-hand experience; and
- encourage more communities, individuals and professional groups to get involved in looking after the natural heritage.

Biodiversity: We would like our wildlife to be rich and varied.

The Caithness Environmental Fund will encourage action which:

- improves, protects and manages native species and habitats;
- restores those habitats and species that have been lost; and
- helps more people from all walks of life to care about biodiversity (the total variety of all living things).

In particular the Fund will support:

- actions set out in the Strategy Implementation Plans supporting the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs);
- actions which help the ‘habitats and species of principal importance’ on the Scottish list, and those on the United Kingdom Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP) list of priority habitats and species;
- managing and controlling non-native species, especially invasive species (those which threaten native species); and
- biological recording and sharing biodiversity data (information).

Who should apply

- Community and voluntary groups

- Non-Local Authority educational groups
- Land managers not eligible for SRDP (Rural Priorities) funding
- Businesses if they can show clear benefits to the public.
- Non Governmental Organisations provided they are not subject already to core funding from SNH (see below)

We are particularly keen to work with: groups, communities and individuals who do not normally know about or get involved with the natural heritage; the tourism sector; and people who make decisions which affect the natural heritage.

Our priorities (Involvement):

We particularly welcome:

- projects which help communities, groups and individuals understand the natural heritage and get involved with it in their local areas.
- Projects which take forward actions identified in Strategy Implementation Plans supporting the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy.

What we will pay for (Involvement): The main things we will pay for are listed below. We will also pay for other proposals that raise people's awareness and understanding of the natural heritage and improve the opportunities for them to get involved.

- Materials and activities which raise people's awareness and understanding of the natural heritage.
- Informing people about the local natural heritage, its value and where to enjoy it.
- Encouraging understanding of the natural heritage, its value and its role in sustainable development among countryside professionals, land managers, tourism operators and other key groups.
- Encouraging understanding of the natural heritage through community learning and development.
- Providing opportunities for first-hand learning about the natural heritage
- Improving the natural heritage value and environmental educational use of appropriate public areas (outwith Local Authority ownership/management), such as community gardens and youth club grounds.
- Helping people to get more involved in looking after the natural heritage.
- Encouraging communities to get involved in taking forward Local Biodiversity
- Action Plans.
- Developing and supporting the role of volunteers in looking after the natural heritage and promoting understanding of its value and importance.
- Surveys or studies of what people think about the Highland scenery and wildlife.
- Delivering training that will help people working in the tourist industry to link local wildlife with their customers.

Our priorities (Biodiversity)

We particularly welcome:

- projects which contribute to delivering the key aims of the SBS and the Strategy Implementation Plans which support it;
- projects which help to deliver the key targets for UKBAP priority habitats and species, and those on the Scottish list of 'habitats and species of principal importance'; and
- projects that encourage partnership working.

We particularly welcome species and habitat recording projects which:

- cover areas of the county where there is little biological recording;
- can supply reliable records to the Highland Biological Recording Group;
- cover groups of plants and animals which are poorly recorded;
- cover groups of plants and animals which are a priority in terms of our other commitments; and

- aim to make as much biodiversity information as possible available to the public with as few restrictions as possible.

What we will pay for (Biodiversity): The main types of projects we will pay for are listed below.

- Activities identified in the Strategy Implementation Plans.
- Targeted management to support species and habitats which are listed in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan as priorities both locally and in Scotland because they are under threat.
- Special schemes aimed at conserving, improving and saving UKBAP priority species and habitats. (Information available from Highland Council Biodiversity Officers or Local Biodiversity Groups).
- Control and management of non-native, especially invasive, species.
- Events or schemes which tackle wildlife crime.
- Identifying, surveying and monitoring habitats and species of local importance, and taking action to manage them.
- Surveying and monitoring priority habitats and species.

Involvement and Biodiversity

What we will not pay for:

- Developing websites.
- Conference fees and associated costs.
- Funding of project officers.
- Fees, travel and accommodation costs for training courses,
- Commercial ventures, even when the outcomes fit the scheme aims.
- Collecting and managing information that will not be made available to the wider public.

What other information your application should include:

To support your application, you should send:

- information about your intended audience, how your project will reach them and how you will measure success;
- details of which model of good practice your project follows or, for new projects, how you plan to develop your project;
- where appropriate, evidence of support from professionals in the relevant field of education, community involvement and interpretation;
- details of how the project will be maintained once it has been completed, and how this will be funded;
- an extract or reference to any relevant Habitat or Species Action Plan, your Local Biodiversity Action Plan or the relevant Strategy Implementation Plan.