

## REPORT OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND COMMITTEE AND FUNDING AND GRANTS OFFICER

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### **SUBJECT: REPURPOSE AND DEVIVERY OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND**

#### Purpose of Report

To present recommendations from the Sustainable Development Fund Committee to Members on how to refocus the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) to support projects that deliver our response to the climate change emergency, as well as improve the efficiency, cost effectiveness, transparency and measurable outcomes of the grant.

#### Introduction/Background

The SDF committee met on 15/7/20 to review SDF in light of the:

- NPA approved (3/6/20) Climate Emergency action plan, which recommends '*prioritising SDF funds for innovative projects that respond to the climate change emergency.*'
- Additional £50,000 allocated to SDF from Welsh Government Sustainable Landscape Sustainable Places scheme for capital decarbonisation projects (to be spent by March 2021)

#### **Recommendations by the SDF Committee**

The Committee discussed a number of options and recommended a number of changes to deliver the funding.

- 1. Change from a generic ‘open call’ which is the current delivery mechanism for funding to a more direct and targeted approach to the funding.**

Applicants will be able to apply for one of three specific carbon reduction projects, while retaining a fourth option of being able to bid for a more “individual” projects. It is proposed that applicants will be able to apply for projects to deliver the following:-

- a. Install renewable energy generation facilities to a community building i.e. solar panels;
- b. An initiative to promote reduction in carbon omissions in transport i.e. installing an electric charging point for bikes or cars or through supporting access to non-individual travel;
- c. Install a community facility that minimises waste, i.e. install water fountain;
- d. Any other community based carbon reduction initiative.

This targeted approach to grant giving would enable the money to be spent in a direct way benefiting communities, it will be more efficient and less time consuming to support and administer. By adopting the approach we would be able to develop approaches to measure the impact of the fund, for example, we could calculate the reduction in carbon emissions due to the installation of photo voltaic panels on a village hall.

## **2. Simplified process of applying and administering the fund**

The committee recommended a series of changes that will enable a more efficient application process, such as the introduction of;

- Online eligibility checklist
- Publicised deadlines and clear guidelines on the length of a project and amount of funding available.
- Simplified application form with corresponding word count and scoring criteria.
- Up to two deadlines per year for submitting an application

## **3. Focus SDF funding on supporting ‘not for profit organisations’**

Currently Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) can apply to SDF, the committee recommend the funding is directed to ‘not for profit’ organisations. So SME’s for private profit would not be eligible.

## **4. Match Funding Requirement**

The Committee recommends a community contribution or investment in the form of match funding would still be a requirement, guidance would be ranging from 25% – 50% which could be offered in cash or in kind.

## **5. Discontinue the Little Green Grant**

Currently, £5,000 of the SDF is allocated to a small grants scheme called Little Green Grant. This element is administered by the Pembrokeshire Association for Voluntary Services (PAVS). The committee was of the view that this money would be better invested by focusing on larger schemes, as it would have a more significant impact on carbon reduction. The Committee is therefore recommending discontinuing the Little Green Grant.

## **6. Reduction in Committee Members**

The committee recommend the reduction in committee membership from 12 members (6 NPA members and 6 advisory members) to 6 NPA members plus 1 or 2 advisory members with skills and experience specifically in carbon reduction, who would be able to advise on the projects.

While the 6 Authority Members make the decisions relating to the grant, they are supported by six advisory members representing – the community, public and private sector. While the advice of these members has been appreciate by members, it was

considered that this model was no longer appropriate with a change of focus to dealing with tackling climate change. However, members were of a view that they would benefit from expert advice on decarbonisation and possibly finance.

### Financial considerations

There is a requirement to spend the £50,000 allocated by the Welsh Government by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021, therefore there is a need to streamline the process to ensure that projects can be agreed in time to utilise this money.

In terms of administration the current cost of administering the fund is very expensive, compared to the money allocated. It is considered that the proposed changes would make the scheme more efficient and reduce staff time on administration and support.

### Risk considerations

The SDF has supported a wider range of projects over the past 25 years. The change in focus to tackling climate change may lead to some negative reaction from groups who wish to submit applications which are not related to climate change. Therefore there will be a need to clearly communicate the reasons for the changes to potential applicants.

There will be a need to have a robust assessment and prioritisation process based on carbon reduction to evaluate applications. The Authority will need to make sure that this is clear to applicants.

### Compliance

Yes, the recommendations have been brought about from the Climate Change Emergency Action Plan and align with the Park Purposes and corporate objectives. They contribute to the carbon reduction aspirations of the National Park and Welsh Government.

### Human Rights/Equality issues

None

### Biodiversity implications/Sustainability appraisal

No negative impact on biodiversity.

### Welsh Language considerations

All revised materials and marketing will be fully bilingual.

### Conclusion

The SDF committee is requesting endorsement of the recommendations for the delivery of the refocused fund, the streamlining of the process and the reduction in committee membership.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**Members endorse the changes to the Sustainable Development Fund recommended by the Sustainable Development Fund Committee, with immediate effect.**

**Background Documents**

Anything published previously in relation to this report (e.g. previous reports to Authority/Committee, consultation reports, related publications, etc.)

*(For further information, please contact Jessica Morgan)*

*Author: Jessica Morgan*

*Consulted/engaged with (internal and/or external stakeholders): Tegryn Jones, Nicola Gandy and Nichola Couceiro*