

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

The Environment Committee

5 June 2013

THE COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT CHALLENGE FUND (CECF) REVIEW**Report by Depute Director (Environment)**

This Report seeks agreement on key changes to the Community Environment Challenge Fund, which was approved by the Environment Committee on 7 September 2011.

The Fund has now been running for over 18 months. The changes proposed in this Report are based on experience gained during this time as well as feedback from organisations/individuals that have experience of applying to the Fund, and Council officers.

1. BACKGROUND / MAIN ISSUES

- 1.1 The Community Environment Challenge Fund was agreed at the Environment Committee in September 2011 (Report Ref No 11/446) following an allocation of funding approved by the Council in its budget setting process in February 2011.
- 1.2 It was envisaged that the Fund would allow communities to bid for environmental improvement funding, and could also link to conservation area appraisals and other regeneration initiatives. The new Fund was aimed at community groups leading and delivering projects which would make a significant difference to their local environment, and be widely supported within the community. In addition, there is a requirement for a long term maintenance commitment for any projects undertaken through the Fund.
- 1.3 The Fund currently operates as follows. The organisation seeking funding must be a constituted group and can act on behalf of other community partners. The project must have the support of all elected members in the ward where the project is taking place and have the support of a range of local community groups including the Community Council. The project must be completed within two years, using at least 50% match funding from other sources which may include fundraising activities and 'in kind' contributions. The fund is accessible by completing a Single Application Form which is processed by Perth and Kinross Grants Direct. This has the benefit of one application which is then considered for a number of grant sources provided by the Council or other funders. Appendix 1(a) details the current application process. Appendix 1(b) details the proposed revised application process.
- 1.4 Up to £100,000 of funding was made available annually between 2011/12 and 2015/16. As the details of how the fund was to be implemented were not confirmed until September 2011, and groups then had to develop projects and apply for the funding, the first year's allocation was underspent. This has subsequently been re-phased with the funding period extended until 2016/17.

- 1.5 In order to maximise the number of groups and areas benefiting from the funding, each community group can currently only apply for funding for one project per financial year. To ensure the projects made a significant difference to the local environment, funding levels were set between £5,000 and £10,000 per project, although larger funding applications would be considered in exceptional circumstances. This approach also reduces the administration process.
- 1.6 In order to maximise the benefits of the Council's funding, additional match funding of at least 50% has to be secured for each project. For example, if a funding application is submitted for £10,000 then the Community Environment Challenge Fund (CECF) will only fund £5,000, if receipted items to the same value can be demonstrated. The 50% match funding by the community group can include a cash contribution from the group or other funders, or 'help in kind' (which needs to be quantified and accounted for), or both.
- 1.7 There has been a good range of projects funded so far, and these projects are detailed in Appendix 3. The funding applications have been submitted by communities from across Perth and Kinross, with over half (9 of the 17 applications) coming from In Bloom Committees. The funding allocation for 2012/13 has been fully committed with 50% paid.
- 1.8 Initial feedback from Community Groups and officers indicated that the accounting rules associated with the Capital nature of the funding were restrictive. For example, any assets funded through Capital have to be owned or leased by the Council. There were also a number of 'tidy up' or equipment purchase activities, which community groups wanted to undertake, however, they were not appropriate for Capital funding. However, through Capital funding, the CECF would only cover quite large projects where an asset is created. Changing the Fund to revenue allows a wider range of smaller projects to be funded, which would have a positive effect on the local environment.
- 1.9 It was therefore felt that revenue funding was more appropriate for the types of work the communities wanted to do. The Fund budget was consequently changed from Capital to Revenue during the financial year 2012/13 (Report Number: 13/52 refers). The budget revisions to the Fund are enabling local groups to access broader support for their community.

2. PROPOSALS

- 2.1 As the Community Environment Challenge Fund has been running for 18 months and it is now funded from the Revenue Budget, it is appropriate to review the fund and make any necessary alterations. The aims of the review were to:
- Make it as accessible as possible to community groups and local organisations.
 - To make it as easy and as streamlined as possible to apply.
 - Assist groups to improve areas and take on maintenance activities in partnership with the Council.

- 2.2 In undertaking the review, feedback from the relevant Council officers, community organisations and individuals that have experience of the Fund were taken into account. The main findings are as follows.

3. Revise the minimum and maximum funding levels

- 3.1 To make the Community Environment Challenge Fund more accessible to communities that want to implement smaller projects, it is proposed that the minimum level of funding that can be applied for is changed from £5,000 to £2,500. If the 50% match funding requirement is retained, the total costs of a project would therefore have to be at least £5,000.
- 3.2 The maximum funding limit should remain at £10,000 with the current option retained that, in exceptional circumstances, a larger funding application can be submitted. The whole project can be of any size and cost.
- 3.3 To enable some flexibility for funding smaller projects, there is the opportunity for several projects to be teamed up together in one application, to meet the minimum funding level. Although it is noted this may involve more work for the applicant group, it will help foster joint working in a community.

4. Take into consideration in-kind support

- 4.1 It is also proposed that in-kind contribution continues to be taken in to consideration when community groups apply for funding. This is because smaller groups often utilise a lot of in-kind support from volunteers, local businesses and other contributors. In situations where 'in kind' contribution is used as leverage to secure CECF funding, the community will be required to breakdown the 'in kind' support types in a standard template so that all applications containing 'in kind' support proposals are considered on a like for like basis. The track record of the Community group mobilising 'in kind' support will also be considered as part of the application assessment.

5. Match-funding

- 5.1 Based on feedback from representatives of Take a Pride in Perthshire, it is proposed that the requirement for match funding is retained at 50%.
- 5.2 In the past, match funding has proven to be problematic for some community groups applying to the Fund, particularly where match funding was predominately made up of 'in kind' contribution. As it is only possible to pay the grant or part of the grant on cash expenditure, as they are incurred, this could create cash flow problems, since no cash grant could be paid against 'in kind' expenditure. To avoid this type of issue, the applicant will still be requested to provide evidence of 'in kind contribution' and the grant would be paid against proof of "in kind" expenditure up to the level of grant agreed.

- 5.3 For example a Community Group applying for a £10,000 project may apply for £5,000 from the CECF, with £2,000 secured from other funding sources and £3,000 accounted for as 'in kind' support. Alternatively the Community may make up the match funding in its entirety through 'in kind' support i.e. £5,000. Provided that the Community can demonstrate "in kind" expenditure, the grant funding will be paid. It will be incumbent on the assessment of the application to ensure the robustness of any claims for in kind activities.
- 5.4 It is also proposed that the Guidance Notes are revised to state that, 'the money should only be released when proof has been supplied that remaining funding has been secured. This proof could be in the form of a Letter of Support for Guaranteed Funding from Other Funder(s).'
- 5.5 There have been some problems with cashflow where groups have incurred costs and do not have the resources to pay the full invoice. The potential for this has been minimised by asking groups to submit proof of requests of payments (i.e. copy of invoices) as soon as possible and payment of the grant was made on that basis before the invoice has been paid.
- 5.6 In order to ensure grant is only paid on eligible items it is proposed that the funding will continue to be paid on production of invoices. The applicant would be advised in the letter of offer to contact the Council if they anticipate any cashflow issues and exceptionally, payment of part of the grant could be agreed to be paid up-front based on invoices or other documented commitment to purchase.
- 6. Revise the essential and desirable criteria**
- 6.1 Following meeting with representatives from Take a Pride in Perthshire, it is proposed that the criteria for the Fund is revised as detailed in Appendix 2.
- 7. Introduce monitoring of projects and outcomes**
- 7.1 Improvements are required to the method of monitoring the impacts of the Community Environment Challenge Fund. It is therefore proposed that an End of Project Monitoring Report is sent to each group that has received funding so that the positive impacts on the community and their local area can be recorded, shared and celebrated.
- 7.2 The End of Project Monitoring Report will record:
- a) progress of the project compared to the programme planned initially
 - b) the number of areas involved in the project (perhaps using a map)
 - c) the area of land maintained by the community
 - d) the number of paid and voluntary posts created through the funded project
 - e) the number of training places created via the project
 - f) the number of volunteer hours dedicated to the project
 - g) the work carried out, e.g. the number of enhanced areas or length of newly-accessible paths

- 7.3 Overall, the form will evaluate the outcomes of the project and confirm what work was carried out. It will explain how objectives were met and will request a robust evaluation of the project.
- 7.4 Photographs can also be submitted with the Monitoring Form so that improvements can be recorded. The Monitoring Form will evidence the work completed and will link closely to the Fund's criteria. A proposed End of Project Monitoring report is included in Appendix 4.

8. Revision of assessment process

- 8.1 The current assessment process follows the established method of officer appraisal followed by recommendations and approvals by the Financial Assistance Panel. This means grants are considered quarterly and may be further delayed if additional information is required. The current timescales are a barrier for some organisations in implementing projects.
- 8.2 In undertaking the review, there is the opportunity to improve the process so that decisions can be made more quickly. It is therefore proposed that grant assessments are undertaken at the Waste Services and Community Greenspace Management Team to assess the applications.
- 8.3 A revised process is attached in Appendix 1(b).
- 8.4 This assessment approach was used in determining Community Waste Fund applications. The outcomes of the Community Waste Fund were reported to the Environment Committee in August 2012 (12/355).
- 8.5 It is proposed to bring forward reports every 6 months to the Environment Committee, so Elected Members will have sight of the funding allocations, and the benefits they provide.

9. Promotion of Fund

- 9.1 Once any revisions to the Fund have been implemented and the accessibility to groups improved, it will be important to promote the Fund. The promotion will need to reach communities across Perth and Kinross.
- 9.2 Possible outlets for promotion include Community Councils, In Bloom Groups, the Take a Pride website, all with links to the Community Greenspace webpages on the Council website and the updated Grants Direct website which will feature the revised Fund. A leaflet will also be produced. The intended timetable for implementation of the proposals is detailed in Appendix 5.

10. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 The review of the Community Environmental Challenge Fund provides an opportunity to make the fund more accessible to community groups and local

organisations and streamlines the approval process. It is therefore recommended that the Environment Committee agrees the following recommendations:

- 1) To the outcomes of the Community Environment Challenge Fund review
- 2) To the revised fund criteria as listed in Appendix 2
- 3) To agree to the revised assessment process and level of delegation for Officers to approve applications
- 4) The outcomes of the CECF be reported to the Environment Committee on a 6 monthly basis.

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Approved

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Date 13 May 2013		

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1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

The undernoted table should be completed for all reports. Where the answer is 'yes', the relevant section(s) should also be completed

Strategic Implications	Yes
Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement	Yes
Corporate Plan	Yes
Resource Implications	
Financial	Yes
Workforce	None
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	None
Assessments	
Equality Impact Assessment	Yes
Strategic Environmental Assessment	Yes
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	Yes
Legal and Governance	Yes
Risk	Yes
Consultation	
Internal	Yes
External	Yes
Communication	Yes

1. Strategic Implications

Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement

1.1 The proposals relate to the delivery of the Perth and Kinross Community Plan/ Single Outcome Agreement by:

- having strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others.
- We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations.
- We reduce the local and global environmental impact of our consumption and production.

Corporate Plan

1.2 The Council's Corporate Plan 2013-2018 lays out five outcome focussed strategic objectives which provide clear strategic direction, inform decisions at a corporate and service level and shape resources allocation. They are as follows:

- (i) Giving every child the best start in life;
- (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens;

- (iii) Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy
- (iv) Supporting people to lead independent , healthy and active lives; and
- (v) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations

The report supports objective ii,iii,iv and v.

2. Resource Implications

Financial

- 2.1 The overall funding available to the CECF remains at the levels agreed in the September 2011 Environment Committee Report (Ref No 11/446) although the funding period has been re-profiled until 2016/17. This review does not alter that allocation but does recommend a change to the levels of funding available for individual projects and the governance arrangements around that allocation. The Head of Finance has been consulted about and agrees with the proposals.

Workforce

- 2.2 The proposals in this report have no workforce implications.

Asset Management (land, property, IT)

- 2.3 The proposals aim to enhance public open space assets and or potentially reduce the maintenance burden on the Council by working in partnership with community groups.

3. Assessments

Equality Impact Assessment

- 3.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council is required to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between equality groups. Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments for plans and policies allows the Council to demonstrate that it is meeting these duties.
- 3.2 The function, policy, procedure or strategy presented in the Community Environmental Challenge Fund report were considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA) and were assessed as **relevant** and the following **positive** outcomes are expected following implementation.
- 3.3 The criteria for the grant requires the applicant to have consulted widely in the community and have community support for the project they are seeking funding for. An improved environment or facilities funded by the grant should benefit most groups and the effect would therefore be positive. An annual review of the success of the grant aid programme will be undertaken including an assessment of equalities in relation to the funding awarded and any negative impacts will be addressed.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 3.4 The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 places a duty on the Council to identify and assess the environmental consequences of its proposals.
- 3.5 The proposals have been considered under the Act and no further action is required as it does not qualify as a PPS as defined by the Act and is therefore exempt.

Sustainability

- 3.6 Under the provisions of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 the Council has to discharge its duties in a way which contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. In terms of the Climate Change Act, the Council has a general duty to demonstrate its commitment to sustainability and the community, environmental and economic impacts of its actions.
- 3.7 There is currently no method of monitoring the impacts of the Community Environment Challenge Fund. It is therefore proposed that an End of Project Feedback Form is sent to each group that has received funding so that the impacts on the community and their local area can be recorded.
- 3.8 By working in partnership with the community to enhance and maintain the environmental quality in locally important areas, we are ensuring a sustainable approach is taken to the environment, community and economy.

Legal and Governance

- 3.9 The Head of Finance and the Head of Legal Services have been consulted on the content of the report.

Risk

- 3.10 Risks associated with individual projects are identified and managed through the assessment process.

4. Consultation

Internal

- 4.1 The amended essential and desired criteria (Appendix 1) have been consulted on with the External Funding Manager, the Grants Direct Administrator, the Service's Finance Team.

External

- 4.2 The amended essential and desired criteria (Appendix 1) have been consulted on with representatives from Take a Pride in Perthshire.

5. Communication

- 5.1 The communications which will be undertaken in implementing the proposals, including the key target audiences and the communication methods.

Communications

- PKC website
- Leaflet
- Launch

Target Audience

Communities across Perth and Kinross including:

- local groups
- individuals
- Take A Pride In Perthshire
- In Bloom Committees

2. BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (and not containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above Report:-

- Environment Committee Report (reference number 11/446) - dated 07/09/11

3. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Current assessment process

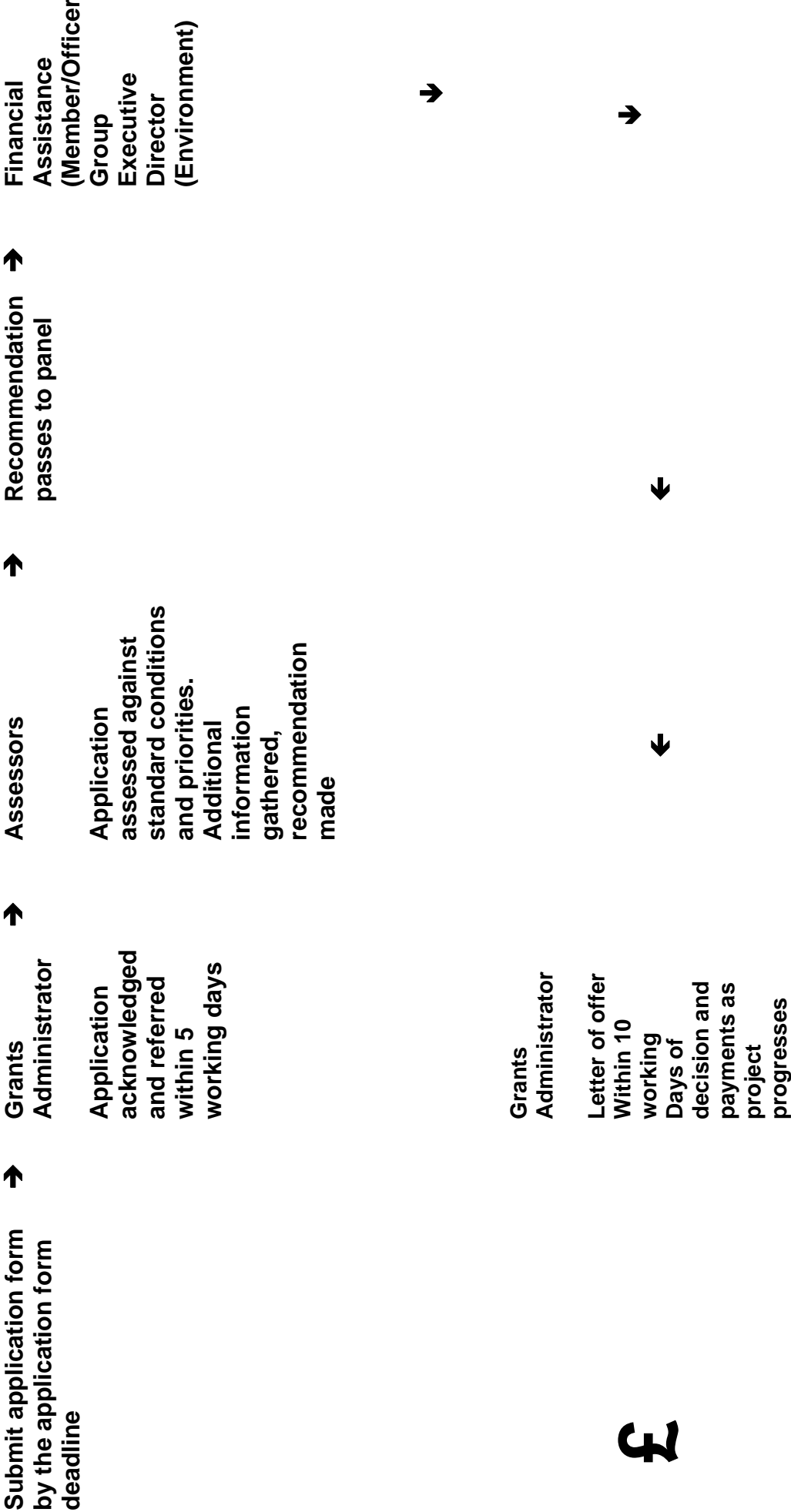
Appendix 2 - CECF proposed revised Criteria

Appendix 3 - Projects supported by CECF 2012/13 and 2013/14

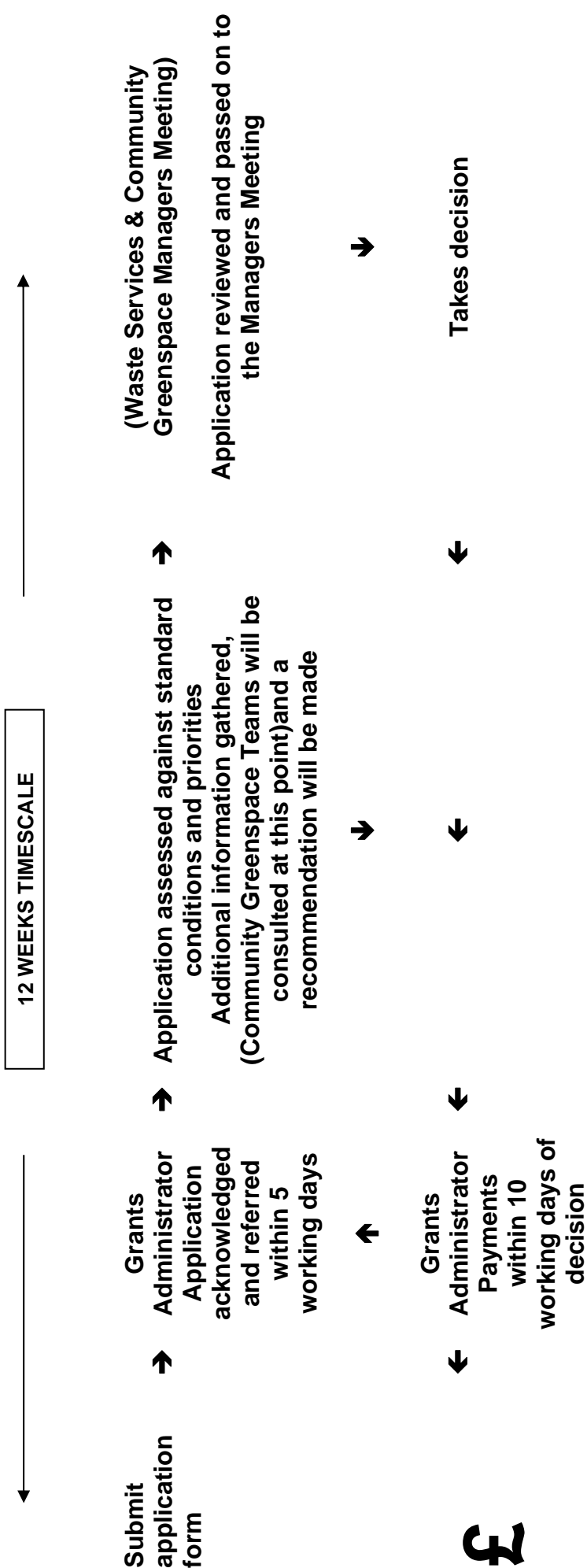
Appendix 4 - End of Projects Monitoring Form

Appendix 5 - Timetable of promotional activities

(a) *Current Structure for Assessing Community Environment Challenge Fund Applications*



(b) Revised process for Assessing Community Environment Challenge Fund Applications



Revised Criteria for the Fund

What is eligible?

The Community Environment Challenge Fund will invest in physical environmental improvement projects in our communities. Each community will only be able to apply for one grant in each financial year and up to a maximum of £10,000. Grant request must be at least £2,500. In exceptional cases where projects can demonstrate a wide range of physical environmental benefits within a community, a larger award may be made. The maximum award is up to 50% of the total costs.

The fund will support applications that can demonstrate all of the following:

Essential

- Application to be submitted by a constituted organisation which could act on behalf of other community partners. The applicant will have to provide a copy of governing documents (e.g. Constitution) and most recent accounts where applicable.
- Wide community “buy in” to the bid through a range of engagement activities and evidence of support from key community groups such as the community councils, bloom groups and development trusts or youth groups, etc.
- Tangible physical improvements to be complete within 24 months of receiving the grant award. In exceptional cases, an extension could be agreed by the Executive Director (Environment). A maximum of 12 months will be allowed from receipt of the grant to provide evidence that other funding is in place.
- Any works must have the agreement of the landowner and statutory consent eg planning permission if required before they start.
- At least 50% of the cost of the project must be funded from other sources including local fundraising. The award will be 50% of the project not 50% of each invoice, in kind support will be taken into consideration.
- Support from all local elected members in the ward.

Possible actions to be eligible for funding

Projects which can demonstrate any of the following:

- ‘Spend to save’ e.g. changing bedding plants to herbaceous plants to save on maintenance and materials
- Reduction of waste, reuse, recycling or use of environmentally friendly materials
- Enhance/contribute to the local economy such as tourism or craft or use of local materials

- Benefits to the wider community encompassing a range of age groups and abilities
- Link to other existing or planned regeneration initiatives (eg conservation area appraisals)
- An ability to complete the project within 12 months.
- Demonstrate environmental sustainability e.g. carbon reduction

The grants will be drawn down as stage payments agreed with the applicant at the outset and be supported with relevant paperwork to support the request. Advance payments could be arranged if needed to allow the work to proceed at the discretion of the Executive Director (Environment).

For works on Council-owned land, the Council would need to ensure that groups had the requisite skills and experience to let or carry out the works and had adequate public liability insurance. Health and safety requirements such as adequate risk assessments and method statements would also need to be supplied. Costs relating to these requirements must be included in the overall project costs. In addition, responsibility for future maintenance would need to be agreed with the Council. Community groups can use funds for projects which are not on Council owned land. In this case authorisation should be obtained from the relevant land owner as well as maintenance and future use of the enhanced asset agreed.

The applicant needs to ensure that for works on all sites which require statutory consents such as planning permission and building warrant that these are in place.

What is not eligible

The fund will not be able to support the following:

- Internal renovations of buildings as the fund is aimed at environmental improvements
- Asset transfer
- Staff costs unless it is for implementing the works
- Unadopted road repairs or maintenance as this is not within the scope of this funding
- An increase in infrastructure on sites which does not have a commitment to long term maintenance.
- Retrospectively a project which has received funding by the Council in the past three years

Appendix 3

APPLICANT	REFERENCE	SUM REQUESTED	DECISION	DATE	PAID	FINANCIAL YEAR	OTHER NOTES
Administration Fees			£3,000		3,000.00	12/13	Administration services provided by Grants Direct
Glenfarg Village Hall Committee	12212	30,000	10,000	20/03/2012	10,000	12/13	improvement of land adjacent to hall
Coupar Angus Pride of Place	12149	5,141	5,141	20/03/2012	5,122	12/13	Paths Network Planning Project
Brig in Bloom	12279	5,047	5,047	10/07/2012	3,745	12/13	Mow and grow project
Crieff in Leaf	12289	7,250	6,890	10/07/2012	4,217	12/13	James Square & Bridgend Garden Environment Improvements Project
Take a Pride in Errol	12254	7,684	7,684	10/07/2012	5,251	12/13	Cistern Green Community Garden
Association of Owners Ruthvenvale Terrace	12397	10,000	2,000	25/09/2012	0	12/13	reinstatement of piece of ground
Balbeggie Playing Fields Association	12192	10,000	10,000	25/09/2012	0	12/13	Playing Fields Improvement
Milnathort in Bloom	12461	8,863	8,863	04/12/2012	0	12/13	Minathort War Memorial and Landscaping project
Pitlochry Festival Theatre	12462	10,000	10,000	04/12/2012	10,000	12/13	Environmental Development of the external campus
Take a Pride in Perthshire Association St Madoes	12199	10,000	10,000	20/03/2012 & 04/12/12	10,000	12/13	creating a community garden
Coupar Angus Pride of Place	13223	10,000	9,990	05/03/2013	0	12/13	Coupar Angus Britain in Bloom Improvements
Loon Braes Partnership	12251	10,000	4,385	05/03/2013	0	12/13	paths and ponds upgrade and environment improvement
TRACKS	12491	10,000	10,000	05/03/2013	0	12/13	Loch Leven Heritage Trail
Projects Total 12/13 + administration fees			103,000		48,334		
Administration Fees			£3,000		3,000.00	13/14	Administration services provided by Grants Direct
Loon Braes Partnership	12251	10,000	5,615	05/03/2013	0	13/14	paths and ponds upgrade and environment improvement
Dunkeld and Birnam in Bloom	13271	15,000	10,000	05/03/2013	0	13/14	St Ninian's Garden Project
Projects Total 13/14+ administration fees			18,615		0		

End of Year/End of Grant Form

Community Environment Challenge Fund
End of Project Monitoring Form



Perth & Kinross Council
Green Space
The Environment Service
Pullar House
35 Kinnoull Street
Perth, PH1 5GD

Basic Info (completed by The Environment Service)

1.Ref:	
2. Name of organisation:	
3. Amount approved:	

As a condition of the grant from Perth and Kinross Council Corporate Financial Assistance to the voluntary and community sector, you have to provide a report on how you spent your grant and the benefits achieved. Please complete and return this form to the address above (you do not need a covering letter) by . If you have any questions about this form, please contact Community Greenspace Service on 01738 476476.

Section 1: Spending your grant:

Please give details below of the items or activities funded by this grant (items and costs). If you do not have enough room here, please use a separate sheet to show us exactly how you spent the grant. Please do not send receipts with this form, but do remember to keep your receipts.

Item/Activity	Cost
Total amount spent	

If the items or activities detailed above are different in any way from what was stated in your original application, please use the space below to explain the changes.

Section 2: Community benefits of your grant

Please give details of the ways in which the grant has benefitted the community:

- a) Directly or indirectly physical improvements in your community
- b) Social or environment benefits to the community
- c) Number of paid and voluntary posts created through the funded project
- d) Number of training places created via the project
- e) Number of volunteer hours dedicated to the project
- f) The work carried out, e.g. the number of enhanced areas or length of newly-accessible paths

Please attach any supporting documents e.g. reports that you have produced for your committee/board, photos of improvements, etc.

Section 3: The signed declaration

I confirm that the details contained in this form are correct and that we will keep all financial records and accounts for at least two years from payment of the grant. (If the Project lasts for longer than two years, then the receipts should be kept for two years after completion of the Project). We understand that this does not release us from any legal responsibility to keep records for longer periods. We are aware that we may be asked to forward receipts for inspection or that we may be visited to inspect our records.

Name: _____ Position in group:

Contact telephone number:

Signature: _____ Date: _____

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THIS FORM

Appendix 5

Proposed Action	Proposed Timeframe
<p>Develop a new webpage under the Community Greenspace section of Perth & Kinross Council's website to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) make it easier to find information about the Fund 2) generally raise awareness of the Fund amongst visitors to this section of the PKC website 	June / July 2013
<p>Finalise the supporting documents:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) monitoring Form 2) revised Guide 3) revised page on Eric Intranet 4) revised Grants Direct webpage 	June / July 2013
<p>A new leaflet will be written and produced in-house by Design & Print (both a printed and an electronic version)</p> <p>This will be available:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) at any events that the Waste & Community Greenspace Service hosts 2) electronically on the PKC website 3) by being distributed to In Bloom Committees across Perth and Kinross 4) by being available to various local groups across Perth and Kinross via community and voluntary groups, community halls, schools, allotments, etc 5) via Community Councils across Perth and Kinross 	July / August 2013
<p>A summer launch event will take place, with a press release and a photocall to publicise the revised Fund. Previous successful applicants will be able to highlight the use of the Fund for their projects and a selection of potential applicants from across Perth and Kinross will be invited to attend to find out more about the Fund, the types of activities covered by the Fund and the application process.</p>	August 2013

