

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 15th April 2009

Agenda Item	
Report No	

Caithness Partnership – Match Funding for LEADER Application

Report by Corporate Manager Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross

Summary

This report describes the Caithness Partnership's plans to seek LEADER funding, and requests that members consider agreeing the required match funding for a three year period.

1. Background

1.1 The Caithness Partnership was originally conceived as the Caithness Economic Partnership, but in recent years has largely taken on the role of working with the Council and partner agencies in the area of Community Planning, most notably in relation to transport issues, biodiversity, and Community Regeneration Initiatives. This activity was supported by the Council with a funding package amounting to £32k per annum over the last four years.

In their recent budget deliberations, members agreed to reduce the funding package by £6k per annum, but noted that there was a potential for the Partnership to apply for LEADER grants.

Taking account of various changes in its operating environment, the Partnership has now drawn up a project proposal which appears to be a good fit with LEADER guidelines, but it is required to show evidence of secured match funding for the three year project.

2. LEADER Project Proposal

2.1 The Caithness Partnership wishes to deliver a project which will fill a gap in present activity by helping local communities to prepare local development plans and at the same time deliver projects that fall outwith the role of existing organisations.

2.2 The project will have four key elements:-

- i) a rolling programme of local development plans
- ii) delivery of projects which require a partnership approach
- iii) support for local Forums to move from community planning to community development activities
- iv) support for local funding mechanisms, e.g. Fairer Scotland Fund.

In general, this can be described as a progression from community planning to community-endorsed development.

- 2.3 This project will be supported by a Development Officer, which will be a new post, replacing the post of Co-ordinator, following the previous postholder's success in securing another prominent job in the community.

3. Funding Model

- 3.1 It is intended to apply to LEADER for annual funding of £28k. This would be supported by up to £26k from the Council as described in this report, £5k from Scottish Natural Heritage, £4k in respect of the Fairer Scotland Fund, and £1k administration support from LEADER. The Partnership intends to actively seek out other projects which would bring additional income, and if possible reduce the reliance on Council support.
- 3.2 Previous Council funding for the Caithness Partnership has come from both Area and HQ resources. A continuation of the contribution from the former area of £10k per annum, from Ward Discretionary Budgets, has been agreed in principle by members from the Caithness wards. The Chief Executives' Service budget holds £16k from the earlier arrangement and this is to be committed to the LEADER project, subject to agreement of the outcomes to be delivered. Members of the Resources Committee are being asked to approve funding for a three year period to allow the Caithness partnership's application for LEADER funding to go forward.

Recommendation

Members are invited to consider this report and to agree to provide match funding for a three year period in support of the Caithness Partnership's LEADER application, subject to the agreement of the outcomes to be delivered.

Signature:

Designation: Corporate Manager Caithness Sutherland and Easter Ross

Date: 02 April 2009