

**Participation of NGOs and The Environmental Sector in  
Structural Fund Programmes in Scotland  
Presentation Summary  
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This paper follows the same structure as the presentation. It covers:

- How the Scottish System for European Funds works
- How environmental issues have been integrated
- How have NGOs been involved:
  - through funding for projects
  - as partners
- Lessons from the Scottish experience

The presentation also considers project examples, which are outlined briefly.

### **The Scottish System**

In Scotland, European Funds are administered through regional partnerships, each covering around 25% of the country by area. The decisions on which projects should receive funding are made by committees, with members taken from interested public bodies. These have always included local authorities, economic development agencies, regeneration agencies, colleges and universities.

The European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund have been available to some parts of Scotland since 1988. The funds have been administered on a competitive basis, and have supported a range of projects including:

- Business development - support for SMEs, research and development.
- Infrastructure - roads, railways, land decontamination, business sites, tourism attractions
- Community level economic development
- Training and work experience, through the ESF

The European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund has almost always been used to support activities led by farmers, and has been administered directly by the Government.

### **Integrating Environmental Issues**

A range of actions have been taken to improve the integration of environmental issues in the funds. These can be divided into two types:

#### *Administrative actions*

- Introduction of environmental questions into the application form and scoring (economic and social issues have always been key to project appraisal), plus guidance material
- Introduction of project level environmental indicators to allow projects to report good practice

#### *Management actions*

- Extensive use of training programmes, based on real project examples
- Support at all stages for partners
- Introduction of environmental experts into the decision making processes and committees
- Use of conditions of grant to improve environmental aspects

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## **Involvement of NGOs**

### *Funding for projects*

NGOs have benefited, considerably and directly, from support for people-centred projects through ESF. To a smaller extent, NGOs have received funding through ERDF to develop community / training centres, and some environmental NGOs (RSPB) have received funding to improve nature reserves, usually in relation to green tourism, or for community projects like recycling.

### *Involvement as partners*

NGOs, including in a few cases environmental NGOs, have participated in decision making committees. There is more evidence of this in social activities, where country-wide NGOs have operated stand alone grant schemes to provide money to smaller NGOs.

### *Issues*

The main issues faced by NGOs relate to the financial arrangements - often, it is many months after projects are approved before any money is received, and NGOs find it difficult to identify money to bridge the gap. Also, there are issues around match funding more generally - NGO projects can involve funding from many partners, each of which requires different things (this is a problem for the sector more widely, and not specific to EU funding). Finally, there are questions about the ability of funding programmes to recognise and reward aspects like volunteering and informal training; indicators are better at capturing 'hard' outcomes like people getting jobs.

## **Lessons from Scotland**

- Be clear about the aims for each funding period. Focus on a small number of key actions (e.g. building capacity, safeguarding key nature sites, establishing small grant schemes) rather than trying to do everything.
- Encourage larger organisations to act as 'banks' for the NGO sector.
- Highlight successful projects, where environmental solutions also give jobs and social benefits (e.g. recycling, training in environmental management).
- Identify key points where projects and partners can most easily be changed, and focus most effort there, especially during Programme preparation.
- Persuade the managing authority to pay for NGO time throughout the process.

Three Projects from Western Scotland:

### *Falls of Clyde Nature Reserve - Scottish Wildlife Trust*

Around 200,000 Euro ERDF was awarded to improve access and visitor facilities to the reserve, which is next to an existing cultural tourist attraction. Outcomes include increased visitor numbers and therefore economic benefit, plus footpaths and visitor facilities improved in line with access for people with disabilities.

### *Greater Glasgow Key Fund*

This is a devolved grant scheme, total value about 1.2m euro (50% ERDF). The fund makes small sums of money (up to 45,000 euro) available to NGOs which have never accessed main sources of EU Funding. A number of environmental projects (feasibility study for community windfarm, pilot recycling projects) have been supported by the Key Fund.

### *Coach House Trust*

CHT provides occupational health activities for people with mental health difficulties. The activities are centred around gardening, composting and recycling. The new phase of the project, for which 300,000 euro has been awarded, expands the existing activity and uses material collected for recycling and composting in local environmental improvement works.