Community Links Guide 17/18

Essential Information for Applicants

November 2016

About Sustrans

Sustrans makes smarter travel choices possible, desirable and inevitable. We're a leading UK charity enabling people to travel by foot, bike or public transport for more of the journeys we make every day. We work with families, communities, policy-makers and partner organisations so that people are able to choose healthier, cleaner and cheaper journeys, with better places and spaces to move through and live in.

It's time we all began making smarter travel choices. Make your move and support Sustrans today. www.sustrans.org.uk

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1   Introduction

1.1   What is the Community Links Programme?

Sustrans Scotland's Community Links Programme provides grant funding for the creation of infrastructure that enables more people to cycle and walk for everyday journeys. It has been running since 2010 and has funded over 700 projects to date. The programme is funded through the Transport Scotland Sustainable Transport team within the Scottish Government.

The Cycling Action Plan for Scotland[1] sets out a vision that "By 2020, 10% of everyday journeys taken in Scotland will be by bike". In order to achieve this ambitious vision, 19 actions are identified, one of which refers specifically to the need to "develop and maintain community links" (Action 4). Therefore, the Community Links Programme is a key component in the delivery of the Cycling Action Plan for Scotland.

The Aims of the Community Links Programme are to:

Create infrastructure that encourages people to cycle, walk or use another active travel mode as their preferred mode of travel for **everyday journeys**

Meet the needs of **communities** – provide communities with the opportunity to shape their local environment and link the places people live in with the places they want to get to

Encourage **innovation** – support partner organisations in raising the standard of infrastructure for walking and cycling in Scotland

Encourage **placemaking** which facilitates greater use of public space and higher levels of active travel

Create an **enabling environment** for active travel

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[1] Transport Scotland (2013) *Cycling Action Plan for Scotland* Available at: http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/strategy-and-research/publications-and-consultations/cycling-action-plan-2013

1.2   Who can apply?

Sustrans encourages applications from any organisation which can demonstrate that they are able to deliver and maintain the infrastructure for which they are applying. Applicants must also be able to demonstrate financial accountability, governance and record keeping appropriate to the level of funding that they are seeking. Community Links funds can only be claimed in arrears and so a successful applicant must hold sufficient liquidity to deliver their project, prior to re-cooping the costs

Local Authorities are the principal delivery partners for Community Links projects as they can demonstrate a strong track record of delivering quality projects within the required time frame. However, other applicants – such as national parks, universities, trusts and larger charitable organisations – have all received funding in the past.

We would recommend that smaller community organisations work with their Local Authority to bid for Community Links funding. Well-constituted community organisations are sometimes able to bid for third party funding which is not available to Local Authorities and so a partnership approach is encouraged (see Section 1.6 of this guide). Sustrans' Community Links team are available to provide advice and guidance to anyone interested in submitting an application for funding.

1.3   What is eligible for funding?

Sustrans will consider funding any project which contributes to the overall aims, and meets one or more objectives, of the programme. This is judged via the application process (see Section 3 of this guide). Community Links can fund pre-construction design, community engagement and feasibility work, construction work and post-construction project enhancements[2]. We would encourage all potential applicants to read through the Community Links criteria carefully and to contact us if you are in any doubt – you'll find our details are in Section 5 of this guide.

Please note that Community Links funding **cannot** be used for projects which seek to deliver the following:

- ✗   Facilities that are not designated for cycling – e.g. footpaths / pavements less than 2.5m wide
- ✗   Projects for which 50% match funding has not been identified
- ✗   Projects with a design-life of less than 15 years
- ✗   Paths constructed of non-sealed surfaces
- ✗   Staggered two-stage crossings (dual phase as opposed to single phase)
- ✗   Unprotected advisory cycle lanes as a stand-alone measure
- ✗   Infrastructure that is primarily designed for sports, recreation or tourist use
- ✗   Projects where there is either no evidence of community need/support or there are significant objections from within the community
- ✗   Cycle parking as a standalone measure – cycle parking can be funded as part of a wider construction project but not on its own
- ✗   Direct creation of new roads, car parks or projects which do not result in a net increase in journeys by foot or by bicycle
- ✗   Routine maintenance or repair of cycling and walking infrastructure
- ✗   Projects involving inappropriate and excessive vegetation clearance or destruction of wildlife habitat
- ✗   Projects involving inappropriate and excessive destruction of local amenities, such as playing fields
- ✗   Active Travel Hubs

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[2] A list of suggested projects is contained in Appendix B

✗ Behaviour change measures cannot be funded through Community Links, but are encouraged to be delivered in tandem with Community Links projects.

✗ Public transport infrastructure projects where there is no active travel benefit

1.4 How much funding is available?

We anticipate that the Community Links programme will receive funding of a similar scale to previous years (£18 million so far in 2016/17). Applicants can apply to Community Links for 50% of their project's capital costs (see section 1.7 below).

Funding awards for individual projects usually range from £10,000 to around £1,000,000. However, there is no limit on how much funding is available for a single organisation, or for a single project.

1.5 When must the funding be spent?

Each round of funding must be spent within a single financial year. Projects must be completed and Community Links funding claimed for by 31st March 2018.

Where a more ambitious project requires longer-term funding, we would encourage applicants to split the project up into attainable phases and complete each phase over concurrent years. The first phase of such projects may be feasibility, community engagement or design work with the construction phases completed in the following years.

1.6 What are the match funding requirements?

Community Links funding can provide up to 50% of project costs. The applicant must find the remaining costs from other sources. Projects can be match funded from any source within reason. Non-Local Authority applicants can consider funding from a range of sources including The Climate Challenge Fund, The Heritage Lottery Fund, Stations Community Regeneration Fund, charitable trusts and commercial partners. As outlined in section 1.2 of this guide, we would recommend that smaller community organisations pool their resources with a Local Authority.

Local Authority applicants often use Cycling Walking Safer Streets (CWSS) as match funding. However, we would encourage applications with match funding from different departments such as Education, Outdoor Access, Health, Regeneration or Planning. Local Authority partners can pool their available match funding from throughout their Local Authority area (including developer contributions), in order to fund specific projects from Community Links. Pooled match funding must improve conditions for cycling and walking such as cycle path construction and improvement, bridges, urban realm regeneration, toucan crossings. Even if the contribution is not available as a cash fund, other matches such as materials or staff costs can be considered. Local Authorities should collaborate across departments so that the applications they submit are consistent and project planning and delivery is coordinated.

Dedicated cycling and walking facilities within large capital projects – such as new schools, hospitals, housing or commercial properties – can be used as match funding in order to make the new development more accessible by foot and by bicycle.

This is a single year funding programme; Sustrans will only accept match funding proposals from the 2017/18 financial year. Sustrans will not accept match funding arranged to be spent in future years (or in other financial years). Consult the

Community Links team if you have any questions about your match funding (see Section 5 of this guide).

1.7   How is Community Links different from 'Community Links PLUS'?

Community Links and Community Links PLUS were designed for the same purpose, to better connect people and places. They share similar aims and objectives, and both support the Cycling Action Plan for Scotland's (CAPS) vision of 10% of everyday journeys made by bike by 2020. However, the two funding options are intended to provide flexibility for applicants to decide which funding structure is most suitable for their project. The key differences are outlined below:

Community Links	'Community Links PLUS'
Is a grant programme	Is a design competition
Offers annual funding, which can be phased over a number of years, where each year is applied for separately	Offers multi-year funding in a single award
Funding is allocated by the Community Links Steering Group	Is judged by an independent panel
Open to applications year-round	Annual funding round
Is a single stage assessment	Has a three stage assessment process
Ongoing project support and input into design	Advice on developing a successful application at stage one, then detailed support offered to winning proposals
Can utilise match funding pooled from across a Local Authority area	Match funding must be project specific
Typically allocated up to £1.5m of Sustrans funding	Projects funded beyond £1.5m
Projects should include appropriate behaviour change interventions	Successful projects must include a programme of behaviour change alongside physical interventions
Road space reallocation is one of the different types of infrastructure options considered.	Must include road space reallocation

2   How to apply

2.1   The application process

To apply for Community Links funding use the online application form (http://scotlandportal.sustrans.org.uk/).

The application is split into three sections:

- **Section A: Outline** – the basic details of the project and the applicant

- **Section B: Justification** – how the project fits with the Aims of Community Links Programme (as detailed in Appendix A of this guide)

- **Section C: Deliverability** – the likelihood of the project being successfully delivered within the necessary budget, match funding requirements and timescales

Your application will be assessed on how closely it meets the Objectives – under each of the Aims – of the Community Links Programme and on the deliverability of the proposed project (see Appendix A of this guide). Detailed information on how applications are evaluated is contained in Section 3 of this guide.

2.2   Support during the application process

While you are writing your application, Sustrans staff can offer advice on your proposed projects and eligibility. If you wish to discuss your proposals we can help talk through the options. We may be able to arrange a site visit with you to have a look over your proposals. If you are having any technical difficulties with the application portal itself, we will also be able to help – you'll find our details in Section 5 of this guide.

2.3   Application timeline

The timeline for applications is detailed in Table 1 below. After the initial round of funding has been allocated (April 2017) the application portal will remain open and able to accept submissions throughout the year. If further funding becomes available later in the year, additional projects will be drawn from those submitted. Such projects will still be assessed for quality and deliverability in the same way as those submitted in the initial round.

We would encourage you to engage with the Community Links Team on your applications throughout the process and to attend Raising the Standards Day[3] if you can.

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[3] Raising the Standards Day is held by Sustrans every year around November. It is our opportunity to share best practice with partners from across the Community Links Programme. It is also an opportunity for peer-to-peer learning and knowledge sharing.

Table 1: Application timeline

Action	Date
Community Links Raising the Standards Day	29th November 2016
Community Links 2016/17 Criteria released	29th November 2016
Online application system available for use	23rd January 2017
Application deadline for submissions	24th February 2017 @ 13:00hrs
Application review	from January to March 2017
Funding decision	by the end of April 2017

2.4   Further guidance

There is a great deal of guidance available on design for cycling and walking infrastructure. As such, this list is not exhaustive but represents the basic information that may help an applicant when writing a good application. Once a project is awarded funding, the applicant will be required to ensure that all relevant standards and legislation are adhered to throughout.

- **Sustrans' Handbook for Cycle Friendly Design**[4] – This document is part of a suite of technical design guidance on active travel being developed by Sustrans. The guidance aims to provide detailed technical advice on key issues around on and off highway cycle infrastructure whilst signposting users to this developing library of further resources. The Sustrans guidance library is largely web based and regularly updated with new examples including the latest innovative and experimental schemes.

- **Sustrans' Technical Information Notes**[5] – these are available online and cover a range of practical issues that may be encountered when developing a project.

- **Designing Streets**[6] – Designing Streets is the first policy statement in Scotland for street design and marks a change in the emphasis of guidance on street design towards place-making and away from a system focused upon the dominance of motor vehicles. It is an interesting and engaging document with many examples of good practice.

- **Town Centre Toolkit**[7] – includes ideas and examples of how people and organisations can make their town centre more attractive, more active, and more accessible.

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[4] Sustrans (2014) *Handbook for Cycle Friendly Design* Available at: http://www.sustrans.org.uk/sites/default/files/images/files/Route-Design-Resources/Sustrans_handbook_for_cycle-friendly_design_11_04_14.pdf

[5] Sustrans (various years) *Technical Information Notes* Available at: http://www.sustrans.org.uk/our-services/what-we-do/route-design-and-construction/route-design-resources

[6] The Scottish Government (2010) *Designing Streets* Available at: http://www.gov.scot/resource/doc/307126/0096540.pdf

[7] The Scottish Government (2015) Town Centre Toolkit Available at: http://www.scotlandstowns.org/town_centre_toolkit

3   How your application will be assessed

3.1   Assessment stages

Projects will be assessed against the Community Links Criteria (see Appendix A of this guide). Evaluation of each application takes place in the following stages:

1. **Screening** – All projects are expected to apply current design standards and guidance for walking and cycling and be suitable for use by the general public. Any projects which do not will be immediately screened out. Other, specific, issues which will immediately discount the project from Community Links funding are listed in Section 1.3 of this guide.
2. **Scoring** – Your application will be scored against the Aims of the Community Links Programme and on the deliverability of the proposed project (see Sections 3.2 and 3.3, below for details).
3. **Site Visit** – A Community Links Project officer may arrange for a site visit to discuss your proposals on the ground (if appropriate).
4. **Comparison** – Each project will be compared against all other applications. An applicant may be asked to indicate which of their projects is of highest priority if the programme is oversubscribed.
5. **Selection Panel** – Applicants for larger projects (more than £500k in total value should be prepared to present their proposals to a selection panel. The selection panel will be made up of Sustrans senior managers and key external stakeholders.

3.2   Meeting the Aims of the programme

When writing a Community Links application, it is important that you take time to read the criteria contained in Appendix A of this guide and to identify how your project will ultimately help us to meet the vision of 10% of every day journeys by bike. Responding each of the given Aims of the programme will help you to do this. The perfect Community Links project would address all the Aims of the programme, by fulfilling each of the measurable Objectives listed. However, it is recognised that some projects will be stronger in some areas than others and not all applications are expected to score highly under every one of the Aims. This section of the application is worth 66% of the overall score.

3.3   Demonstrating deliverability

It is essential that your project is delivered within the agreed financial timeline. The Community Links Programme does not have the ability to carry over funds from one financial year to the next. For this reason, the scores for the deliverability section of the application carry 33% of the overall score. In addition, a score of zero for any one of the deliverability indicators will mean that the application is screened out or that further information is requested.

4   How funding is awarded

4.1   Provisional Funding Award

Where the Funding Application includes a project design which has been judged by Sustrans to require further design input in order to ensure that the programme objectives are fulfilled, a Provisional Award may be allocated. A Provisional Award allows the applicant to progress design works, with input from Sustrans, up to a maximum of 10% of the overall budget applied for. Once the final project design has been agreed between the parties, Sustrans will issue a Funders Statement to the applicant. On receipt of the Funders Statement, the applicant may consider the project to have been allocated the Full Award. The timeline for developing the project design and receiving a Funders Statement will be provided by the applicant and agreed with Sustrans.

4.2   Full Funding Award

Where Sustrans is satisfied, based on the information provided within the funding application, that the project design is sufficiently advanced, that the project fulfils one or more of the programme objectives and that the project is of a suitably high quality, then a Full Award may be allocated. After this, the applicant may commence the project construction works and Sustrans role is to ensure that the quality of both materials and workmanship are in accordance with the design submitted. Funding applications for projects which are solely for design and feasibility and which meet the Community Links criteria may be automatically allocated the Full Award.

5   Support during the project

Once funding has been awarded, a Community Links Officer will be assigned to your project and will be your primary point of contact. They will contact you initially to let you know if your application has been successful, will help you establish a list of Key Milestones for your project and will organise regular site visits with you. It is your responsibility to keep your Community Links Officer up to date on your progress and to highlight any issues to them. Our primary interest is in the success of the project and we will help you to overcome any delivery issues if we can. It is therefore important to stay in touch with us.

Your Community Links Officer will work with you to identify opportunities for further support from Sustrans where possible. Sustrans can potentially offer engineering support, design review, press coverage or enhanced community engagement where we have the capacity to do so. Staff resource from Sustrans will be allocated by the Community Links Steering group.

6　Monitoring, reporting and grant claims

Accurate monitoring and evaluation enables a Community Links project to demonstrate whether it has achieved its specific aims and objectives to the funder. Monitoring data is used to demonstrate how Community Links projects are contributing towards national indicators set by Transport Scotland as outlined in Cycling Action Plan for Scotland Action 19.

6.1　Monitoring

Each year, Sustrans Research and Monitoring team survey a sample of Community Links Projects in order to report back on the outcomes of the programme. Monitoring data which tracks usage before and after infrastructure improvements has enabled Sustrans to show an increase in walking and cycling at Community Links project sites. It also demonstrates a number of social and economic benefits to local communities including return on investment. As well as being used to evidence usage at an individual site, this data may be used by Sustrans to contribute to wider analysis of cyclist and pedestrian levels across Scotland. Applicants are also encouraged to monitor the success of their own project and this can be done through automatic or manual counts of route users, collecting anecdotal feedback or surveys of users and beneficiaries. Applications which include detail on this will score more highly than those that do not.

6.2　Reporting

In order to make a grant claim to Sustrans on completion of a project, all applicants are required to submit a project report. Project reports must include details of the works undertaken, good quality before and after photographs and any community feedback that has been collected. Project reports should sum up the project and draw out any best practice which has been employed or any issues which were overcome. The project report presents an opportunity to highlight any innovation and may be used as an example for future applicants.

6.3　Grant claims

Community Links Grant claims are always paid in arrears, after the project has been completed and inspected. A grant claim form must be submitted for each project and this must contain evidence of spend up to the value being claimed from Sustrans. A separate grant claim for will need to be filled out for each individual project. All claims must be exclusive of VAT.

7   Contact us

If you have any questions about this guidance or need advice on a project that you think may be suitable for Community Links funding, please contact the team:

Email: community.links@sustrans.org.uk

Telephone: 0131 346 1384

Or come in and see us at:

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9 Haymarket Terrace

Edinburgh

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Appendix A – The Community Links Criteria

The Community Links Criteria can be found online. Use the web link below to view this document.

- http://www.sustrans.org.uk/scotland/what-we-do/communities/community-links-grant-programme-0

Appendix B – Suggested Community Links Projects

Pre-construction

We will consider applications that progress a scheme to the point of construction for following years, such as:

- Feasibility studies
- Cycling and Active Travel Strategies
- Cycling Network Strategies
- Community engagement to develop new projects
- Land negotiation and acquisition, planning process
- Design of the project including signage
- Baseline monitoring

Construction

Funding for new or improved infrastructure:

- Projects which result in routes of reasonable cycling or walking distances
- Formalising desire lines
- Upgrading and repair of existing surfaces
- Route destination signage
- Replacement of steps with ramps
- Reduction of gradients which do not comply with the Equality Act 2010
- Addition of wheeling ramps to steps
- On road cycle provision
- Installation of flush kerbs
- Provision of TOUCAN and Zebra crossings as part of the network and junction improvements
- Provision of raised table crossings
- Provision of appropriate bridges
- Removal of access controls or improving access controls to comply with the Equality Act 2010
- Provision of lighting on active travel routes
- Cycle parking as part of a wider scheme
- Enhancements to existing cycling and walking networks, including the National Cycle Network (NCN)
- Placemaking schemes that evidence future modal shift to cycling and other active travel modes
- Implementation of 20 mph speed limit areas

Note: For construction projects, all land negotiations and planning permissions should be complete or very well advanced at the time of application.

Post construction

The funding could also cover promotional aspects of current and previous Sustrans funded infrastructure projects, such as:

- Promotion and awareness raising such as mapping and the use of digital channels – which support a wider Community Links infrastructure projects.

- Route destination signage. The signing (or upgrading of signing) of an existing route can also qualify as a Community Links project. The existing route does not have to be one previously funded by Sustrans.

- Installation and / or upgrade to monitoring equipment (data also to be supplied to Sustrans' Research & Monitoring Unit)

- Additionally, your match funding, but not Community Links funding, can be used for the following types of post construction activities:
  - Measures that help to ensure a legacy for your project
  - Ongoing monitoring such as Intercept Surveys, residents' and beneficiary surveys, or qualitative methods to capture perceptions and experience
  - Events and community engagement workshops

The above lists are to provide guidance only and do not necessarily exclude other proposals.