

SCOTTISH RURAL PARTNERSHIP FUND

Consultation Paper

March 2004



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

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CONSULTATION PAPER

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The Rural Policy Team of the Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department (SEERAD) has prepared this consultation paper on the Scottish Rural Partnership Fund (SRPF). Your views on any aspect of the SRPF would be very welcome.

If you wish to access this consultation online, go to www.scotland.gov.uk/consultations/rural/srpc. You can telephone Freephone 0800 77 1234 to find out where your nearest public internet access point is.

A new email alert system for SE consultations (**SEconsult**) was launched in December 2003. This system will allow stakeholder individuals and organisations to register and receive a weekly email containing details of all new SE consultations (including web links). SEconsult will complement, but in no way replace SE distribution lists, and is designed to allow stakeholders to ‘keep an eye’ on all SE consultation activity, and therefore be alerted at the earliest opportunity to those of most interest. We encourage you to register as soon as possible.

How to respond to this consultation paper

To help summarise the issues, each section of the consultation document is followed by a question and these are repeated on the enclosed form for responses. You can respond by:

- Completing the enclosed response form and sending it to us at the address below. There are no postal charges for this.
- Completing the form on our website at [www.scotland.gov.uk/srpfConsultationResponse Form/](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/srpfConsultationResponseForm/) and sending it to us by e-mail at srpfconsultation@scotland.gsi.gov.uk.
- Writing a letter or sending an e-mail to us with your comments.

We would be grateful if you could clearly indicate in your response which questions or parts of the consultation paper you are responding to (using the consultation questionnaire if appropriate) as this will aid our analysis of the responses received.

Comments on the proposals should be sent by **Friday 28 May 2004** to:

Scottish Rural Partnership Fund Consultation
FREEPOST NAT11009
EDINBURGH
EH14 0BR

Please include your name, organisation (if appropriate) and contact details with your response.

We will make all responses available to the public in the Scottish Executive Library by 29 June 2004, unless confidentiality is requested. All responses not marked confidential will be checked for any potentially defamatory material before being logged in the library or placed on the website.

If you have any queries, please call the Rural Policy Team on 0131 244 4479.

Foreword by the Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development



I know that the Scottish Rural Partnership Fund (SRPF) makes a real difference to people's lives and that it is greatly valued by Scotland's rural communities. We are fully committed to the continuance of the Fund. However, as it is over seven years since the SRPF started, we want to look at how we can simplify the Fund and make sure that it is best able to provide grants for improvements that people in rural areas want and further focus assistance on those disadvantaged communities in greatest need of assistance.

Over those seven years, the SRPF has helped finance hundreds of community-based rural projects across Scotland, many of these in disadvantaged communities. All these projects aim to ensure that everyone in rural Scotland can access the opportunities and services that will allow them to have a good quality of life and create communities and services that are sustainable in the longer term. The positive impact which the projects often have on the development of their local communities is huge and can make a significant contribution to closing the rural opportunity gap.

However, we recognise that the Fund could be made easier for rural communities to apply to particularly in disadvantaged areas and be better designed to help good projects access the money they need. I also know that it is the people who have direct experience of SRPF funding, or the lack of it, who may be best able to identify where things can be improved. This consultation paper is the first stage in that process. It sets out some of the issues and a range of options for tackling them.

The consultation will be open for three months. It is designed to provoke discussion. This is your chance to tell us what you think and I urge you to share your views with us. Those views will be fully considered in shaping any new proposals for the future operation of the SRPF. I look forward to receiving your response and I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for taking part.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Allan Wilson". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

Allan Wilson MSP

1 March 2004

1. Summary

This document invites your comments on the current operation of the Scottish Rural Partnership Fund (SRPF), a grants' scheme for communities across rural Scotland. The paper sets out some background to the SRPF and explains why we are holding this consultation.

The SRPF has been up and running in its current format for over seven years. During that time, the Fund had not been formally evaluated. Over the autumn of 2003, an evaluation of the SRPF was carried out to assess the effectiveness of the Fund at delivering for Scotland's rural communities. The evaluation sought the views of successful and unsuccessful SRPF projects, as well as key stakeholder, including Local Rural Partnerships, Community Planning Partnerships, local authorities, and other funders such as the Community Fund.

Overall, the evaluation showed that the SRPF has the scope to meet the needs of Scotland's rural communities and that the funding it provides is greatly valued by them. However, a number of issues emerged from the evaluation process. In particular, the evaluation stressed the need for the SRPF to be easier for applicants to understand and less bureaucratic. More detail on the outcome of this work and a link to the evaluation summary report can be found in section 5.

The findings of the evaluation reinforce the need for an external consultation exercise before final decisions are taken on the future operation of the Scheme. There are a number of options on which we want the views of Scotland's rural communities. These options include different ways of operating the SRPF to make it simpler and more effective at helping good projects which improve the quality of life of people in rural areas to access the funding they need.

Each option for changing the fund is set out under the 'What do you think?' section (page 6) and each option is followed by a question or questions seeking your views. The questions are also listed in the enclosed questionnaire. You do not have to answer all the questions, nor do you have to use the questionnaire provided. We are equally happy to receive your responses in the form of a letter or e-mail which covers issues of particular interest to you. However, please do remember to tell us if you want your response to remain confidential.

2. The Context

'Rural Scotland: A New Approach' forms the basis of the Scottish Executive's rural policy. A copy can be found at www.scotland.gov.uk/library2/doc15/rsna-00.asp. The four main priorities it identifies – economic development, providing opportunity, improving access to services, sustaining our natural and cultural heritage – are key to our aspirations for rural Scotland and are reflected in the rural commitments of the 'Partnership for a Better Scotland' (www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/government/pfbs-00.asp). The objectives and criteria for the SRPF are consistent with these four main priorities.

They aim to ensure that everyone in rural Scotland can access the opportunities and services that will enable them to have a good quality of life and create communities and services that are sustainable in the longer term.

The consultation on the SRPF will also be carried out in line with the ongoing joint strategic review of voluntary sector funding in Scotland which is being taken forward by Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, the Convention for Scottish Local Authorities and the Scottish Executive. The aim of the review is to maximise the contribution of voluntary organisations to the common good of Scotland by working to resolve the cultural and practical issues relating to the funding of voluntary organisations that currently constrain them. Further details can be found at www.scotland.gov.uk/about/UNASS/UNASS/00015300/page2106627178.aspx. The Strategic Review Steering Group will make its recommendations to Ministers in due course.

3. What is the Scottish Rural Partnership Fund?

The SRPF is an annual competitive fund with a budget of £3.123m in 2003/04. The Fund invites applications from not-for-profit community and voluntary organisations and partnerships for a variety of rural development projects.

The SRPF in its current format was established on 1 April 1997. The scheme is split into three strands as set out in the table below:

Table 1 Purpose of and Conditions of Award for the Three Strands of the SRPF

Funding Strand	Stated Purpose of the Fund	Summary of Conditions of Award
Rural Challenge Fund (RCF)	Offers capital and revenue grants to rural projects, which propose innovative ways of tackling rural problems or create wider opportunities for rural areas.	The funding is primarily intended for local projects, but national bids, which benefit rural communities across Scotland and which have local backing, may be considered. Grants of up to 50% of eligible costs are available for a period of 1 to 3 years, subject to a maximum overall grant limit of £50,000.

Table 1 Purpose of and Conditions of Award for the Three Strands of the SRPF (continued)

Funding Strand	Stated Purpose of the Fund	Summary of Conditions of Award
Rural Strategic Support Fund (RSSF)	<p>Offers revenue grants to cover the core costs of establishing Local Rural Partnerships, along with grants for minor capital items.</p> <p>However, funding can also be made available to other groups wishing to promote rural community capacity building at a local or national level.</p>	<p>For Local Rural Partnerships, a grant is available to fund up to 50% of eligible costs in the first year, declining to 33% in the second year and 16% in the third year.</p> <p>For local or national capacity building projects, outside Local Rural Partnerships, a grant of up to 50% of the eligible costs is available for up to 3 years, subject to a ceiling of £50,000.</p>
Local Capital Grants Scheme (LCGS)	<p>Offers mostly capital grants to assist local, voluntary and community organisations to provide new or upgraded community premises for educational, social or recreational activities.</p> <p>Local Authorities which submit a prioritised list to SEERAD each year administer applications.</p>	<p>Grants are available for up to 50% of the eligible costs, subject to a ceiling of £100,000. In addition, the relevant Local Authority must be committed to match fund every project to 25% to the eligible costs.</p>

The balance of funding between Rural Challenge Fund (RCF), Rural Strategic Support Fund (RSSF) and Local Capital Grants Scheme (LCGS) is not fixed but is dependent on the quality of the applications received under each strand. In 2003/04, 86 projects were successful: 58 for RCF, 25 for LCGS and 3 for RSSF. This represented an overall success rate of 44%.

4. Existing Criteria for the SRPF

The operation of the SRPF is governed by a detailed set of criteria. These are laid out in the SRPF Information Note which can be found at www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/environment/srpf-00.asp.

Criteria include:

- that local community support for projects is essential for funding to be awarded. We need evidence of consultation with the local community
- that the SRPF contribution to a project must be match funded from other sources, e.g. the public, private or voluntary sectors

- that match funding does not need to be in place for an application to be successful although it does need to be in place for money to be paid. A maximum of 25% of match funding can be ‘in kind’ match funding, such as volunteers’ time in taking the project forward.

Projects which are currently ineligible for support from all these strands of the SRPF include:

- businesses and profit-making bodies
- activities associated with agriculture and fisheries
- existing projects and projects where the match funding will come from another Scottish Executive Department, Whitehall Department or an agency of the Scottish Executive.

We set out our main options for change to the SRPF in Section 6 of this paper. However, we believe that most of the existing criteria are important to ensure that the SRPF meets its aims for Scotland’s rural communities. Our intention is to keep the existing criteria largely intact. The two main exceptions where we would welcome your views on proposed changes are on the definition used for what makes up rural Scotland (section 6.6) and whether we should fund community businesses including some community-led projects related to agriculture and fisheries activity (section 6.7).

5. Why Review?

The SRPF has been in operation for over seven years and anecdotal evidence indicates that the quality of recent applications has been falling and that the scheme may not be meeting the needs of rural communities fully.

We commissioned an external evaluation of the SRPF over the autumn of 2003. The purpose of this research was to evaluate the effectiveness of the SRPF, in terms of its success in providing support to rural communities in Scotland. The research, involving surveys of participants and stakeholders, examined the objectives of the SRPF; the quality of the applications; its operation; and whether it provided value for money. All three strands of the Fund were included in the evaluation. The main recommendations of the evaluation included that:

- SRPF should be retained but the three strands of the Fund should be merged to create a single fund
- the mechanisms for providing support and guidance to applicants should be reviewed
- a network based possibly on existing local partnerships should be developed to help projects with their applications
- a new category of ‘small projects’ should be introduced for groups to secure limited funding to take forward smaller projects or to develop a proposal with a view to applying for a full project grant
- the terms and conditions of funding should be reviewed in three areas; the maximum ceiling on grants, the single annual call for applications and the lack of provision for carrying over funds between years.

A summary of the external evaluation report on the SRPF can be found at www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/rural/raf5-00.asp.

6. What Do You Think?

We are grateful to all those who took part and shared their views in the recent evaluation of the SRPF. This consultation paper is largely based on the outcome of that research. It looks at a number of issues and proposals as to how the SRPF could or should change the way it operates and asks for your comments and opinions.

The most important part of this process is for us to hear what you think. You may have received SRPF funding; you may have applied for it and been unsuccessful or you may have provided match funding or other support to a project. Your views are important in deciding how SRPF money should be spent in the future. The main areas where we would welcome your views are set out below and in the enclosed questionnaire. You may want to raise other areas for change.

6.1 No SRPF

One possible option would be to abolish the SRPF and, rather than replace it with some other grants scheme, to explore different ways of using the money to help Scotland's rural communities. The money could be distributed on behalf of rural Community Planning Partnerships to be used for the benefit of their rural population or dispersed to existing rural grants schemes, such as the Rural Transport Fund. However, by adopting such an approach, one of the main benefits of the SRPF – that local people generate local solutions for their community – would be lost. Therefore, we do not suggest that this approach is adopted.

Question 1

Do you think we should abolish the SRPF? If so, how should we use the money to help Scotland's rural communities?

6.2 No Change

We could make no change to the current operation of the SRPF but continue with the scheme in its current format. This would include retaining the existing three strands of the scheme, current levels of funding and conditions of grant. The main disadvantage with the 'no change' option is that it would not tackle the issues identified in the recent, external evaluation of the SRPF, nor improve the effectiveness of the Fund in addressing the needs of Scotland's rural communities.

Question 2

Do you want to keep the SRPF in its current format? If so, why?

6.3 Merge the Different Strands of the SRPF

The recent evaluation recommended merging all three strands of SRPF. Merging the different strands of SRPF has merit for rural communities in that it reduces confusion around the different strands of the scheme and what type of project should apply to each. However, LCGS is a very different scheme from RCF and RSSF. It is a mainly capital scheme for building or improving community premises. It is administered by the Local Authorities on behalf of the Scottish Executive. Local Authorities must be prepared to commit to match fund LCGS projects to the tune of 25%. Local Authorities have local knowledge to prioritise bids and relevant professional and technical expertise regarding planning and building such premises. The current set-up encourages local authority buy-in to the long-term sustainability of community facilities. These benefits would be lost if all three of the strands were merged. As a result, we do not suggest merging LCGS with the other strands of the scheme.

However, it is arguable that the original rationale for RSSF no longer holds. This strand of the scheme needs to be considered in the context of the development of Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) and the wider community planning framework. These mechanisms promote community capacity building in rural areas in the same way as RSSF. As community planning has evolved, the number of applications to RSSF has fallen. There were only 13 applications to RSSF in 2004/05 and it seems unlikely that many applications will come forward in future years. We suggest that RSSF be discontinued as a separate fund and that the revised SRPF would comprise of two strands; one for mostly capital grants to upgrade or provide new community facilities and one for mostly revenue grants to tackle local rural issues. The latter could be used to fund partnerships.

Question 3

Should the SRPF have two strands in future – one mostly for capital grants and one mostly for revenue grants?

6.4 Introduce Two Application Rounds a Year

We recognise that the current position, where there is only one annual application round for SRPF, can cause difficulties. If projects miss the autumn deadline they have to wait a year to put their project forward and this can lead to long delays to good projects which are needed in rural communities. We feel that this problem is less acute for LCGS projects which need a relatively long lead-in time to do all the necessary planning before building work starts. We suggest the introduction of two annual rounds for RCF.

Question 4

Should there be two application rounds each year for RCF?

6.5 Introduce Themes

We have used specific themes alongside the general criteria for RCF in the past to encourage applications from projects which tackle issues for particular sections of the community or which help disadvantaged groups. For example for the 2002/03 round the theme was childcare and for 2003/04 it was older people. However, the use of these extra themes has not been very successful at generating a significant number of high quality projects which address the particular theme. We would welcome your ideas on the potential benefits of using themes and any ideas on how to do this successfully. For example, communities are likely to benefit from a minimum length of notice about the introduction of a theme. Extra funding might be available for certain themes in future if projects clearly fit with specific national policy agendas. It is worth stressing that projects will not be ruled out if they fail to address a particular year's theme.

Question 5

What are your views on the use of additional themes?

6.6 Change the Use of the Rural Definition

The Scottish Executive employs a framework for defining what area is covered by the term 'rural Scotland'. Within this framework, a core definition defines rural Scotland as settlements of less than 3000 residents (regardless of drive times from larger population centres which define degrees of rurality). For the purpose of SRPF, we recognise that this definition is not always appropriate. For example, a community and voluntary organisation can be based in a settlement of over 3000 residents but provide a service which benefits residents of the surrounding rural area. As a result, SRPF projects are always considered on an individual case-by-case basis and we judge each application on the extent to which it will benefit rural communities. We propose to continue with this approach.

Question 6

What are your views on the flexible use of the rural definition of settlements of less than 3000 residents as a guide to whether an application is rural or not?

6.7 Fund Community Businesses/Agricultural and Fisheries Activity

We do not use the SRPF to fund businesses. However, we suggest that the SRPF consider funding projects undertaken by community businesses where they are genuinely community led and where profits are reinvested in that business for the benefit of the wider community. In such cases, we will look at each case on its merits. Projects are most likely to succeed if they are providing a service in a rural area that is not being provided and is not likely to be provided by the private sector or by the community/voluntary sector acting in a traditional way.

Equally, we do not provide funding for the core activities associated with agriculture and fisheries via the SRPF. However, projects which are associated with agriculture and/or fisheries but which are community-led and intended for the benefit of the local community will be considered. Again, profits must be reinvested in the business for the continued benefit of the wider community. It is important to state that giving money to such organisations means that there will be less funding available for SRPF's traditional client base of community and voluntary organisations.

Question 7

Do you think that community businesses should be funded by SRPF?

Question 8

Do you think that community-led projects that are associated with agriculture and/or fisheries should be funded through SRPF?

6.8 Introduce a Small Projects' Fund (including grants for capacity building)

- a) We would like to introduce a small grants' element as part of RCF. The element will make total grants of between £500 and £5000. These grants may represent 100% of a project's funding requirements and this strand of the Fund will be open to applications all year. The application process will be straightforward and decisions on applications will be made quickly (usually within 12 weeks). This strand of the Fund will also make full grants of £500 to £5000 available for feasibility studies to allow rural communities to explore and develop an idea for a project in their local area.
- b) As part of the latter proposal, we would like to make some funding available for capacity building projects. This fits with the existing 'Rural Voices' pilot scheme which was launched in October 2002 to encourage rural communities to identify their particular needs and become skilled at running their own local consultations on what the community feels it requires. The successful projects receive a high level of support and guidance. The current funding for 'Rural Voices' is due to end in March 2005. We recognise that 'Rural Voices' delivers real benefits, particularly in terms of capacity building, but we are unclear about whether demand exists for a similar scheme under the SRPF with a high level of support and guidance as opposed to a less intensively supported, more general scheme.

It is important to note that a high level of support and guidance will cost significantly more to deliver and that, as a result, we will be able to fund fewer projects if that is the favoured option.

Question 9

Would introducing a small grants scheme be a good idea?

Question 10

Do you think that a small number of these small grants' projects should receive higher levels of support and guidance to foster capacity building? What criteria would you use for deciding which projects require a higher level of support?

6.9 Increase Levels of Support and Guidance

We recognise the importance of providing effective support and guidance to applicants, especially to disadvantaged communities and groups which are less likely to apply to the SRPF or where grant support can make the biggest difference to people's quality of life. Over the summer of 2003, we held six road shows and two application seminars around the country. These events were intended to supplement the written information note for the SRPF and provide interested parties with the chance to find out more about the Fund and ask questions about their own projects. The events were well attended and, subject to the demands on the relatively small team that deals with the SRPF, we would like to do more of them. However, a relatively high proportion of projects still fail – both to be successful at the application stage and to access their funding once they have received an award. There may be a complimentary role for a network based on existing partnerships or for an on-line support network where applicants can share their experiences. It may be the case that a complex and more expensive project needs more intensive support and guidance than a smaller, straightforward project. In addition, as discussed in section 6.8, there may be a case for providing more intensive support for feasibility studies. It is important to stress that additional support will depend on the capacity of the Rural Policy Team and the relevant external organisations to deliver that extra level of support.

Question 11

What sort of support and guidance would you like? Should the levels of support and guidance offered vary by the size of the project? What are the advantages of providing guidance and support locally?

6.10 Sharing Good Practice

We are well aware that one of the ways of providing greater support and guidance for applicants would be to increase the opportunities available for people to share their experience; examples of what worked and what did not work, where they found useful assistance from other organisations and where they encountered unexpected problems. While we recognise that not everyone has easy access to the Internet, one suggested way of helping people to share their experience is to dedicate an area on the Rural Community Gateway website (www.ruralgateway.org.uk) to the SRPF. This would be a place where applicants could share their experience, find out about the experiences of others and ask for advice from each other. It could be a condition of grant in future that successful projects complete a simple form for inclusion on such a website.

Question 12

Would you welcome a shared area on the Rural Community Gateway website where people can share their experience of the SRPF? Do you have any other suggestions for ways of sharing good practice?

6.11 Extend the Deadline for Applications

We recognise that eight weeks between the opening of each round of SRPF and the deadline for submission of applications may not be long enough especially for small local, community and voluntary organisations which have to involve a number of other individuals and organisations in the process of preparing the application. We would be interested to hear your views.

Question 13

Is eight weeks between the opening of each SRPF application round and the deadline for submitting the application form long enough? If not, why, and how long do you need?

6.12 Increase the Levels of Funding

The thresholds for each of the strands of the SRPF (Table 1, page 3) have not changed in seven years. One option would be to increase the amount of money available under each strand of the scheme. Any increase will need to be funded from the existing money available to the scheme and, as a result, fewer projects will secure grants if the level of funding goes up. For example, based on a 5% increase over the last seven years, the total amount available to RCF and RSSF could increase to £70,000 and under LCGS to £140,000.

Question 14

Should the level of funding available to each strand of the SRPF be increased? If so, why, and by how much? What difference would increasing the levels of funding to £70,000 for RCF and £140,000 for LCGS make to the outputs of SRPF projects?

6.13 Change the Match-funding Requirements

At the moment, SRPF does not provide all the funding that a successful project needs. Instead, it is a requirement of the Fund that match funding is secured from other funding bodies. The aim of this requirement is to secure value for money for taxpayers' money and to secure buy-in from other – often local – organisations to good projects in their area. It is important that communities are committed to securing such funding for their project if it is to be sustainable. The SRPF will accept 25% of match funding contributions as in kind match funding, for example, volunteers' time. We could remove or decrease this match funding requirement. Any such changes to match funding requirements will mean that the extra money has to be found from existing SRPF money and that fewer projects will be successful.

Question 15

Should the level of match funding required be changed? If so, how should it be changed and what would the benefits be?

6.14 Extend the Period During Which Grants can be Claimed

At the moment, the SRPF does not allow for the carrying over of grant funds between financial years. This means that money allocated to a project in a particular financial year must be spent in that financial year and cannot be carried forward into the next financial year except in exceptional circumstances. We recognise that this can cause real difficulties for award holders as SRPF grants cannot be released to successful projects until all the match funding is in place. It can be difficult for projects to secure confirmation of their match funding in time to access and spend their full SRPF grant entitlement in the financial year for which it was allocated. Under the current arrangements, most projects lose their grant entitlement in these circumstances. We suggest relaxing this requirement to allow projects to claim grant within a longer timescale of an award of grant being made. One concern about this approach is that it may remove the incentive for a project to maintain its momentum and ensure that it claims its grant entitlement within a reasonable timescale. However, this does not mean that a project can wait an indefinite period of time before claiming their grant. What it does mean is that projects will have a longer but set timescale within which to claim. We will set clear timescales for claiming grant within this new flexibility. For example, projects may be allowed an additional 12 months after the financial year for which the grant was allocated to submit their final claim for that financial year.

Question 16

Should projects be able to carry over funding between financial years, where this is allowed under the terms of Government accounting?

6.15 Other Issues

This paper does not attempt to cover all the possible changes that could be made to the structure and operation of SRPF. If you feel that there are specific changes – not already covered – that could be made to the Fund which would help it to deliver better for Scotland’s rural communities, then please let us know. It would be helpful to have an outline of the changes you think would help and an idea of the improvements you think would result from those changes.

Question 17

Do you have any further comments on the SRPF or on the consultation paper?

7. The SRPF Consultation Process

This consultation paper is only one part of the wider consultation process on the future operation of the SRPF. We will also be holding regional meetings around Scotland to gather views on the future of the SRPF. We expect there will be eight regional meetings, one each in Orkney, Shetland, Western Isles, Borders, Dumfries and Galloway, Caithness and Sutherland and Perth or Stirling. These meetings will be a further opportunity for interested parties to contribute. We expect them to take place during April and May. If you would like to take part please email your name, organisation (if relevant), contact details and a note of which meeting you would like to attend to srpfconsultation@scotland.gsi.gov.uk or call 0131 244 4479 to register your interest. More details of timings and exact location will be made available nearer the time on the Scottish Executive website and on the Rural Community Gateway website (www.ruralgateway.org.uk).

Once the consultation process is complete, we will be holding post-consultation meetings in the same locations to feed back the results of the consultation process to those who took part. Once again, further details will be available nearer the time and if you would like to attend please register your interest as above.

8. Conclusion

We welcome your comments on the issues raised in this paper and more widely on any other issues connected with the distribution of SRPF funding. The consultation will last until Friday 28 May 2004 and the details of how to share your views are summarised at the front of this document.

Thank you for taking the time to respond.

Appendix 1

The Scottish Executive Consultation Process

Consultation is an essential and important aspect of Scottish Executive working methods. Given the wide-ranging areas of work of the Scottish Executive, there are many varied types of consultation. However, in general Scottish Executive consultation exercises aim to provide opportunities for all those who wish to express their opinions on a proposed area of work to do so in ways which will inform and enhance that work.

While details of particular circumstances described in a response to a consultation exercise may usefully inform the policy process, consultation exercises cannot address individual concerns and comments, which should be directed to the relevant public body. Consultation exercises may involve seeking views in a number of different ways, such as public meetings, focus groups or questionnaire exercises.

Typically, Scottish Executive consultations involve a written paper inviting answers to specific questions or more general views about the material presented. Written papers are distributed to organisations and individuals with an interest in the area of consultation, and they are also placed on the Scottish Executive web site enabling a wider audience to access the paper and submit their responses.¹ Copies of all the responses received to consultation exercises (except those where the individual or organisation requested confidentiality) are placed in the Scottish Executive library at Saughton House, Edinburgh (K Spur, Saughton House, Broomhouse Drive, Edinburgh EH11 3XD, telephone 0131 244 4552).

The views and suggestions detailed in consultation responses are analysed and used as part of the decision-making process. Depending on the nature of the consultation exercise the responses received may:

- indicate the need for policy development or review
- inform the development of a particular policy
- help decisions to be made between alternative policy proposals
- be used to finalise legislation before it is implemented.

If you have any comment about how this consultation exercise has been conducted, please send them to the contact details set out at the start of this paper.

¹www.scotland.gov.uk

Appendix 2

LIST OF CONSULTEES

Commission for Racial Equality
Communities Scotland
Community Fund
Community Planning Partnerships
Community Councils
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
Councils for Voluntary Service
Disability Rights Commission
Equal Opportunities Commission
Federation of Small Businesses
Forestry Commission
Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Leader Plus Action Groups
Local Authority Chief Executives
Local Authority LCGS contact officers
Local Enterprise Companies
Local Rural Partnerships
National Farmers Union
New Opportunity Fund
NHS Boards
Recent Past Applicants to the SRPF - successful and unsuccessful
Scottish Agricultural College
Scottish Civic Forum
Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations
Scottish Crofting Foundation
Scottish Enterprise
Scottish Landowners' Federation
Scottish Natural Heritage
Scottish Parliament
Scottish Trades Union Congress
Small Business Federation
Social Inclusion Partnerships
VisitScotland
Voluntary Sector Intermediary Bodies
Volunteer Centres

SCOTTISH RURAL PARTNERSHIP FUND CONSULTATION

RESPONSE FORM

Please fill in the form below to record your views. After each section, there is a space for comments and further thoughts. Please include other options if you would like them to be considered. If you have more to say on a particular question please attach a separate sheet of paper if necessary.

Please send all responses by 28 May 2004 to:

**Scottish Rural Partnership Fund Consultation
FREEPOST NAT11009
EDINBURGH
EH14 0BR**

Or e-mail to: srpfconsultation@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

The form is available at www.scotland.gov.uk/srpfConsultationResponseForm/ to be completed online or downloaded.

Your Details

Your name: _____

Your organisation (if applicable): _____

Your address: _____

E-mail: _____

Telephone number: _____

1. Have you received or applied for an SRPF grant? Yes No
2. Are you responding as: (please tick one box)
 - (a) an individual (go to 3a/b)
 - (b) **on behalf of** a group or organisation (go to 3c)

3a. INDIVIDUALS:

Do you agree to your response being made available to the public (in SE library and/or on SE website)?

Yes (go to 3b below)

No, not at all

3b. *Where confidentiality is not requested*, we will make your response available to the public on the following basis (please tick one of the following boxes)

Yes, make my response, name and address all available

Yes, make my response available, but not my name or address

Yes, make my response and name available, but not my address

3c. ON BEHALF OF GROUPS OR ORGANISATIONS:

Your name and address as respondees ***will be*** made available to the public (in the SE library and/or on SE website). Are you content for your response to be made available also?

Yes

No

4. We will share your response internally with other SE policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for the Scottish Executive to contact you again in the future for consultation or research purposes?

Yes

No

Question 1	Yes	No
Do you think we should abolish the SRPF?		
If so, how should we use the money to help Scotland's rural communities?		

Question 2	Yes	No
Do you want to keep the SRPF in its current format?		
If so, why? Please share any comments with us:		

Question 3	Yes	No
Should the SRPF have two strands in future – one mostly for capital grants and one mostly for revenue grants?		
Please share any comments with us:		

Question 4	Yes	No
Should there be two application rounds each year for RCF?		
Please share any comments with us:		

Question 5	Yes	No
What are your views on the use of additional themes?		
Comments:		

Question 6	Yes	No
What are your views on the flexible use of the rural definition of settlements of less than 3000 residents as a guide to whether an application is rural or not?		
Comments:		

Question 7	Yes	No
Do you think that community businesses should be funded by SRPF?		
Comments:		

Question 8	Yes	No
Do you think that community-led projects that are associated with agriculture and/or fisheries should be funded through SRPF?		
Comments:		

Question 9	Yes	No
Would introducing a small grants scheme be a good idea?		
Comments:		

Question 10	Yes	No
Do you think that a small number of these small grants' projects should receive higher levels of support and guidance to foster capacity building?		
What criteria would you use for deciding which projects require a higher level of support?		

Question 11	Yes	No
Should the levels of support and guidance offered vary by the size of the project?		
<p>What sort of support and guidance would you like?</p> <p>What are the advantages of providing guidance and support locally?</p>		

Question 12	Yes	No
Would you welcome a shared area on the Rural Community Gateway website where people can share their experience of the SRPF?		
Do you have any other suggestions for ways of sharing good practice?		

Question 13	Yes	No
Is eight weeks between the opening of each SRPF application round and the deadline for submitting the application form long enough?		
If not, why, and how long do you need?		

Question 14	Yes	No
Should the level of funding available to each strand of SRPF be increased?		
<p>If so, why and by how much?</p> <p>What difference would increasing the levels of funding to £70,000 for RCF and £140,000 for LCGS make to the outputs of SRPF projects?</p>		

Question 15	Yes	No
Should the level of match funding required be changed?		
If so, how should it be changed and what would the benefits be?		

Question 16	Yes	No
Should projects be able to carry over funding between financial years, where this is allowed under the terms of Government accounting?		
Please share any comments with us.		

Question 17

Do you have any further comments on the SRPF or on the consultation paper?
(Please continue on a separate sheet if you wish.)

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