



THE LOUGHS AGENCY

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE POLICY

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23 September 2008



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1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

- a. The Loughs Agency (hereinafter referred to as “the Agency”) will consider applications by organisations/individuals for financial assistance to support angling development, conservation and protection of the fisheries, marine tourism, aquaculture and Agency corporate services in the Foyle and Carlingford catchments and elsewhere (where beneficial contribution to the Agency’s aims and objectives can be clearly demonstrated).
- b. It should be noted that there is no automatic entitlement to financial assistance and the decision of the Agency will be final in any assessment process.
- c. This policy must be read in conjunction with any Letter of Offer that may be issued.

2. AIMS, OBJECTIVES, TARGETS AND OUTCOMES

- a. The mission statement of the Agency is:

“The Loughs Agency aims to provide sustainable social, economic and environmental benefits through the effective conservation, management, promotion and development of the fisheries and marine resources of the Foyle and Carlingford Areas.”

- b. The principal objectives of the Agency in the Foyle and Carlingford areas are:
 - To manage, conserve and protect the salmon and inland fisheries of the Foyle and Carlingford areas
 - To develop the recreational fisheries of the Foyle and Carlingford areas
 - To licence and develop aquaculture and shellfisheries
 - To develop marine tourism
 - To pursue increased efficiency and continuous improvement in the delivery of services to all customers
 - To ensure the efficient, effective and economic utilisation of resources available to the Agency



c. For the purposes of the Agency, marine tourism is defined as being activity undertaken in a marine environment (the sea and the coast) by visitors and holidaymakers.

d. The Agency intends that the outcomes of the financial assistance programme are that the Foyle and Carlingford areas shell and fin fish stocks remain at sustainable levels; aquaculture grows; and marine tourism, angling and other recreational use develops.

e. Targets follow for 2009 (subject to review and update):

ACTIVITY	TARGET
AH1 In stream habitat enhancement to improve fish stocks	2 projects
AH2 Restoration of river, stream or other waterbody	2 projects
AH3 Improvement of ease of fish passage along waterways	1 project
AA1 Access for anglers	2 projects
AA2 Facilities for disabled anglers	2 projects
AF1 Drying rooms and prepare your catch facility (restricted to registered tourist accommodation providers and commercially run recreational fisheries)	3 projects
AF2 Facilities at commercially run recreational fisheries that will improve the visitor experience	2 projects
TW1 Marinas, moorings or launch facilities for water based leisure	1 project
TW2 Navigation aids to support water based leisure and tourism	1 project
TA1 Access for disabled boat users	1 project
TS1 Water safety improvement, including display of information	1 project
TE2 Marine eco tourism projects	2 projects

f. Promoters of events must meet with the Agency in good time to discuss such proposals. EOI closing date applies. The key criteria in assessment of an event will be the potential economic impact levered by holding the event and its sustainability.



3. SELECTION PROCESS

a. The criteria against which the Agency will assess project proposals include the following:

- ii. Estimated visitor numbers attracted as a result of the project
- iii. Estimated number of bed nights generated (if applicable)
- iv. Economic spin off for local businesses
- v. Effectiveness of the marketing/public relations plan
- vi. Opportunity for fostering social cohesion/community participation
- vii. Significance of the event/activity/development within the Foyle and Carlingford catchments
- viii. Amount of sponsorship and/or additional funding secured
- ix. Status of the event or activity's participants/performers (local participation or national/international exposure)
- x. Level of grant assistance requested
- xi. Relative experience of the promoter of the event/activity/development
- xii. Provision made to meet statutory requirements (health and safety, planning etc)
- xiii. Robust sustainability plan/exit strategy
- xiv. Environmental impact

b. The Agency will gather key local advice (from local authorities, fishery inspectors, regional tourism bodies etc) to support decision making at assessment.

c. The Agency will only offer assistance to projects that (in its view):-

- meet the criteria listed above
- clearly demonstrate an economic and civic impact
- provide value for money
- complement the aims and objectives of the Agency



4. LEVEL OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

- a. Each application will be evaluated as per the criteria above. The level of any funding will reflect the impact the event/activity/development will have on the Foyle and Carlingford catchments. There is no fixed level of assistance – each case will be considered on its own merits. In practice, funding will be restricted to a level of up to 75% of total qualifying eligible expenditure, normally not exceeding £5,000 (or euro equivalent). Larger scale projects may be considered – however, potential applicants must contact the Agency in good time to discuss their proposal in detail.
- b. No more than two applications per applicant will be considered for funding in any round of funding.
- c. If the applicant organisation is VAT registered and reclaiming VAT then all costs outlined in the application form must be nett of VAT. If the applicant organisation is not VAT registered all costs outlined in the application form should be the gross figure (ie including VAT paid by the organisation). If an organization commences a project and then finds it is able to reclaim VAT (or is exempt from VAT) then any VAT amount previously claimed must be repaid to the Agency.
- d. The amount of assistance offered is dependent upon assessment and decision by the Agency and the budget available.
- e. The actual sum of monies allocated to the financial assistance programme is decided on an annual basis. Allocations to respective sub-programmes in any year will be guided by the annual corporate plan.



5. ELIGIBILITY

The Agency will not normally provide funding for the following activities:

- i. Event/activity/development taking place entirely outside the Foyle and Carlingford Catchments
- ii. Commercial concerts
- iii. Conferences of a commercial nature
- iv. Trade conventions
- v. Cash payments
- vi. "In kind" project costs will not be grant aided but may be admitted as match funding where quantifiable and approved in advance by the Loughs Agency
- vii. VAT - where the applicant is VAT registered and reclaiming VAT
- viii. Core funding for events/activities eg salaries, general administrative costs including telephone calls, postage, rent, rates, electricity, fuel costs, bank charges and internet costs (unless directly relating to the marketing plan and a clear audit trail is retained for inspection)
- ix. Interest charges and repayments of capital in respect of borrowings
- x. Cost incurred by the applicant in relation to its trading or other activities as part of its own general administration costs (including staff costs) / normal running costs
- xi. Costs incurred prior to the date of the Letter of Offer will be at the applicant's risk
- xii. Repayment of existing debt
- xiii. Project promoter fees
- xiv. The purchase and/or cost of erection of bunting cannot form part of any award
- xv. Event/activity whose primary objective is to raise money for charity
- xvi. Payments made to committee members
- xvii. Costs associated with an Annual General Meeting (AGM)
- xviii. Projects that create economic displacement
- xix. Mainstream agricultural activities
- xx. Any event or activity that is party political in intention, use or presentation
- xxi. Pro-forma payments will not be considered

Applicants must note the above list is guidance only and not definitive.



6. MAKING AN APPLICATION

- a. The application form is an important document and you should take time and care in completing it. The information provided must be accurate. Please ensure you complete all appropriate sections of the application form and enclose all essential documentation. The project will be assessed on the information supplied in the application form. Additional information may be requested – any such request must be attended to promptly.
- b. The Agency will reject illegible or incomplete applications. Provision of false or misleading information will result in the withdrawal of any offer of financial assistance.
- c. The application must be received at the Agency offices by the deadline set by the Agency (please seek clarification from the office if this date is not immediately evident from the Agency website and literature - tele 028 [048 from ROI] 7134 2100). Late applications will not be considered.
- d. Requests for funding should be submitted at least 12 weeks prior to the date of commencement of the project. The Agency will not consider retrospective funding (ie those that have taken place before the Agency has considered the application or those on which money has been spent prior to the date of the Letter of Offer).

7. CANVASSING

Applicants should note that the proposal can only be judged on the information submitted and strategic fit. Any canvassing of Agency officers, Board or Advisory Forum members will result in the application being rejected.

8. LETTER OF OFFER AND TIMESCALES

- a. A formal Letter of Offer will be issued to the applicant following Agency approval of the project. All pre-conditions stated in the Letter of Offer must be met before any assistance can be paid.



- b. If the terms of the Letter of Offer are not adhered to by the applicant, the Agency has the right to withhold or seek to recover all or part of the financial assistance.
- c. The Letter of Offer will clearly set out timescales for the project. These must be adhered to and the Agency must be advised forthwith of any likely failure to meet same.
- d. The Agency may not accept funding claims received more than three months after the activity completed.

9. PROCUREMENT

- a. Project promoters must strive to ensure that Agency funds are used economically, efficiently and effectively.
- b. The project promoter will obtain competitive quotes/tenders for goods/services. Agency staff must be invited to attend any and all tender panels. The following procurement procedures apply, unless superceded by Letter of Offer or other correspondence:

Estimated Purchase Value or Contract Value (exc VAT)	Minimum Number of Tenders to be Sought	Important Notes
Up to £1,000 / €1,500	2 Oral Quotations	File note detailing the suppliers providing quotes and the respective amounts
£1,000 to £10,000 / €1,500 to €15,000	3 Tenders (written quotations)	Loughs Agency must be invited to sit on tender panel as independent observer
£10,000 -£30,000 / € 5,000 - € 45,000	4 Tenders (written quotations)	Loughs Agency must be invited to sit on tender panel as independent observer
£30,000 up to EC Threshold £99,695 / €45,000 to €149,543	Open Tender (secured by public advertisement)	Consult with Loughs Agency regarding media advertising and invite Agency to sit on panel
EC threshold of £99,695 / €149,543 and above	European Journal	Consult with Loughs Agency



10. PAYMENT OF ASSISTANCE

- a. Grant aid shall be paid in arrears on receipt of a claim for actual vouched expenditure accompanied by the Post Project Evaluation Form and a full and accurate statement of account. In exceptional circumstances - and where prior approval has been obtained from the Agency - phased payments in arrears may be made (in such circumstances the final 10% of grant monies will be withheld until receipt and evaluation of the Post Project Evaluation Form).
- b. Prior to the payment of the grant aid the recipient shall provide satisfactory evidence to the Agency that all statutory approvals for carrying out the project (including planning and building control approval, health & safety, fair employment) have been obtained.
- c. Payment of grant or any installment will only be made on receipt of a claim form accompanied by such evidence of relevant and legitimate expenditure as original invoices and/or receipts, bank statements and (where appropriate) a record of the procurement process (see section 9 above). Expenditure claimed without the support of the above will be disallowed.
- d. Project promoters must make all payments by cheque from the appropriate bank account. Expenditure must only be in response to presentation of a *bona fide* invoice. Cash expenditure is not eligible expenditure.
- e. Payment of grant will only be made once the Agency is content that the grant has been expended in accordance with the Letter of Offer, this policy and the proposal outlined in the original application.

11. LIABILITY AND INSURANCE

- a. The promoter of the event/activity/development shall indemnify the Agency against all actions, proceedings, costs, claims, demands and liabilities whatsoever arising from all or any activities associated with the project.



- b. The organiser must confirm that insurance arrangements will cover risks as appropriate - eg employers liability (will you require cover for volunteers as well as employees?), public liability, professional indemnity, all risks (will you require cover for equipment?). Project promoters must confirm their insurance requirements with a reputable insurance agent/broker.
- c. A copy of all relevant insurance documents must be supplied to the Agency prior to the project taking place.
- d. All assets associated with the project or funded by the Loughs Agency must be insured and maintained.

12. FAIR EMPLOYMENT / EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

The Agency is fully committed to supporting the elimination of all forms of discrimination in employment. The applicant will be expected to adhere to the requirements of the Fair Employment (NI) Act 1989, and to observe the spirit of the legislation. Under Section 43 of this act the Agency has the right to withhold or recover any payment or part thereof in the event of failure by the applicant to honour the undertakings stipulated in this paragraph.

13. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- a. In accepting any offer, the project promoter undertakes to assess all aspects of the project to identify potential impact on the environment. The promoter will adopt and implement an appropriate environmental policy that will mitigate any negative impact.
- b. Where projects impact on or are located close to any water body, a quantitative fish stock survey will be undertaken to establish a baseline before any works commence – unless waived in writing by the Loughs Agency.



14. POST PROJECT EVALUATION

Project promoters are required to complete a Post Project Evaluation Form. They are expected to monitor the economic and/or civic impact of the project and make an accurate assessment of this at key stages.

15. PUBLICITY

On receipt of financial assistance, the role of the Agency as sponsor must be fully acknowledged by means of inclusion of logos and text on all literature and associated marketing material, including advertisements. Failure to comply may result in the withdrawal of assistance.

16. TRANSPARENCY

Project applicants will be asked to state any links they have with the Loughs Agency (for instance: past / present board member, past / present advisory forum member, past / present member of staff; related to or a close friend of past / present member of staff / board / advisory forum). The response to this question will not affect the assessment of a project proposal - unless it is found that an applicant knowingly withheld information.

17. APPEALS

An unsuccessful applicant may submit an appeal but this must be done in writing and received in the Agency headquarters within fourteen days of the date of the notification letter.

APPLICANTS MUST NOTE THAT THE AGENCY'S FINANCIAL POLICY IS SUBJECT TO REVIEW AT ANY TIME AND WITHOUT NOTICE. THE AGENCY'S DECISION IS FINAL IN ANY ADJUDICATION.

D Anderson
Chief Executive
September 2008



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