

Response to the Consultation on Options for the Future of the Community Facilities and Activities Programme

Welsh Government Consultation

The Carnegie United Kingdom (UK) Trust welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the options for the future of the Community Facilities and Activities Programme. The Trust works to improve the lives of people throughout the UK and Ireland, by influencing policy, and by changing lives through innovative practice and partnership work. The Carnegie UK Trust was established by Scots-American philanthropist Andrew Carnegie in 1913. We have chosen only to respond to the questions where we have experience and relevant evidence. Further information on our work is available on our website www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk.

Q1. Do you agree that all new applications to CFAP should demonstrate how the project will help to combat poverty in the local community?

Improving the wellbeing of people across the UK and Ireland is the primary focus of all the Carnegie UK Trust's work. Action to tackle poverty is clearly essential if the wellbeing of citizens and communities is to be improved, and we therefore agree that applicants to the CFAP should be required to demonstrate how their project proposal will tackle poverty in their neighbourhood.

However, we would caution against asking applicants to CFAP to focus their proposal only on the problems facing their local community. While it is vital that this analysis forms an important part of the application process, we believe it should be complemented by an 'assets-based' approach to the proposed project.

Our '[Appreciating Assets](#)' report, published in 2011, explains that an assets approach focuses on what a community has, rather than what it lacks, and then seeks to build on these positive

features of the community in order to achieve social and economic improvements. Assets can include tangible assets such as buildings, land and finance, but also intangible assets such as local people's knowledge and skills; the groups, networks and relationships within the community; natural resources; and the external influence that a community has available to it. A community might be lacking in one or more of these areas – but it will have strengths and capacity in others. Our recent '[Pride in Place: Tackling Environmental Incivilities](#)' report demonstrates, through a series of eight case studies, how an assets-based approach to improving local public spaces which had previously been blighted by environmental problems has helped to enhance quality of life in a number of deprived communities across the UK.

In terms of how an assets approach might be applied to CFAP, we suggest that applicants to the Programme should be asked to demonstrate how their proposed project would build on the existing assets within their local community in order to achieve positive outcomes. Applicants should be given clear guidance as to what the assets in their

community might be, and provided with case study examples of projects that have successfully used an assets-based approach.

Q3. Would you like to see a development phase introduced to CFAP with funding available to assist with the costs of project development? Do you consider £25,000 to be reasonable?

We strongly support the introduction of a development phase to CFAP, with funding available to assist with the costs involved. Providing such support for project development is likely to bring significant benefits:

- It may allow for more complex projects to be developed, which may otherwise not have been feasible, as those involved in the project would not have had the necessary time and resources to scope and plan the project fully.
- It will allow for more robust and comprehensive community engagement and consultation to be undertaken, to help shape proposed projects. Our experience across a range of policy areas is that sustainable solutions to community problems are often community-led solutions. A development phase which allows communities to play a greater role in designing and taking ownership of a project from the outset is therefore highly beneficial.
- It would support the local community group to assess the feasibility and sustainability of their project idea more robustly. This is important, as there may be significant ongoing costs involved in a project and it is essential that community groups have the support that they need to determine at an early stage if their idea is realistic and achievable.

Q4. Do you consider that allowing applications to CFAP to be made at any time rather than in rounds with fixed deadlines is a good idea? Do you think it is reasonable to

expect unsuccessful applicants to wait for six months before re-applying to CFAP?

We agree with the proposal that, to speed up the application process, applications to CFAP should be permitted at any time with a rolling assessment process. However, it will be important that this arrangement is clearly communicated to potential applicants.

We agree that unsuccessful applicants should be required to wait for six months before re-applying – but it is essential that these applicants are given detailed feedback on the reasons why their proposal was rejected, which they can then consider and address in the intervening period before re-applying.

Q5. Should the Welsh Government consider targeting funding as outlined above?

We support in principle the proposal that some element of targeting should be used to ensure that CFAP resources reach areas of Wales which have tended to be less successful than others in attracting funding. However, it is essential that any targeting which is applied is based on a clear, fair and transparent set of criteria. These criteria must be straightforward and easy to understand and must be made widely available to potential applicants at the start of the funding period.

Q7. Do you think that the Welsh Government should continue to support the transfer of assets to the third sector?

Earlier this year, we worked with the Island Book Trust to publish '[From the Low Tide of the Sea to the Highest Mountain Top](#)'. This book describes, in some detail, how community ownership of land and other assets has transformed communities in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. We strongly support opportunities for communities and third sector organisations throughout the UK to take greater control and ownership of the assets in their locality, where they are interested in doing so. We are currently members of a

Ministerial Working Group advising the Scottish Government on the asset transfer proposals set out in the proposed Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill.

The benefits of community ownership can be:

- financial: leveraging in finance from other sectors and other fund raising activities;
- economic: contributing to the regeneration of the local economy which in turn will improve the value of local land and buildings; and
- social: opportunities for participation, pride in the local environment and individual and community wellbeing.

Conversely, unused and underused public assets can have a hugely negative impact on communities, particularly where they are allowed to fall into disrepair. Our '[Pride in Place: Tackling Environmental Incivilities](#)' report shows clearly the impact of the local environment on the wellbeing of individuals and communities, illustrating the vital role that communities have to play in sustaining and protecting local assets, ensuring that they are a positive feature of the community and not a blight upon it.

The third sector has a particular role to play in ensuring that assets are used in the way in which citizens desire. Some groups in society are unlikely to be actively engaged in community groups due, for example, to chaotic lifestyles, or a lack of confidence. Charities and voluntary organisations are often in direct contact with groups that are likely to be disengaged from discussions about how local assets might be used. Third sector organisations should, and often do, act as intermediaries to enable engagement with otherwise excluded groups. It is important however to separate out the third sector's role as gatekeepers to 'hard to reach' groups from their views as asset owners or managers in their own right.

From our experience, we would offer some further comments about the arrangements for the successful transfer of assets to community or third sector organisations:

- In order to understand the assets in their area (tangible and intangible), local people need to be provided with the opportunity to explore these issues together. There are many techniques for facilitating discussions about local assets, including asset mapping, appreciative enquiry and community-led planning, as highlighted in our 2011 report '[The Power of the Plan](#)'. To be effective, these approaches must start by accessing the views of people in the community as to what they think the assets are.
- Following on from this point, it is essential that this is articulated as an opportunity to request the transfer of an unused or underused asset. Taking over community assets must come from a desire from the community to do things differently, not pressure from public authorities to take responsibility for assets that they can no longer maintain effectively.
- There are a range of practical requirements that we would expect to be in place before a community body can take ownership, for example they must be legally constituted and provide information on how they would finance the asset transfer. In addition, community or third sector groups should be able to provide evidence that they have the support of the wider community in their plans for the future development of the asset.
- Community bodies require information from the public authority in terms of the ongoing costs of running the asset which will no longer be provided by the authority. It is essential that community groups considering asset transfer are provided with a full picture of the costs in order to allow them to plan accordingly.

- The consultation paper only mentions asset transfer in this section, but this is of course only one of a number of options available to communities and public authorities when exploring the future of an asset. Other options include long-term leasing, joint or cooperative ownership and gradual equity purchase. There is no 'one size fits all' approach to identifying the correct solution for community assets but all should be considered by the public authority and community groups.

Q8. Do you agree that town and community councils should be eligible to apply to CFAP when they are in partnership with another community group in order to provide a clear community benefit?

The Carnegie UK Trust was an early supporter of community councils across the UK as we recognised the important role that they could play in local democracy. We share the concerns raised by a number of groups that community councils are not always representative of the communities that they serve. However, we see this as a need

for them to be revived and reformed, rather than abandoned.

Providing community councils with an opportunity to apply to CFAP, in partnership with other community groups, appears to offer a useful opportunity to build stronger relations between community councils and the local areas that they represent. The proposal therefore has some merit. However, it is essential that the community council and other community groups are seen as equal partners in any joint CFAP-funded project, and this will need to be clearly. We would also caution against any specific rights or opportunities being offered to community councils that are not available to other community groups. Any 'special' powers or privileges given to community councils in relation to CFAP may inadvertently dissuade other types of community groups from considering action. Similarly, any active role in the provision of community facilities must be driven by the community council themselves, and not imposed on them otherwise it is unlikely to be sustainable or effective.

The Carnegie UK Trust works to improve the lives of people throughout the UK and Ireland, by changing minds through influencing policy, and by changing lives through innovative practice and partnership work. The Carnegie UK Trust was established by Scots-American philanthropist Andrew Carnegie in 1913 and we are delighted to be celebrating our centenary in 2013. Please see our website for further information on our centenary plans.

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Written: November 2012

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