

Frequently Asked Questions on Neighbourhood Planning funding for Local Planning Authorities

Q1. What is this funding for?

- A. This money is to ensure local planning authorities receive sufficient funding to enable them to meet new legislative duties in relation to neighbourhood planning. Specifically, it covers the neighbourhood planning duties introduced in the Localism Act 2011 which are to provide advice or assistance; to hold an examination; and to make arrangements for a referendum

Q2. What does “advice or assistance” mean?

- A. The extent of advice and assistance will be different in each area. The legislation requires local planning authorities to provide such advice or assistance to qualifying bodies as, in all the circumstances, they consider appropriate for the purpose of, or in connection with, facilitating the making of proposals for neighbourhood development plans orders. Planning guidance (<http://tinyurl.com/pm8un6x>) is that a local authority should:

- be proactive in providing information to communities about neighbourhood planning
- fulfil its duties and take decisions as soon as possible, particularly regarding applications for area and forum designation
- set out a clear and transparent decision making timetable and share this with those wishing to prepare a neighbourhood plan or Order
- constructively engage with the community throughout the process

Parish or town councils or neighbourhood forums should discuss with their local planning authority how this funding can support their work involved in taking forward neighbourhood plans. There is more detail on this available in the neighbourhood planning roadmap produced by Locality available at: <http://mycommunityrights.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Roadmap-worksheets-map-May-13.pdf>

Q3. How do I apply for this funding?

- A. Any local planning authority supporting neighbourhood planning will be able to claim using LOGASnet following designation of a neighbourhood area or forum, after publicising the plan prior to examination and after successful examination.

Q4. How much can I claim?

- A. For all areas, the basic level of funding is £30,000. The first payment of £5,000 will be made following designation of the neighbourhood area. The second payment of £5,000 will be made when the final pre-examination version of the neighbourhood plan is publicised by the local planning authority prior to examination. The third payment of £20,000 will be made on successful completion of the neighbourhood planning examination.

Additional funding is available in certain areas. In non-parished areas, local planning authorities can claim £5,000 per forum designated. In business areas, local planning authorities can claim a further £10,000 following a successful examination.

Q5. When and how can I submit a claim?

- A. There will be four opportunities to submit claims using LOGASnet in 2015/16. There will be windows between 1 and 30 June, 1 and 30 September, 1 and 31 December and a final window between 1 and 31 March.

Q6. What are these payments expected to cover?

- A. The payments recognise the local planning authority officer time to provide advice and assistance to communities in taking forward their neighbourhood plans and payments for examinations and referendums.

Q7. Why is this money being paid to local planning authorities and not direct to communities?

- A. Local planning authorities have a duty to support and advise parish councils, neighbourhood forums and community right to build organisations and pay for examination and referendum. We want to ensure that local planning authorities receive the appropriate funding to enable the fulfilment of this duty in line with new burdens principles.

Information about support available for communities doing neighbourhood planning in 2014/15 is at www.mycommunityrights.org.uk/neighbourhood-planning. We are currently procuring a partner organisation to take on the support contract from April 2015. We hope to award the contract early in 2015.

Q8. What about if we designate more than twenty areas this year?

- A. Area designation claims are limited to 20 areas per year. The payment is in recognition of officer time to provide advice and assistance to communities. Experience suggests that once there is significant level of neighbourhood planning activity in the area (e.g. over 20 areas), further activity has less impact on the resources needed for ongoing support to neighbourhood planning groups.

Q9. The final payment will be made at 'successful independent examination' – what does 'successful' mean?

- A. Following the examination, the examiner will make a report recommending that the proposal (with or without modifications) proceeds to the referendum stage. They will recommend it proceeds to referendum if it meets the required legal conditions (e.g. appropriate having regard to national policy). A payment can be claimed if the examiner recommends that the proposal (with or without modifications) proceeds to the referendum stage. A payment cannot be claimed if the examiner considers that the proposal cannot proceed to referendum.

Q10. Is this additional to the £20,000 already paid to neighbourhood planning frontrunners?

- A. Yes. These payments are available to local authorities in relation to all areas, including frontrunner areas. The frontrunner payments were made in 2011/12 to help neighbourhood planning frontrunners develop their plans ahead of legislation and regulations coming into effect.

Q11. What about National Parks Authorities and the Broads Authority that are supporting neighbourhood plans?

- A. We are intending to pay National Park Authorities under section 72 of the Environment Act 1995 and the Broads Authority under section 15 of the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act 1988. In making these payments we will ask the National Park Authority or the Broads Authority to make a payment to the local authority in relation to the referendum it will undertake on behalf of the National Park Authority or Broads Authority.

Q12. What happens where a designated area crosses the boundary of two local planning authority areas?

- A. Where a neighbourhood area falls within the area of more than one local planning authority, including a National Park Authority or the Broads Authority, it will be for each authority to decide on who to make the claim and how to share the payment locally. We would expect it normally to be the area with the largest proportion of the neighbourhood area or whichever authority has agreed to lead. However, this may not necessarily be the case if both parties agree otherwise. We would expect the lead authority to share the payment, in such proportions as may be locally agreed, with the other authorities working on the scheme.

Q13. How much will we be able to claim if we have to hold a business referendum?

- A. Where a neighbourhood area is considered to be wholly or predominantly business in nature the legislation enables the local planning authority to designate this as a 'business area'. In these areas an additional referendum must take place in which non-domestic rate payers can vote. Where a responsible authority must run two referendums we will make an additional payment of £10,000. This can be claimed at the same time as the £20,000 payment on completion of a successful examination.

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