

Consumer Focus Board

Paper 5.2

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| Title: | Consumer Focus Scotland - externally funded project (Scottish Accessible Information Forum) |
| Purpose: | For decision |
| Date of meeting: | 16 September 2010 |
| Responsible officer: | Mike O'Connor |
| Prepared by: | Marieke Dwarshuis |
| Attachments: | None |

1 Overview

- 1.1 The Scottish Accessible information Forum (SAIF) is a Scottish Government funded project that has been run by CFS and its predecessor SCC since 1997. It is established to improve access to and standards of information and advice services for disabled people and carers, and to represent and promote the interests of disabled people in having accurate and timely information and advice about all goods and services.
- 1.2 The current three year funding agreement with the Scottish Government comes to an end on 31 March 2011. Following a review of the strengths and weaknesses of the project, the CFS Board decided in May 2010 that renewal of funding for another 3 year period should be sought from the Scottish Government.
- 1.3 Current arrangements for the sign-off of externally funded projects state that proposals involving funding in excess £250,000 require approval of the Board. The (approximate) value of the 3 year funding arrangement is £280,000.

2 Key issue

- 2.1 The deadline for submission of applications for funding under the relevant programme in the Scottish Government is particularly early (30 September 2010). There is not sufficient time now to allow for the funding application to be approved by the main Board, as the project's staff and its Advisory Group are currently in the process of finalising this. The CFS Board meets on 21 September, and should be able to consider the near final proposal then.

3 Proposal

- 3.1 The Board is asked to agree in principle to the renewal, subject to the approval by the CFS Board at its meeting of 21st September, and the approval of the Chief Executive as Accountable Officer after that. The detail of the proposed budget will have been discussed and agreed with the Head of Finance before finalisation.

3.2 This renewal of funding raises the issue of the appropriateness (in terms of practicalities, relevance and accountability) of current sign-off arrangements for projects developed and run by the nations, and overseen by the CFS or CFW Boards. We intend to bring a proposal for revised and clarified arrangements for approval of externally funded projects to the next Board meeting, setting out the role of the main Board, the country Boards and SMT in the sign-off process.

4 Action for the Board

4.1 To consider seeking a renewal of funding for the SAIF project, subject to the approval by the Consumer Focus Scotland Board of the detailed application, and the approval of the Chief Executive (as Accountable Officer).

5 Next steps

5.1 The Board to consider revised sign-off procedures for projects run by the nations (Consumer Focus Scotland or Consumer Focus Wales) at its next meeting in November.