

Chichester District Council

CABINET

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Strategic Wildlife Corridors Project

1. Contacts

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2. Executive Summary

The Environmental Strategy Unit has identified the need for a wildlife project aimed at safeguarding Strategic Wildlife Corridors across the District, connecting Chichester and Pagham Harbours with the South Downs National Park. The National Heritage Lottery fund is considered a suitable source of funding for the project which would also allow for the continued funding of the Community Wildlife Officer post.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1 That Cabinet approve the submission of an application to the National Heritage Lottery Fund for the funding of a 5-year Strategic Wildlife Corridors Project.
- 3.2 That Cabinet approve the annual contribution of £10,000 from reserves for 5-years as match funding towards the project and to allow the continued funding of the Council's Community Wildlife Officer Post.

4. Background

- 4.1 The Environmental Strategy Unit (ESU) has developed a policy within the draft Local Plan Review on Strategic Wildlife Corridors. Strategic Wildlife Corridors have been identified based on existing wildlife value and run north-south connecting the South Downs National Park to Chichester and Pagham Harbours. The aim of the draft policy is to direct development to areas outside of these corridors to ensure that the corridors are safeguarded and maintained. This will allow species to move for food and to breed, ensuring the sustainability of their populations for the future.
- 4.2 The corridors have been identified as part of the Local Plan Review work and the proposed Local Plan policy offers protection through the planning system. The existing work of the Council's Community Wildlife Officer in the Bournes has identified the need for enhancing the strategic corridors as well as preserving them

through planning protection. This is vital to ensure that they are resilient to environmental changes. This need is the basis of a new Strategic Wildlife Corridors Project.

- 4.3 ESU has investigated the National Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the funding of a 5-year wildlife corridors project. The project provides an opportunity for the future development and funding of the Community Wildlife Officer post as the s106 funding for the current post is due to cease at the end of July 2020.

5. Outcomes to be Achieved

- 5.1 Chichester District's wildlife is safeguarded through enhancing the Strategic Wildlife Corridors which allow species to move and their populations to thrive;
- 5.2 The District's wildlife is more resilient to change, including climate change;
- 5.3 The funding of the Council's Community Wildlife Officer post is continued for 5 years, ensuring the post holders skills, experience and community links are retained;
- 5.4 Local residents are better engaged with their natural heritage.

6. Proposal

- 6.1 In developing the Local Plan Review, ESU identified Strategic Wildlife Corridors of existing wildlife value to be safeguarded to ensure that species can continue to migrate, in light of the development proposed up to 2036. These corridors run north-south connecting the South Downs National Park to Chichester and Pagham Harbours. A policy has been drafted for the Local Plan Review which directs development to areas outside of these corridors over the long term, safeguarding these corridors to enable species to move. In addition to safeguarding the corridors, existing work has identified the need for these corridors to be enhanced independently of the planning system and hence has identified a potential project to ensure this need is met.
- 6.2 The Council's Community Wildlife Officer has for many years undertaken recreational disturbance mitigation projects at Chichester Harbour. This post is currently funded from Graylingwell, Roussillon and Hambrook strategic development Section 106 monies and so is outside the base budget. The original s106 funding is due to cease at the end of July 2020 and future s106 funding and the on-going work will pass to Bird Aware Solent and the Pagham Harbour Mitigation Scheme (RSPB).
- 5.1 The Community Wildlife Officer post has been instrumental in enabling the Council to demonstrate compliance with its statutory biodiversity duty. The post holder has developed exceptional links with many local resident groups and has acquired an in-depth knowledge of the area's habitats and species. The timing of the Heritage Lottery Fund application has been driven by the desire to avoid losing the ecological skills, experience and community links that the post holder has developed and would be difficult to replace or would take considerable time to re-acquire.
- 5.2 ESU has identified National Heritage Lottery Funding (HLF) as a suitable option for the funding of a 5-year Strategic Wildlife Corridors project, including the future funding of the Community Wildlife Officer post. For a project of this size, there are

two phases: a Development Stage (2 years) and a Delivery Stage (3 years).

5.3 The total project costs for the two phases have been estimated as:

Development Stage Costs/ £	
Professional Fees	6000
New Staff Costs	105300
Surveys	6000
Other costs (training, travel, equipment, printing)	22800
Contingency	7500
Non-case contributions	6200
Volunteer time	3000
Total	168800
Grant Requested	149600

Delivery Stage Costs/ £	
Capital works – practical enhancement measures	513000
New Staff Costs – 2 Full-time Equivalent	344500
Other activity costs	45600
Contingency	5000
Non-case contributions	10800
Volunteer time	30000
Other costs (inflation, evaluation, publicity,	38700
Total	988500
Grant Requested	871700

- 5.4 The total project costs for the 5-year project, including the costs of implementing the enhancement works is just over £1.15 million. To secure HLF, partnership funding is required which can consist of cash, non-cash contributions (in-kind funding such as room hire) and volunteer time. The partnership funding cash commitment from CDC would be £10k per annum, or £50k over 5 years. However this contribution would unlock over £1 million in funding.
- 5.5 An Expression of Interest for the proposed project was submitted to the HLF last summer and confirmation has been received that CDC has been invited to submit an application for development stage funding. To enable an application to be completed, confirmation is needed that CDC is committed to the partnership funding and is willing to host the project officer post.
- 5.6 If approval to submit an application is given by Cabinet, it is ESU's intention to submit an application for development funding for the March 2020 deadline. Confirmation of funding will be received by the end of June 2020, with the possibility of the project commencing on 1 August 2020. The proposed timeline for the project is as follows:

Grant Application Submission Deadline	2 March 2020
Funding Confirmed (Assumed)	End of June 2020
Development Phase Commenced	1 August 2020
Development Phase Completed	31 May 2022
Delivery Grant Application Submission Deadline	1 June 2022
Funding Confirmed (Assumed)	End of September 2022
Delivery Phase Commenced	1 November 2022
Delivery Phase Completed	31 October 2025

7. Alternatives Considered

- 6.1 An alternative option is for the funding of the Community Wildlife Officer to work on the Strategic Wildlife Corridors Project to be secured from reserves. The total cost for the funding of the post for a further 3 years, including on-costs, is £163,000. This option does not include an operating budget for enhancement projects, making the success of the project dependent on volunteer time and project specific small grant applications. The cost benefit analysis makes this option less viable and it is not at this stage being put forward. Without HLF or CDC funding for an enhancement project, the future of the corridors would rely on protection from major development through the planning system and any ad-hoc improvements that may be secured by local voluntary groups.

8. Resource and Legal Implications

- 8.1 To secure the HLF grant, CDC needs to commit to partnership cash funding of at least £10,000 per annum or £50,000 for the 5-year duration of the project.
- 8.2 The development phase of the project will provide funding for the Community Wildlife Officer post which will be overseen by the Environmental Coordinators. During the delivery phase, funding will be provided for the Community Wildlife Officer post and another full-time equivalent post.

9. Consultation

- 9.1 In developing the project, advice and support has been secured from the Manhood Wildlife and Heritage Group, the Sussex Wildlife Trust, Chichester College, West Sussex County Council and the South Downs National Park Authority. Support is also being sought from Chichester Harbour Conservancy. A number of landowners have been engaged during the development of the project and have already given their in-principle support to enhancement works taking place on their land.

10. Community Impact and Corporate Risks

- 10.1 The HLF will require two applications for the two different phases of the project, development and delivery phase. Should the development phase be unsuccessful in securing delivery funding, the project would cease after the development stage. In

this unlikely situation, CDC’s commitment would also be reduced to the 2 years of the development stage.

10.2 The staff costs during the interval between the development phase funding and delivery phase funding (approximately 5 months) is intended to be met by retaining the final part of the s106 funding, related to the current post, in order to give continuity of employment.

11. Other Implications

Are there any implications for the following?		
If you tick “Yes”, list your impact assessment as a background paper in paragraph 13 and explain any major risks in paragraph 9		
	Yes	No
Crime and Disorder		x
Climate Change and Biodiversity Yes, positive impacts for biodiversity and mitigating and adapting to climate change	x	
Human Rights and Equality Impact		x
Safeguarding and Early Help		x
General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)		x
Health and Wellbeing Yes, by engaging local people with their natural heritage, will have additional benefits for their health and well being	x	
Other (please specify)		

12. Appendices

12.1 A copy of the Expression of Interest (EOI) submitted to the National Heritage Lottery Fund, is included in the Appendix. Please note that the project, including the timescales, has evolved since the EOI was submitted.

13. Background Papers

13.1 None