

Chichester District Council

Cabinet

5 October 2021

Release of funds from the Community Infrastructure Levy to Chichester District Council Environment Team to fund Project IBP/842 Strategic Wildlife Corridors

1. Contacts

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2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That Cabinet recommends to Council approval of the release of £575,000 from the Community Infrastructure Levy to Chichester District Council's Environment Team to cover most of the costs of funding Infrastructure Business Plan Project 842 Strategic Wildlife Corridors.**

3. Background

- 3.1 Legislation requires the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to be collected and spent on infrastructure to mitigate the cumulative impact of development in order to assist the delivery of the adopted Local Plan.
- 3.2 On 2 March 2021 the Council approved the Infrastructure Business Plan (IBP) for 2021/2026. This IBP's CIL Spending Plan includes Project IBP/842: Strategic Wildlife Corridors profiled across the five years as follows:

2021/22	£43,000
2022/23	£98,500
2023/24	£143,700
2024/25	£144,500
2025/26	£145,300

- 3.3 This is a ground-breaking project which will safeguard and enhance strategic wildlife corridors that connect the South Downs National Park to the internationally designated sites of Chichester and Papham Harbours. These wildlife corridors are essential for allowing species to move and migrate for food and to breed. They also provide a living landscape around our most important wildlife sites which cannot exist in isolation but need connections to other sites and habitats. They also allow species to adapt in response to changes, both natural and man-made making them resilient and helping to ensure their survival over the longer term.
- 3.4 The project supports the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which states that, in planning for our local area, local authorities should (paragraph 174a):“Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation.”

4. Outcomes to be Achieved

- 4.1 IBP/842 will help deliver the Local Plan, particularly policies concerning green infrastructure and biodiversity by creating strategic wildlife corridors connecting Chichester and Papham Harbours in the south to sites within the South Downs National Park, to the north. These corridors will be safeguarded and enhanced to ensure connectivity for wildlife over the longer-term and increase the resilience of important sites within the corridors.
- 4.2 The project will deliver green infrastructure enhancements on up to 60 sites across 7 corridors. Each site has in principle agreement and a full landowner agreement will be in place by the end of the planning phase of the project to ensure on-going maintenance by the landowners, with support for community groups where relevant.

5. Proposal

- 5.1 That funding of £575,000 is released from the community infrastructure levy to enable delivery of the strategic wildlife corridors project.
- 5.2 The project will be managed within Chichester District Council by the Environmental Co-ordinator, working with the Divisional Manager for Environment and Health Protection.
- 5.3 The delivery of the project will be monitored quarterly at the Section106/CIL liaison meetings in accordance with paragraph 43 of the Section 106 and CIL Protocol.

6. Alternatives Considered

- 6.1 The alternative is not to fund project IBP/842. The effect would be that the opportunity for long term enhancement and protection of the strategic corridors will either be lost or delayed. This project was selected for inclusion within the CIL Spending Plan from a number of projects on a long list within the IBP, which were deemed to be required within the next five years.

7. Resource and Legal Implications

- 7.1 The CIL Spending Plan 2021 identifies that sufficient funds are available to deliver this project, along with the other projects identified for CIL spend during 2021/2026 (see Appendix to this report).
- 7.2 The total cost of the project is £665,000 and the amount requested of CIL towards this project is £575,000. Other sources of funding to deliver this project include £90,000 from Network Rail for enhancements where the railway crosses the corridors. The CIL will provide the capital cost of delivery.
- 7.3 In most cases landowners will be able to fund ongoing maintenance through Rural Payment schemes. Work on National Highways or Network Rail land will be maintained by those bodies.

8. Consultation

- 8.1 The IBP 2021, which selected IBP/842 for CIL spend during 2020/21 was subject to consultation with the neighbouring local planning authorities including the South Downs National Park Authority, the Infrastructure Delivery Commissioners, and the Town and Parish Councils for a six week period from 5 October to 16 November 2020, before being considered by the Chichester Growth Board on 8 January 2021, the Development Plan and Infrastructure Panel on 21 January 2021, Cabinet on 2 February 2021 and approval by full Council on 2 March 2021.

9. Community Impact and Corporate Risks

- 9.1 The project will engage with landowners of sites within the corridors to implement wildlife enhancement measures. These will include tree/hedge/woodland planting, rewilding areas, creating wildflower meadows, installing green bridges, creating ponds and restoring ditches for water voles. It will also sign-post landowners towards funding for other enhancements through schemes such as the Forestry Commission's Woodland Creation Fund; the Woodland Carbon Fund; Natural England's Higher Level Stewardship Scheme and any opportunities for funding under the proposed new Biodiversity Net Gain Scheme. The project will also engage with local people on the importance of the corridors, encouraging them to adopt important sites within the corridors to be enhanced and managed for wildlife through volunteering and over the longer term.
- 9.2 The improvements will help to deliver the mitigation required in adopted Local Plan Policy 49 Biodiversity and Policy 52 Green Infrastructure as described in paragraphs 4.1 and 4.2 of this report. Improvements for biodiversity affects all people positively as we rely on a good ecosystem for our very survival.
- 9.3 The risk that the proposal will not deliver the desired outcome is minimal as the project by its very nature is designed to bring environmental and health improvements.

10. Other Implications

	Yes	No
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Crime and Disorder		✓
Climate Change and Biodiversity See paragraph 9.1	✓	
Human Rights and Equality Impact		✓
Safeguarding and Early Help		✓
General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)		✓
Health and Wellbeing See paragraph 9.2	✓	
Other		✓

11. Appendices

11.1 Appendix: CIL Spending Plan 2021/2026

12. Background Papers

None