

Chichester District Council

CABINET

14 May 2024

Chalk Stream Resilience Project – Arun and Rother Rivers Trust

1. Contacts

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2. Executive Summary

The Arun and Rother Rivers Trust (ARRT) have approached CDC with a request to part-fund 2 new posts for three years. One post will work on the restoration of the Ems and the Hambrook. The other will begin work on a similar plan for the Lavant and its subsequent implementation. The success of both posts will be judged against a variety of metrics, both ecological and on the amount of additional funding secured for works that improve water quality and restore habitats. This report explains the funding proposal and the governance arrangements proposed for the project.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1 That Cabinet recommends to Council that funding for the Arun and Rother Rivers Trust's (ARRT) Chalk Stream Resilience project of £180,000 (£60,000 per year for three years) is allocated from General Fund Reserves.
- 3.2 That the Director of Planning and Environment is authorised to enter into a Memorandum of Agreement with ARRT to secure the funding and governance arrangements.
- 3.3 That approval of the release of the allocated funding for years 2 and 3 is delegated to the Director of Planning and Environment, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environmental Strategy, following an annual review of the project's performance.

4. Background

- 4.1 The rivers Ems, Hambrook and Lavant are among only 238 chalk streams and rivers in England. These are globally very rare habitats, but none of these rivers is a designated site for nature (e.g., Site of Special Scientific Interest). These rivers are suffering from the effects of abstraction, pollution, habitat loss, drought and

interruptions to natural processes and flow. They also feed into the internationally protected Chichester Harbour Special Protection Area.

- 4.2 The Arun and Rother Rivers Trust (ARRT) is one of a national network of river trusts that aim to protect and restore our rivers and streams. The Trust's area covers nearly all of Chichester and Arun Districts (see map in Appendix 1). The Trust has been working on a series of catchment-based plans for the restoration of rivers and their tributary streams within Chichester District. The Rother project is one of these projects and is being led by the South Downs National Park Authority, with the Council contributing match funding of £5k per year for 2 years. For the Ems / Hambrook and the Lavant, ARRT have approached the Council with a funding proposal for two Chalk Stream Resilience Officers over 3 years. These posts would enable ARRT to apply for and implement further grants funding for physical enhancements and educational work in those catchments to restore the rivers.

5. Outcomes to be Achieved

- 5.1 The funding proposal (appendix 1) sets out detailed list of outputs for each catchment. These are not identical for the two posts as the river Ems restoration plan is more advanced than work on the Lavant (which has yet to begin). The success measures that the project officers will report against are also set out.
- 5.2 The principal outcomes are restoration of natural function in the river channels, tackling invasive non-native species, river and floodplain restoration (re-meandering, water meadow restoration, ponds etc). Alongside this work the project officer will work with landowners and the community to carry out citizen science monitoring or water quality, biodiversity and incident reporting. They will also run events to build community engagement and understanding of the issues affecting the rivers and hence support for potential solutions.
- 5.3 The detailed outcomes will be further developed through discussions between ARRT and CDC and secured in a funding agreement (MoA) between the parties.

6. Proposal

- 6.1 The primary reason for the proposal is to protect and restore the Rivers Ems and Lavant, together with the Hambrook stream, the chalk streams with the largest catchments in the District. The part funding by the Council of two project officers so that they can be full time posts enables the Trust to carry out planning and engagement work and produce a plan for the Lavant and Hambrook. It will also allow for the continued monitoring of the Ems and the further implementation of the 10-year Restoration plan and the identified outcomes for the project as a whole to be delivered.
- 6.2 The funding request to CDC is sufficient for the posts to be filled at 0.8FTE and for the outcomes in the appendix to be delivered. ARRT is seeking additional funding elsewhere for the staff costs of these posts, in order to make them full time. The funding proposal does not guarantee funding will be secured for habitat improvements. The request is based on the necessity to have the officer posts, the engagement process and the plan in place to be able to make further funding bids for capital projects and other aspects of delivery (e.g., volunteer training, education programmes). However, the Trust has proposed that the amount of funding secured

and ratio of funding secured per £ of CDC investment are key performance metrics for the release of CDC funding at the annual reviews.

- 6.3 The project timescales will not fall neatly into financial years. The first year would begin in mid-24/25. The review process is proposed to be through the Environment Panel, with the Cabinet member making a delegated decision on the release of further tranches of allocated funding. The review will take place ahead of the end of the first calendar year of delivery.
- 6.4 The annual review process is separate to regular steering group meetings between CDC officers, ARRT and other funding partners. The MoA will set out the governance arrangements for the project, but it is anticipated that the steering group will meet quarterly to monitor delivery. Day-to-day management will be by ARRT's manager.
- 6.5 Should the recommendations be agreed, the next steps are to negotiate a Memorandum of Agreement to set out the Year 1 outputs, targets for the key success measures and the timescale for the annual review.

7. Alternatives Considered

- 7.1 Alternatives considered included funding of the Ems / Hambrook post only on the basis that work is further advanced in that catchment, with a 10-year restoration plan for the Ems already drawn up. However, water quality issues on the Lavant are known to be an ongoing concern.
- 7.2 Making a reducing funding offer contingent on securing match funding for staff costs was also considered, but risks undermining the project before it has begun and the securing of match funding for non-staff costs is the rationale for funding the posts and is the key success measure for the release of funding beyond year one.

8. Resource and Legal Implications

- 8.1 There is no current budget that would support the funding proposal. The recommendation is therefore to fund from reserves, with the budget to be provided for year one immediately following the completion of the MoA and other funding agreed so as to give certainty to the project (subject to the review process).
- 8.2 As a fixed term project there are no recurring resource requirements.
- 8.3 Other sources of funding include the Environment Agency (under the Water framework directive requirements), funding bids to Portsmouth Water and Southern Water and other likely funders public/private and philanthropic. There is no statutory requirement for the Council to fund such work, but the work will form a key part of our upcoming Biodiversity Strategy, through enhancing a rare habitat, by working across the wider catchment areas, and by connecting with our proposed Strategic Wildlife Corridors.
- 8.4 The ongoing monitoring of the project's performance and facilitating the annual review will be managed within the existing resources of the Environmental Strategy team, and this will support the development of the new Biodiversity Strategy for the District.

8.5 As an externally hosted project there are no potential redundancy/maternity pay costs, IT requirements or property implications.

9. Consultation

9.1 No specific consultation has been undertaken on this project proposal. However, the River Ems 10-year restoration Plan has been prepared with extensive input from the communities and landowners in the Ems catchment. The development of restoration plans for the Hambrook and Lavant will also be subject to consultation.

10. Community Impact and Corporate Risks

10.1 Restoration of rivers delivers environmental benefits. Working across a catchment to improved water quality has additional benefits for the state of Chichester Harbour. The projects will engage their communities in monitoring and offer volunteering opportunities.

10.2 The risks of non-delivery centre mainly on drawing in external funding for site specific improvements. The annual review would prevent the project continuing if it was unsuccessful, but the Council officers would endeavour to work though the steering group meetings to avoid that situation arising.

10.3 For the Lavant, development of a plan will take a period of time to develop in year one. The targets for investment secured at the end of year 1 will have to reflect this, but the plan should identify suitable project sites and the funding sources that would apply to these.

11. Other Implications

	Yes	No
Crime and Disorder		X
Biodiversity and Climate Change Mitigation Chalk streams and rivers are a rare and vulnerable habitat. By working at a catchment scale to tackle issues of water quantity and quality and by securing investment from other funders for riparian habitat restoration, this project will safeguard the future of three of the most significant streams in our District.	X	
Human Rights and Equality Impact		X
Safeguarding and Early Help		X
General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)		X
Health and Wellbeing The project will result in an improved natural environment for residents of the District to enjoy, and offer volunteering opportunities to undertake positive environmental work in an outdoor setting	X	
Other (please specify)		X

12. Appendix

12.1 ARRT Chalk Stream Resilience Officer Funding Proposal.

13. Background Papers

None