

MEETING: 12/05/2015

Ref: 12421

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Improving London's Environment

Chiswick House and Gardens Trust

Adv: Sandra Davidson

Base: Hounslow

Amount requested: £139,481

Benefit: Several SW London

Amount recommended: £89,100

The Charity

The Chiswick House and Gardens Trust (CHGT) was established in 2005 jointly by English Heritage and the London Borough of Hounslow (who had managed the gardens historically). The Trust is dedicated to the protection and enhancement of this Grade 1-listed villa and Grade 1-registered gardens, which have been enjoyed as a public park since 1929. Chiswick House is the first and finest examples of neo-Palladin design in England. The Trust oversaw a £12.1 million project, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and private donors, which restored the gardens in June 2010. The gardens at Chiswick are the birthplace of the English Landscape Movement and have inspired countless others including New York's Central Park.

The Application

Within the grounds of Chiswick House there is a walled garden, parts of which date back to 1682. As with the house and grounds, it had become overgrown and dilapidated but in 2005 a group of entrepreneurial local residents began a project to revive it and turn it into a community resource to teach people about horticulture and growing food. Repairs were made to the walls and gates; historic paths re-laid; and over 140 heritage fruit trees and soft fruits planted. The garden is a produce garden, divided into four quadrants, and fruits, vegetables, pulses, herbs, cereal crops and companion flowers are grown there. The project is thriving under the leadership of a full-time gardener and part-time volunteer manager.

The Recommendation

This request seeks support for salary and running costs of the successful Kitchen Garden Project including the Kitchen Gardener and part-time Volunteer Manager. The project has a core pool of regular, committed, volunteers who work in the garden every Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 4pm and undertake planting and pruning fruit trees, growing vegetables, weeding, watering, composting, and picking produce. Regular volunteers also staff the garden on open days, selling produce and talking to the public about the garden and their work. The recommendation is for a lesser sum than that originally requested (which is to support two posts, one of which is full-time) as it is your general policy for projects such as this to fund a maximum of 1 FTE post. The organisation is aware of this approach:

£89,100 over three years (£29,130; £29,700; £30,270) for the salary of the full-time Kitchen Gardener and associated project costs.

Funding History

None

Background and detail of proposal

The kitchen garden is a sheltered and controlled environment, so close attention can be given to volunteers who may be particularly vulnerable or have support needs.

CHGT promotes the kitchen garden volunteering opportunities on its website and through more than 70 community, educational, gardening or health related organisations. The aim of the project is to use the unique facility for the benefit of the local community, with a focus on those most disadvantaged.

In addition, there are 40 Friday morning sessions each year for school children and which focus on healthy eating, plant science and art. The children work outdoors on practical gardening tasks including digging. Since 2010 over 2,000 school children have benefited from the project.

CHGT is now led by a new Director who has been helping the Trust to plan for the takeover of the management of the house in 2016. It is currently formulating a five year business and fund-raising strategy. Whilst this intensive process is underway the charity is determined to maintain current provision, particularly for community groups and schools, and funding for the Kitchen Garden project is critical to this endeavour. It is hoped that by the end of the grant period, (should you approve one), CHGT will have established sufficient revenue streams to support the project.

Following Members' request, at your last meeting, for further information as to how the charity generated resources and what benefit/impact the charity offered, your officer has received the following response:

Chiswick House is a grade 1 listed early Georgian garden villa in south west London set in 65 acres of the site is a recreational and cultural hub enjoyed by local community groups and schools, families, dog walkers, and visitors from across London, the rest of the UK and the world.

User groups include a range of mental, physical and social disadvantages, community garden and allotment groups and local schools and colleges. Users are engaged in a range of supported activities- including health placements for unemployed young people and horticultural students and educational sessions for local children on growing and sustainability. In addition, a series of open days and special events attracts large numbers of the general public. Appendix A to this report provides detailed information of the key beneficiaries of this project.

The Trust is responsible for the gardens, and in addition to funding of £250,000 from the London Borough of Hounslow, it generates income worth more than £550,000. Principal income streams include venue hire, filming rights, retail sales, car park charges and a café lease. Whilst the year end position has not been formally confirmed, fundraising for 2014/15 stands at more than £72k with donations from L.B of Hounslow's Community Fund, Friends of Chiswick House, memorial bench contributions, and small amounts given by a variety of visitors. In addition, the outcome of a round 1 bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund is unknown, but if successful will significantly add to the fundraising total for 2014/15.

CHGT receives much support from local volunteers who give their time in all areas of the Trust's activities. The charity has benefited from more than, 1,000

volunteer days in 2014/15 with in-kind value of £55,000(based on £50 per day unskilled labour rate used by the Heritage Fund).

Financial Information

Accounts for 2013/14 show a deficit on unrestricted funds of £149,230. The charity advises that this is largely due to a shortfall in anticipated grant funding towards expenditure which had already been incurred (approximately £100k). The charity attributes the balance of the deficit to a change in accounting policy for venue hire deposit receipts. These are now accounted for in the year of the event, which required £50k of deposits received in 2013/14 to be recorded in the accounts of 2014/15 when the related events will take place.

For the current year 2014/15 income is forecast to total £830,000 of which £651,000 (78.4%) had been confirmed as at 10th November 2014.

The organisation advises that the cost of generating funds figure was high in 2013/14 (and in the previous year) due to the implementation of a new fundraising function. The charity anticipates that these costs will reduce over the next three years and this is supported by a budgeted reduction of these costs in the current year as shown in the table below.

Year end at 31 March	2013/14 Audited Accounts	2014/15 Current Year Budget
	£	£
Income and Expenditure		
Income	746,320	830,000
Expenditure	898,890	877,000
Unrestricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	(149,230)	(47,000)
Restricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	(3,340)	-
Total Surplus / (Deficit)	(152,570)	(47,000)
Surplus / (Deficit) as a % of turnover	(20.4%)	(5.6%)
Cost of Generating funds (% of income)	366,315 (49%)	148,000(17.9%)
Free unrestricted reserves		
Unrestricted free reserves held at Year End	292,999	245,999
How many months' worth of expenditure	3.9	3.4
Reserves Policy target	250,000	250,000
How many months' worth of expenditure	3.3	3.4
Free reserves over/(under) target	42,999	(4,001)

Key Beneficiaries – Chiswick House Walled Kitchen Garden

User groups coming to the kitchen garden benefiting from therapeutic horticulture, health placements, volunteering, work based placements and school educational sessions are detailed below. In addition other community projects are encouraged to visit and share ideas and good working practice as well as gardening clubs, societies and visitors to the park & events.

The long term aim of the project is to provide a therapeutic resource to help people with a range of mental, physical and social disadvantages. The Trust requests written feedback from everyone who works in the kitchen garden and the information captured shows improved well-being and knowledge, as well as high-levels of enjoyment of those involved. For example, of the 14 forms received in the last month, ten people rated the experience four or five (top scores) in response to the question 'To what extent has coming to the garden improved your physical or mental wellbeing?'.

Kitchen Garden Volunteers

- **Volunteers** come to the walled garden throughout the year tending the garden and growing produce. Many volunteers are retired and come to combat social isolation. 10 – 14 attend per session twice a week averaging in excess of **1000 attendees** annually. These numbers also include:
 - **West London Mental Health (NHS)** 16 clients initially offered placements – 5 clients continue coming after 14 months. Status: referrals ongoing.
 - **Thrive** (therapeutic horticulture charity) 12 initial referrals – 3 continue attending after 3 years. Offering support to clients with mental health issues and disabilities. Status: referrals ongoing.
- **Health referrals**

School & Educational Sessions

- Up to 40 free education slots are offered to **Hounslow and Ealing schools** to come to the walled garden for structured learning sessions focusing on growing and sustainability. This means up to **1200 children** can learn about growing food to complement the school curriculum. A group of 6 teenagers have come to short training sessions from **Roots and Shoots (Lambeth)** to look at using cut flowers in floral displays.

Health placements

- **Queensmill School, Hammersmith.** Queensmill support young people with autism & special needs. **5 – 7 SEN students plus support staff** have been coming to the walled garden for the last two years. A new intake has begun recently with **5 different students** attending. Status: placement ongoing.

Work Experience Placements

- **Cultivate London** - organisation based in west London training young unemployed people, many with social issues, in horticulture. **5 students** for 6 week placements over the last 2 years. Status: placements offered.

Student Work Experience

- **15 students** from **Caple Manor College**, Gunnersbury, Ealing have attended as part of their work structured placements some for 1 day practical sessions and **2 students** for up to 6 weeks. Status: placements offered.

Community Projects

- Community garden project staff, volunteers & trainees regularly come to visit the garden. Recent visitors include **Jam Yesterday Jam Tomorrow** (Richmond) and community project **Cultivating Kensington & Chelsea**. The Trust's Kitchen Gardener, William Rallison, is on the steering committee of Jam Yesterday Jam Tomorrow which is an advisory panel for community gardening projects which aims to share best practice.

Societies, Allotment & Gardening Groups

- Societies and gardening groups regularly visit the walled garden. Visits from **Kew Horticultural Society**, **Hurlingham Club** and **Brentford UEA** took place over the last 6 months. A visit from **Hampton Court Kitchen Garden** staff & volunteers is planned for later this year.

Public Open Days

- Seasonal weekend open days allow the public to visit the walled garden and meet garden staff and volunteers. Open days can attract up to **150 - 250 visitors**. In addition between May and November the public are able to come to the walled garden 2 afternoons each week when produce and plants are made available on a donations basis.

Special Events

- The walled garden is being included more regularly in special events and tours attracting a broad range of visitors. It is a venue for the annual **Family Pumpkin Party**, last year attracting over **1200 visitors** and more recently was opened during the Camellia Show for special tours and for **ArtMiles**, an event in association with the Art Fund with over **150 participants**.

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