

**ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Improving London's Environment**

**Zoological Society of London**

**Adv: Joy Beishon  
Base: Westminster  
Benefit: London-wide**

**Amount requested: £159,587  
{Revised request: £150.050}  
Amount recommended: £150,000**

**The Charity**

The Zoological Society of London (ZSL), a charity founded in 1826, is a world-renowned centre of excellence for conservation science and applied conservation. ZSL's mission is to promote and achieve the worldwide conservation of animals and their habitats. Its UK & Europe Conservation Programme is designed to protect and restore freshwater, estuarine and marine habitats; to secure the status of focal species 'in situ' and to work with 'citizen scientists' to deliver conservation, thereby engaging more people in the management and conservation of their environment.

**The Application**

The eel is an iconic London species and important for the ecology of rivers in London, but due to declines in the number of young eels joining the adult population (known in this field as "recruitment"), it is now classified as critically endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources. Research undertaken by ZSL has shown that recruitment in the Thames River Basin District has declined by up to 95% since the 1980s. One of the reasons for this decline is habitat loss, caused by barriers to migration, such as weirs. For ten years, ZSL has been working to conserve the European eel across the Tidal Thames and its tributaries through research, river improvements, public engagement and advising policy. With the help of the Trust, ZSL would like to continue to expand this programme of work with a further 500+ citizen science volunteers to monitor eel migration in London's rivers, working with partner organisations (including the Port of London Authority) to open up habitats for eels and to enrich the ecology of the Thames and its tributaries.

**The Recommendation**

The social benefits of river restoration for a local community are numerous and far reaching. Urban rivers represent a valuable social and environmental asset that plays a crucial role in the drive for sustainable urban communities. The UK Government has recognised that access to the natural environment in a key determinant of health. The Department of Health's 'Healthy Lives, Healthy People' White Paper in 2011 sets out an approach based on enabling local communities to tackle the wider factors that influence health and well-being; protecting natural species and improving access is a key part of this.

***£150,000 over three years (£52,000; £49,000; £49,000) for the salary of two part-time posts - Project Manager (4 dpw) and Project Coordinator (1 dpw) plus related costs of the Tidal Thames Conservation Project.***

**Funding History**

Meeting Date	Decision
13/02/2013	£50,000 towards capital costs for access facilities at Tiger Territory.

## Background and detail of proposal

The European eel has one of the most fascinating life-cycles in the animal kingdom. Beginning as larvae in the Sargasso Sea, they make an incredible two year migration across the Atlantic Ocean to the rivers and shallow coastal waters of Europe. They enter European waters as 'glass eels' and then transform into elvers as they migrate into rivers, before spending between 12 and 30 years as adult 'yellow eels'. They further metamorphose with eye enlargement and a change in the colour of their bellies to silver before they start the long swim back to breed and subsequently die in the Sargasso Sea.

## Financial Information

ZSL's reserves policy is to hold £4m to cover three months' worth of fixed operating costs which covers animal disease, zoo closure and loss of revenue. At 31<sup>st</sup> December 2014 ZSL held £6.3m above this target which it advised will be used on its capital expenditure programme. After an assessment of its sites it advised that it identified £54m of capital projects which it would like to undertake over the next five years. It estimates that it will spend c£10m during 2015 comprising £7m on animal housing, exhibits and facilities; and £3m on essential infrastructure such as a new entrance, keepers' accommodation and a replacement customer ticketing system.

In addition, ZSL advised that it has a commitment towards conservation, research and science projects, towards which it held designated funds of £1.3m at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2014. Total forecast income for the current year 2015 is £58m, of which £13.2m (22%) was confirmed at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015. ZSL advised that the majority of its income (over 70%) is derived from gate admissions and that the first quarter of the year is a seasonal low point.

Year end at 31 December	2014 Audited Accounts £	2015 Current Year Forecast £
<b>Income and Expenditure</b>		
Income	55,202,000	58,000,000
Expenditure	51,033,000	55,900,000
Unrestricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	3,535,000	2,100,000
Restricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	633,000	-
Endowment Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	1,000	-
Gain on investments	161,000	-
Actuarial (loss)/gain on pension scheme	(6,300,000)	-
<b>Total Surplus / (Deficit)</b>	<b>(1,970,000)</b>	<b>2,100,000</b>
Surplus / (Deficit) as a % of turnover	(3.6%)	3.6%
Cost of Generating funds (% of income)	7,542,000 (13.7%)	-
<b>Free unrestricted reserves</b>		
Free unrestricted reserves held at Year End	10,289,000	2,389,000
How many months' worth of expenditure	2.4	0.5
Reserves Policy target	4,000,000	4,000,000
How many months' worth of expenditure	0.9	0.9
Free reserves over/(under) target	6,289,000	(2,389,000)