

Committee(s):	Date(s):
Epping Forest & Commons	15 01 2018
Subject: Participation in a <i>Trees Outside Woods</i> (TOWs) joint project bid to Heritage Lottery Fund (SEF 02/18)	Public
Report of: Director of Open Spaces & Heritage	For Decision
Report Author: Jeremy Dagley – Head of Conservation, Epping Forest	

Summary

The national trees and woodlands protection charity, the Woodland Trust (WT), is developing a *Trees Outside Woods* (TOWs) Project across England & Wales for a Stage 1 bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and other funders during 2018. For this ‘umbrella’ bid WT is currently seeking 10 to 15 local partnership schemes that it would incorporate into this overall project. These partnership schemes would help TOWs achieve the aims of increasing the canopy cover of trees outside woods, thereby enhancing the biodiversity and landscape of towns and countryside and providing greener accessible corridors for people across England & Wales. These aims match those of the Green Arc partnership, which the City of London Corporation (CoL) has strongly supported for 15 years, and would also fit the remit of the *OneEppingForest* Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Green Taskforce workstrand of which the City Corporation is a board member.

An Expression of Interest has been made to WT by the Local Strategic Partnership, *OneEppingForest*, for a joint local scheme in the Epping Forest Green Arc area to be considered for inclusion as part of the larger TOWs project. This report, therefore, requests permission for your officers to work with partner organisations from *OneEppingForest* and Green Arc, with the aim of compiling a project proposal. The project details would need to be worked up during 2018 for submission under a WT’s TOWs Stage 1 bid (or bids) – provisionally targeted for the end of 2018. The project proposal would seek to enhance the natural environment of the Green Arc around Epping Forest. The details of the proposal would be reported to Grand Committee for scrutiny before the Stage 1 bid submission.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- approve the joint development, with *OneEppingForest* and other partners, of a *draft* project proposal under the *Trees Outside Woods* umbrella project, for inclusion in WT’s Stage 1 bid(s) to the Heritage Lottery Fund, subject to the *draft* proposal being submitted to Grand Committee for scrutiny prior to any final agreement on submission of a project bid.

Background

1. The Woodland Trust (WT) is leading a partnership bid, or group of bids, for multi-million pound grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and/or other potential funders, to protect and restore trees outside woods. Trees outside woods are a threatened and currently diminishing component of our natural and cultural heritage. Trees outside woods matter because:
 - a) they represent 25% of the UK's tree canopy cover;
 - b) they support valuable biodiversity not found in woodlands, especially fungi, insects and birds, such as those species associated with wood-pastures, parklands and orchards;
 - c) they provide ecological connectivity across landscapes between patches of semi-natural habitats;
 - d) they currently have little legislative and policy protection;
 - e) the resource they represent is being eroded by lack of management, tree safety concerns, damage from developments, roads and intensive agricultural techniques;
 - f) tree pests and diseases are magnifying problems, with the nationwide loss of hedgerow elms now likely to be followed by extensive losses of ash;
 - g) there is a generation gap opening up, with succession not keeping pace with losses.
2. The aim of the Trees Outside Woods (TOWs) bid by the WT is to provide an effective response to the losses of such trees across a varied selection of landscapes nationwide. As well as the need to increase recording of the current TOWs, their aim will be to make a significant contribution to tree planting, particularly to replace ash losses. Another aim will be to celebrate these trees and the landscapes they help to create and to change attitudes and awareness, including those of planning authorities and private landowners.
3. The WT bid(s) would aim to comprise between 10 to 15 partner-run delivery projects in 'treescapes' across England and Wales which would be submitted under the TOWs 'banner' to HLF and/or other funders. These would be underpinned by a small number of strategic national projects covering, for example, data and evidence gathering and engagement of key audiences through a national communications and engagement strategy.
4. The WT 'umbrella' TOWs project has four themes and is likely to encompass partner-run projects such as ones:
 - enhancing green infrastructure at a landscape-scale, including replacing anticipated ash losses and increasing hedgerows.;
 - increasing tree cover in the urban environment;
 - increasing tree cover on farmland;
 - improving veteran and ancient tree management and providing successors.
5. *OneEppingForest* is the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) founded over 15 years ago and is a voluntary partnership of public, private and voluntary sector agencies working together within the Epping Forest District to provide

coordinated services that improve the quality of life in the District. CoL, as the Conservators of Epping Forest, is a board member of this LSP.

6. The Green Arc is a visionary project founded by a number of partners including the City of London Corporation, Lee Valley Park Authority and the Forestry Commission in 2002. It has the ambition of realising Abercrombie's London Plan ambition of creating a corridor of accessible and wildlife rich public open space surrounding London, by creating new open spaces and routes that link existing outer London Open Spaces.
7. The Green Arc area, which began around the north-east arc of London, was split into quadrants. The north-east quadrant is the area with which the City Corporation are a partner. Centred close to Epping Forest this Green Arc NE area stretches across Hertfordshire to the west around Hatfield, north to Bishops Stortford and east around the M25 to the Thames. There have been five key zones of interest for the partners, three of which are centred on Epping Forest: one connecting north to Harlow, one bridging across to Hainault Forest and the other seeking green infrastructure connections with the Lea Valley.
<http://www.greenarc.org/>
8. The partnership of organisations involved in the Green Arc NE quadrant has changed over the 15 years of its existence but the aim of "*bringing the big outdoors closer to everyone*" remains the same. Financial contributions to the NE quadrant partnership enabled a number of small projects to be achieved. The Director of Open Spaces has over the last 5 years helped to facilitate, coordinate and chair meetings of the partners and the City Corporation currently acts as the Green Arc NE Partnership's account holder and banker.

Proposal

9. It is proposed that this local TOWs project could fulfil several key aims of both the *OneEppingForest* Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Green Taskforce workstrand and the Green Arc partnerships, strengthening green corridors and other infrastructure and 'treescapes' between Epping Forest and other areas and within the Epping Forest Buffer Lands, which themselves have important ancient trees and historic parkland heritage. These would include the Green Arc (North East) zones of interest listed above providing green infrastructure to the Lea Valley/Hertfordshire woods, Hainault Forest and the Green Lanes around Harlow.
10. Specifically, a local TOWs project proposal would concentrate on two strands. Firstly, completing maps and checking the condition of ancient trees in the hedgerows and green lanes of the District around the Forest, Secondly, involving local communities and land-owners in helping to protect those trees and plant successor generations of trees in the countryside around the Forest. This second strand would also be aimed at schoolchildren and celebratory events, including a festival.
11. Both strands are aimed at enhancing the 'treescape' and connectivity across Epping Forest District. In particular, areas around the Forest and through Warlies

Park, the Cobbins Brook Valley to Lea Valley and to the east of Epping town from Copped Hall north towards Epping Forest's historic green lanes and The Lower Forest.

12. Other bodies have expressed interest in a local TOWs project and *OneEppingForest*, the LSP, is coordinating the work. The concepts described in paragraphs 9 to 11 above, therefore, have been proposed to the WT, which will consider these ideas and others at its review of TOWs in mid-January 2018. Should WT accept these as fitting with its TOWs bid, it is proposed that a joint project within the Green Arc NE is developed, facilitated by *OneEppingForest*, along with contributions from interested Green Arc partners and other organisations.

Expression of Interest (Eoi)

13. At this stage the the Woodland Trust TOWs HLF Project Development Group is short-listing expressions of interest and project outlines on 18th January 2018.
14. The Expression of Interest put forward by *OneEppingForest* has outlined:
- The range of *OneEppingForest* partners, including City Corporation and The Tree Council and including local Woodland Trust officers, from whom support would be sought if the proposal is accepted to be part of a joint Stage 1 bid in 2018;
 - the main project purposes, which include recording trees on accessible internet mapping, celebrating treescapes, education about conserving existing ancient trees in the countryside (see also paragraphs 9 to 11 above);
 - timeframes, which would fit to those of TOWs – across 5 years from 2019 – 2024 currently proposed;
 - outline resource requirements, seeking full cost recovery, including staffing;
 - outcomes for heritage and people which align with those of the Green Arc to improve access, to protect the ancient tree (especially oak) heritage and to provide a successor generation of trees both protected and monitored.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

15. The proposed letting accords with the Open Spaces Department Strategic Aims, by assisting the provision of a World Class City which protects, promotes and enhances our environment.

Implications

16. **Financial:** Individual projects submitted should be for a minimum of £200,000 and a maximum of £2,000,000. Grants from HLF can cover both capital and revenue costs, including staff. HLF may fund up to 90% of the total project costs with a minimum of 10% matching cash funding. Most HLF grants are between 50 – 80%. Other funders would also be approached by the Woodland Trust

because of the limit that HLF has imposed of no single bids greater than £5M to be considered over the next 18 months.

17. 'In-kind' contributions in the form of partner staff-time, equipment or office space and also volunteer time are all eligible as match funding contributions under HLF grants and could be drawn from a number of organisations in the *OneEppingForest* and Green Arc partnerships.
18. If the WT's TOWs HLF Project Development Group accepts the joint EoI and outline project proposal the next stage would be to work up the project details with partners for inclusion as part of the WT Stage 1 bid to the HLF. If successful, there would then be a development phase to reach a detailed Stage 2 bid with the aim of beginning a funded project by January 2021.
19. A small amount of funding may be available from WT to assist any partnership develop its project during 2018 to be ready for Stage 1. If Green Arc partners agreed to fully participate some of the remaining Green Arc funds (currently several thousand pounds) may also be able to assist with the development of this Stage 1 bid. It is hoped to convene a meeting of these partners early in 2018.
20. Should a Woodland Trust 'umbrella' TOWs Stage 1 bid be accepted by HLF, from 2019 onwards the project would be further developed by the partnership to a Stage 2 bid to HLF. Other funders may also need to be sought but this would be the responsibility of the Woodland Trust under the 'umbrella' project. Funding for this second development phase may be granted by HLF itself. This would allow development of project ideas and stakeholder (including landowner) engagement.
21. **Legal** – should WT accept the Expression of Interest in January, the project proposal would be drawn up during 2018 and should the need arise the City Corporation could withdraw from the partnership during this time and before submission of any Stage 1 bid at the end of the year.
22. This joint project proposal would be developed with further Grand Committee scrutiny in 2018, before allowing the proposal to be submitted with CoL as a partner.
23. Beyond this and further Committee scrutiny, any successful bid would come under the Woodland Trust (WT) 'umbrella' bid to HLF and, therefore, the Woodland Trust would be the 'accountable body' under the terms of any HLF grant. WT would, therefore, take on the project's cash-flow risk during both Stage 1 and, if successful, beyond Stage 2 also. The WT, not the proposed project partnership, would be accountable to HLF for local project delivery as part of the wider TOWs project.

Conclusions

24. Should the Woodland Trust (WT) accept an Expression of Interest from *OneEppingForest* partners for the Green Arc North East area, Members are asked to approve involvement by City of London officers in the development of a draft project proposal with the aim of submitting it under the 'umbrella' of the *Trees Outside Woods* (TOWs) project which WT propose to submit to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and possibly other funders during or soon after 2018. The proposal is likely to be based around two strands concerning connections: – of trees within the landscape and of people to these trees and the treescape formed by them. Such a project would help fulfil the long-standing aims of the Green Arc partnership, of which the City was a co-founder, including strengthening green links and enhancing the 'treescape' within the Forest's Buffer Lands, between the Lea Valley and the Forest's green lanes and between the Forest and Hainault Forest.
25. The project development, and its scope, would be reviewed by Grand Committee during 2018. The further involvement of City of London officers in the project beyond this proposal stage would also be reviewed before any submission as part of the Woodland Trust's larger bid to funders, including HLF.

Appendices

- None

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