

## **CITY BRIDGE TRUST – Delegated Authority (Requests up to £250k)**

### **ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Bridging Divides - Connecting the Capital Growing, greening and environmental projects**

**London Wildlife Trust**

**Ref: 15947**

**Amount requested: £235,264**

**Adv: Gilly Green**

**Base: Westminster**

**Benefit: Hackney, Haringey**

**Amount recommended: £216,000**

**Purpose of grant request:** Wild Woodberry will deliver 3 activity strands at Woodberry Wetlands in Hackney, centred around outdoor volunteering and community learning, engaging people living near the reserve, especially those from under-represented groups.

#### **The Applicant**

The vision of the London Wildlife Trust (LWT) is 'a London alive with nature, where everyone can experience and enjoy wildlife'. A charity, it looks after 37 nature reserves across London, engages 1500 volunteers, and supports 14,000 school children and young Londoners to enjoy engaging with nature.

#### **Background and detail of proposal**

In 2014 LWT was awarded a National Lottery Heritage grant in order to provide a much needed nature reserve in the densely populated London borough of Hackney and in 2016 opened the Woodberry Wetlands, attracting 60,000 visitors a year, becoming part of the much wider and longer term regeneration of the area. Three years later, in 2019, the LWT commissioned an independent evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of delivery at the Wetlands. Recommendations from this report showed that more needed to be done by LWT to ensure that it is genuinely used by the local community and in particular, people living in social housing, those from BAME communities, disabled people and young people aged between 18-24.

This application responds to the recommendations made in the report and aims to increase take-up from under-represented groups to participate in outdoor nature activities and use the Wetlands (as well local green spaces) more regularly. The reserve is fully wheelchair accessible and free for all to visit. The application is part of an LWT-wide initiative to increase the diversity of participation across London, and this specific project is highlighted as one development within LWT's Diversity and Inclusion plan. The organisation recognises it will need to be proactive to successfully increase participation, build relationships with local community organisations and take activities out to communities before it can expect local people to develop trust and see the Wetlands as a welcoming space. On the back of some (albeit limited) consultation the work will begin with 200 people involved in community food growing and build outwards into two further strands: walks and talks; and conservation volunteering opportunities within the Wetlands. The work will be delivered by two existing staff members who will dedicate part of their roles to this work. Despite the closure of all sites during lockdown, Woodberry Wetlands re-opened on July 15<sup>th</sup> and the organisation is adapting plans for the work, including the

much-needed outreach to kick-start the project. LWT has an advantage in that most activities take place outside.

### Financial Information

The organisation has a good diversity of income streams from membership fees, legacies, grants and donations, government grants and contracts from LB Hackney. Pre COVID income had been rising and the organisation received a large capital grant in 2019 (800K) for a new development in Camden. In response to COVID LWT reduced outgoings by furloughing 28% of staff in April, all senior managers took a 20% pay cut for the first quarter of the year, and it paused non-essential spend. It also communicated early to members and raised £13,000 in donations in response and in June launched an emergency appeal to support the costs of re-opening the Woodberry Wetlands site as a COVID-safe environment. It also worked closely with key funders to repurpose project funding to help cover core costs. The organisation states it is reasonably confident of securing the remaining 55% of its income for this year which includes projections of £1.2m from membership fees.

The board approved a new reserves policy in 2018 with a minimum level of £175,000 in unrestricted funds and an optimum level which it aims to reach of £475K. Draft figures for 2020 show unrestricted reserves of £178,000 – just above the minimum requirement. It should be noted however that this level represents only around one month's unrestricted expenditure but Trustees felt that maintaining 3+ months was not justified by the scenario planning they carried out at the time. Given the organisation has done well in raising emergency funding, it appears to be currently weathering the storm, but the level of reserves is low so there is little cushion if the income is not forthcoming. Cuts will be made to this year's budget through regular reforecasting exercises if the need arises. Following assessment, the project budget has been revised downwards on some items – hence the reduced recommendation.

Year end as at 31 MARCH	2019	2020	2021
	Signed Accounts	Forecast	Budget
	£	£	£
<b>Income &amp; expenditure:</b>			
Income	3,547,000	4,676,264	4,965,847
- % of Income confirmed as at 3 June 2020	N/A	100%	44%
Expenditure	(3,403,000)	(4,781,544)	(5,253,179)
Gains on endowment	0	0	0
Total surplus/(deficit)	<b>144,000</b>	<b>(105,280)</b>	<b>(287,332)</b>
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	143,000	(192,280)	(292,332)
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	1,000	87,000	5,000
	<b>144,000</b>	<b>(105,280)</b>	<b>(287,332)</b>
Operating Expenditure (unrestricted)	1,587,000	2,040,132	2,647,467
<b>Free unrestricted reserves:</b>			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	91,000	178,000	183,000
No of months of operating expenditure	0.7	1.0	0.8
Reserves policy target	175,000	175,000	175,000
No of months of operating expenditure	1.3	1.0	0.8
Free reserves over/(under) target	(84,000)	3,000	8,000

**Funding History)**

<b>Meeting Date</b>	<b>Decision</b>
09/05/2013	£50,670 over three years (£16,300; £16,880; £17,490) towards the salary of a part-time Coordinator (2 days/week) and related costs of the LEEF project to increase the value and effectiveness of environmental education in London.
15/03/2012	£169,000 over three years (£70,000, £54,000, £45,000) towards the design and delivery of landscape-scale conservation initiatives across London.

**Recommendation**

This application responds to an independent review of LWT's services which called for increased efforts to reach a more diverse section of the population. The Woodberry Wetlands is situated alongside a large social housing estate now surrounded by private, new developments. Its attempt to engage residents from the established local community should be welcomed but the success of this work will depend on successful outreach and the building of relationships. Given the work will be performed by existing staff and due to the changes to the approach required by COVID, it is advised to add a condition to the grant for the release of funds to require provision of a detailed programme of work for year 1 outlining the approach to community engagement. On this basis a grant over 5 years is recommended:

**£216,000 over five years (£42,200; £42,300; £43,000; £43,850; £44,650) for the salary and project costs towards increasing the participation of under-represented groups at Woodberry Wild. Release of the grant is conditional on the organisation providing a satisfactory year one activity plan for its community engagement work.**

**Approved.....**  
Chief Grants Officer /  
Deputy CGO

**Approved.....**  
Chair

**Approved.....**  
Deputy Chair

**Date.....**

**Date.....**

**Date.....**