



Community Infrastructure Levy Neighbourhood Fund

Assessment Pack – February 2024

Pollinating London Together (21911)

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY NEIGHBOURHOOD FUND

Pollinating London Together (ref. 21911)

Amount requested: £270,000

Amount recommended: £270,000

Purpose of grant request: To continue to employ a full-time ecologist and also support additional ecology expertise and expanded project activity, associated administration, and communications costs.

Type of cost: Revenue

Ward(s) benefitting: All wards (City-wide)

The Applicant

Established in 2020 by the Worshipful Companies of the Wax Chandlers and Gardeners (WCWCG), Pollinating London Together (PLT) began as a collaboration between the City of London's Livery Companies with the aim of creating spaces in central London where all the natural pollinators can thrive, and their habitats can be enjoyed by everyone. In January 2023 PLT became a CIO, taking control of its finances from WCWCG who had previously held funds on its behalf. PLT's membership remains reserved for organisations but has recently opened up to welcome corporations as well as organisations within the Livery movement. 54 of the City of London's Livery Companies are PLT members in addition to four corporate members (Gravis Capital Management Ltd, CMS Cameron McKenna, Barings Bank, BNP Paribas) who also sponsor key events.

PLT seeks to increase biodiversity and mitigate climate change by raising awareness of all pollinators, the challenges facing them and what can be done to reverse their decline. To achieve this PLT delivers three key areas of work focusing on: redressing pollinator decline in the City of London by promoting action to improve planting and habitat in the Square Mile; raising environmental awareness of the human benefits of pollinators and improved planting; informing people of the plight of pollinators and encouraging them to take positive actions at personal, local and national levels.

PLT is led by a board of nine trustees drawn from seven different Livery Companies, with experience of the City, property management, ecology and charity governance to which five working groups made up of Trustees, Aldermen and co-opted expert advisers report monthly (Strategy, Science and Education Sub-group, Membership & Events, Communications, Fundraising). The organisation is extremely well networked working in close collaboration with a number of key City and national groups including Friends of City Gardens, City Livery Climate Action Group, Royal Horticultural Society, Kew Gardens, City of London (Open Spaces Team, Biodiversity Office and Environment Resilience Teams), City of London Diocese, London Wildlife Trust, Greater London Authority and Bristol University Urban Pollinator Research Team. While PLT remains primarily focused on surveys, planting advice and

establishing pollinator friendly habitats, their ecological expertise has been recognised through invitations to input into wider strategic plans to reduce biodiversity loss and mitigate the effect of climate change including the City of London's City Plan, the National Pollinator Strategy and DEFRA's Pollinator Advisory Steering Group. PLT's programme of surveys and events is managed by two Ecologists, a Project Co-ordination and Intern alongside a team of 40 volunteers.

Background and detail of proposal

Three-quarters of the world's flowering plants and about 35 per cent of the world's food crops depend on animal pollinators to reproduce – equivalent to one out of every three bites of food we eat. Consequently, both the health of our natural ecosystems and global food production are fundamentally linked to the health of bees and other pollinators. Pollinators are a diverse group and include the honeybee, bumblebees, solitary bees, hoverflies, black bees and butterflies which are in serious decline in the City, primarily because of the lack of pollinator-friendly plants and habitats. The bottom line is that these pollinators lack food and places to nest.

In March 2022, PLT was awarded a two-year Community Infrastructure Levy Neighbourhood Fund (CILNF) grant to pay for a full-time Ecologist, Project Manager and administration support enabling them to create and map biodiversity corridors across the City of London. In just two years, PLT has undertaken 60 plant audits of green spaces in the City including churchyards and City Gardens. The audits have helped PLT produce a list of recommended pollinator-friendly flora suitable for the Square Mile's needs and different seasons, which has been shared with the keepers of the spaces, along with advice and support. PLT has launched a website, produced informative videos, and is encouraging the use of pollinator nesting and reproduction boxes, focusing on native species of bee rather than the ubiquitous honeybee. A major part of PLT's work has been to aid in the development of biodiversity corridors across the City working alongside the City of London Environmental Resilience Team to agree the position of three green corridors/networks that run through the City and can link to surrounding boroughs. These are vital as certain pollinator species can only travel for a limited time before they need to locate a suitable plant to refuel.

PLT is seeking £270,000 from the CILNF over two years to deliver three key strands of work:

- The enhancement of the three identified City Green Corridors by working with owners and managers of the spaces along these routes to improve their pollinator friendly planting and habitat, and the expansion of the City Corridors out into Greater London. Continued regular surveys of sites along each corridor (30 sites analysed six times each year) will enable PLT to advise City Space Managers on appropriate planting and create a substantial database of information on flora and fauna across four years to map the impact of their interventions on pollinator numbers and biodiversity in the City of London. From 2024 surveys will also begin to be taken for sites at different heights of buildings in the City (8 out of the 30 sites) to give valuable insights into the impact of roof gardens in urban environments and whether, rather than supporting pollinators, building owners could be creating 'fixed habitat islands' where pollinators become more vulnerable to both genetic and weather changes.

- A Wellbeing Survey in association with the University of Reading to gather evidence not only about the impact of green space on health and wellbeing amongst those working and living in the City of London, but more specifically the impact of pollinators on that sense of wellbeing. PLT anticipate that the survey undertaken from April 2024 in sites across the City of London will provide a major input to the scientific link between access to verdant spaces and health.
- Delivery of an education and information programme across City of London Schools (City of London, City of London Girls School, Aldgate Primary School) and businesses to raise awareness of the plight of pollinators and the need for action through a programme of three major events, school visits and published articles each year.

To deliver this ambitious programme PLT needs to increase the capacity of its ecological science team and is seeking funding to continue to employ their Ecologists, Project Co-ordinator, Administrative Intern and contract additional seasonal ecology expertise (salaries £102,000/yr), expand project activity and pay for associated administration and communications costs (approx. £25,000/yr).

Financial Information and Value for Money

Since inception PLT has been managed by its own Board but governed by the Wax Chandlers' Charitable Trust (WCCT) who held their grant funds. In January 2023, PLT became independent registering as a CIO. Given PLT's successful track record of CILNF grant management and positive interim Information & Learning report, CGU agreed that PLT could submit for continuation funding based on signed accounts made up for their first six months as an independent operation. Accordingly figures for 2024 in the table below represent six months independently verified accounts plus six months projected figures. Turnover has been growing steadily year on year, however unrestricted reserves are currently below PLT's reserves policy of minimum three month's turnover, but are set to grow year on year as membership income increases.

The CoL is currently the main funder of PLT, however the CILNF continuation grant reflects good value for money through wages benchmarked in line with the sector, adherence to the London Living Wage as a minimum, but most significantly through the potential for CoL's investment to lever in future funding. Over the next two years, the Board will focus on the longer-term sustainability of the project through diversification of PLT's funding base, expanding corporate membership and seeking event sponsorship to build reserves in line with policy by 2026. With a track record of successful grant management, PLT will be in a strong position to seek funding from large charitable foundations with an environmental interest (Garfield Weston Foundation, John Ellerman Foundation, City Bridge Foundation). The development of a recognised Standard for urban green spaces and its national roll-out in association with International Organisation for Standardisation is another potential earned income stream. PLT will not be seeking funding from CILNF in 2026/27.

Year end as at 31 March	2024	2025	2026
	Forecast Accounts	Projected	Budget
	£	£	£

Income & expenditure:			
Income	198,295	214,500	251,500
Expenditure	(176,316)	(206,356)	(228,352)
Surplus/(deficit)	21,979	8,144	23,148
Reserves:			
Total restricted	10,854	0	0
Total unrestricted	14,115	33,113	56,261
Total reserves	24,969	33,113	56,261
Of which: free unrestricted	14,115	33,113	56,261
Reserves policy target	44,079	51,589	57,088
Free reserves over/(under) target	(29,964)	(18,476)	(827)

Recommendation

PLT's mission has caught the imagination of the Livery movement. The organisation is uniquely placed to actively reverse the decline in pollinators in the City for the long term benefit of residents, workers and visitors. CILNF continuation funding over a further two years will enable PLT to expand its current portfolio of ecological studies and advice, space management, education programme, advocacy work and to deliver a new research project that analyses the links between verdant activity (abundance of pollinators and flora) and human health, particularly mental wellbeing. Their pollinator surveys and growing database will feed into the City Plan, National Pollinator Strategy and City of London Climate Action Strategy ensuring the climate resilience of the City's green spaces and protecting our shared natural resources. Moreover, PLT is a central partner and delivers three of the four strands of the City of London's Biodiversity Action plan by protecting and enhancing habitats and species in the City, promoting a greater understanding of the City's biodiversity and improving the monitoring and biodiversity in the City. Having garnered widespread support PLT is poised to have a lasting and positive impact on the City's biodiversity and offset some of the damaging effects of the City's built environment on wildlife. A grant is recommended as follows:

£270,000 across two years (Year 1 £130,000; Year 2 £140,000) to continue to employ a full-time ecologist and also support additional ecology expertise and expanded project activity, associated administration, and communications costs.