

City Bridge Trust – Monitoring Visit Report

Organisation: Carbon Leapfrog	Grant ref: 10645 (assessing officer John Merivale)	Programme area: 04. London's Environment\ a) Environmental Education
Amount, date and purpose of grant: 30/06/2011: £70,000 over two years (£40,000; £30,000) towards a programme to increase the number of London based carbon reduction projects supported by free professional advice from London's inhabitants and organisations subject to an updated budget for 2011/12.		
Visiting Grants Officer: Ciaran Rafferty	Date of meeting: 8 th November 2012	
Met with: Clare Hierons (CEO) and Alex Germanis (Head of Projects)		
1. Introduction to the organisation: Carbon Leapfrog was founded in 2006 and formally launched in 2009. Its aim is to help the transition to a low-carbon economy through the provision of pro bono professional support (legal, financial, etc) to community-based carbon reduction projects. It was the brainchild of a Partner of law firm Simmons & Simmons after he had noticed how many enterprising projects could flounder just because the right advice was inaccessible or unaffordable. Carbon Leapfrog is more than a brokerage service, however, as it helps organisations develop their capacity to deliver low-carbon initiatives. It says that its work is not about the process of volunteering but about the outcomes.		
2. The project funded: The grant commenced in July 2011 and runs for 2 years. Its aim was to select and/or encourage London carbon reduction organisations/projects and work with them to bring them suitable pro bono expertise and then to determine and disseminate learning from their projects to the wider sector. The grant was to support the general costs of the scheme, mostly covering a variety of salaries.		
3. Work delivered to date: The project has worked in depth with c.10 organisations/schemes in London and has been involved in some very interesting and successful initiatives. One, for example, is the PETRA project in Havering where a local tenant management organisation for 3 1960's tower blocks is receiving support to introduce a range of energy-efficiency measures to help alleviate fuel poverty etc. Another scheme, Brixton Energy 1, which facilitated the installation of solar energy panels on the Loughborough Estate has been a great success with Carbon Leapfrog helping the group draw up necessary licence agreements and to liaise with various authorities. This project proved very popular with the local authority and the organisation has now become a formal Co-op which is bringing the template of the scheme to other parts of Lambeth. A third example is provided by Project Dirt which has produced a web platform to facilitate sustainable activity and enable easy information exchange. Members are encouraged to look at their website: www.projectdirt.com to get a flavour of their work.		

4. Difference made:

One of the key facets of Carbon Leapfrog's approach is that they emphasise and support the social aspect of the organisations' work. Most of the schemes, being community based, involve bringing various parts of the local community together – whether for consultation or implementation purposes. In all instances this has proved both valuable and successful – schemes usually develop a template for their work which can then be replicated elsewhere. This has been the case with the Brixton Energy 1 scheme, for example, which has now spawned Energy 2 and Energy 3 schemes in other parts of Lambeth and all with the support of the local authority. This developmental/capacity-building approach is the bedrock of Localism as it is helping local communities to improve and manage their environment in a professional and sustainable way. The individual schemes have each generated high levels of enthusiasm which helps drive the learning and replication into other areas. Carbon Leapfrog has also been instrumental in enabling networks to be formed between established and burgeoning schemes.

One of the original aims of this funding, as expressed by the organisation, was to deliver an overall, measurable, reduction in the carbon footprint by 80,000 tonnes over the two years. To this end each schemes supported was given a recognised measurement tool/formula for determining this and in year 1 it was calculated that at least 30,000 tonnes was achieved. Whilst this is commendable in itself the true impact and value of this grant is much more. It has enabled professional expertise to be channelled into London community organisations; the schemes supported have brought communities together and enhanced skills within them; new jobs and apprenticeships have been created in many of the projects as there is usually some element of construction involved; communities have been given the wherewithal to become engaged in Localism; community organisations themselves have become more sustainable through improved capacity and reach; replication has enabled more carbon-reducing projects to be supported in London and elsewhere.

5. Grants Administration:

The grant has been managed and accounted for well and has been used for the purpose intended. The organisation has good links with the City of London Corporation (especially with the CoL Sustainability Officer). It has stated that it is very happy with the Trust's administration of the funds and the reporting systems, etc, and values the guidance given by the managing officer.

6. Concluding comments:

This initiative has delivered a wide range of outcomes far beyond supporting carbon-reduction in London – very valuable though that is in itself. It has been a driver of positive change, helping bring people together to tackle local needs and to deliver sustainable and replicable solutions. It has harnessed the skills and enthusiasm of professionals in areas of law, finance and marketing and utilised those skills for particular communities and for London as a whole. A good project, expertly delivered.