

Committee:	Date:
City Bridge Trust	10 April 2014
Subject: Strategic Initiative – Thames21 Development Programme	Public
Report of: Chief Grants Officer	For Decision
Summary	
<p>This report requests funding over three years to increase community activity and participation in protecting and preserving the River Thames and London's waterways.</p>	
Recommendation	
<p>Members are asked to:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Approve a grant to Thames21 of £340,000 over three years (£134,000; £102,000; £104,000) for the salaries and operational costs of a Development Programme to increase and sustain London volunteers' involvement in protecting the capital's waterways.</p>	

Main Report

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Thames21 is the charitable company set up to conserve London's rivers and canals and to improve the public's knowledge and appreciation of the heritage, ecology and amenity they provide. The current charitable company was formed in 2004 (though the organisation operated before this as a distinct project of the larger, national, charity ENCAMS). It is unique in its coverage of all the major waterways in the capital and it is held in high regard by professionals and public alike for its work to improve and protect these amenities. It describes itself – with some justification – as "*the voice for London's waterways*".
- 1.2 The Trust has supported the charity's work on many occasions since your first grant in 1996, with good monitoring information provided on every occasion. You are currently supporting its project to train and support volunteers to look after their local waterways – a scheme which has progressed well so far and provides a foundation for this proposal.
- 1.3 The City Corporation also supports Thames21 through the provision of office accommodation at Walbrook Wharf whilst there are very strong links between the charity and the Port of London Authority.

1.4 In recent years the organisation's annual turnover has been in the region of £1.6m. Whilst it employs approximately 20 staff much of its accomplishments are due to the thousands of volunteers – individuals, communities and corporates – it mobilises and supports each year.

2.0 Current Position

2.1 In the ten years since its establishment as an independent charity Thames21 has grown steadily: building the numbers of volunteers each year to over 12,000 currently; spreading its activities out from the central artery of the River Thames to embrace new waterway areas; building a solid reputation in the community and amongst stakeholder organisations (eg Thames Water; Local Authorities; Environment Agency).

2.2 The charity, nevertheless, feels that it has fulfilled only a fraction of its potential to benefit London's natural environment or to engage and nurture the commitment and energy of London's communities.

2.3 Over the years it has found that its most successful and sustainable work has resulted from listening to Londoners and creating programmes hand in hand with local communities. It sees the best way of achieving long term impact, and real change as well as growth, is to work directly with residents and groups in many more localities throughout the capital. To take this approach forward, therefore, it now wishes to instigate a Development Programme for London.

3.0 Proposal

3.1 Thames21 wishes to establish a major, new, three-year Development Programme to focus on growing and increasing the impact of its work through more and direct contact with Londoners in their localities. This programme would integrate fully within the operational structure of the organisation, and be located within its Senior Management Team.

3.2 A new Development Team, comprising a Senior Manager and Project Officer, would deliver the following:

Outputs:

a) Establish Thames21 activities in new localities across Greater London by running a range of "taster" engagement and volunteering activities in communities where the charity does not yet have much reach - to build local interest in the waterways, and in environmental issues.

b) Work hand in hand with more local communities to develop practical projects for their local water-space which will meet local needs, concerns and interests.

c) Establish a new Senior Management Strategy Group to consider new ideas and initiatives. "Road test" and develop these initiatives hand in hand with London communities, gathering the evidence required to generate robust proposals to potential funders for full project delivery.

- d) Facilitate increased neighbourhood/borough involvement in current Thames21 London-wide programmes such as the charity's Training Programme and Schools Programme.
- e) Work with local authorities and other organisations to increase opportunities for Thames21 to deliver or facilitate improvements to the natural environment such as Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems to reduce flood risk and water pollution or River Re-naturalisation work in localities across London.

3.3 This Programme would enable Thames21 to develop new opportunities hand in hand with Londoners, and in new areas, to the point where it can then secure separate, major, project funding for each of them. Currently the charity is unable to allocate resources to this area of development which is a source of great frustration as it recognises the value of how much more could be achieved through scaling up its work to date. The anticipated outcomes are:

- a) Measurably increase Thames21's presence and benefit in every borough in London (eg with volunteer groups preserving local waterways).
- b) Number of Londoners engaged in the charity's programmes increased from 12,000 currently to 21,000 within three years.
- c) Charity programmes created (eg habitat preservation schemes) which can be shown to respond directly to the needs of London communities.
- d) Long term sustainability of new programmes maximised.
- e) Charity reputation, professionalism and trust enhanced at grassroots level.
- f) The profile of Londoners involved in Thames21 progressed to represent more closely the cultural and racial make-up of London's population overall (eg Thames21's Training programme participants are on average 88% White British and 12% Minority Ethnic - whereas the population of London as a whole is 60% White British and 40% Minority Ethnic.)
- g) Larger funding grants and overall income received for the charity's work significantly improved by presenting more robust funding applications through the new system of piloting project work within communities.

3.4 The Development Programme, therefore, will both generate new activity to preserve and enhance waterways across London and make the organisation more sustainable, thereby protecting a unique and valuable pan-London service.

4.0 Costings

4.1 This new programme would be costed over three years as outlined in the table that follows:

Development Manager: salary + on-costs for 3 years	128,700
Development Delivery Officer: salary + on-costs for 3 years	94,800
Development Group: Senior Thames21 staff time set aside from other work to focus on development strategy and delivery @ £3k per manager for 3 years	27,000
Communications and publicity materials for development activity (eg social networking systems, evaluation and marketing systems)	36,000
New database to support effectively the involvement and development of increasing numbers of volunteers and localities (Expenditure in Year 1)	30,000
Equipment and materials (eg ground-working equipment, personal safety items, perishables)	10,000
Full cost recovery: calculated on basis of project staff hours and related contribution to central overheads	13,500
TOTAL:	£ 340,000

5.0 Financial Observations

- 5.1 Audited accounts for the year ended 31st March 2013 show total income of £1,672,568 and a surplus of £6,562 (0.4% of turnover), all on unrestricted funds.
- 5.2 The reserves policy states that “*the level of free reserves should be the equivalent of six months’ essential operating costs and that reserves should be built up to the desired level in stages consistent with the Charity’s overall financial position and its needs to maintain and develop its charitable activities*”. As at 31st March 2013 free unrestricted reserves amounted to £64,563 which equates to 3.1 weeks’ worth of 2014/15 total expenditure.
- 5.3 The latest forecast for the current year ending 31st March 2014 shows total income of £932,000 all of which is confirmed and a deficit of £3,000 (0.3% of turnover) all on unrestricted funds.
- 5.4 The budget for 2014/15 shows total income of £1,092,114, of which £891,774 (81.7%) had been confirmed as at 26th March 2014. After total expenditure of £1,068,000 a surplus of £24,114 is forecast, all on unrestricted funds. This surplus would see the free reserves position increase to £85,677 by 31st March 2015, equating to 1 months’ worth of total expenditure.

6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 Recent events have shown that the health and proper functioning of London, Londoners, and the capital’s rivers and waterways are intrinsically linked. Floods have recently caused damage to thousands of households whilst sewage pollution in the Thames has increased significantly as a direct result.

Government agencies cannot rectify these issues alone and therefore the will and effort of local communities to clean, protect and preserve their waterways is essential. Thames21, as the sole charity with pan-London responsibility for mobilising and supporting London volunteers in these endeavours warrants the investment as recommended in order to increase and sustain its capacity in this respect. A grant of £340,000 over three years (£134,000; £102,000; £104,000) is recommended.

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