

MEETING: 25/09/2014

Ref: 12291

## ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Improving London's Environment

Thames21 Ltd

Adv: Ciaran Rafferty

Base: City

Amount requested: £107,882

Benefit: London-wide

Amount recommended: £108,000

### The Charity

Thames21 is the charitable company set up in 2004 to conserve London's rivers and canals and to improve the public's knowledge and appreciation of the heritage, ecology and amenity they provide. 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.

### The Application

This application is for a further, and final, two years' funding of a London-wide community training programme. Funded by the Trust for the past three years, this project recruits, trains and supports Londoners to become active custodians of their local waterways and habitats. It aims to give them the practical and organisational skills to continue their work long after the charity's direct support ends.

### The Recommendation

Although the work to date has been of a high standard, demand for this project remains high, whilst the charity will use the learning from the past three years to target and refine its support over the next two years:

***£108,000 (£53,000; £55,000) for two further, and final, years towards the salary of a Project Officer and related costs of a scheme developing and supporting local volunteers to improve the Thames and London's waterways.***

### Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
10/04/2014	£340,000 over three years (£134,000; £102,000; £104,000) for the salaries and operational costs of a strategic Development Programme to protect the capital's waterways. (NB this was a Strategic Initiative)
28/04/2011	£150,000 over three years (£43,000; £50,000; £57,000) for the salary of a Project Officer and the related costs of a scheme developing and supporting local volunteering to improve the Thames and London's waterways.
05/04/2007	£50,000 (2 x £25,000) for a further and final two years' contribution to the salary of the Chief Executive subject to receipt of a satisfactory monitoring report for year 3 of the previous grant.

### Background and detail of proposal

No single organisation, with a complement of 18 full-time staff, could be expected to protect and improve London's waterways yet that is the mission of Thames21. It attempts to achieve this, however, by engaging and supporting thousands of Londoners as active volunteers. In 2011 you funded the charity for three years to

provide a programme of engagement and training to local communities of volunteers. This, typically, would see the charity engage a cohort of local people in an area where a waterway needed some care and attention (eg if it had been used as a dumping ground); and work side-by-side with them to rectify the immediate problem whilst also training them in the principles and practicalities of waterway and habitat management. The charity would also help the group become more formalised, perhaps to become constituted as a voluntary body, so that it could apply for small grants for equipment, for example, in order to continue its stewardship into the future.

The project has had numerous and tangible successes over the past three years and can demonstrate that this model does work and that there continues to be demand for it. For the next two years, however, Thames21 is able to build on the knowledge gleaned so far so that it can offer training courses at times and in venues which are even more successful at engaging people; and it will focus on engaging more people from BME communities, and more young people. You are able to consider a further two year's funding as the project is unique and has a London-wide benefit.

### Financial Information

The organisation's reserves policy states that the level of free reserves should be the equivalent of six months' "essential operating costs". It can be seen in the table that the actual free reserves' holding is low at approximately 3 weeks' worth of total expenditure. However, in the charity's draft accounts for 2013/14, the charity commented on its actual holding of free reserves stating that: "*The Trustees consider that the Charity's finances are sufficient to continue to operate for the foreseeable future.*"

The charity calculates its 'cost of generating funds' when preparing its year-end accounts and, therefore, this is not available for the current year 2014/15.

Total forecast income for 2014/15 is £1,712,114 of which £1,511,774 (88.3%) had been confirmed by March 2014.

Year end at 31 March	2012/13 Audited Accounts	2013/14 Draft Accounts	2014/15 Current Year Forecast
	£	£	£
<b>Income and Expenditure</b>			
Income	1,672,568	1,739,946	1,712,114
Expenditure	1,666,006	1,731,778	1,688,000
Unrestricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	166,118	149,443	151,920
Restricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	(159,556)	(141,275)	(127,806)
Total Surplus / (Deficit)	6,562	8,168	24,114
Surplus / (Deficit) as a % of turnover	0.4%	0.5%	2.2%
Cost of Generating funds (% of income)	£18,812 (1.1%)	£19,173 (1.1%)	-
<b>Free unrestricted reserves</b>			
Unrestricted free reserves held at Year End	64,563	73,122	85,677
How many months' worth of expenditure	0.47	0.51	0.61
Reserves Policy target	833,003	865,889	844,000
How many months' worth of expenditure	6	6	6
Free reserves over/(under) target	(768,440)	(792,767)	(758,323)