

MEETING: 26/11/2015

Ref: 12953

## ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Improving London's Environment

**Froglife Trust**

**Adv: Ciaran Rafferty**  
**Base: Outside London**  
**Benefit: London-wide**

**Amount requested: £69,116**

**Amount recommended: £54,000**

### **The Charity**

Froglife Trust is a national charity which was established in 2002. Its mission is to support the conservation of amphibians and reptiles – frogs, toads, newts, snakes and lizards – and to save the habitats they depend on. It actively encourages people who are not usually involved in conservation and concentrates on “on the ground” action which directly benefits amphibians (eg through the care of habitats). It has been particularly successful over the years in delivering environmental education programmes and in incorporating new audiences, eg one such scheme, funded by you, which used young offenders to improve habitats in London.

### **The Application**

In 2012 you awarded a grant of £77,000 for the three-year “Dragon Finder” project, which targeted children and families to educate them about amphibians and to engender a desire to care for them and their habitats. As a unique, successful, and pan-London piece of work the organisation now seeks a further two years’ support.

### **The Recommendation**

The specific proposal for the next two years is to continue in the same vein as the current grant (which is now ending) but for 18 months. After this, there would be a significant switch in that the Project Assistant would finish and then a Project Manager would be employed to help stakeholder groups to raise funds to commission Froglife to continue the work. Your officer has a number of concerns with this approach, not least of which is that continuation funding is usually awarded at a level commensurate with the original grant. Consequently a lesser sum than that requested is advised so that the structure of the grant is similar to before. The charity’s 2014/15 accounts are currently being drafted and it is recommended that any grant is subject to these being audited and satisfactory.

***£54,000 over two years (2 x £27,000) for the salary of a p/t (3 dpw) Project Assistant and related costs of the Dragon Finder project for London. The grant is subject to receipt of satisfactory, audited, accounts for 2014/15.***

### **Funding History**

Meeting Date	Decision
27/09/2012	£77,000 over three years (£35,000; £21,000; £21,000) towards the costs of the Dragon Finder project.
01/11/2007	£98,600 over three years (£26,900; £36,000; £35,700) towards a project promoting the creation, good maintenance and overall care of standing water habitats within London's environment.

## **Background and detail of proposal**

Froglife is expert at what it does and its work in London over the years has been crucial in developing and preserving habitats for amphibians. The Dragon Finder project, through its educational and hands-on approach, has been instrumental in developing a community approach to habitat care and preservation – which is always going to be more effective and sustainable.

To date the Dragon Finder project has delivered 29 habitat projects in 24 boroughs; run 145 events, workshops or volunteer days; and reached over 6,000 participants across all of Greater London. The components of the project include:

- Wildlife workshops (training courses for allotment holders to encourage wildlife-friendly practices)
- Practical habitat work (volunteering days where participants can help improve local green spaces)
- Life Under the Surface exhibitions (aimed at primary school pupils)
- Swimming with Dragons (interactive educational swimming pool sessions with themed swim floats and games)
- Dragon Days (family open days, incorporating storytelling, pond-dipping, etc)

Should you agree funding for a further two years the core structure of the project would continue as before, achieving a similar range and rate of outcomes.

## **Financial Information**

Forecast income in the current year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 is £1,015,175, of which £667,288 (66%) had been confirmed by July 2015. This level of forecast income represents growth of £213,305 (26.6%) compared to the prior year which the charity explains is due to its 5 year strategy to increase operations. So far this has included expansion of its Dragon Finder programme into the East of England and its Green Pathway Scheme to Glasgow. It is also in the process of fundraising for a project in Sheffield and working with Buglife to expand in to Northern Ireland. Its Leapfrog Schools programme has also started to expand and is now working with several schools.

The organisation has a reserves policy target to hold 6 months' worth of expenditure in free reserves but it currently holds approximately 2 weeks' worth as shown in the table below. The charity acknowledges that it is short of its target and advised that it has put measures in place to hopefully generate increased income, including the appointment of a full-time ecologist so it is better placed to respond to requests for consultancy work and able to provide training packages. It has also recently reviewed its merchandising strategy and has worked hard to improve its profile to secure corporate sponsorship.

<b>Year end at 31 March</b>	<b>2013/14 Audited Accounts</b>	<b>2014/15 Forecast</b>	<b>2015/16 Budget</b>
<b>Income and Expenditure</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Income	926,274	801,870	1,015,175
Expenditure	874,017	860,046	1,022,584
Unrestricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	46,117	(97,498)	47,383
Restricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	6,140	39,322	(54,792)
Total Surplus / (Deficit)	52,257	(58,176)	(7,409)
Surplus / (Deficit) as a % of turnover	5.6%	(7.3%)	(0.7%)
Cost of Generating funds (% of income)	175,162 (18.9%)	92,915 (11.6%)	-
<b>Free unrestricted reserves</b>			
Free unrestricted reserves held at Year End	127,137	31,778	79,161
How many months' worth of expenditure	1.7	0.4	0.9
Reserves Policy target	437,010	430,023	511,292
How many months' worth of expenditure	6.0	6.0	6.0
Free reserves over/(under) target	(309,873)	(398,245)	(432,131)