

MEETING: 14/07/2016

Ref: 13140

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Improving London's Environment

South London Botanical Institute

Adv: Joan Millbank

Amount requested: £76,899

Base: Lambeth

Benefit: Several SE London

Amount recommended: £76,500

The Charity

The South London Botanical Institute (SLBI) was endowed by one Allan Octavian Hume in 1910 to be a working men's rival to Kew Gardens. Housed in a large Victorian house in Tulse Hill with a reasonably sized garden, SLBI holds an extensive botanical library, a herbarium of some 100,000 pressed plants and a small garden which includes a moss trail, poisonous border, medicinal plants, dye garden and a wildlife pond. In the 1920's and 30's the Institute had a paid warden and was open full time providing a range of education classes and lectures. It continues to provide a range of plant based educational activities although today it is run by its trustees, 3 part-time staff members and 40 volunteers. Unpaid resident wardens look after the property in exchange for rent-free accommodation, one of whom is an experienced community environmentalist, known to the Trust in another capacity and well-regarded in the field. Past activities include a programme of school visits, and SLBI is linked into other programmes such as Open House, Big Draw and Open Gardens Squares Weekend. The charity has strong working links with the London Natural History Society, Natural History Museum and Royal Botanical Gardens Kew, amongst others, through its scientific advisory group.

The Application

SLBI is seeking a 3 year grant to fund its "Botany on a Plate" initiative. The project wants to help audiences to understand the botany of plants - local and more exotic - and their different uses. Specifically it will provide a place for school children, families and local residents to explore food plant physiology, uses and production. Activities will include microscope work, botanical illustration, foraging and cooking wild plants.

The Recommendation

SLBI is a lovely example of how an enduring bequest has contributed to public education for over a century. The house and garden offer an unusual – and albeit small – setting for South Londoners to engage in environmental education, connect with their local natural environment and be inspired. To meet the requirements of your programme the grant, if approved, will be contingent on SLBI providing an outline programme of work for each funding year.

£76,500 over three years (£26,800; £27,700; £22,000) towards the salary of a part-time Education and Outreach Coordinator (14hpw) and part-time Project Manager (7hpw) and running costs of Botany on the Plate programme.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
04/06/2009	£50,000 over three years (£16,300; £16,700; £17,000) for the salary and on costs of an environmental education programme.

Background and detail of proposal

Building on its previous work with schools and the wider community, SLBI's programme - Botany on a Plate - will provide a series of learning opportunities. The schools' discovery visits will comprise of half day visits by 25 local schools classes each year. The visits will provide hands-on, practical opportunity for mainly reception and primary pupils and their teachers to engage with plants, and to enhance their curriculum-based learning and understanding. Visits by schools will then be followed up by visits to schools by SLBI to help consolidate learning. SLBI will also develop learning materials and deliver 2 dedicated sessions each year for educators. The open workshops will be half-day food botany workshops delivered mainly at weekends; 10 per year and made available to families and area residents. 300 people of all ages are expected to benefit over the 3 years.

SLBI will employ two part-time posts to deliver the programme; additional support provided as required by specialist tutors and volunteers.

Financial Information

Forecast income for the current year to 31st March 2017 is £111,277, with £80,000 confirmed (71.9%) at June 2016.

SLBI benefits from its original endowment fund comprising the building and garden, plus investments, as well as some legacies held in unrestricted reserves, which has given a considerable boost to the organisation's balance sheet. The unrestricted funds include £300,000 of designated funds, which are held according to policy in case of financial need, split between £190,000 for running costs and £110,000 for the maintenance of the building and garden.

The cost of generating funds is nil because all fund-raising is undertaken by the trustees and volunteers at no cost to the charity.

Year end at 31 March	2014/15 Independently Examined Accounts	2015/16 Forecast Outturn	2016/17 Budgeted
Income and Expenditure			
Income	46,693	154,439	111,277
Expenditure	122,132	99,138	104,298
Other Recognised Gains/ (Losses)	51,248	0	0
Unrestricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	34,529	26,503	4,979
Restricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	(58,720)	28,798	2,000
Total Surplus / (Deficit)	(24,191)	55,301	6,979
Surplus / (Deficit) as a % of Income	(51.8%)	35.8%	6.3%
Cost of Generating Funds (% of Income)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Free unrestricted reserves			
Free unrestricted reserves held at Year End	411,177	437,680	442,659
How many months' worth of expenditure	40.4	53.0	50.9
Reserves Policy target	300,000	300,000	300,000
How many months' worth of expenditure	29.5	36.3	34.5
Free reserves over/(under) target	111,177	137,680	142,659