



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

C251

Grant Working Party 6 December 2011

Rural Initiatives Grant Scheme: Application for Project Funding: 2011/2012

1. Financial Background

- 1.1 The current Rural Initiatives Grant Scheme budget available for 2011/2012 is £82,818.90 (this consists of £28,871.21 for grants of £4,000 or less and £53,947.68 for grants of £4,000 or more).

2. Wickhambrook Parish Council

- 2.1 Wickhambrook Parish Council would like a grant to completely refurbish their play area. The refurbishment includes:

- (a) removal of existing equipment and surfacing;
- (b) supply and install of safety surfacing;
- (c) supply and install of a toddler multi-unit;
- (d) supply and install of a junior multi-unit;
- (e) supply and install of free-standing components (e.g. web climber, litter bin, roundabout, spring rider, stepping posts and rope arch bridge); and
- (f) supply and install of a 25m zip line.

- 2.2 The play area needs to be refurbished since the current play equipment has been in use for over 20 years and does not meet health and safety guidelines (as confirmed by the Borough Council's Play Inspector's report).

- 2.3 The refurbishment will take place on the existing playground site, which is owned by the Wickhambrook Memorial Social Centre Trustees. The trustees have confirmed in writing that they are happy for Wickhambrook Parish Council to: *"erect, maintain and manage whatever play equipment and safety surfaces as they deem appropriate"*.

- 2.4 The application has been approved by the local Ward Member, Councillor Redhead: *"This facility is well used but in need of refurbishment. I am happy to support this application providing the rest of funding is in place"*.

- 2.5 The project fits the following corporate priorities:-

- (a) to improve the safety and well being of the community; and
- (b) to secure a sustainable and attractive environment.

- 2.6 The cost of the project is £90,000 (excluding VAT since the applicant can reclaim this). Wickhambrook Parish Council has £18,000 from their own funds; confirmed match funding of £3,300 from local donations; £5,000 from Havebury Housing Partnership; and £3,000 from Suffolk County Council's Locality budget; and applied for but not confirmed funding of £5,000 from Suffolk Housing Society's Village Gold fund.
- 2.7 Wickhambrook Parish Council's match funding currently totals £34,300. The applicant is looking to apply to other funders to meet the shortfall of £55,700 (once they achieve 50% of the total project cost they hope to apply to larger funders, such as Biffa and the Queen Elizabeth II Fields in Trust fund).
- 2.8 Wickhambrook Parish Council has applied for £10,000 from the Rural Initiatives Grant Scheme.
- 2.9 The Grant Scoring Matrix for this application is attached as Appendix A to this report.

3. Suffolk Wildlife Trust

- 3.1 Suffolk Wildlife Trust (SWT), a registered charity (No. 262777), would like a grant to purchase Knettishall Heath as a freehold from the Riddlesworth Estate.
- 3.2 The opportunity to purchase the heath has arisen since the Riddlesworth estate would like to sell it due to a change in personal circumstances and concurrently Suffolk County Council, who managed the land, wanted to end its lease with the estate as part of its divestment programme.
- 3.3 Knettishall Heath is well used by local people and visitors as a country park and the concern raised by local people in response to Suffolk County Council's decision to withdraw from the site has demonstrated the importance they place on Knettishall Heath and being able to access and enjoy it.
- 3.4 Knettishall Heath was marketed locally during Summer 2011. At this time SWT agreed a purchase price (based on an independent valuation from the District Valuer) with the Riddlesworth estate on the understanding that SWT would be going to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) at the earliest opportunity to secure a percentage of the overall funds. HLF recognised the urgency of the project and entered SWT's application into the first available application round. The vendor is willing to give SWT a period of grace on the sale to enable the HLF to make their decision and to allow SWT a reasonable time to raise the remaining £100,000 before the end of January 2012.
- 3.5 SWT's proposed project is multifaceted and their project plan involves:-
- (a) ensuring the continued accessibility and enjoyment of a significant recreational facility in the west of Suffolk. Visits are estimated to be more than 75,000 each year;
 - (b) restoring nationally-important Breckland Heath habitat, of which Knettishall Heath at 434 acres is one of the largest remaining fragments in the Brecks, plus 225 acres is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, noted for its Breckland flora and fauna (10 year management plan);

- (c) restoring 1.5 km of river corridor and 5.2 ha of wet woodland, enhancing the environment for otter, water vole and brown trout (5 year management plan);
 - (d) providing new signage and interpretation, including suitable signage to guide visitors to Knettishall Heath from main roads, clearly marking the four 'gateway' entry points to Knettishall Heath and explaining the heritage value of Knettishall Heath (within first year);
 - (e) increasing public access by creating 7 km of new trails on land previously outside the former country park boundary, completing two new circular routes for people to use and enjoy (within first year);
 - (f) involving local people in the development of Knettishall Heath as a nature reserve, including contacting 10,900 households in the four postcode sectors bordering Knettishall Heath to invite them to a spring Community Open Day (within first year and ongoing); and
 - (g) creating opportunities for people of all ages to play an active part in the conservation and management of Knettishall Heath, including the recruitment, training and supporting of volunteers to undertake a variety of tasks on site (within first year and ongoing).
- 3.6 Most of Breckland is owned by large estates and opportunities to buy land for nature conservation are very rare. The project offers a unique opportunity to acquire such a substantial site in an area of national and international importance for its biodiversity.
- 3.7 The project is fully supported by local parish councils and community groups, who have provided SWT with letters of support.
- 3.8 The application has been approved by the local Ward Member, Councillor Ray: *"SCC effectively withdrew from the Knettishall Heath Country Park in September 11 and, if funding is available, there is an agreement for the Suffolk Wildlife Trust to purchase the land of the Park owned by the Riddlesworth Estate. The Trust would manage the Park thereafter and maintain public access to this important recreational facility which is used extensively by the local communities and visitors from further afield. This is a unique and time-limited opportunity: Should the Trust fail to raise the funds required to purchase the site in the required timescale, it is probable that the current owners would seek another, and much less competent and desirable, purchaser. I strongly support this application which would facilitate this important development for our local environment"*.
- 3.9 The project fits the following corporate priorities:-
- (a) to improve the safety and well being of the community; and
 - (b) to secure a sustainable and attractive environment.

- 3.10 The cost of the project is £1,171,000 (including VAT). Whilst the applicant can normally reclaim VAT, they cannot reclaim VAT on the land purchase which forms the overwhelming majority of this project. The total project cost consists of:-
- (a) £1,140,000 for land purchase;
 - (b) £21,000 for legal fees and agent; and
 - (c) £10,000 for interpretation.
- 3.11 SWT has £415,000 from their own funds; confirmed match funding of £140,000 through in-kind land from Suffolk County Council (who currently own a 11.5 ha landholding on the site); and applied for but not confirmed funding of £516,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (a decision will be given in January 2012).
- 3.12 SWT therefore need to find £100,000 more match funding by the end of January 2012. In addition to applying to the Rural Initiatives Grant Scheme, they are appealing to 25,900 SWT members; they have written to 10,900 addresses for a major donation campaign; they are requesting donations from local residents; grants from local authorities, business and Havebury Housing Partnership; and local fundraising activities and engagement with local schools and community groups.
- 3.13 SWT has applied for £10,000 from the Rural Initiatives Grant Scheme.
- 3.14 The Grant Scoring Matrix for this application is attached as Appendix B to this report.
- 3.15 Officers are satisfied that this application meets the criteria to apply for RIGS funding as SWT is a community group. However, this scheme is on a different scale to the type of locally generated schemes for which the funding was primarily devised. The scheme is also one which has resulted from a divestment on the part of SCC. If RIGS funding becomes routinely used for purchasing divested land or facilities it will limit the opportunities to fund the kind of local schemes for which RIGS was designed. Finally, although Knettishall Heath is within St Edmundsbury it is on the north-east boundary of the Borough and is accessed by many residents of surrounding districts, and visitors from much further afield, again making it different in kind to the very local schemes for which RIGS was devised. While it is important for external funders to see that the scheme attracts some funding from the Council the factors outlined above have been taken account of in reaching the recommendation for the level of funding.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1 It is **RECOMMENDED** that a grant of £10,000 be awarded to Wickhambrook Parish Council towards the refurbishment of their play area. The full amount requested is being recommended by officers due to the size of the village, the number of potential beneficiaries and the amount of match-funding that the project will require.
- 4.2 It is **RECOMMENDED** that a grant of £7,500 be awarded to Suffolk Wildlife Trust towards the purchase of Knettishall Heath. The reasons for suggesting a lower amount than that applied for are outlined at 3.15 above.

For further information, please contact:-

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Appendix A - Grant scoring matrix, Wickhambrook Parish Council

Appendix B - Grant scoring matrix, Suffolk Wildlife Trust

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Application for Project Funding 2011-12.doc

Grants Scoring Matrix

Applicant: Wickhambrook Parish Council
Date: 6 December 2011
Summary of project: To refurbish the Wickhambrook play area
Amount requested: £10,000
Amount recommended: £10,000
Total project cost: £90,000 (ex. VAT)

Criteria	Available points	Score
Matched Funding Sources	1 point = up to 50% external funding 3 points = 50% external funding and over Plus out of the matched funding element the local contribution: 2 points = if over 10% but under 20% 3 points = over 20%	4 (out of 6)
Council's priorities	Priorities that apply from Corporate Plan - 1 point per priority	2 (out of 4)
Risk to the Council	Low (1 point), Medium (3 points) or High (5 points) - an example of a low priority is something that does not cause a loss of service to the Council.	1 (out of 5)
Risk to the Applicant	Low (1 point), Medium (2 points) or High (3 points) - an example of a high priority is the loss of a facility such as a village hall that is well used.	2 (out of 3)
Community Impact	Low (1 point), Medium (3 points) or High (5 points) - high priority will generate increased usage, increased social inclusion and benefit others.	3 (out of 5)
Number of beneficiaries	1 point = exclusive group 2 points = groups open to all 3 points = village groups and Parish Councils	2 (out of 3)

Total Score (maximum score = 26 points): 14

Grants Scoring Matrix

Applicant: Suffolk Wildlife Trust
Date: 6 December 2011
Summary of project: To purchase Knettishall Heath
Amount requested: £10,000
Amount recommended: £7,500
Total project cost: £1,165.833 (inc. VAT) £1,171,000 (ex. VAT)

Criteria	Available points	Score
Matched Funding Sources	1 point = up to 50% external funding 3 points = 50% external funding and over Plus out of the matched funding element the local contribution: 2 points = if over 10% but under 20% 3 points = over 20%	6 (out of 6)
Council's priorities	Priorities that apply from Corporate Plan - 1 point per priority	2 (out of 4)
Risk to the Council	Low (1 point), Medium (3 points) or High (5 points) - an example of a low priority is something that does not cause a loss of service to the Council.	1 (out of 5)
Risk to the Applicant	Low (1 point), Medium (2 points) or High (3 points) - an example of a high priority is the loss of a facility such as a village hall that is well used.	2 (out of 3)
Community Impact	Low (1 point), Medium (3 points) or High (5 points) - high priority will generate increased usage, increased social inclusion and benefit others.	5 (out of 5)
Number of beneficiaries	1 point = exclusive group 2 points = groups open to all 3 points = village groups and Parish Councils	3 (out of 3)

Total Score (maximum score = 26 points): 19