

Planning Policy and Open Spaces

B4609 – 2 Seas - Nature Smart Cities – partnership project to enhance green infrastructure

Q: This should explain the procedure by which the council has entered into this partnership and the benefits that it provides; what the proposed budgeted amounts are actually for (given that the item only appears to enable the council to self-finance investments which this presumably does not cover)

Background

1. Nature Smart Cities across the Two Seas (NSCiti2s) is a European Union (EU) funded climate change adaptation project involving 7 other EU cities, 1 province and 3 academic institutions. For further details on NSCiti2s see: <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/nature-smart-cities-across-the-2-seas-programme>.
2. Under the approved project, each of the city partners is required to develop and test a local green infrastructure (GI) investment business model pilot. Cambridge City Council's proposed pilot is the Cambridge Canopy Project, which aims to help the city adapt to climate change by increasing tree canopy cover and contributing to the sustainable management of the city's urban forest. Further details on the Cambridge Canopy Project pilot see: <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/cambridge-canopy-project>

Partnership procedure

3. The initial NSCiti2s Stage 1 expression of interest was submitted to the EU by the lead project partner, Southend on Sea District Council on the 2nd May, 2018. The City Council's inclusion, as a partner, in the submission was supported by the then Executive Councillor for Streets and Open Spaces.
4. The Stage 1 submission was successful and notification was given on the 13th July, 2018. The project partners, including the City Council, entered into a formal commitment to the project in January, 2019. The proposed Cambridge pilot was 'signed off' by the partnership in April, 2019, with the approval of the Executive Councillor for Planning and Open Spaces.

Project benefits

5. At a strategic level, the NSCiti2s aims and objectives and those of the proposed Cambridge Canopy Project GI investment pilot support:
 - The Council's corporate vision and strategic objectives in terms of its greening and environmental justice target outcomes
 - The Council's recent declarations on climate and biodiversity emergencies
 - The Council's existing policy commitment to increase the volume of tree cover throughout the city

6. More specifically, the proposed Cambridge Canopy Project will deliver the following benefits:
 - Levering in c60% (£365,000) external funding from a c40% (£243,000) Council investment, over the 4 year life of the project
 - Securing a 40% annual increase to the Council's existing tree planting budget over 3 years
 - Planting c2000 trees over 4 year life of the project. This equates to a 100% increase in tree planting activities and will result in a 2-3% rise in Council owned and managed tree canopy by the 2050s
 - Providing a platform to undertake a number of citizen science projects¹ to provide accessible and manageable opportunities for public engagement and learning. The outcomes of such projects will have real value information that supports the management of both the Council's and wider city's tree stock. The platform will be able to be extended beyond the life of the project.
 - Providing an evidence base for future GI investment that will be publically accessible, inform policy and support action plans, as well facilitate a more collaborative and community approach to urban forest management in the city, beyond the life of the project.

¹ These include: Ash population survey – to collect data on the distribution of ash across the city to inform an Ash dieback Action Plan; i-Tree Eco project to collect tree data to inform the valuation of ecosystem services provided by the City's urban forest; Ash dieback sample survey to inform on the on-going spread and impact of this disease in the city; Young tree establishment survey – to inform on the establishment success of our young trees.

Project budget

7. The following table sets out the proposed budget requirements for each of the four years of the pilot and the associated project activities delivered. The EU funding accounts for 60% of the total project costs, with the remaining 40% match funding balance, including in kind contributions, to be secured by the City Council.

Year (calendar)	Activity (incl. staff costs²)	Council/ £k	EU grant/ £k	Total budget/ £k	% of sum total
2019	Data collection and analysis	41.2	61.8	103	17%
2020	Software, digital platform licence and tree planting	81.6	122.4	204	34%
2021	Tree planting	58.8	88.2	147	24%
2022	Tree planting	61.2	91.8	153	25%
Sum total/ £		242.8	364.2	607	100%

8. The following table sets out the proposed match funding requirements of the 'Council element' of the annual pilot project costs and any resulting funding shortfall. As shown by the above income breakdown, the City Council is using existing revenue budgets/ in kind support to cover the bulk of the 40% match funding, however, this still leaves a total budget shortfall of £50k over the four year life of the project. The BSR proposal represents an 'under-writing' commitment of the shortfall, with the expectation that officers will be able to secure the

² This relates to a new project manager post (1 FTE), and existing line management support (0.2 FTE)

necessary match funding from external sources, thereby avoiding the need to make use of this budget provision. Any un-used annual budget provision associated with the BSR proposal will be returned to reserves.

Year (calendar)	Council/ £k	Funded from	Contribution/ £k	Shortfall/ £k
2019	41.2	Council (existing budgets) Council (in kind) ³	31.2 10	Nil
2020	81.6	Council (existing budgets) Council (in kind)	50.5 10	31.1
2021	58.8	Council (existing budgets) Council (in kind)	50.5 10	8.3
2022	61.2	Council (existing budgets) Council (in kind)	50.5 10	10.7
Sum total/ £k	242.8		192.7	50.1

Further information

9. For further information, please contact Matthew Magrath, Senior Arboricultural Officer, at matthew.magrath@cambridge.gov.uk; or tel. 01223 458526.

³ Eligible in kind contributions relate to Council base budget staff costs associated with the project's delivery in each of the four years