

Record of decision taken under delegated powers by a council officer



Title:	Your Fund Surrey Application: CF294 “Kitty 2” - replacing Basingstoke Canal Society’s canal boat
Divisions Affected:	1. Woking – Will Forster
Key Decision:	No Note: This record relates to a decision which impacts solely on one division as set out above.
Reason Key:	N/A
Decision taken under delegation by virtue of:	Cabinet/ Committee decision Cabinet 21st July 2020 Min Ref: 112/20 COMMUNITY PROJECTS FUND [Item 10] Link

Summary

This decision record sets out the key information for publication on the decision by the Executive Director for Customer and Communities to approve expenditure for a Your Fund Surrey project located in Woking.

The agreed recommendations are set out below and details of the project are set out in a decision report attached as an annex to this record.

Decision made

Decision made:

It was AGREED to:

1. Fund project CF294 for the full £75,000 requested, composed of:
 - £71,250 of capital funding towards the project to be paid in staged payments, on evidence of spend.
 - Including £3,750 (5%) to be held by SCC until final evidence of income, expenditure and evaluation is received.
2. Include the following conditions within the funding agreement:
 - final evidence of all other funding secured to complete the project prior to release of first payment
 - final evidence of consent for the works from Surrey County Council Land and Property prior to release of first payment
 - final evidence of income & expenditure and evaluation prior to release of final payment

Reasons for Decision:

These decisions are to enable expenditure from the Your Fund Surrey to be awarded to a project which have been the subject of a rigorous assessment process by

officers and considered by the Your Fund Advisory Panel.

Officers consider the project to meet the aims and published criteria of the fund and to satisfy the requirements to award funding.

Decision taken by:	Marie Snelling, Executive Director - Customer and Communities
Decision taken on:	3 July 2023
To be implemented on:	3 July 2023 (decision not subject to call-in)

Alternative options considered

N/A

Summary of any financial implications

This project that has been approved for funding and has been through the due diligence and agreed governance process.

Cabinet agreed in July 2020 the funding for these projects would be drawn from capital funding allocated to Your Fund Surrey within the Capital Programme

Declarations of conflicts of interest

None

Consultation/Process Followed

Decision taken in consultation with Cllr Denise Turner-Stewart, the Cabinet Member for Communities and Community Safety and following Your Fund Surrey Advisory panel review.

Background Documents

Exempt:

Annex 1 – Your Fund Surrey Decision Report CF294	No
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Annex 1

Your Fund Surrey - Delegated Officer Decision Report

DATE: 22nd June 2023

SUBJECT: YOUR FUND SURREY APPLICATION – THE BASINGSTOKE CANAL SOCIETY

PROJECT NAME: ‘Kitty 2’ – replacing Basingstoke Canal Society’s canal boat

CF REFERENCE: CF294

Purpose of the Report:

This decision record sets out the key information for publication on the decision by the Executive Director for Customer and Communities to approve expenditure for a Your Fund Surrey.

This is to enable expenditure from Your Fund Surrey to be awarded to projects which have been assessed by Officers to meet the fund criteria and further considered by the Your Fund Advisory Panel. The vision of Your Fund Surrey (YFS) is to bring community-led and place-making projects to life, with a focus on wider community benefit that leaves a real legacy.

Recommendations:

Officer Recommendations in consultation with the Advisory Panel. It is recommended:

1. **To fund project CF294 for the full £75,000 requested, composed of:**
 - **£71,250 of capital funding towards the project to be paid in staged payments, on evidence of spend.**
 - **Including £3,750 (5%) to be held by SCC until final evidence of income, expenditure and evaluation is received.**
2. **To include the following conditions within the funding agreement:**
 - **final evidence of all other funding secured to complete the project prior to release of first payment**
 - **final evidence of consent for the works from Surrey County Council Land and Property prior to release of first payment**
 - **final evidence of income & expenditure and evaluation prior to release of final payment**

Reason for Recommendations

1. This application has been the subject of a rigorous assessment process by officers, as set out in the body of this report. Officers consider the project to meet the aims and published criteria of the fund and to satisfy the requirements to award funding.
2. The Basingstoke Canal Society are a charity whose volunteers work to preserve and develop the environmental sustainability of the canal. In addition to their biodiversity duties, volunteers provide educational and social canal boat trips between Woking and Staines for a wide range of local people. The current boat (named Kitty) is diesel powered, inaccessible and near end of life. By replacing the boat with a modern, fully accessible and electric powered alternative and installing two electric charging points the charity will be able to increase the range of users of the canal whilst contributing towards net-zero carbon targets for Surrey.

Executive Summary

3. The Basingstoke Canal Society (BCS) is a charity formed in 1966 by likeminded residents of Woking who believed the canal was in a state of disrepair and needed desperate intervention to ensure its' longevity. The BCS campaigned for public ownership of the canal and by 1976 the local County Councils (Surrey and Hampshire) had purchased their sections of the canal. BCS have over 260 volunteers supporting with physical work on the tow path, crew members and administration. The Basingstoke Canal Authority (the Authority) are the managing agent of the canal on behalf of both County Councils and the BCS work under the Authority to control and promote the canal to guarantee its sustainable future. In addition to their conservation duties on the canal, BCS run educational and social canal boat trips between Woking and Staines for a wide range of user groups in the Woking area. The society is run totally by volunteers and has over 1,000 registered members.
4. This project has two key elements. Firstly to replace BCS's existing diesel canal boat, Kitty, with a modern, fully electric alternative. Despite being a well utilised community resource, the current boat is nearing its' end of life and is inaccessible for many residents. It can only be used in conjunction with the nearby Lightbox Art Gallery in Woking, as there are no amenities on board. The second element is to install two electric charging points along the canal.

Project Summary

5. The new environmentally friendly boat, named Kitty 2, will have accessible toilets, be accessed with passenger and wheelchair lifts and seat up to twelve people (plus two crew members). Currently BCS have 1,000 users per year and predict they will double the number of users by having a modern, accessible and environmentally friendly alternative.
6. The second element is to support the decarbonisation of the canal. As part of this, BCS aim to install two electric charging points (at Town Wharf in Woking and at Barn Bridge in Staines). BCS will ensure the charging point at Barn Bridge is available for other boat users and will implement a mechanism for this in conjunction with the Basingstoke Canal Authority. BCS will have day-to-day management responsibilities for the boat and both charging points. If any significant maintenance or upgrades are required for the charging points then permission will be required from Basingstoke Canal Authority. The new boat will be sole responsibility of BCS.
7. The BCS have consulted widely on their proposal and undertaken a significant public fundraising campaign, raising in excess of £55,000. The group are already well connected locally providing trips for local schools, charities, care homes and private groups.
8. The section of the canal in question is owned by Surrey County Council (SCC). Land adjoining the canal is a mixture of privately owned and leased from SCC. The BCS have support from both SCC and the main landowner in relation to the charging points installation. Full plans are currently being submitted to SCC Land and Property with full consent for the works expected to be in place by the end of June 2023. Planning permission is not required.

Details

Description of project benefits

9. The benefits to the project include:
 - Contribution to Surrey's net-zero carbon target
 - Supports conservation of the Basingstoke Canal habitats and water quality
 - Provides more opportunities for local people to connect with the canal through improved accessibility, increased trips and increased numbers of passengers

- Supports community cohesion through volunteering and community events

Project Timeframes and Management

- The boat build is estimated to take 16 weeks and the installation of the electric charge points are expected to take 8 weeks.
- The delivery of the project will be managed by the BCS committee in conjunction with SCC Land and Property, the boat builder and the contractors for the electric charging points.
- The ongoing maintenance of the boat and charging points will be the responsibility of BCS, who will contract specialist companies to carry out the works. Ongoing maintenance is funded via income from boat hire for privates functions and fundraising activities.
- Once operational the boat will have a minimum of two crew members per trip. At least one of each crew member will hold a Royal Yachting Association (RYA) First Aid qualification and RYA Inland Waterway Helmsman qualification or a Boatmaster Licence issued by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency.

Financial and Value for Money Implications

- YFS funding is requested to contribute towards the new boat and electric charging points. The project has applied for £75,000 which equates to 46% of the overall project costs. The remaining monies needed for the project have already been raised from various sources (see Table 1).
- Table 1. Financial Summary details the £88,115 of other funding against the total project cost of £163,115. Table 2 details the total project cost breakdown.

Table 1. Financial summary

Amount applied for:	£75,000
Total project cost:	£163,115
Percentage of cost against total:	46%
Have other funding sources been secured?	Yes
Other funding:	Fundraising – £55,309 Charity reserves - £32,805
Is there a commercial element to the project?	No
Amount suggested for funding:	£75,000

Table 2. Project Cost breakdown:

Activity	Total Cost (VAT zero-rated)
Build of complete, fitted electric boat*	£120,100
Installation of electric charging points*	£15,802
Boat delivery to Basingstoke Canal	£5,000
Boat build contingency	£18,015
Electric charging points contingency	£2,198
Training of volunteer crew and commissioning costs	£2,000
Total	£163,115

*Denotes element with YFS contribution.

- As with all applications, there is a risk that construction and purchase costs will increase between application and approval. This is partially mitigated by the contingency (which will only be released if there is demonstrated need). The applicant has secured quotes that support their costing, and will ultimately be funded based on evidenced, actual spend, up to the amount awarded.

17. Corporate finance colleagues in SCC identified BCS as having significant reserves and were asked why they could not contribute more to the project. SCC finances were satisfied with the response from BCS which detailed the large amount of working capital required to conduct general activities on the canal.
18. BCS provide a mixture of charged, reduced rate and free of charge trips depending on the user group. In general private functions are charged a corporate rate whilst charities, schools and community groups benefit from heavily reduced or free use. BCS invite all users to donate towards the charity and organise various fundraising activities.

Expert Hub Review

19. Finance

This project has been reviewed financially and is felt to be adequately planned. YFS is funding less than half of the project cost (47%). It is relatively low value and low risk. The reserve query has been explained and is satisfactory. The project has a wealth of community support, demonstrates wider community use and better inclusivity, and is in line with SCC's Greener Futures strategic objective.

20. Greener Futures

The Greener Futures team is in support of this project as it will meet the Council's Greener Futures objectives for the following reasons;

- Reducing carbon emissions by switching from a diesel engine to an electric boat
- Improving local air quality by removing the combustion engine
- Encouraging more residents into the countryside and making the countryside more accessible to those with disabilities

21. SCC and Hampshire County Council Strategic Manager for Basingstoke Canal

"The Canal Society's proposed scheme for an electric trip boat primarily for the Woking area of the Canal will continue to give low cost access to the waterway for all, it is also understood that the new boat will be fully accessible. BCS boats are entirely staffed by volunteers most of whom live locally to some part of the canal adding to their social inclusion – their volunteers also do lots of work on the fabric of the canal too, which the proceeds from their trip boats support. Both the low cost and volunteer staff supports the social inclusion policies of the County Council.

The new trip boat and charging points will be a first step towards reducing carbon emissions on the Canal. Traditional diesel powered trip boats due to their regular operating patterns tend to produce more emissions than other privately owned boats. Transitioning a trip boat to electric power will have a greater effect than privately owned vessels. The charging points will also provide access to carbon savings for privately owned vessels visiting the canal to charge their leisure batteries, saving engine running times to charge off grid. These proposals fit with the carbon neutrality and sustainability targets of both the County Council and Central Government."

Advisory Panel Comments

22. The Advisory Panel functions in an advisory capacity and its role is intended to assist the formal decision-making processes which sit outside the Panel. The role of the YFS Advisory Panel is to review shortlisted applications and to advise and inform the final officer recommendations to the appropriate decision-maker.
23. The Advisory Panel met on 14th June 2023. A report detailing project CF294 was shared with panel members in advance and questions were invited ahead the meeting. No issues were raised by panel ahead of the meeting, although a question was raised during panel about the future plans for the canal. A unanimous decision was reached to recommend the project for the full amount requested.

Consultation

Summary of Support

24. Have your say, which featured the Kitty 2 project, received 886 comments, a significant amount of support for a project of this value.

25. Letters of support have been received from the following organisations, groups and individuals:

- Jonathan Lord MP
- Accessible Boating Association
- Hale End Court Residential (supported living)
- Brockhill Extra Care (supported living)

26. The Divisional Councillor Will Forster fully supports the application and has commented as follows:

“As Councillor for Woking South for Surrey County Council I am very supportive of the Basingstoke Canal Society’s efforts to replace their community trip boat Kitty with an all-electric boat which would also be a first step towards decarbonising the entire canal.

I’m aware of the wide range of fund-raising efforts that the Basingstoke Canal Society has undertaken over the last 18 months to meet this goal. They have raised over £55,000 largely from support from the local community by crowd funding, art auctions, grants, individual and corporate donations and bequests. There is no doubt in my mind that there is wide community support for this project.

The canal itself is a fantastic resource both for Woking and the areas of Surrey it runs through. The Basingstoke Canal Society does an amazing job of motivating and facilitating the involvement of the community in the preservation of the environment and history of the canal. The Canal Society is a model of how a successful community organisation should operate with not a single paid employee and over 1,000 members who volunteer their own time to help.

I’m also aware of the community work that the Canal Society and particularly Kitty carries out with local care homes, disabled people, schools and hospitals as well as having, in the past, been a host to the Children of Chernobyl.

Their proposal to replace what is now a very old diesel boat and becoming difficult to maintain with an electric boat together with the infrastructure to kick-start the electrification of the canal has my full support and aligns well with Surrey County Council’s Greener Futures climate change delivery plan.”

Risk Management and Implications:

27. The applicant has provided an overview of risks against the project in Table 3 below. Officers consider there to be adequate control measures in place.

Table 3. Summary Table of Risks and Key Mitigations

Risk description	RAG	Mitigation action/strategy
Boat build slot is missed	Green	Boat build is reserved for Feb 2024
Boat build cost increases	Yellow	Adequate level of contingency included within costs
Permission for electric charge points not received	Green	Landowners are supportive of the project and are waiting on final information. Permission would be a condition as part of the funding agreement.

Equalities and Diversity:

28. Your Fund is designed to provide investment in schemes that encourage community participation, reduce isolation, and develop the potential for social wellbeing and economic prosperity. As such it is anticipated that it will have a positive impact on a number of those who may rely on or gain support from within the local community and those within protected characteristics that may be more likely to experience social and economic exclusion.

29. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been produced for YFS and was circulated as an Annex to the YFS Cabinet Report 26th January 2021.

Legal implications – Monitoring Officer:

30. The report sets out the information and steps for the consideration of the application further to the Council's governance arrangements for Your Fund Surrey.
31. Further to those arrangements, if approved, the Council and the organisation will enter into a comprehensive funding agreement which will include the performance measures that will be put in place to ensure the funding is used as intended as well as clearly describing any support or additional conditions agreed as part of the funding award.

Other Implications:

32. The potential implications for the following council priorities and policy areas have been considered. Where the impact is potentially significant a summary of the issues is set out in detail in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Implications for council priorities and policy areas

Area assessed:	Direct Implications:
Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children	No direct implications
Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children & adults	Disability Challengers have their own safeguarding policy and procedures.
Environmental sustainability	Use of timber from sustainable forestry. Full carbon footprint of each playground element provided.
Public Health	The project has a positive impact on wider health determinants with specific reference to users with disabilities being encouraged to use outdoor space and increase their physical activity. The project also seeks to enhance social cohesion.

What Happens Next:

- Following Delegated Officer approval of the funding a notice of the records of decisions taken under delegated power will be published within 3 days of the decision being made.
- Officers will prepare the relevant schedules and funding agreements to enable payment of funds and monitoring and evaluation of the project against its outcomes.
- YFS Officers will then issue a provisional offer of funding to the applicant, including a copy of the draft Funding Agreement.

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Consulted:

Division County Councillor

Corporate finance

Sources/background papers:

Your Fund Surrey Governance Document

