

CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH **BIODIVERSITY PROJECT FUND**

Halingway towpath large willow pollarding project December 2007

Discussion in Projects Group:

Pollarding of 40 trees along the Halingway. The partnership's contribution would fund pollarding 4 trees and putting up bat and bird boxes.

Positive:

- Cam Conservators are a useful ally for biodiversity
- Willow pollarding is beneficial both for landscape and biodiversity
- Funding support from Biodiversity Partnership and SCDC helps persuade the board of Cam Conservators to put money into pollarding themselves
- Good opportunity for publicity (good photo opportunity, and also a chance to promote the willow pollarding leaflet)

Concerns:

- How useful are barn owl and bat boxes: old pollards should provide hollows for barn owls and bats anyway, also boxes would need to be put up at quite a low height on the pollards where they would be accessible to people. SCDC ecologist explained that he would advise which trees would be suitable for bat and barn owl boxes, suitable trees might be on adjacent sites rather than on the old pollards themselves. The pollarding might affect roosting bats in the pollards.

Recommendation

- Recommended for funding with the **full amount of £1500.**

Conditions:

- Cam Conservators to liaise with the Biological Records Centre to record veteran trees on GIS.
- Cam Conservators to liaise with Bat Group to give due regard to potential roosting bats in old pollards.
- Cam Conservators to seek publicity when the work has been carried out (pollarded willows are good photo opportunity), acknowledging the funding support.
- Monitoring and Evaluation activities also to include monitoring the success of the bat boxes (only barn owls mentioned in application). Consider monitoring of bird and bat box contents rather than only informal monitoring.

PROJECT ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Essential

Project proposals must:

- Be clearly linked to the achievement of targets and/or the implementation of priority actions contained within a Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Species Action Plan or Habitat Action Plan, or to the aims and objectives of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough BAP more broadly;
→ **Veteran Trees and Parkland HAP**
- Demonstrate sound project design and internal logic (i.e., projects should be feasible, have realistic and cost-effective budgets, and demonstrate clear linkages among their objectives, outputs and activities);

→ funding is sought to allow a more phased approach of willow works over the coming years

- Demonstrate partnership working;
→ liaison with SCDC ecologist and Biodiversity Partnership
- Demonstrate the use of matching funds or in-kind contributions for all projects seeking £1,000 or more from the Biodiversity Project Fund.
→ Cam Conservators and SCDC
- Include publicity and awareness-raising for biodiversity
→ as a condition

Desirable

Where possible and appropriate, project proposals should:

- Encourage local involvement.

Other Criteria

- Preference will be accorded to innovative and catalytic activities that lever in other funds as well as the involvement of others;
- Support will not normally be provided for routine, site management activities;
- Support will not be provided for retrospective activities;
- In reviewing the proposals, the Surveys and Projects Group will try to ensure that a range of different project types is funded, across different Species and Habitat Action Plans.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH BIODIVERSITY PROJECT FUND Project Proposal Form

PROJECT TITLE

Halingway towpath large willow pollarding project 2007.

1. INTRODUCTION

- *This project proposal is being submitted by the Conservators of the River Cam, the independent navigation authority for Cambridge.*
- *The Conservators own a stretch of riparian green corridor approximately 8 km in length known as the Halingway. The towpath starts at Chesterton*

and ends at Clayhithe Bridge. There are over 800 surveyed trees along the length of the towpath including a mixture of willow, ash, oak, rowan and *Prunus* spp. Each tree bears a numbered tag from a survey which was undertaken by Cambridge City Council in 1994. Many of the willows are veteran trees. Some, unchecked by pollarding, have grown very large. Over a series of winters the Conservators have undertaken a large willow pollarding programme to reduce the larger specimens, so ensuring their long-term preservation from disease and windfall. At times, this pollarding programme has received grant assistance from other Local Authorities who have a vested interest in maintaining the conservation and visual amenity value of this open space. The 2007/08 winter programme has identified 40 trees requiring works, for which the Conservators have put aside monies. Assistance is being sought so that some of the Conservators' budget allocation for 2007/08 can be extended to fund further works in 2008/09, so allowing a more phased approach to the programme.

- To date, the Conservators have liaised with the Ecology Officer, SCDC, meeting at the SCDC offices and on site on 11th and 19th September 2007 respectively.
- This project involves local business (tree surgeons from the Cambridge area).

2. BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION

- The Conservators are obligated to manage trees on land that they own to sustain the health of the trees and for reasons of public safety. The conservation value of these trees is inestimable; this tree-lined avenue provides an important habitat corridor between the City of Cambridge and Waterbeach. Visually, the trees provide an amenity screen for housing developments and the railway to the west of the towpath. The trees also create a windbreak in an otherwise open landscape. The County Council cycleway along the towpath is used heavily by cyclists and pedestrians. The local population using the towpath have a certain sense of ownership of the trees.
- The project links to the Local Habitat Action Plan for Cambridgeshire – Veteran Trees and Parklands.
- It is proposed that data on the history of the tree works along the Halingway should be shared with the funding partners.

3. OBJECTIVES

- The Conservators are seeking to reduce all large willow trees along the Halingway. This particular proposal is to attend to 40 trees in the winter of 2007/08, with further works to be identified for the 2008/09 programme.
- It has been recognised that barn owl and bat boxes would be well located in the proposed area of works given the surrounding environment (mostly set-aside land). This funding proposal seeks some monies towards the costs of building these boxes.
- Longer term, an updated survey of the trees will allow Conservators' staff to identify, in collaboration with funding partners, potential sites for replanting of new trees, including BAP species (e.g. black poplar).

4. ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

- *Key project activities and outputs are as follows:*
- *40 large willow and ash trees to be pollarded. Waste material to be chipped and retained on site. A limited number of logs will be securely stacked subject to space and safety issues.*
- *Ivy growth around base of each tree checked to reduce susceptibility to wind blow and ensure good re-growth of crown.*
- *Barn owl and bat boxes to be placed strategically in the reach identified for works in 2007/08.*
- *'Before' and 'after' photographic record of tree works.*
- *Tree-by-tree digital database of tree works' history to be supplemented with information from this programme.*
- *Article on Conservators' website about the Halingway trees and biodiversity. Other publication possibilities in collaboration with funding partners.*

5. ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

- *The lead organisation is the Conservators of the River Cam,*
- *Roles and responsibilities of all participating organisations: 1. Conservators of the River Cam – principal funding provider, coordinator of works with contracted tree surgeons, recorder of works; 2. SCDC – partial funding provider, guidance on acceptable tree works' practices; 3. Cambs & Peterborough Biodiversity Partnership – partial funding provider, guidance on design and siting of barn owl and bat boxes in catchment and any other potential biodiversity-enhancing measures.*

6. TIMEFRAME AND WORKPLAN

- *Project duration: one month (commencing 1st December 2007).*
- *Key milestones: completion of all target trees by 31st December 2007.*

7. BUDGET

- *Anticipated costs: £12,000 ex VAT (£14,100 inc. VAT) which equates to c. £300 per tree.*
- *Contribution from Conservators of the River Cam: £9000 plus shortfall accrued by VAT*
- *Contribution from SCDC Wildlife Enhancement Scheme: £1500, equating to 5 trees.*
- *Request from Cambs and Peterborough Biodiversity Project Fund: £1500, equating to 4 trees (£1200) plus £300 to spend towards the cost of materials for barn owl and bat boxes. Boxes to be fabricated by the Conservators' staff at their depot at Clayhithe Bridge and installed by the tree surgeons at locations agreed with the funding partners before the works are finished.*

8. MONITORING AND EVALUATION ARRANGEMENTS

- *'Before' and 'after' photographs of pollarded trees.*
- *Schedule of pollarded trees to be recorded in spreadsheet.*
- *Success of barn owl nesting boxes to be monitored by Conservators' staff*