toe²
Trust for
Oxfordshire's
Environment

Putting people and places together

Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE2) Ltd
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INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS

TOE2 supports a wide variety of community projects which improve and benefit Oxfordshire's environment. TOE2's funding is derived from a range of sources, some of which have specific requirements; eligible funding applications are considered in the light of the funds available. We thank all our funders and in particular our main funder Grundon Waste Management.

These notes provide guidance for applicants.

1. Areas of Support
TOE2 aims to support projects in 3 main areas:
- Promote and improve the **biodiversity** of Oxfordshire's wildlife habitats
- Encourage and develop projects that contribute to the **low carbon agenda**, including the sustainable use of renewable resources and energy efficiency in community facilities
- Increase **access** to the local countryside and green spaces

Education and community involvement are seen as key across all three funding areas.

Biodiversity
Definition – Biological diversity is the variety of life and its processes; it includes the variety of living organisms, the genetic differences among them and the communities and ecosystems in which they occur

All biodiversity projects should at their core aim to bring about actual practical improvements to biodiversity on a local scale and they should all demonstrably fit within the wider County or national strategy for biodiversity.

Projects aimed solely at awareness raising or education will not qualify for a grant unless this is demonstrably part of a larger biodiversity scheme aiming to bring about actual biodiversity benefits. As a guide, we suggest that you limit any of these elements to 25% or less of the overall grant request.

Projects involving surveys of habitats or species or the production of management plans will only be eligible where they are part of a larger scheme that will lead to advances in our understanding of species and habitat requirements or direct improvements to biodiversity.

The "*Oxfordshire Community & Parish Guide to Biodiversity*", produced by Oxfordshire County Council, Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre and Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust could help provide ideas about what you can do in your community:
- Discover what is in your area
- Contribute to a Parish or Neighbourhood Plan
- Find sources of help, information and funding
- Set up a local conservation group
- Read about inspiring projects that have resulted in a better local environment and also enhance biodiversity.

www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/sites/default/files/folders/documents/environmentandplanning/countryside/naturalenvironment/communitybiodiversityguide.pdf

www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/my-community

Examples of the types of projects that TOE2 might support are those that:
- Expand the biodiversity resource within the 36 Conservation Target Areas (CTAs). Further information on CTA's and NERC Act S41 Habitats of Principal Importance (were previously called BAP priority habitats and species is available from Wild Oxfordshire, www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk.
- The Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS) provide useful guidelines on landscape character and general biodiversity down to the Parish level – (http://owls.oxfordshire.gov.uk.)
- Improve the overall biodiversity of the wider countryside
- Increase awareness about Oxfordshire's natural environment and its priority habitats and species, and the significant role that communities and individuals can play in promoting real and lasting change
- Aim to maintain and increase biodiversity through surveys, habitat and species management and habitat creation, resulting in direct improvements to Oxfordshire's natural environment.
- Improve the quality, quantity or coverage of voluntary recording in Berkshire or Oxfordshire.

It is requested that ecological records are shared with TVERC (http://www.tverc.org/cms/content/share-your-records) and that biodiversity improvement works form part of a management plan. All biodiversity projects are encouraged to consider if a data search would be helpful to inform the proposed plans. A data search is provided by TVERC at a cost of £50 per hour.

For works involving a watercourse it is essential that the all appropriate consent forms are in place, this would be the Environment Agency for main water courses, or the lead water authority for a non-main water course which is likely to be the local authority. This link to the Water Framework Directive (http://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/RiverBasinDistrict/6) provides status information for waterbodies in the Thames Catchment and it could provide useful context for relevant applications.

Funding theme for 2016 – 2017: Encouraging Bumblebees
TOE2 would like to help raise the profile of the bumblebee in Oxfordshire. Bumblebees are not as numerous or widespread as you might expect. Changes in land management mean there are less and less wildflowers in the landscape, and many bumblebee species and other pollinators are struggling to survive.

TOE2 can make funds available for projects which benefit bumblebees and other invertebrates by planting native flowers and shrubs in suitable natural habitats and also planting nectar-rich non-native species in more urban locations. If you are already planning to submit a biodiversity application to TOE2, do consider whether you can increase the scope of your project by creating opportunities for bumblebees, which will also benefit other pollinators as well.

So if you would like to see more bumblebees in your area, do come to us with your project ideas and we will do what we can to help you.

For further information about threats to bumblebees and how to help them, have a look at the Bumblebee Conservation Trust website:
1. http://bumblebeeconservation.org/get-involved/gardening-for-bees
2. http://bumblebeeconservation.org/get-involved/managing-your-land
3. To find out more about how bumblebees are doing in your area, set up BeeWalk survey transects - http://bumblebeeconservation.org/get-involved/surveys/beewalk/. This will also be useful in helping you evaluate the success of habitat creation. Remember to share your records with TVERC - http://www.tverc.org/cms/content/share-your-records
4. Visit http://bumblebeeconservation.org/about-us/resources for further information and printable resource sheets.

TVERC Recording Grant

Grants are available to support work that improves the quality, quantity or coverage of voluntary recording in Berkshire or Oxfordshire.

Examples of what the funding can be used towards include:
- Digitising paper records - priority given to recent data & under-represented taxa
- Money towards running training courses or promotional activities to recruit new recorders and improve the quality of voluntary recording.
- Training for individuals (volunteers, not professionals)
- Publication of atlases and checklists
- Cost of setting up or running a recording group
- Purchase of equipment for field survey work, including ID guides, for use by the group (PLEASE CHECK FIRST WHETHER TVERC HAVE SUITABLE EQUIPMENT AVAILABLE FOR FREE LOAN http://www.tverc.org/cms/content/borrow-tverc-surveying-equipment)
- Purchase of data management tools, including upgrading and new hard/software to be used solely for the purposes of recording
- Provision of travel expenses for voluntary recorders(45p/mile or cost of public transport) to deliver any of the above

Applicants for this grant should include in their application:
- Contribution from applicant in terms of total volunteer time or other resources.
- Approximate number of records that will result from this project.
- Approximate number of new recorders engaged.
- Confirmation that your records will be made available to TVERC (http://www.tverc.org/cms/content/share-your-records).

Low Carbon Agenda

With increasing concern about climate change, there is a groundswell of interest in this area and there are many active local groups in the county. TOE2 wishes to promote existing imaginative and effective schemes and help to inspire more communities to get involved. TOE2 will only want to support projects that can demonstrate there will be no detrimental effects on biodiversity, landscape or visual amenity.

Examples of the types of projects that TOE2 might support are those that:
- Make community buildings and facilities more energy efficient; please note that we request that projects are identified as a result of an energy audit. TOE2 can provide grants towards the cost of energy audits.

- Develop renewable energy projects for community facilities; where there are direct community benefits and any profits go back to the community, and where energy efficiency improvements have already been implemented.
- Produce wood fuel through managing local woods for biodiversity
- Encourage the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste
- Increase awareness of how communities can reduce their carbon footprint
- Improve water efficiency
- Encourage and promote more sustainable transport options
- Promote, produce or distribute local food and reduce food miles

When putting in an application for energy efficiency works on a community building be clear how the planned works fits in the priorities recommended for the building in the energy audit report. The request for funding needs to sit in this context.

Access to the countryside and green spaces
Definition – Making Oxfordshire's countryside and settlements easier and safer to explore on foot, by bicycle and by horse. Access can be on public rights of way, permissive routes, cycletracks, Access land, community-owned areas, nature reserves and country parks

Improving access to green spaces and the wider countryside has many health benefits and allows more people to appreciate the natural environment. TOE2 will support projects that fit with the aims of Oxfordshire County Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) and where all permissions have been obtained.

The primary aim of all projects should be to bring about actual physical improvements to public rights of way, permissive routes, cycle tracks, access land, community-owned areas, nature reserves and country parks. Please note that where permissive paths are concerned there should be some form of written agreement in place with the landowner, confirming at least three years of public use.

We will only grant aid the provision of signage, route marking, information or interpretation if they are part of a wider scheme for physically improving access. As a guide we suggest that you limit any of these elements to 25% or less of the overall grant request.

TOE2 wishes to support projects to improve the accessibility and quality of the rights of way network by:

- Creating new links and circular routes – for example to connect a village or shop to the countryside, or join up two or more public rights of way, a route to school or the shops or a route to avoid a busy stretch of road, or to create circular routes around communities.
- Improving access points to make paths more accessible and safer. The basic premise for such work must be adoption of the least restrictive access method, ie; gaps are least restrictive, followed by gates, kissing gates and then stiles. TOE2 can support the upgrading of access structures where the proposed new structure (or gap) would be less restrictive than the current one. Applicants will be expected to provide the least restrictive structure possible in any particular situation. Consideration should always be given to which access structure is most appropriate for the site, ie; if there is stock in fields a self-closing gate or a kissing gate may be required. (Further information about least restrictive access is available at www.accessiblecountryside.org.uk/creating-access)
- Improving path and bridleway surfaces – after drainage has been managed, to increase year round usability for paths particularly in village areas, or make key paths more enjoyable for less agile users. Full consideration should always be given to the provision of adequate drainage as the first stage of any path improvements. Please note that if you are applying for funding towards a board walk,

TOE2 prefers to support the use of recycled plastic but will consider the use of locally and sustainably sourced wood where there is a firm commitment to regular maintenance.

- Improving signs and route-marking – eg; by providing village information boards, 'on path' information, or themed interpretive trails to increase connections to the natural environment, and increase enjoyment and understanding

- Promoting the wider use of the countryside and green spaces - for example by showing all accessible spaces and paths on community information boards, by encouraging local businesses to provide facilities for walkers, cyclists and equestrians, by enabling practical works to improve access and understanding of the natural environment. Please note that TOE2 will only consider funding such promotion work as part of a project involving the delivery of practical works. As a guide we suggest that you limit any of these elements to 25% or less of the overall grant request.

TOE2 will only wish to support projects where applicants have considered how the access improvements will be publicised to the local community once the project is complete, in order to ensure greater use and enjoyment. This might include specific information and maps on notice boards and in parish magazines, circular walk leaflets, opening events, guided walks etc. **Please include details of how you intend to promote your project in your application.**

Maps of access routes and positions of gates are required as part of the application.

Further information at: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/rowip   for a range of community-led project ideas and to read the Local Council Guide to Improving Public Rights of Way.

2. Who can apply for funding?
TOE2 can fund not for profit organisations including voluntary groups, Parish Councils, charities and Community Interest Companies. Local Authorities such as County and District Councils may also apply for grants, but TOE2 generally prefers applications to be submitted by local community groups or charities.

3. Location of Projects
TOE2's priority is to support projects located in Oxfordshire, but consideration can be given to projects which straddle county boundaries or which benefit communities in Oxfordshire and its immediate neighbourhood. TOE2 is keen to see its funds distributed across the county; we are unlikely to support several projects within one community. Projects to be funded with landfill tax credits must be less than 10 miles from a registered landfill site.

4. Access Requirements
TOE2 generally only funds projects at sites where there is some level of public access. Please note that any projects funded through the Landfill Communities Fund must have public access for a minimum of 2 days or 4 evenings a week, unless they are biodiversity projects addressing the needs of a priority habitat or species which can take place on private land with no public access.

5. Community involvement
TOE2 looks to support projects which involve and benefit local communities. Please ensure that there has been effective community consultation resulting in widespread support for the project and good involvement of volunteers.

TOE2 cannot accept applications from projects which might result in local disagreement so please ensure that any areas of potential conflict are resolved prior to submitting an application.

6. Ongoing Management

TOE2 seeks to fund projects which are sustainable into the future and we need to know:

- How the project will be managed in the long term; biodiversity projects should have a site management plan. TOE2 may be able to provide advice so do get in touch if this would be helpful.
- Where the funds will come from to manage the project into the future
- Who will undertake the work
- The succession planning in place to ensure your organisation will have the capacity to manage the project effectively in the longer term

7. What we don't fund

- We do not generally fund land purchase projects but can consider them for some funding streams; contact us for further information.
- We cannot fund projects which are fulfilling a statutory requirement or a requirement of planning permission.
- We prefer not to fund the production of leaflets.
- Most projects funded by TOE2 should involve capital works to improve a site. We do not fund revenue costs alone, but can support a proportion of revenue costs which are required to support the delivery of practical projects.

8. Level of funding

Although the majority of TOE2 grants are up to £5,000, larger requests can be considered.

9. Specification and quotes

Where work is to be done by contractors, please provide TOE2 with a copy of the specification and at least two competitive quotes. All costs need to be justified and accompanied by a detailed breakdown so that TOE2 can see all of the costs associated with the delivery of the project.

Some of the projects we support are very specialist in nature, requiring specialist skills. In these circumstances there will often be little value going to more than one contractor for a quote. Where there is only one quote for a project it would need to be justified.

10. Match funding requirements

TOE2 looks favourably at applications from projects that have strong local support, volunteer input and that have sought funding from other sources.

11. Timetable for project delivery

Projects should be completed within a reasonable timescale. Please note that we ask projects to start work and submit their first claim for funds within one year of the grant being awarded by TOE2. It is *essential* that no work is done prior to the formal funding agreement being in place as TOE2 is unable to fund any work retrospectively.

Please do give the anticipated start and completion dates careful consideration; be realistic about timescales and what might be achieved. Where projects are funded through the Landfill Communities Fund and registered with the regulatory body, ENTRUST, extensions will only be permitted under certain circumstances.

12. Project Publicity

TOE2 and its funders request that all grants are acknowledged and promoted in the local media; guidance notes on project publicity are made available to all funded projects.

13. Project Monitoring

TOE2 expects applicants to monitor the impact of their project. The level of monitoring required is dependent on the type of project.

- **Access project** - it may be the state of accessibility after 12 months and monitoring will involve a site visit of a request for photographs.
- **Low Carbon project** - it may be the increase in use of the facility and change in energy use overall. A comparison in energy bills before and after the project may be requested a year after project completion.
- **Biodiversity project** - it may be the percentage success of any planting after 1 year and 5 years. The effectiveness of ongoing maintenance or management will need to be monitored by the applicant/landowner and evidence of results provided.

14. Submitting your application

- Please complete the application form.
- Provide photographs and site plans which help to illustrate the need for your project. Please note that we ask successful applicants to keep a photographic record of their projects as a way of recording progress.
- Provide maps showing project location for access and biodiversity projects.
- Provide copies of quotes from contractors or for materials.
- Submit your application by email to admin@trustforoxfordshire.org.uk and if possible by post to Lynn Parker, TOE2, Earth Trust Centre, Little Wittenham, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX14 4QZ
- The TOE2 Grants Panel meets four times a year and application deadlines will be posted on the website.
- Your application will be processed at the TOE2 office.
- An assessor with relevant expertise will contact you to discuss some of the details of your project and to arrange a site visit and discuss aspects of your project.
- The assessor will add their report to the summary sheet and this, along with any relevant enclosures, will be distributed to the TOE2 Grant Panel members before their meeting. Please note that assessors provide technical advice and that the Grants Panel makes recommendations to the TOE2 Board, so it is the Board that makes the final decisions about how to allocate funds.
- Some applicants may be invited to attend a Grants Panel meeting to provide additional information and answer questions.
- Applicants will be notified a few days after the relevant Board meeting of the outcome of their application.

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