

COMMUNITY AREA GRANTS SCHEME ASSESSMENT FORM

Ref No: #3637
Technical Officer: Fiona Elphick MSc. Env. Biol. - Senior Ecologist,
Name of organisation: Landscape & Design Team, Economic Development & Planning, Wiltshire Council.
Information from technical officer – : How well will the grant help meet the needs of the community? It will enable the involvement of local volunteers in a project that they have an interest in which in turn will increase local knowledge of the special interest of the meadows, providing the community with education opportunities and a sense of local “ownership”.
Are the costs appropriate and realistic? The expected adjusted costs would be realistic – however I would like the project plan to include some structured monitoring of the vegetation assemblage within the site, in order to assess how effective the works have been and to inform management plans going forward that will maintain the ditches in a condition that is beneficial to the grassland interest (see below, final comment)
Does the applicant help to deliver any of the Councils policies/strategies? Please state which one(s) and which aims/objectives: Environment Health and wellbeing Leisure and Culture Our Community
Would you rate the application as high priority, medium priority or low priority within your service area: Medium - low
How long have you known the group and in what capacity? I have engaged with the group via various stakeholder and partnership groups over the last 13 years, where we have been involved in Wiltshire -wide habitat conservation initiatives, such as the Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Plan, the Protected Road Verges Scheme, the County Wildlife Sites Project and the Wiltshire & Swindon Biological Records Centre Advisory Group.
Please comment on the group’s ability to deliver the project The group has considerable experience in recruiting and managing volunteers to work on various projects, with great success. There is every likelihood that the project will be delivered successfully, however I would like to see a time limit on the funded works, to ensure that the restoration of the ditches takes place as soon as possible, within the local ecological constraints and necessary timing constraints.

Any other comments

Considering the importance of the ditch system to the grassland assemblage that is dependent on it, some annual botanical monitoring of the grassland over the 5 years following ditch renovation would be appropriate, in order to gauge the success of the works and to inform future management of the ditch system within the site. Without such monitoring, there is little point in carrying out the works as the outcome cannot be assessed with any certainty. If this additional element could be built into the proposal, I would be happy to support the application for funding.

Date and initials: 12/3/2020 FE