

Eco Towns Funding Proposal 2023: Shoreham Harbour Leaders Board

Summary

It is proposed that £460,000 Eco Towns capital grant held by Brighton & Hove City Council is released to fund wider climate change and biodiversity capital projects in the Shoreham Harbour Regeneration Area; to be agreed by the Shoreham Harbour cross-authority governance structures.

It is proposed that the grant funding should be directed towards creating a Shoreham Harbour Green Corridor from east to west through the JAAP area.

Recommendations

This report seeks to re-assign the capital funding from the unimplemented Portzed scheme to wider climate change and biodiversity projects across the Shoreham Harbour area; and to agree indicative governance arrangements.

Background

In 2010-11, £750k of Government EcoTowns funding was secured to support sustainability initiatives in Shoreham Harbour. It was split across the two main local authorities. Adur District Council received £290k revenue funding (primarily used to deliver the Shoreham Harbour Joint Area Action Plan); and Brighton & Hove City Council received £460k capital funding for sustainability projects.

The grant was made under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003, which provides that the payer may determine the purpose of the grant and the circumstances in which it must be repaid. The conditions of the grant are that:

- It may be used only for the purposes that a capital receipt may be used. These purposes are set out in Regulation 23 of the Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) Regulations 2003 and would include the use of the grant to meet capital expenditure.
- The annual declaration is made.

In 2012, the BHCC funding was indicatively allocated towards a visitor centre at the PortZed development at Aldrington Basin, but this development has not proceeded. The capital grant has not been spent and remains held on the balance sheet by Brighton & Hove City Council.

In July 2022, BHCC's Policy & Resources Committee agreed re-assignment of EcoTowns capital funding to climate change and biodiversity projects across the Shoreham Harbour Area. Authority was delegated to the BHCC Assistant Director for City Development and Regeneration to agree the detail with the relevant authorities (Shoreham Harbour Leaders Board) in consultation with the Chair of BHCC's Policy and Resources Committee.

This paper now puts forward options for the use, allocation and governance of this funding.

Objectives of funding

Projects which address climate change and biodiversity were prioritised for this funding by the BHCC Policy & Resources Committee in July 2022. The Shoreham Harbour Joint Area Action Plan, adopted in 2019, sets out nine overarching objectives, several of which address the climate and biodiversity crisis:

- Minimising carbon emissions and creating a renewable energy hub;
- Promoting sustainable transport choices including improved pedestrian, cycling and public transport facilities and choices;
- Reducing risk of flooding and adapting to climate change; and
- Adding to the natural capital of Shoreham Harbour Regeneration Area with net gains in biodiversity and multifunctional green infrastructure network.

These clearly defined objectives will provide a robust framework for future decisions for the Eco Towns Grant.

It is suggested that a key theme for the funding could be the development of a green corridor through the regeneration area, combining projects which support biodiversity and active travel within a coherent overarching theme.

Location and eligibility of projects

Location - With the theme of an active / green travel corridor, projects would be prioritised which lie along travel routes close to the harbour. Projects which lie just outside the regeneration area could be included if they fit the themes and other criteria.

Eligibility - It is suggested that the majority of the funding is allocated to strategic projects originated by the regeneration project partners (local authorities and Shoreham Port Authority). Some funding would be reserved for special interest groups, and local community groups within the area. This would bring forward a wide range of projects. The usual caveats about ownership of land and permissions would be included.

Funding split - The £460k remaining funding was originally allocated to BHCC. However, developing a green biodiversity and active travel corridor through the JAAP would mean selecting projects that fall within both BHCC and Adur DC. Geographically approximately one third of the regeneration area is in Brighton and Hove, and two thirds in Adur. It is proposed that the funding split reflects this. The proposed funding split is as follows:

Location	Strategic project fund	Community project fund	Total
Adur	£240k	£60k	£300k
Brighton & Hove	£120k	£40k	£160k

Min / max funding per project - The creation of a green corridor would seek a number of projects from along the length of the JAAP, therefore it is suggested that £100k would be the maximum available for the strategic project fund. This would mean the fund would not be able to fund large infrastructure projects but instead would focus on adding value.

For the community project fund, a minimum allocation of £10k is advised to minimise time spent in administration of the fund.

Conditions of funding - In the current budgetary climate, it will be important that allocated funding has certainty of being delivered within a reasonable timescale. Therefore, it is suggested that priority should be given to projects led by established organisations with some track record of project delivery in the area, and that a 2-year timeframe for projects to have spent a minimum % (eg 50%) of the funds should be included. Projects should report annually on their progress to the Leaders Board.

Applying for the fund - If agreed, officers from BHCC and ADC will work together to devise an application and evaluation process. The fund would be jointly launched and publicised. However, each authority will administer the grant funding within its own boundaries.

Links into other policy/projects/programmes

The proposed green corridor would complement and/or contribute to the delivery of the following policies/projects/programmes:

- Adur & Worthing Councils Corporate Plan - Our Plan
- Adur Estuary sub group of the Adur & Ouse Catchment Partnership
- Sussex Bay
- Weald to Waves
- Adur River Landscape Recovery Project
- Kingsway to the Sea / Hove Western Lawns regeneration

Timeline

If agreed, it is suggested that funding is allocated during the 2023-2024 financial year. Projects should be delivered within two years of receipt of funding.

Governance

It is proposed that governance of the fund is carried out through the existing bodies used to take forward projects in the area and determine past spend of the revenue element of the grant:

- Shoreham Harbour Project Board – prepare and agree options and proposals for spend of the Eco Towns Grant to go to Shoreham Harbour Leaders’ Board for agreement.
- Shoreham Harbour Leaders’ Board – oversight of implementation of capital spend.

Community engagement and consultation:

Extensive engagement was carried out during the preparation of the Shoreham Harbour Joint Area Action Plan. This engagement helped to shape the objectives and policies in the Plan; which was prepared jointly by the Brighton & Hove City Council, Adur District Council and West Sussex County Council.

There has been consultation with officers at the partner authorities on the current report.