

Oxfordshire Environment and Waste Partnership 25 January 2013

TOE2 Woodfuel Programme

Introduction

- 1 At the last meeting a paper from TOE2 was tabled which requested funding for its Wood Fuel Programme. A recommendation was made to refer the proposal to the Waste Partnership's New Initiatives (NIF) fund. However, subsequent evaluation of the proposal confirmed that the TOE2 Programme would not be eligible for NIF funding as it would not use waste wood, and does not meet the specific waste criteria which the NIF fund requires. TOE2 was therefore invited to submit a funding proposal to the Environment Partnership, to give members an opportunity to consider the proposal. The proposal is attached at Annex 1.

Background

- 2 Maximising the use of biomass as a fuel source is identified as a priority in the list of potential projects in the Climate Local report to this meeting from the local authority officer group; this includes local authority arisings from parks and woodlands. The group is aware of the TOE2 project and supports its objectives.
- 3 Many local authorities already provide financial support to Thames Valley Energy (TVEnergy), the renewable energy agency which has operated in the county for many years. Thames Valley Energy has a well-established commercial wood-chip subsidiary with 19 wood chip-contracts, some of which are in the county. In addition there are commercial suppliers offering wood chip relatively locally. TOE2 were therefore asked to clarify in their funding proposal how they will work with TVEnergy and other local partners and organisations.
- 4 The proposal below does not refer to TVEnergy. The local authority officer group has recommended that:
 - more information is needed about TV Energy's plans for using local woodfuel, and establishment of a fuel station, and how they might be able to work together with TOE2;
 - a joint meeting is held between TV Energy, TOE2 and local authority energy officers to clarify their respective roles and identify the potential for future collaboration in Oxfordshire.

Resource implications

- 5 The Environment Partnership currently has no expenditure budget, or grant funding process, though it has played a co-ordinating role in helping organisations to generate funding through joint bids. With no funds, it is therefore not possible at this stage to recommend financial support for this project.

Recommendations

- 6 That the Oxfordshire Environment Partnership is recommended to:
- (a) consider the TOE2 funding request;
 - (b) request officers to organise a joint meeting between TVEnergy, TOE2, and local authority officers, and to recommend next steps to the next meeting;
 - (c) consider whether to invite officers to develop a funding strategy for the Environment Partnership for review at a future meeting.

Contact Officer

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Annex 1 TOE2 Funding Application**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Project Name	The Oxfordshire Community Woodfuels Programme	Total Funding Requested	£25,000
Where Will the Project Be Delivered? Throughout Oxfordshire			
Name of Proposing Organisation: The Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment – TOE2			
<p>Details about the Organisation:- 'Putting people and places together', TOE2 is an Oxfordshire environmental charity providing support and funding for communities wishing to deliver a positive, lasting change to their environment. TOE2 works in partnership with key organisations within the County, whilst encouraging and supporting a better use of natural resources and improvements to local wildlife habitats. TOE2 provides a catalyst for collaboration, and a conduit for funding throughout Oxfordshire, to our three areas of support: Biodiversity; Access to Green Spaces; the use of Renewable Resources and Energy Efficiency.</p> <p>The charity focuses on sourcing donations and other funding to give back to the community via a grants scheme. The woodfuel programme is a specific demonstration project which is being run by TOE2 due to the close fit with the charity's aims and objectives.</p>			

Project Manager	Mrs Fiona Danks	Scheduled Start Date	Current
Contact Name (if different)	As above	Scheduled End Date	Ongoing
Contact Address	Jericho Farm Worton Witney Oxfordshire OX29 4SZ		
Contact Phone No.	01865 883488	Contact e-mail address	toe@oxonrcc.org.uk
Date of completion of this form		9 January 2013	

2. PROJECT STATEMENT

Please provide a brief, clear statement of your project and key project objectives.

The TOE2 Community Woodfuel Programme is a collaborative initiative, which has brought together a number of key environmental charities and Public Sector partners currently working in Oxfordshire. Although Oxfordshire is the least wooded County in the South of England, our 18,235ha of woodlands reflect a typical pattern across England where at least half the woodland area is not managed. There are currently 47 woodlands across the County that are benefitting from some community involvement. However, Oxfordshire has over 400 Parishes, suggesting a major disconnect between local communities and woodland management. It is estimated that, if **only half** of the annual growth of Oxfordshire's woodlands were sustainably cut and used for woodfuel, it could be worth between £2-3 million (depending on market values) to local woodchip supply businesses and could save an estimated 9,000 tonnes of carbon per annum (compared to oil fired central heating). The Forestry Commission's document, **'Woodfuel Potential and Progress in South East England. February 2012'** allocated a target for Oxfordshire to be producing 35,000 tonnes of woodfuel per annum by 2020.

Much of the woodfuel currently used for Oxfordshire's growing woodfuel boiler market is brought in from outside the County, some of it from overseas. Increasing the use of locally sourced timber will therefore also have an impact on reducing current fuel miles for transportation.

Finally, fuel poverty is a significant issue in Oxfordshire, as many parts of the County are not on mains gas, and oil fired heating is an increasingly expensive alternative as well as being an environmental pollutant. Key objectives of this programme are as follows:

- Build an evidence base for decision makers to encourage uptake, helping to ensure the merits of woodfuel are understood, and the practicalities of ownership including cost and wood supply. Build awareness of woodfuel within communities
- Build awareness of woodfuel and its links to woodland management
- Increase areas of woodland managed in Oxfordshire
- Build demand for locally sourced woodfuel
- Build a strong local supply chain
- Broadly communicate case studies of good practice via comprehensive website
- Provide community and Parish Council talks on benefits of woodfuel and woodland management
- Produce monthly informative newsletter and disseminate widely via networks
- Initiate and enable a Biomass Trade Centre as a flagship demonstration project

3. PROJECT OUTCOMES AND OUTPUTS

Briefly describe the project activities that will meet the project objectives outlined above, and list any measurable outputs.

The programme will build awareness of woodfuel as a sustainable and renewable fuel, and its close links to woodland management and biodiversity. It will build an evidence base for decision makers to convince them of the merits of woodfuel heating as a viable

alternative to fossil fuels, and help to build demand for woodfuel in Oxfordshire generally. It will also help to address the growing issue of fuel poverty in the County.

The TOE2 programme will also help bring Oxfordshire's woodlands back into active management, improving biodiversity and providing opportunities for local land-based forestry and farming businesses to diversify. The project will therefore deliver ecologically enriched and sustainably managed woodlands which will help to strengthen the local rural economy. It will help increase Oxfordshire's woodland cover by creating new woodlands and replanting harvested sites, leading to an overall increase in woodlands and woodfuel usage.

NB: Improving income opportunities from woodlands helps owners to actively manage their assets, helping ensure that they are as robust as possible to the effects of pests and diseases such as ash tree dieback. Income for woodland owners and managers means that more money is available to invest back into the woodland for replanting or woodland management works. Regular management helps to ensure that issues are picked up early and dealt with effectively.

4. PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Outline how you propose to work with key partners in order to deliver your objectives.

TOE2 develops its programmes in close partnership with a number of organisations. The post of Woodfuels Programme Manager has been funded by the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, with an additional small grant from the Forestry Commission. The post holder is employed through TOE2, guided and supported by a Steering Group, with representatives from some of the main woodlands/woodfuel organisations in Oxfordshire. The key partners for this programme are:

1. The Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE2) www.trustforoxfordshire.org.uk
2. Oxfordshire Nature Conservation Forum (ONCF) www.oncf.org.uk
3. The Sylva Foundation – *Reviving Britain's wood culture* www.sylva.org.uk
4. The Oxfordshire Woodland Project www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/public-site/woodland-project
5. The Forestry Commission www.forestry.gov.uk
6. Oxfordshire County Council

5. FUNDING

Please state the amount of funding that you are requesting, and provide a breakdown of your funding request, including any match funding being provided.

A grant of £25,000 is requested.

This would be used by TOE2 to ensure continued support of the existing programme, and enable the successful delivery of the key project objectives as laid out in the Project Statement 2.

A grant of £25,000 has been received from the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, and a grant of £5,000 from the Forestry Commission. These have enabled the employment of a part-time project officer for 1 year only. Additional funding is critical to enable delivery of a programme of works to meet the objectives. These include investigating and putting in place models of funding or community investment that would self-finance the project in the future.

6. LOCAL FIT - supporting the aims & objectives of the Environment Partnership

Please state briefly how your project supports Oxfordshire 2030 priorities (summary of revised 2030 priorities attached) www.oxfordshirepartnership.org.uk.

TOE2's Community Woodfuel Programme delivers against the OEP Priorities 3 & 4. The major outcomes will be reduced energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions, a reduction in fuel poverty from the use of locally sourced, sustainable woodfuel. The programme will also make a significant contribution towards improving the biodiversity of Oxfordshire's woodlands, by bringing existing woodlands back into active management and encouraging the creation of new areas of woodland. The programme will also help engage local people with issues surrounding energy efficiency, and provide a much needed boost to the local economy by increasing the local woodfuel supply chain.

7. EVALUATION

Describe how you will you measure the success of your project against your initial objectives.

A full evaluation of Year 1 of this programme will be submitted to the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation and the Forestry Commission in October 2013. Early indications show that there are likely to be some unexpected but positive outcomes from the programme, and measurements of 'success' may be adapted to reflect this. However, the broad goals that are being worked towards are as follows:

- A greater understanding within communities of the strong links between woodfuel and woodland management and their subsequent improvement and increase in biodiversity
- An increase in the amount of locally sourced woodfuel used in the supply chain
- More Oxfordshire woodlands actively managed, with timber being used locally
- An increase in demand for local woodfuel, with an improved local supply
- A well used and informative Biomass Trade Centre

Completed by: *Chairman, TOE2*

Date: *09/01/2013*

Name: *Karen Woolley*

Organisation: *TOE2*