

**Summary:** To identify potential developments for the administration of the Sustainable Development Fund, thereby ensuring the best possible use of available resource, including the Fund's responsible Officer and Sub-Committee.

**Recommendation:** That the proposed developments outlined in this document be adopted as the operating principles of the Sustainable Development Fund with effect from Friday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2018.

**Officer Ref:** Edward Bonn (01451 862032)

**Proposed developments:**

1. The Officer proposes that an increase in the limit to funding by delegated authority is increased from its current level of £2,500 to £3,500. It is envisaged that this uplift will increase the Officer's involvement in decision-making for grant applications. However, members of the Sub-Committee will be informed in writing of any decisions made by delegated authority on a quarterly basis, with consultation between the Officer and these members also available if required in connection with particular applications.
2. A calendar for the Sustainable Development Fund's annual operations, with particular reference to when the Fund is open for applicants, is added to the Fund's webpage. This calendar would comprise a simple breakdown of key dates throughout the year, namely, the two windows open for applications, and the subsequent arrangements for considering any applications submitted. Reference would be made to the uplift in delegated authority and the role of the Sub-Committee, using a structure chart to convey the various options for considering these applications, depending on the level of grant requested.
3. A database of appropriate applicants in reference to the proposed Education and Learning theme is compiled from previous applications, who are contacted with the link to the Sustainable Development Fund's calendar at the start of the financial year and at stated intervals on the Fund's website, to provide information about the key deadlines for the upcoming year. To attract new applicants, posts on the Cotswolds AONB Facebook page, Twitter account and information in the Cotswolds Lion will also be used, with additional information to be provided via these platforms throughout the year by the Officer in discussion with colleagues, in particular, the Communications Officer. These recommendations may be consolidated into the Board's overall Communications strategy with reference to the Sustainable Development Fund in due course.
4. Electronic filing system for the Sustainable Development Fund is the only repository of records for monitoring its expenditure and assessing applications only, rather than an electronic filing system and paper files. In connection with this development, applicants will be encouraged to submit electronic copies of applications, with any hard-copy applications accepted but should strongly be in the minority.

5. One project is selected per year as a case-study by the Officer in discussion with the Sub-Committee, which is designed to demonstrate an ideal or prototype project to other applicants, for inclusion as a promotional feature in the Cotswolds Lion magazine.
6. In terms of Sub-Committee meetings, electronic versions of all documents tabled to these meetings are used, rather than hard-copies distributed in advance.
7. Two Sustainable Development Fund workshops or drop-in sessions per year will be available for potential applications to book a slot in advance, with these sessions aimed at improving the engagement of applicants and subsequent quality of their applications. These workshop could take place at locations in the north and south of the Cotswolds AONB, to ensure coverage of the entire area.
8. Applicants who submit more than 1 consecutive application (i.e. 1 application per year for 2 years) are required to wait a period of 1 year before applying to additional grants from the Sustainable Development Fund, to allow new applications with no history with the Fund to be considered for grant funding.
9. The Sustainable Development Fund documentation is updated to include the form used by applications to request transfer of their particular grant, which is currently provided only when the project is complete. This form would be kept on file in advance of project completion, to transfer the necessary funds once the project completion report is submitted by the applicant, and thereby avoiding any unnecessary repetition in terms of circulating documents and requesting information from applicants.
10. The Terms and Conditions of the Sustainable Development Fund are updated to advise applicants that any increases in the project's costs above the grant confirmed by the Sub-Committee will need to be met by the applicant in question, as the Fund itself is a regional grants scheme with a restricted amount of funding to allocate each year. The following clause within the Fund's Terms and Conditions does not explicitly state that increases in the costs incurred by applicants will not be funded, hence, this recommendation:
  - 18. If it appears that changes will be required to the works or the approved estimated cost of the works the Applicant shall immediately submit written details to the CCB for prior approval.

**Supporting papers: None**