



Application to HTC for funding to support the Haslemere Biodiversity Project Phase 2 – submitted by Haslemere Vision, Nov 2021.

Background

- Haslemere has a rich natural environment with 45 designated wildlife sites lying wholly or partly within the Neighbourhood Plan area. Haslemere also sits within Surrey’s network of Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) where targeted conservation action is expected to deliver the greatest benefit. It borders the northern edge of the South Downs National Park and lies partly within the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- The green spaces surrounding the town are an essential part of its overall character and an expanding visitor economy.
- The Haslemere Biodiversity Project (HBP) was set up to conserve and enhance these special biodiversity assets at a time when wildlife across Surrey is disappearing at alarming rates. It seeks to protect, maintain, restore and enhance important wildlife sites and the vital wildlife corridors that connect them. It also aims to boost resilience to future pressures such as climate change, development, pollution and invasion by non-native species.
- The HBP is an integral part of the Haslemere Neighbourhood Plan (HNP) and currently operates under the auspices of Haslemere Vision.

What have we delivered so far?

- Phase 1 began in April 2020 with the primary goal of establishing the biodiversity baseline for the Neighbourhood Plan area. The [Biodiversity Audit](#) was completed on time and to budget. The resulting Haslemere Ecological Network (HEN) maps were incorporated into the Neighbourhood Plan and underpin policy that seeks to guide location, layout and design of new housing development while protecting/enhancing essential elements of the HEN and delivering net biodiversity gain.
- Three ‘mini-projects’ were set up to help assess the prevalence of dormice, riparian mammals and newts in the Plan area and to identify habitat management practices that can boost local populations of protected species. These are ongoing and have proved an effective way of raising awareness of conservation issues with local landowners and the wider community.

What are we asking for now?

- We’d like to propose that the Haslemere Biodiversity Project is adopted by HTC as a ‘special project’ over a period of 5 years.

- We are seeking funding totaling £24-£27K for 2022 followed by a further £10K per annum from 2023-2026. We are requesting £10K from HTC for 2022 followed by a further £5K pa for each year from 2023-2026.
- A detailed breakdown of the Phase 2 work program and budget is provided in the Appendix.

What will the community get for this funding?

- A solid and detailed base of information on Haslemere's biodiversity assets.
- A detailed Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan which will set out practical and cost-effective measures to conserve and enhance Haslemere's Ecological Network. The Plan will provide an important contribution to HTC's Climate and Biodiversity Emergency Motion as well as larger regional initiatives concerned with developing Local Nature Recovery Strategies across Surrey, Hampshire and West Sussex.
- Tools and resources to help:
 - Inform local planning/development decisions and help small and medium-size developers find ways to meet the expected requirement for 10% biodiversity net gain in the upcoming Environment Bill;
 - Support improvements in the condition and management of local green spaces e.g. the new space at Sunbrow Wood and the Sturt Farm SANG;
 - Raise awareness of local wildlife conservation issues and activities and support effective action at local level;
 - Support the creation of a trained group of local conservation volunteers.

Other sources of funding

- Our Phase 1 work was funded by grants totaling ~ £10K. Our sponsors included HTC (£2,197), The Haslemere Society, The Lobs Trust, and CPRE Surrey. We are currently seeking further funding from these other organizations as well as from Waitrose, The Surrey Hills AONB and The South Downs National Park.

Prepared by Dr Philippa J Guest, Haslemere Vision and Chair Haslemere Biodiversity Project - 9.11.21.

APPENDIX

Phase 2: Overview of key tasks and proposed budget

Year 1: 2022

Task	What, Why and How	Est Cost
Biodiversity Strategy & Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop framework for conserving & enhancing biodiversity locally, including plan of action to ensure that future work focusses on realistic, proportionate & achievable measures. Will contribute to HTC's Climate & Biodiversity Emergency Motion as well as regional Local Nature Recovery Strategies. To be led by a consultant ecologist in consultation with key local stakeholders. 	£10K
'Ground-truthing' the HEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More detailed surveying of key wildlife corridors to validate/strengthen HEN maps & identify priority areas for protection, restoration or enhancement. Covers survey work on up to 150 corridors & incorporation of data into the HEN maps. To be led by a consultant ecologist with help from trained volunteers. 	£4-5K
Existing and new mini-projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue & expand existing projects (dormice, riparian mammals, newts) & set up 2-3 new projects (e.g. Sun Brow Wood Enhancement project, Haslemere Tree survey) Working with local landowners & other partners to improve biodiversity through better habitat management practices. To be led by consultant ecologist with support from trained local volunteers. 	£4-5K
Biodiversity policy development and implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop tools & resources to support implementation of biodiversity policy including monitoring & enforcement. Develop new biodiversity policy for town's open green spaces. Working with key local partners including WBC, HTC, SWT. 	£2K
Expand communications and outreach platform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise awareness of local biodiversity issues & activities through communication & community engagement. Covers production of printed material (e.g. survey forms, HEN maps, project literature) & paid support for social media. Also includes training workshops to build capacity among local volunteers. 	£2K
Contingency		£2K
Total		£24-27K

Years 2-5: 2023-2026

Identification of priority issues and actions for the period 2023-2025 will flow from the Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan to be completed in 2022. It is therefore proposed that a more detailed work programme and budget for the period 2023-2025 is prepared for discussion and review with HTC and other partners at the end of 2022. However, it is currently anticipated that the total amount of funding requested at this time will be in the region of £10K pa.