

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND COMMITTEE

17th September 2014

Present: Councillor Mrs L Jenkins, Councillor RM Lewis, Mr AE Sangster, Mrs M Thomas and Councillor M Williams; Ms S Cokeham (Natural Resources Wales), Ms V John (Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services) and Ms L Williams (Pembrokeshire Tourism).

(NPA Offices, Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock: 10.00am – 12.15pm)

1. Appointment of Chair

It was **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that Mr AE Sangster be appointed Chairman for the ensuing year.

2. Appointment of Deputy Chair

It was **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that Mrs M Thomas be appointed Deputy Chair for the ensuing year

3. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor DWM Rees, Mmes S Hughes/H Murray (PLANED), Ms A Robinson (Pembrokeshire County Council) and Mr R Smith (PBI).

4. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 29th January 2014 were presented for confirmation and signature.

PLANED had asked that the minutes be amended to record the title of their organisation in capital letters.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on the 29th January 2014 be confirmed and signed subject to the above amendment.

5. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosures of interest.

6. Sustainable Development Fund Update Report

The report of the SDF Administrator outlined the three applications before the Committee that day, and went on to update the Committee on three projects which had previously been agreed and which had changed or been delayed. The first of these was SDF 0339 Dr Beynon's Bug Farm Phase II which had been approved by the Committee in May 2013 to enable the enterprise to develop into a farm delivering conservation through research, innovation and education. It included the purchase of a farmstead site in St Davids where two traditional farm buildings

would be renovated into a laboratory/interpretative centre and a temperature controlled dung beetle breeding room. Following an enquiry made by Dr Beynon about another source of funding for activities at the Farm that were outside the scope of the SDF project, it became apparent that because there was no provision to use public money to purchase agricultural land under state aid legislation, that in order to demonstrate compliance with European Commission requirements for state aid, an amendment to the overall SDF project finances was necessary. The original financial appendix had therefore been amended so that it was clear that SDF funding had not contributed towards the purchase of agricultural land. The amendments made had been discussed and checked with Welsh Government, as had a revised draft grant award letter and bespoke terms and conditions and confirmation had been received from them that it was clear that the purchase of the agricultural land was outside the scope of the SDF project. The grant offer of £107,500 remained unchanged but the overall SDF project value had been reduced from £563,869 to £298,573 because all agricultural land had been excluded from the cash expenditure listed. The intervention rate had therefore increased from 19% to 36%.

In response to a question, the SDF Administrator explained that State aid meant that receipt of public funding could give a competitive advantage in trade between EU member states; however under the de minimis regulations, funding not in excess of €200k over 3 years could be offered.

It was **RESOLVED** that the change to the project finances be confirmed and the re-issue of the grant offer be approved, taking into account the change to project finances.

The SDF Administrator then went on to explain that two projects had not delivered against their approved outcomes in 2013 and had therefore underspent against their SDF Grants. She updated the Committee on the current situation of each of these, and noted that confirmation was awaited as to whether SDF 0320 Woodland and Wetlands Project Manager would deliver against their targets for year 3; however she believed that SDF 0329 eduCAT would spend the majority of its grant allocation in the forthcoming year.

The report went on to note that the annual SDF report detailing fund progress from April 2013 to March 2014 had been completed in June 2014 and this had been circulated to the Committee. Twenty one projects had been funded and these were very varied in nature and had levered in a significantly greater amount of match funding than in previous years.

Finally the report set out the financial position for 2014-15, noting that the underspend by the two projects detailed previously had allowed other projects to be put forward. Any approval for projects seeking funding beyond the current year would be subject to grant allocation from Welsh Government. However the Finance Manager added that there was huge pressure on the 2015/16 budget but

it was likely a decision on the SDF grant allocation would be taken before the end of the calendar year.

Turning to the Little Green Grant, it was reported that this had been reduced for 2014-15 in line with the SDF Grant allocation. Two projects had already been approved under the scheme. A further five applications had been received and were currently being processed but it was unlikely that there would be sufficient money available to fund them all, meaning that prioritisation might be necessary.

NOTED.

7. Applications for funding under the Sustainable Development Fund

The Committee considered three new applications for funding under the Sustainable Development Fund. The applications were considered in detail against the fund assessment criteria, following a brief presentation by each of the project applicants. The SDF Administrator reminded Members that a number of the applications included on the agenda that day contained commercially sensitive information.

| Ref No | Project Name | Presentation by | Organisation |
|---------------|---|--|---|
| SDF 0343 | A Stitch in Time | Ant Rogers Michel Regelous Geraint Jones | Pembrokeshire Biodiversity Partnership PCNPA PCNPA |
| SDF 0344 | Marine Code – Caldey Island Buoyage | David Jones | Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum |
| SDF 0345 | Biomass Firewood Kiln | Liam Morris | LM Tree Solutions |

The Chairman reminded the Committee that, under its terms of reference, the decisions were to be taken by the Members of the National Park Authority, taking into consideration the views of those Advisory Members present.

Following discussions, it was **RESOLVED** that the following applications be approved:

- (a) SDF 0343 A Stitch in Time
Members asked whether they could receive some feedback on the progress of the project in the future.
- (b) SDF 0344 Marine Code – Caldey Island Buoyage
It was agreed that having taking into consideration the conflicting pressures, support would be given for the provision of buoys at the location specified.

- (c) SDF 0345 Biomass Firewood Kiln
This grant would be subject to the granting of planning permission and the provision of a letter of confirmation from the landowner as security of tenancy.