
Restoring the Soar: Acceptance of Grant

Decision to be taken by: Deputy City Mayor Housing, Economy,
and Neighbourhoods

Decision to be taken by: date 23 January 2025

Lead Officer: Anne Provan

Useful information

■ Ward(s) affected: Belgrave, Abbey ■ Report author: Samantha Woods ■ Author contact details: samantha.woods@leicester.gov.uk ■ Report version number: 3

1. Summary

The purpose of this report is to gain the necessary approval to accept grant funds on behalf of the Restoring the Soar partners, in line with the award of The National Lottery Heritage Fund (Heritage Fund) Restoring the Soar Development grant HZ-23-00023. The Restoring the Soar partners are Leicester city council (LCC), Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust (LRWT) Canal and River Trust (CRT). The grant was awarded in August 2024 and covers development activities as outlined below to run until the submission of a delivery bid and supporting documentation no later than July 22nd 2026. LCC are the accountable body for the funds and responsible for making payments to the partners in line with the Restoring the Soar Partnership Agreement.

2. Recommended actions/decision

The Deputy Mayor is recommended to:

- Note the development stage project work outlined in this report in relation to Restoring the Soar, and the prospect of a future grant bid for delivery;
- Approve that the Council accepts the National Lottery Heritage Fund Grant and acts as Accountable Body on behalf of Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust and the Canal & River Trust;
- Approve the addition of £579k for Restoring the Soar as an immediate start to the General Fund Capital Programme, to be financed by this grant;

3. Scrutiny / stakeholder engagement

The City Mayor, Cllrs G. Whittle, E. Cutkelvin and V. Dempster and Belgrave Ward Councillors have received a summary of the project. Consultation with communities and stakeholders in the project area has commenced. The Permission to Start form has been signed by LCC Finance, Andrew L Smith (Director Planning Development and Transportation), Mat Carter (CEO Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust) and Linny Beaumont (CRT Director East Midlands Region). The Restoring the Soar Partnership agreement has been signed by all three parties.

4. Background and options with supporting evidence

The Restoring the Soar Partnership is made up of Leicester City Council (Accountable Body), Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust and Canal and Rivers Trust. The National Lottery Heritage Fund (Heritage Fund) awarded the partnership £578,980 for a development stage project to develop programmes for environmental, heritage and social improvements to the River Soar Corridor between West Bridge and Watermead Country Park. The total project value is £778,585. For the development stage, the partners are offering in-kind match in the form of staffing and volunteering.

The partners are carrying out surveys, appraisals, community consultations and engagement exercises, and pilot works to inform a delivery bid (with a suite of supporting documentation) to be submitted no later than July 22nd 2026. The delivery bid will require a further match element (up to 10%, some of which can be in-kind but some will be required to be cash). The delivery bid is expected to be for a project value of around £3million over 3.5 years.

The project covers the North of the River Soar from West Bridge to Watermead Country Park (LCC-owned land only), embracing the natural, built and cultural heritage of the area. The Project is aligned with the National Lottery Heritage fund Investment principles:

1. Saving heritage ·
2. Protecting the environment ·
3. Inclusion, access and participation ·
4. Organisational sustainability.

The project aims to improve the riverside environment from West Bridge to Watermead Park, drawing on the rich built, natural and cultural heritage of the land and communities in around the river, including the settled communities of Belgrave and newer communities in the housing developments at Waterside and Wolsey Island by:

- Creating a safe, welcoming, and vibrant destination along the river for visitors, residents, leisure/sports users, boaters and tourists.
- Enhancing the safety and aesthetics of the public realm.
- Protecting and improving both built and natural heritage assets throughout the project area.
- Creating a range of opportunities for diverse people to interact with heritage for leisure, work, volunteering and training.
- Integrating new opportunities for nature connection) by creating new habitats and connecting and improving existing habitats, improving air and water quality and reducing negative environmental and social impacts from littering and other anti-social behaviour.
- Encouraging more people to access the riverside and increase active involvement of communities across Belgrave and Abbey Wards.
- Creating new opportunities for learning and career development in heritage-related careers including conservation

The development stage runs to July 2026 and will allow the three partners to explore and experiment with different approaches and to plan for further investment up to around £3million in the following 3 years. The output of the development stage will be a delivery stage bid and accompanying documentation. All the partners will also be working together to develop the Delivery Stage bid.

- LRWT will focus on delivery of community engagement activities starting with a series of listening exercises and walking consultations in /around the Belgrave area and ensuring that the views of local people are considered when designing interventions.
- LRWT will design a new training to encompass a wide range of conservation skills, with a view to offering four fully-funded and paid training places in the delivery stage offered at living wage level.

• CRT will be carrying out a range of consultations which will focus on cultural celebrations and the use of the river by different stakeholders including the boating community and leisure users.

5. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

5.1 Financial implications

This report seeks approval for the addition of £579k to the General Fund Capital Programme, financed by grant. Revenue budgets exist to finance the Council non-cash match-funding requirement of £101k, which represents staffing time. Any risks associated with the Council acting as Accountable body will be mitigated through payment in arrears to partner bodies.

Signed: Stuart McAvoy – Head of Finance

Dated: 12th December 2024

5.2 Legal implications

Regarding funding, the Council is required to adhere to the conditions contained within the funding agreement. If the funding is allocated to procure services, the Council must follow its internal procedures and ensure the funds are used solely for their intended purpose.

Legal Services can provide guidance on any terms and conditions related to the funding agreement. Additionally, all funding must be evaluated in compliance with subsidy rules.

In relation to the ongoing consultation, the Council must ensure that the process is conducted fairly and transparently, taking into account all findings. Furthermore, the Council has a responsibility to report the outcomes of the consultation to both the consultees and the broader public.

Signed: Seema Patel

Dated: 5 December 2024

5.3 Equalities implications

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which means that, in carrying out their functions, they have a statutory duty to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

Protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

The recommendation to approve acceptance of The National Lottery Heritage Fund (Heritage Fund) development grant of £578,980 is likely to have positive impacts overall in relation to advancing equality of opportunity for people from across all protected

characteristics. The improvements to the public realm are also likely to have a positive impact in terms of fostering good relations between those who share a protected characteristics and those who don't as the aim is to enable greater participation.

It is important that any engagement and or consultation is accessible.

Signed: Equalities Officer, Surinder Singh

Dated: 4th December 2024

5.4 Climate Emergency implications

The climate emergency presents a significant threat to UK wildlife and habitats. The Restoring the Soar project is expected to help address this threat through creating and enhancing habitats in the project area, as well as delivering wider environmental benefits such as improving air and water quality and enabling active travel in the project area. As project delivery generally contributes to the council's carbon footprint, consideration should be given to opportunities to mitigate this impact, for example, through following the council's sustainable procurement guidance, encouraging the use of low carbon travel and measuring the carbon emissions of activities.

Signed: Aidan Davis, Sustainability Officer Ext 37 2284

Dated: 6 December 2024

5.5 Other implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)

N/A

6. Background information and other papers:

N/A

7. Summary of appendices:

The following documents accompany this form:

- Grant Notification
- Permission to Start
- Restoring the Soar partnership agreement

8. Is this a private report (If so, please indicate the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

No

9. Is this a "key decision"? If so, why?

No