

Report title: To Agree Sector Support Fund Grant Allocation to the Gourmet Garden Trails (Extension) Project	
Report to: Chief Executive Officer of the SELEP	
Report author: Howard Davies, SELEP Capital Programme Officer	
Date: 15 December 2020	For: Decision
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Divisions affected: Pan - LEP	

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out the recommendations and supporting documentation of the Sector Support Fund (SSF) Bid for the Gourmet Garden Trails (Extension) (the Project). The Project has been through an Independent Technical Review (ITR) process, to enable £35,000 of Growing Places Fund (GPF) Revenue grant to be devolved to Kent County Council for Project delivery. The bid document is included in Appendix 1.
- 1.2 The ITR report sets out an analysis to demonstrate that the Project meets the criteria for funding. This report is included in Appendix 2

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 **Approve** the award of £35,000 GPF Revenue grant to Kent County Council to support the delivery of the Project identified in the Funding Bid and which has been assessed as meeting the criteria for funding.

3. Summary of issue

- 3.1. On 9th June 2017 the SELEP Strategic Board (the Board) approved the use of the GPF Revenue grant to fund a programme of works to support the sector focussed activities that are being undertaken on a pan-LEP basis and predominantly led by the SELEP working groups, namely, the Sector Support Fund (SSF).
- 3.2. The Board agreed, in 2017, the programme of total funding available in each year would be up to £500,000 of revenue grant per annum for three financial years, beginning 2017/18.
- 3.3. At the June 2020 meeting a further £1 million was allocated to the SSF programme and it was extended until 31 March 2022 or when the fund is exhausted, whichever is sooner.
- 3.4. The purpose of the SSF is to support one-off, discrete pieces of work of a pan-LEP nature with a sector focus that brings demonstrable benefits and has

support across the LEP. All applications must meet the criteria detailed in section 3 of the SSF Guidance and be submitted in line with the process in section 4 of the same. This process ensures that the funding is allocated in accordance with the requirements of the SELEP Assurance Framework.

- 3.5. The Catalyst for Culture project has submitted a bid for SSF of £35,000 to support the delivery of the Project, which was endorsed by the Board on the 11th December 2020

4. Project Summary

- 4.1. In light of Covid-19, this programme intends to focus on the domestic market to drive the recovery of the visitor economy.
- 4.2. The Gourmet Garden Trails project aims to encourage visits to the region by; adapting products for and targeting the domestic market – focusing on local food, local produce, and local landscapes, geographical and product expansion with a focus on the South East, developing further seasonal content to expand the year-round offer, and supporting local businesses and jobs.
- 4.3. The amplification of Gourmet Garden Trails will prioritise:
 - Adapting product for and targeting the domestic market by capitalising on the growing trend for enjoying local food, local produce, and local landscapes, with a focus on wine and RHS partner gardens.
 - Geographical & product expansion including East Sussex, with a focus on the South East.
 - Developing further seasonal content to expand the year-round offer, supporting local business and jobs at a fragile time.
 - Making the product self-sustaining through integration with VisitBritain's [Tourism Exchange Great Britain \(TXGB\)](#) distribution platform for individual products and explore other third party booking partnerships for booking 'packages'.
 - Collaboration with Produced in Kent's [Support Your Local](#) and [Help Kent, Essex and East Sussex Buy Local](#) campaigns, to cross promote and maximise benefits.
 - Position Gourmet Garden Trails to be able to leverage more funding

5. Project Funding

- 5.1. The total cost of the Project is estimated at £84,000 including an SSF ask of £35,000, along with match and in-kind contributions from Visit Kent, Visit Essex, Sussex, Royal Horticultural Society and Produced in Kent, as set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Project Funding breakdown (£s)

Source	2020/21
SSF	£35,000
Other sources of funding	
Cash Match: Visit Kent Visit Herts Experience West Sussex	£13,000
Monetised in-kind support: Visit Kent Visit Herts Experience West Sussex East Sussex Visit Essex RHS Produced in Kent	£36,000
Total Project Cost	£84,000

Issues for consideration

6. Risks and Dependencies

6.1. The Project risks and dependencies are:

- Covid-19: The pandemic has devastated the tourism industry which is why a quick-win project is needed now. Our focus should be to maximise the domestic

footfall over Winter and Spring 2020/21, onboarding and engaging further partners and honing the product. The activity and budget have the ability to adapt to the market conditions and any travel restrictions.

- **Staff retention:** The loss of key project staff could impact the delivery timescales of the project. All GTP staff engaged on the project are permanent members of staff and all project management is coordinated through Asana to ensure all processes are monitored to allow easy handover.
- **Delay in funding approval:** This could impact delivery and match funding potential. Onboarding documents will be updated and sent to delivery partners to progress at risk before funding is confirmed.

7. Outcome of ITR Process (*Accountable Body Comments*)

7.1. The Accountable Body has independently assessed the Project Bid Document and has confirmed that the Project meets the criteria for funding, including the Assurance Framework requirement with regard to the expectation that value for money will be achieved.

7.2. The Project aligns with SELEP’s strategic objectives to increase skills levels and STEM sector growth across the SELEP area by;

- Seeking to increase jobs and secure existing jobs by strengthening the local SELEP tourism industry focusing on domestic visitors
- Supports Covid 19 recovery in SELEP region.
- Aligns to ESS priority;
 - Promoting innovation
 - Growth and Business Opps. in Tourism Sector
 - Diversification of businesses

7.3. The application references a target of;

Type of Benefit	Number of benefits created
Agreed metric	Additional outputs expected
New Itineraries developed	8
B2C/B2B websites updated	0
Number of image libraries developed	2
Integration with booking systems	1
Number of businesses onboarded to TXGB	30
Press toolkit developed	0 developed, 1 updated

Number of Virtual Sales calls	5
Number of advertising campaigns arranged and/or live	1
Number of agents engaging with Trade Hub	25
Number of domestic visitors to website	12,500
Seasonality metrics	30% of bookings within shoulder season

7.4. Exemption 1: This may be applied where a project does not present High Value for Money (a Benefit Cost Ratio of over 2:1); but

- has a Benefit Cost Ratio value of greater than 1.5:1; or
- where the project benefits are notoriously difficult to appraise in monetary terms.

7.5 The Project provides a BCR of 3.1:1 calculated

7.6 Exemption 1 will only apply if the following conditions are satisfied:

- (1) The funding sought from SELEP in relation to the project must be less than £2.0m and to conduct further quantified and monetised economic appraisal would be disproportionate; and
- (2) where there is an overwhelming strategic case (with minimal risk in the other cases); and
- (3) there are qualitative benefits which, if monetised, would most likely increase the benefit-cost ratio above 2:1.

Financial implications (Accountable Body Comments)

8.1 A total SSF fund of £1,206,500 was established for 2020/21; of this, successful funding applications of £345,510 have been awarded in year to date and should the projects which were endorsed by the Strategic Board in December 2020, all receive approval for funding awards, the remaining balance of SSF funding available for investment will be £261,729, as shown in Table 1.

8.2 The total of SSF projects (including Gourmet Garden Trails (Extension)) endorsed at the December 2020 Strategic Board meeting, which are requesting approval in January 2021 (in separate decision reports) is £599,261. There is sufficient funding available to support the approval of these funding allocations as shown in Table 1.

8.3 The balance of funding of £261,729 is available for use in 2020/21 and 2021/22 (if not fully utilised in the current financial year), to support Covid-19 recovery SSF projects.

8.4 The Gourmet Garden Trails (Extension) project in this report is seeking £35,000 of SSF. The Project came forward at the December 2020 Strategic Board meeting and was endorsed for funding by the Board.

Table 1

	2020/21 £
Funding	
Covid-19 Recovery SSF	1,000,000
C/f 2019/20	206,500
Total 2020/21 funding	1,206,500
Approved projects 2020/21	
Buy Local South East	69,510
Skills Working Group	76,000
Visitor Economy	200,000
	345,510
Projects endorsed Dec. 2020 & seeking approval	
Gourmet Garden Trails (Extension)	35,000
Catalyst for Culture	181,700
Carbon Pathways (C-Path)	99,061
SE Export Development (SEED)	91,500
Building Back Better	192,000
	599,261
Balance SSF remaining for investment	261,729

8. Legal implications (*Accountable Body Comments*)

8.1. The grant will be transferred to Kent County Council via a notional grant agreement; the grant agreement will include a requirement for claw back of the funding if it is not fully expended or not expended in line with the Project Bid Document.

9. Equality and Diversity implications

9.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 creates the public sector equality duty which requires that when a public sector body makes decisions it must have regard to the need to:

- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act;
- (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;

(c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

9.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation.

9.3 In the course of the development of the project business cases, the delivery of the project and the ongoing commitment to equality and diversity, the promoting local authority will ensure that any equality implications are considered as part of their decision making process and where possible identify mitigating factors where an impact against any of the protected characteristics has been identified.

10. List of appendices

10.1. Appendix 1 – Project Bid Document

10.2. Appendix 2 – Independent Technical Review report


11. List of Background papers

11.1. Sector Support Funding Guidance [LINK](#)

11.2. SELEP Assurance Framework [LINK](#)

11.3. Minutes of the Strategic Board Meeting 11 December 2020 [LINK](#)

Role	Date
Accountable Body sign off Peter Shakespear (On behalf of Nicole Wood, S151 Officer, (Essex County Council)	06/01/2021

I approve the above recommendations set out above for the reasons set out in the report.	Date
 Adam Bryan Chief Executive Officer for the South East Local Enterprise Partnership	19/01/21

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