

NORTH DORSET DISTRICT COUNCIL LIVEABILITY STRATEGY 2004 – 2006

Background – What is the Liveability Fund?

- North Dorset District Council has been successful in attracting a substantial grant from the Liveability Fund, from the Sustainable Communities Programme administered by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). The bidding process was highly competitive and three bids were selected from each English Region.
- North Dorset District Council attracted a total of £3.71 million. The funds are in two parts. £441,000 is revenue funding, which is the incentive to the District Council to improve the delivery of its services by working in a different way. £3.3 million is capital and this is the reward element and may be spent on projects relating to the creation, maintenance, management and active use of public open space. The funds are District Council funds and there is no requirement to match them.
- The funds are available for two years and the capital needs to be committed against a capital programme of projects agreed with the local community partnerships in the district. These projects need to fit with the Council's strategic priorities, the guidelines for the Liveability Fund, the spirit and content of the North Dorset bid and the milestones for delivering the programme.

Our Vision for Liveability in North Dorset.

Our vision is to create high quality public open space that is available for all to use and enjoy throughout North Dorset. This will be achieved through the following objectives which will help guide the programme and support projects that aim to :-

- a) Increase the provision, accessibility and quality of public open space in North Dorset
- b) Provide opportunities for active and beneficial use, making provision for all
- c) Enhance the management, maintenance and sustainability of open space projects
- d) Facilitate education/training initiatives in local environmental management skills to be enhanced or developed.

We will also aim to :-

- e) Maximise the benefit from the Liveability Fund by seeking matched funding wherever possible
- f) Identify sources of income for continued management and maintenance

Issues – What are we trying to address?

One of the key needs we are trying to address is the speed of growth and development in the district and in particular, Sturminster and Gillingham areas. In those areas, we need to be able to safeguard public open space from development, create new public open space with quality management and maintenance plans in place and encourage active use. We are aiming to respond to the role of the community planning partnerships in the strategic community planning of their areas and in enabling any requirements for change in the delivery of council services.

The Liveability Fund will seek to help improve the delivery of projects funded partly through the collection of S106 developer contributions, the Council's capital programme and other sources of funding locally in order to lever in as much external funding as possible. There is a need to rationalise funding streams to reduce confusion, avoid duplicated overheads and provide a cohesive and comprehensive approach to service delivery.

Ultimately the Liveability Fund will need to find ways to generate an income to sustain capital projects.

Delivering the programme

The Liveability Fund team that will administer the programme is :

Hilary White, Rural Regeneration Manager
Jan Templeton, Capital Programme Manager
Jo Lamb-White, Administrator

The team will ultimately be based at the Environmental Management Centre at Sturminster House, Sturminster Newton.

Other professional funding advice and bid writing will be bought in as required in order to obtain the best value from the Liveability fund. There will be a need for technical support to review the capital programme and provide accurate costs for proposed projects.

Implementing the final phase of the Liveability Fund Capital Programme

- The remaining funds will be distributed with priority ratings being given to **Shaftesbury, Blandford and district wide projects**. Projects will be included in the Liveability capital programme and assessed against an agreed set of assessment criteria.
- The process will be open and transparent. There will be a two stage appraisal process. An **Appraisal Panel** made up of North Dorset District Council Officers will score projects against an agreed set of criteria. The **Project Board** will consist of 6 Councillors and they will advise the Chairman of the Project Board who is the Portfolio Holder on projects to be granted funding from Liveability.

What types of projects will be funded?

- This programme includes projects from those contained within the Open Spaces Strategy.
- An indicative programme of projects was submitted to illustrate the bid to ODPM. This included the establishment of the Environmental Management Centre and associated training, trailways, a community development worker for the Blandford area, footpaths and cycle links, informal recreation areas, multi-functional community buildings, led health walks, a youth activity project, a food distribution and marketing co-operative, community transport and community safety initiatives. Several examples are described in the funding agreement between the Council and ODPM as set out below. The establishment of the Environmental Management Centre in Sturminster House has been included as a milestone in the grant determination.
- The bid was predicated on the need to respond to the projects coming through the Local Community Partnerships during the course of the next two years.
- Guidance notes are available in the Liveability pack to assist project proposers on the types of projects that may be funded, and also those that are unlikely to be funded. This information is also available on the Website.

Timetable - Outline for Payment Schedule for Liveability Fund Pilot Funding Agreements and included in the funding agreement between North Dorset District Council and ODPM

<i>No</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Grant Instalment date</i>	<i>Grant Instalment payment</i>
1.	Pump-priming payment	After making of the grant determination - target March 2004	£260,000 (revenue)
2.	Completion of leasing Sturminster House and launch bidding process	After sending a certificate of completion of the milestone in accordance with condition 2 - July 2004	£250,000 (capital)
3.	Completion of: a) employment of Liveability Fund staff and obtain advice on new trust or company structure; b) review of capital programme and S106 developer contributions, agree assessment and appraisal process for projects to be funded and performance measures for monitoring and evaluation.	After sending a certificate of completion of the milestone in accordance with condition 2 - July 2004	£181,000 (revenue)
4.	Commencement of work on agreeing prioritised project schedule to include trailways, open spaces strategy, footpath / cycle links, business park entrance signs, public art open spaces interpretation, feasibility study on the formation of food and marketing and distribution co-operative, community facilities and other projects proposed by the Local Communtiy Partnerships	After sending a certificate of completion of the milestone in accordance with condition - target August 2004	£575,000 (capital)
5.	Commencement of implementation of the strategic management plan and projects from Gillingham Green Spaces Working Group, initial funding towards Sturminster Community Building and Gillingham Community Facilities Establishment of Environmental Management Centre, including training programme	After sending a certificate of completion of the milestone in accordance with condition 2 - target September 2004	£750,000 (capital)
6.	Completion of: a) free standing regeneration trust company established (BALDRIC) and capable of advising partners, commissioning services, bidding for funds and delivering projects;	After sending a certificate of completion of the milestone in accordance with condition 2 - target March 2006	£1,725,000 (capital)

	<p>b) projects will be appraised by a panel including Council officers, local community partnership representatives and partners representing various initiatives to ensure that maximum benefit is derived to the community and best use is made of resources (matched funding to be sources wherever possible) flexibility is required in order to respond to the work of the local community partnerships and to the timetable for bidding for matched funding - projects will be progressed in the areas of priority and also to take account of the timetable for repayment of developer contributions; and</p> <p>c) launch of BALDRIC</p>		
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Payments of grant will be made on delivery of the milestones subject to there being no slippage between financial years.

Project Assessment Criteria

- The project assessment criteria are designed to take account of the original project proposal submitted to ODPM, upon which the grant was awarded. This includes the Council's strategic priorities, the Open Spaces Strategy, the work undertaken by the Local Community Partnerships, the need to obtain value for money and the need to substantially deliver the capital programme by 2007. Projects will be scored against a range of criteria and given a total score. These criteria have been set by the Project Board, and are separated into essential and important criteria. Pass marks have been set for both criteria, and the Appraisal Panel undertakes the scoring for each project.
- Projects under £2500 are appraised by the Rural Regeneration Capital Programme Manager and approved by the General Manager, Policy & Performance, under delegation.
- The onus will be on the project promoter to make a case for obtaining a grant from the Liveability Fund and there should be no assumption that a project will be funded. There will be insufficient funds to cover the costs of all the projects submitted for consideration and those offering the greatest benefit or value for money against the appraisal criteria are most likely to succeed.

Performance Indicators

Performance Indicators	Objective	Who will measure
• Number of Local Nature Reserves designated	A	KM
• Amount of trailways secured/improved	A	KM
• Number/amount of public space created or improved	A	KM
• Public satisfaction with open space	A	Citizens Panel
• Number of Parish Plans produced as a result of Liveability Fund activity	A	JT
• Improved perception of safety in public places	A	Citizens Panel
• Improved perception of site cleanliness	A	Citizens Panel
• Establishment of new community facilities eg. Env. Mgmt Centre	A	HW
• Number of interpretation points/signage established or improved	A	KM
• Number of sites with improved access to the public	B	KM
• Number of arts, cultural and outdoor activities/events held	A	JT
• Number of projects for young people created	B	JT
• No of projects supporting healthy living objectives	B	JT
• Number of play areas (equipped and non-equipped) per 1000 population per town	B	BH
• Number of metres of hedgerow/dry stone wall created/lost	C	KM
• Number of new trees planted by community groups and parishes	C	KM
• Number of volunteers involved in countryside management activity	C	KM
• No of education/training opportunities implemented	D	JT
• Amount of funding levered and income generation opportunities identified	EF	JT
• No of projects meeting the cleaner, safer, greener objectives of ODPM		JT

KM – Kevin Morris,

JT – Jan Templeton,

HW – Hilary Ritchie

Monitoring Arrangements

The procedure will be:

- A. Establish baseline data and performance indicators and agree these with the Improvement Development Agency
- B. Output indicators to be measured every three months from records and questionnaires
- C. Result indicators will be measured every six months from records and questionnaires to identify any slippage against agreed milestones in overall capital programme
- D. Measurement will be undertaken by the Capital Programme Manager and progress reported quarterly to the Project Board and Cabinet
- E. A set of indicators will be agreed between the Capital Programme Manager and the Project promoter for each project and will be assessed every three months
- F. The Rural Regeneration Team will have a weekly Team Meeting
- G. The Rural Regeneration Team will have six monthly staff appraisals to discuss progress and training needs

The monitoring and evaluation process is shown below in Diagram 2.

The Liveability Fund Grant will be ring fenced and treated as a discrete cost centre, within the Council's budgets. Letterhead with the logos of both the District Council and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister will be used for all correspondence and financial paperwork for Liveability Fund administration so that it can be clearly traced.

Exit Strategy beyond 2006

Generating an Income

- As the majority of the available funding is capital, it is intended to identify potential sources of income to allow for the continued management and maintenance of the projects funded through the Liveability Fund.
- The Environmental Management Centre may continue beyond two years as it is not dependent upon Liveability Funding as each organisation located in the building will be paying a rent to North Dorset District Council for the area they occupy. The Rural Regeneration Team will be located there but the offices can be let to other organisations at the end of the Liveability Fund programme.
- We are investigating the use of Liveability Funds as a 'loan' to deliver projects for which Section 106 Developer contributions are being collected, so that these can go ahead and then the Liveability Fund can be repaid as the developer contributions are received. This will need to be carefully managed.
- Discussions are also being held to ascertain whether the capital funding can be used to acquire or create assets which generate an income to be used for the specific purpose of providing for management and maintenance of public open space. If we able to identify ongoing income streams there is an opportunity to create a free standing trust or company to take on a wider role beyond the remit of Liveability, as described in the next paragraph.

Baldric – Building a Local Dorset Regeneration Initiative in the Community

- Different company or trust structures will be investigated to establish a pilot in North Dorset which brings together private sector, public sector and voluntary sector organisations and various partnerships and initiatives, with a view to co-ordinating resources and reducing the duplication in overheads. This is described fully in the bid proposal and the structure will need to be agreed by all parties who wish to be involved so that it is accountable and transparent, can bid for funding and hold funding, employ staff, and provide services.

Review

- It is suggested that this strategy should be reviewed after six months and is kept under review as part of the monitoring and evaluation process.

Communication and Publicity

- We hope to ensure that North Dorset receives the maximum positive publicity and a high profile as an example of best practice and innovation for the work undertaken through the Liveability Fund. We will take every opportunity to undertake the following:
 - a) Information and advice is available from the Rural Regeneration Team on how to access the Liveability Fund and how projects will be assessed.
 - b) Progress will be monitored in written and pictorial form for the records and a display maintained at the Environmental Management Centre

- c) The results and outcomes of projects and actions undertaken as part of the Liveability Fund Programme will be disseminated, both within the Council and with our partners and other authorities
- d) Individual projects will be asked to maintain written and photographic records where appropriate
- e) Launch events and other PR activities will be organised
- f) Official visits will be organised in conjunction with GOSW, Improvement and Development Agency and Office of Deputy Prime Minister
- g) The ODPM logo will be used on Liveability Fund material and plaques will be designed and placed on projects supported through the Liveability Fund
- h) Information on the Liveability Fund will be placed on the Council Web Site

Links will be made with other initiatives and programmes wherever possible. We hope to bring the whole programme to a satisfactory conclusion and identify a way of providing for the future of what has been created.

Strategy Prepared 13.05.04
Strategy Reviewed and Revised 1.12.06