



ERS
Research &
Consultancy

Evaluation of the Biffa Award Programme

Final Report



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Executive Summary

Overview

This independent evaluation has followed established good practice in capturing the impacts generated by £48 million of Biffa Award grants approved between 2009-2014. It is based on comprehensive document/data review, a large scale survey and visits to grant recipients. Biffa Award seeks to build communities and transform lives by supporting community and environmental projects across the UK. The Biffa Award Programme comprises:

Small Grants Scheme – accounting for 2% of the Programme total, this involves grants up to £10,000. Funds are allocated to projects that improve local amenities/conserve wildlife. As resources decline, a decision has been taken to focus on small grants which are believed to represent better value for money. There has been an increase in larger organisations applying for smaller grants since the thresholds on grant and project size were both raised.

Main Grants Scheme – accounting for 86% of the Programme total, this involves grants between £10,000 and £50,000. It plays an important role in restoring, maintaining and enhancing community and cultural facilities, and species and habitats. There is a notional split of funding between three themes (35% Cultural Facilities/Recreation, 35% Rebuilding Biodiversity and 30% Community Buildings).

Flagship Grants Scheme – accounting for 7% of the Programme total, this involves grants up to a maximum of £500,000 for Cultural Facilities and Rebuilding Biodiversity projects. These are capital schemes and must be of regional or national importance.

Partnership Grants Scheme – accounting for 5% of the Programme total, this involves grants between £1,000,000 and £1,500,000 for Cultural Facilities and Rebuilding Biodiversity projects. About £1.3 million a year is devoted to three or four projects, which are believed to have proved worthwhile.

The Programme is managed by the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts (RSWT) and overseen by a Board comprising representatives from Biffa Group Ltd and RSWT. Decision making processes were seen as robust and transparent, and management/administration was believed to function very effectively. The Programme Manager/Deputy Programme Manager have cultivated a strong team working ethos amongst the grants team and helped to foster a very good working relationship between the grants team and the Board. They have introduced innovations that have resulted in a re-design of the Programme's structure (e.g. grouping projects by theme and introducing the Partnership Scheme), more robust procedures (now fully documented), more efficient operations (e.g. a new website and a new database of applicants) and the adoption of an even more positive and supportive attitude to applicants. As a result, the grant process is regarded as straightforward and the grants team viewed as professional, helpful and flexible. In short, Biffa Award is investing grants in appropriate projects relatively quickly and highly effectively.

Applicants

According to evaluation survey data:

- In relative terms, **the prospects for success are highest in respect of the Rebuilding Biodiversity** theme, with more than twice as many successful than unsuccessful applications. In contrast, the most competitive theme is Community Buildings, with 24% more unsuccessful than successful applications.
- **Most successful applicants are relatively small organisations**, with nearly half having an annual income of less than £50,000. That said, nearly 1 in 5 successful applicants have an annual income of £1 million or more.
- **Unsuccessful applicants exhibit a slightly smaller size profile**, with just over half having an annual income of less than £50,000. At the other end of the scale, only 1 in 10 unsuccessful applicants have an annual income of £1 million or more.
- In most cases the Biffa Award grant is crucial to the project proceeding. In 1 in 5 cases the grant covered all of the costs, and in more than half of cases the grant covered at least three quarters of costs. The balance of funding came from a variety of sources, with local people and local authorities especially important sources. **In 1 in 6 cases projects also utilised other Landfill Communities Fund monies**, which perhaps raises wider policy questions about co-ordination between LCF bodies.
- **In more than 1 in 3 cases, successful applicants became aware of Biffa Award by undertaking an internet search**, and in 1 in 4 cases did so as a result of recommendation. This suggests that search engine optimization is crucial to ensuring that prospective applicants find their way to the Biffa Award Programme.
- **Nearly two thirds of both successful and unsuccessful applicants described the application process as straightforward**, albeit that a significant minority of unsuccessful applicants described the process as difficult or very difficult.
- More than two thirds of successful applicants described management and monitoring as straightforward and just under two thirds described the grant claims process as straightforward. Even more positively, **nearly two thirds of respondents described the payments process as fast/very fast**, with only 3 per cent describing it as slow/very slow.
- **An important aspect of scheme promotion is the annual Biffa Awards ceremony**. Feedback from attendees suggested that the event and the recognition it gave to projects was much appreciated.
- **The survey of unsuccessful applicants revealed that in more than half of cases the project went ahead anyway**. Furthermore, in three quarters of instances the project proceeded on the same scale, albeit that nearly half were progressed more slowly.

Community Impacts

According to evaluation survey data:

- **The most common impact was increased use of an existing community facility**, reflecting the substantial number of village hall/church hall/community centre projects that have been supported. The second most common response was that the project had supported the expansion of one or more existing groups, with the third most common being that it had promoted greater community cohesion.
- **Around 5.8 million people have benefited from Biffa Award projects approved since 2009**, most of these (3.2 million) benefitting from cultural facilities (albeit two thirds of this figure was claimed by just three projects). Although extrapolation ought to be undertaken cautiously, it would appear reasonable to say that **Biffa Award funded projects have touched the lives of at least 1 in 5 people across the UK**. Similarly, whilst it would be crude to calculate 'cost per output', especially given the diversity of impacts on each individual, a basic value for money calculation, produces **an average 'cost' of Biffa Award projects of around £4 per beneficiary**.
- In respect of volunteers engaged/hours contributed, projects responding to the survey recruited nearly 11,000 people who gave a total of more than 270,000 hours. Again, there is a danger in extrapolation, but it seems reasonable to suggest that **Biffa Award funded projects mobilised more than 20,000 volunteers, contributing more than half a million volunteer hours**.

Biodiversity Impacts

- In respect of the scale of biodiversity impacts, **in nearly half of cases they related to plots of less than half a hectare**. Anecdotal evidence suggested that many projects were substantially less than half a hectare, for example involving the cleaning up of a pond. That said, **one fifth of projects related to sites of 10 hectares or more with some partnership projects being of national significance**.
- Whilst responses did not allow for the calculation of specific totals, we would conservatively estimate that **Biffa Award projects have protected well over 2,000 species and more than 700 habitats**.

Post Biffa Award Activities

- Sustainability of activities is excellent. **Almost half the projects expanded after Biffa Award monies were spent and most of the rest have been sustained at the same level**. The single biggest source of financial support has been charities, followed by local authorities and local people. In 1 in 5 cases support came from other Landfill Communities Fund sources.
- It is apparent that **many applicants have themselves gained a great deal as a result of delivering a successful project**. Most commonly this related to garnering more support from local residents. In addition, more than half of applicants reported being clearer about their future direction and exactly half mentioned having recruited more volunteers.

Key Recommendations

Improving the Strategic Approach of the Programme

- Focus more resources on disadvantaged communities. Where capacity is under-developed, this might mean projects being relatively risky, but this might be balanced by the prospect of substantial impacts in some instances.
- Require that a minimum percentage of match funding must be raised from local people. This may achieve higher levels of community impacts and help to spread grant monies over more projects. However, it is acknowledged that raising funds locally may prove especially challenging within deprived communities.

Improving the Operational Aspects of the Programme

- Given the number of applicants finding their way to Biffa Award by undertaking an internet search, search engine optimization is crucial. The move to an on-line application form is an opportunity to re-visit the form and ensure it is clear, succinct and visually appealing.
- Consideration might be given to whether it is appropriate to fund improvements to privately owned land/property where the grant enhances the value of the site/building (and/or neighbouring site/buildings) rather than being primarily for the benefit of local communities.
- Consideration ought to be given to more cost-effective/time-efficient means of monitoring projects, than through site visits.
- Although there may be a temptation to further reduce management and administration costs, it is essential that the requisite skills and capacity are retained in order to ensure that the fundamental integrity of the Programme is sustained.

Contributing to the Lasting Legacy the Programme

- With the Flagship Scheme having finished, there is a case for focusing more resources than previously on Small Grants and Main Grants.
- There may be merit in limiting eligibility for grants up to a certain size to smaller organisations.

Helping to influence Relevant Government Policies

- Every effort ought to be made to attract Government Ministers, Shadow Ministers and senior representatives of other key bodies to the Awards ceremony.
- There is a need for a more effective/co-ordinated demonstration to the Government of the considerable benefits generated by Biffa Award/similar programmes.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In June 2014, ERS and Chimera Consulting were awarded the contract to evaluate the Biffa Award Programme over the period 2009-2014. Biffa Award is a multi-million pound fund that helps to build communities and transform lives through awarding grants to community and environmental projects across the UK. The money comes from Landfill Tax credits donated by Biffa Group Ltd, in the context of the Landfill Communities Fund (LCF). LCF is the portion of Landfill Tax (which is collected by waste management companies on behalf of HM Revenue & Customs when waste is disposed of to landfill) which is diverted to an authorised Environmental Body which in turn is regulated by ENTRUST, and is distributed in the form of grants to non-profit making community projects.
- 1.2 The key evaluation aims were to compile evidence that could be used to:
- improve the strategic approach of the Programme;
 - improve the operational aspects of the Programme;
 - contribute to the lasting legacy the Programme; and
 - help influence relevant Government policies.
- 1.3 The evaluation captures the impacts that have been generated as a result of the £48 million awarded to projects since the previous impact assessment in 2009, identifying the most beneficial types of awards. The report also seeks to establish:
- what is being achieved and how it is being achieved;
 - the factors facilitating and hindering the achievement of strategic objectives;
 - the types of projects and applicants most likely to be successful in terms of both the impacts they generate and their sustainability; and
 - recommendations designed to enhance future performance and strengthen legacies.
- 1.4 It is important to be clear that this is a critical analysis. As with all ERS evaluations, the findings have been informed solely by the evidence. The fact that this report is so positive is a reflection of the evidence and not of any predisposition on the part of ERS to write in favourable terms.

2. Methodology

2.1 The evaluation findings are based on the following:

- a review of all relevant documentation and analysis of data relating to successful applicants;
- consultations with the Biffa Award team and Board members;
- surveys of grant recipients and unsuccessful applicants;
- telephone interviews with a sample of unsuccessful applicants; and
- visits to a selection of case study projects.

Document Review and Data Analysis

2.2 All relevant paperwork has been reviewed, including:

- the flow charts and procedures for the Small, Main and Flagship grants
- application guidance
- analysis of applications by typology (successful and unsuccessful)
- a selection of applications
- a selection of appraisals
- the previous Biffa Award evaluation report.

2.3 The evaluation also sought to review evidence relating to other LCF programmes, against which the Biffa Award Programme could be benchmarked to identify any commonalities/differences in achievements and alternative approaches to delivery that have proved effective. However, whilst we have been able to describe other programmes there is not yet any evidence of their impact (at least not in the public domain). Brief descriptions of these other programmes can be found in Appendix 1.

2.4 The Biffa Award team regularly monitors and reports on the profile of grant recipients and their analysis has been incorporated within this report. This covers successful applications by applicant type, location, theme and value.

2.5 As well as offering interesting findings in their own right, this profiling also helped to inform the construction of a sampling framework for the beneficiary consultations.

Strategic and Operational Interviews

- 2.6 The views were sought of those offering strategic direction as well as officers who are directly involved in the application and assessment process. This included:
- the Chair and two other Board members
 - the Programme Manager
 - the Deputy Programme Manager
 - members of the Biffa Awards ceremony judging panel
- 2.7 In addition, a member of the evaluation team attended the Board meeting on 14 August 2014 in High Wycombe and a meeting of the Small Grants Panel on 22 July 2014 in Coventry. Two members of the evaluation team attended the Biffa Awards Ceremony on 9 October 2014 in London.

Consultations with Applicants

- 2.8 These consultations were three-tiered:
- all applicants (successful and unsuccessful) were invited to participate in an e-survey;
 - site visits were undertaken and face-to-face interviews conducted with a sample of 24 successful projects (and project partners, as appropriate); and
 - telephone interviews were conducted with a selection of 24 unsuccessful projects.

E-Survey

- 2.9 All applicants (successful and unsuccessful) were either emailed a link to an online survey (around 90%) or a hard copy questionnaire with Freepost return (around 10%). In each case, an introductory email/letter was sent to inform the applicant that ERS would be in touch.
- 2.10 Inevitably, given the fact that some of these applications had been made up to five years previously, a significant number were no longer contactable (as evidenced by the number of email 'bounce-backs').
- 2.11 In respect of the period to be covered by the evaluation there were a total of 4,452 applications, of which 1,090 were successful and 3,362 were unsuccessful. With some prompting, the survey elicited 884 responses, which is a very robust completion rate. In statistical terms, this represents a 5% margin for error at the 99.9% confidence level. In other words, we can be 99.9% confident of our survey results being within 5% of the results that would be expected had a 100% response rate been achieved, which indicates a very robust sample size.

2.12 The total number of responses received was 884, which broke down as follows:

Successful – 509 respondents

Community Buildings	40% (196 responses)
Cultural Facilities	10% (48 responses)
Rebuilding Biodiversity	18% (86 responses)
Recreation	32% (159 responses)

Unsuccessful – 375 respondents

Community Buildings	50% (176 responses)
Cultural Facilities	7% (24 responses)
Rebuilding Biodiversity	8% (29 responses)
Recreation	35% (124 responses)

Site Visits/Interviews

2.13 Based on an analysis of the applicant database, a sampling framework of projects was constructed covering different grant size, region of applicant, applicant type and project type. This was used to select a representative sample of projects for interview.

2.14 An initial list of 40 projects was reduced to 28 candidates for field visits, with a view to producing 25 case studies. Each prospective interviewee was telephoned to establish their suitability for interview and to obtain contact details of project partners/supporters. In all but three cases site visits were subsequently undertaken (with the three projects in question either considered unsuitable or not contactable). Evidence gathered in these site visits/interviews has informed the overall report and, more specifically, development of in-depth case studies, telling the story of projects from inception to completion. In particular, these case studies have sought to capture the impacts the grant has made to recipient organisations and the local communities and sites their projects were designed to benefit.

Telephone Interviews

2.15 Telephone follow-ups were carried out with a selection of unsuccessful applicants expressing a willingness in the e-survey to be consulted on a more detailed basis. Telephone interviews were undertaken with 24 unsuccessful applicants, applying to either the small grants or main grants funds and drawn from across the themes. This enabled views to be captured from a variety of perspectives. Whilst listening carefully to all views expressed we were mindful of the potential for negative bias amongst some interviewees, given their application to Biffa Award had been unsuccessful.

3. Programme Management and Structure

Management and Governance

- 3.1 The Biffa Award Programme is managed by the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts (RSWT), which has been awarding Biffa Award grants since 1997. At the time of writing, Biffa Award has approved grants worth more than £135 million, benefiting more than 2,800 projects across all the nations and regions of the UK. This divides between:
- Small Grants Scheme (grants up to £10,000) - 2% of the total
 - Main Grants Scheme (grants between £10,000 and £50,000) - 86% of the total
 - Flagship Grants Scheme (grants up to a maximum of £500,000) - 7% of the total
 - Partnership Grants Scheme (grants approximately between £1,000,000 and £1,500,000) - 5% on the total
- 3.2 As such, the approach is to adopt an intelligent funding strategy that ensures grants can be invested quickly in appropriate projects and thereby address community needs and help generate community benefits as soon as is practicable.
- 3.3 The Biffa Award Board is a panel of six members: three from Biffa Group Ltd and three from RSWT. It decides whether or not an application will be supported and focuses upon flagship, partnership and main grants, but delegates authority to the Small Grants Panel for applications under £10,000. It is chaired by a former Trustee of the Lloyds TSB Foundation (a position held for six years) with an employment background including Finance Director at both London Underground and British Aerospace.
- 3.4 The Board is comfortable with the split of funding between themes (35% Cultural Facilities/Recreation, 35% Rebuilding Biodiversity and 30% Community Buildings), but remains open to re-visiting this should there be good reason to do so. Management information provided to the Board ensures that they are aware of previous commitments and can shift emphasis on one or more themes that has been under-resourced, as appropriate. In addition, these allocations are notional, operating as a guide rather than a cap, meaning there is flexibility around these percentages should it be justified.
- 3.5 Non-Board/Staff member interviewees complimented the robustness and transparency of decision making processes and its complete independence from the commercial interests of Biffa Group Ltd. It was believed that these characteristics had enhanced the credibility of the grants Programme.

- 3.6 In respect of the Biffa Award grants team, there is a Programme Manager, Deputy Programme Manager, three Grants Officers and a small team of three support staff (covering administration, payments, finance, public relations etc.). The size and shape of the team has evolved over time and recently has reduced as the receipt of LCF monies has decreased. The two most senior members of the team have been in post for around seven years, providing valuable stability and adding further to their previous experience in grant management/administration. This continuity is likely to be even more important if the size of the team reduces further.
- 3.7 It is apparent that the team working ethos that characterises the team and indeed the relationship between the team and the Board, is something that has only developed since the current Programme Manager/Deputy Programme Manager came into post. In addition, communications amongst team members has become much more efficient.
- 3.8 In respect of programme management, the appointment of the current Programme Manager (in 2008) led to some fundamental (as well as some minor) changes in approach (including those described later in this section and in section 5). At a strategic level, this included grouping projects by theme and allocating a notional split of expenditure across the four themes that were defined. This provided a structure to the Programme and enabled meaningful analysis to be carried out, in terms of where resources were going and the impacts they were having. It also resulted in the creation of the Partnership Scheme, which was said to have boosted overall activity in respect of both the cultural facilities and biodiversity themes. On a more operational level, a new website was designed and a new database of applicants was constructed.
- 3.9 The availability of Biffa Award grants is not advertised as such, nor do staff attend funding forums. As an established source of funding, it is relatively well known, for example appearing on Grantfinder. Nevertheless, Biffa Award is promoted via social media and through press releases. Applicant consultations indicated that finding Biffa Award as a potential funding source had not been difficult. Furthermore, it is apparent that the value of applications significantly exceeds available resources (by a ratio of about 3 to 1). Of course, this does not necessarily mean that all those who could/should be applying for funding do so, as this will inevitably be determined by the capacity, skills and experience of prospective applicants.
- 3.10 The previous programme impact assessment (NRM Ltd., 2009) found that the grant process was regarded as straightforward, the grants team was highly praised for its professionalism, helpfulness and flexibility. In the intervening period the views of grant applicants have not changed (see section 4.).

Small Grants Scheme

- 3.11 Decision making in respect of the Small Grants Scheme (SGS) is delegated to a Small Grants Panel. The SGS allocates funds directly to grassroots community groups (sports clubs, village hall committees etc.) for projects that enable communities to improve local amenities and to conserve wildlife. It is very popular, and is said to produce tangible impacts in terms of community cohesion, playing a part in reversing a slow decline in community activities and giving local people a boost. Funds are generally used to achieve significant impact for the level of funding (it was reported that there is often a high level of voluntary support).
- 3.12 As resources decline, a conscious decision has been taken to focus on small grants in respect of which there are believed to be bigger impacts, pound for pound. Interestingly, there appears to have been an increase in larger organisations applying for smaller grants since the thresholds on grant and project size were both raised.

Main Grants Scheme

- 3.13 The Main Grant Scheme (MGS) plays an important role in restoring, maintaining and enhancing community and cultural facilities, and species and habitats. Again, the grant scheme appears to have significant and wide ranging impacts for communities and biodiversity. Although in some cases there was insufficient baseline information to reliably determine actual impact against planned impact.
- 3.14 The merger of the Cultural Facilities and Recreation Themes was more for pragmatic than strategic reasons. There had been relatively few applications under the former (hence it was consistently under-target) and significant numbers under the latter, and grouping them together seemed sensible, especially given the crossover between some projects (which could have seen them allocated into either theme).

Flagship Grants Scheme

- 3.15 In respect of Flagship Grants Scheme (FGS) funding, there appears less certainty about how valuable such projects have proved to be (which does not imply criticism). Interestingly, the most recently approved FGS project, the Dudley Canal project, was approved on the basis that it made a strong case in respect of the number of visitors it would attract and the impact it would have on the local economy and the environment. It was also noticeable that – unlike some other funders who place great weight on leverage of other resources – the Biffa Award contribution being a high proportion of overall project costs was seen as a positive. It appears the Board favours being a prime funder for schemes – the funder of first resort rather than of last resort i.e. prepared to make an early and significant commitment rather than wait for other contributions and fill the gap in funding. This can be enormously helpful to applicants in triggering other contributions. From the Programme's perspective, this approach enables more money to be spent more quickly.

Partnership Grants Scheme

- 3.16 Partnership Grants Scheme (PGS) projects are relatively new, often complex and time consuming (though perhaps not relative to the size of grant on offer). About £1.3 million a year is devoted to three or four projects, which are believed to have proved worthwhile.

Thematic Split of Grants

- 3.17 In respect of grants offered by theme, the intention was for a broadly equal split across the three themes, with Cultural Facilities/Recreation and Rebuilding Biodiversity each being allocated slightly more than Community Buildings. However, during the most recent period for which Programme monitoring data is available (May 2009-June 2014), nearly half of all monies were allocated to Cultural Facilities/Recreation. Within Cultural Facilities/Recreation, the former accounted for 18% of total allocations and the latter 27% of total allocations.

Table 1: Cumulative Performance against Targets (April 2013 - April 2014)			
	Community Buildings	Cultural Facilities & Recreation	Rebuilding Biodiversity
Actual %	25%	45%	30%
Target %	30%	35%	35%
Difference	-5%	10%	-5%

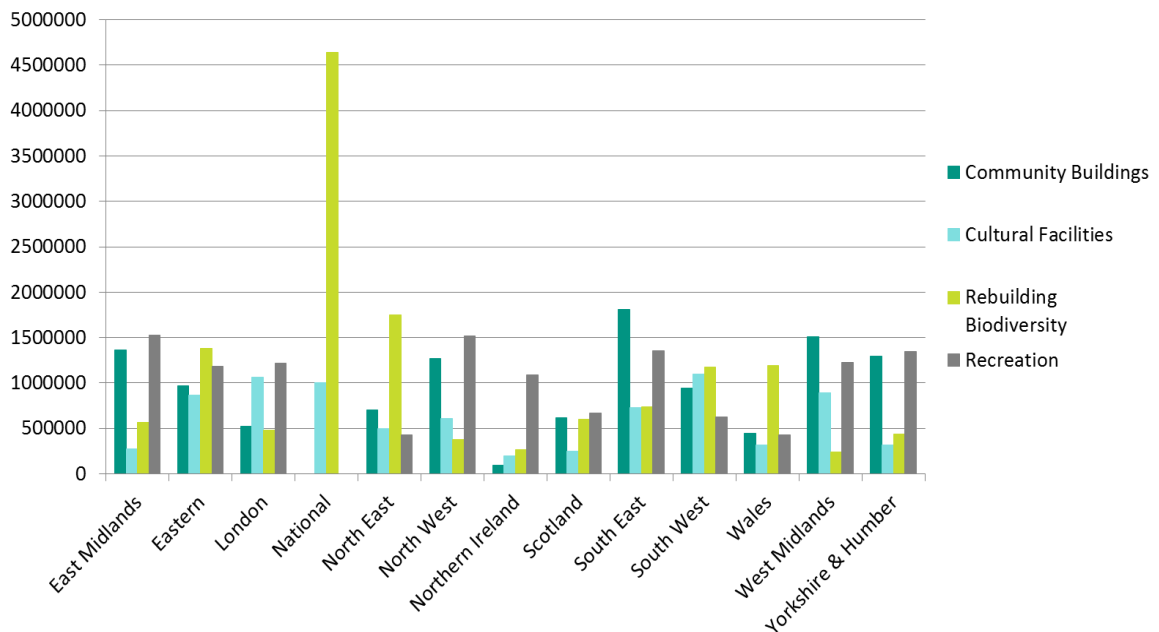
- 3.18 In respect of the number of grants rather than values, evaluation survey data indicates that Community Buildings tend to be individually smaller than average (40% of grant awards, receiving 24% of funding). In contrast, the Rebuilding Biodiversity theme accounted for only 18% of grant awards, but received 26% of funding and the Cultural Facilities/Recreation 42% of grant awards, but received 50% of funding.
- 3.19 Comparing successful with unsuccessful applications by theme, evaluation survey data indicates that in relative terms, the prospects for success are highest in respect of the Rebuilding Biodiversity theme, with more than twice as many (115%) successful than unsuccessful applications. In contrast, the most competitive theme is Community Buildings, with 24% more unsuccessful than successful applications.

Table 2: Successful and Unsuccessful Applications by Theme		
Theme	Successful (%)	Unsuccessful (%)
Community Buildings	40.1	49.9
Recreation	32.5	35.1
Rebuilding Biodiversity	17.6	8.2
Cultural Facilities	9.8	6.8

3.20 In respect of national projects, around £1 million was allocated to each of Cultural Facilities and Rebuilding Biodiversity, with nothing allocated to other themes. This was a deliberate policy designed to re-balance the under-funding of these themes in respect of other schemes within the Biffa Award Programme.

3.21 Across the nations and regions of the UK, significant variations are evidenced in terms of thematic emphasis. For example, the Community Buildings theme dominates in the South East, Cultural Facilities are most pronounced in the South West, Rebuilding Biodiversity is by far the most popular in the North East and Recreation leads the way in both the East Midlands and North West.

Figure 1: Regional Comparison between Themes

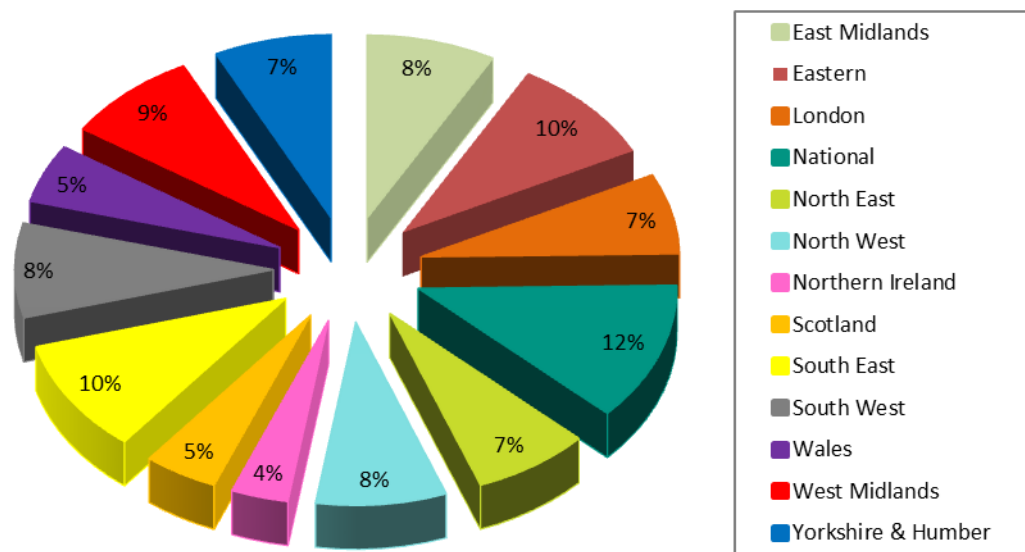


Spatial Distribution of Grants and Applicants

3.22 A breakdown of the value of grants offered by region is summarised in the pie chart below. However, Biffa Award does not concern itself with trying to achieve spatial balance – it is more interested in funding worthwhile and sustainable projects wherever they may be. In this context, there will inevitably be differences in national/regional allocations depending on the distribution of landfill sites across the country.

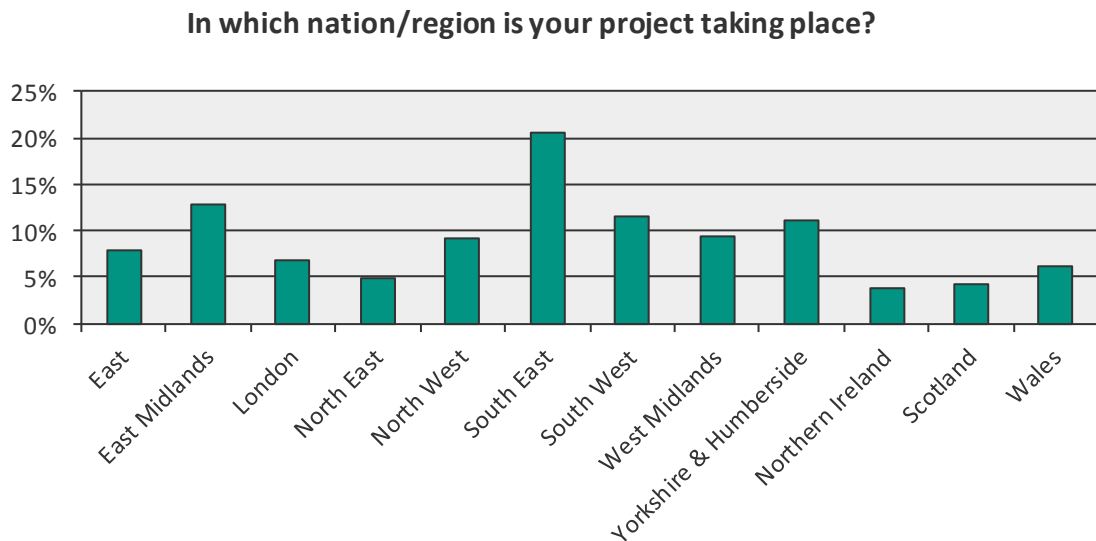
3.23 Furthermore, seeking to establish whether there has been a proportionate allocation of funding across nations and regions would require a complex analysis of the relative sizes of eligible communities, further complicated by the fact that a landfill site could exist in one nation/region and a project just the other side of a national/regional border. Hence, the breakdown below is merely indicative of where grants have been allocated with no purpose served in attempting a more detailed analysis.

Figure 2: Grants Offered by Region



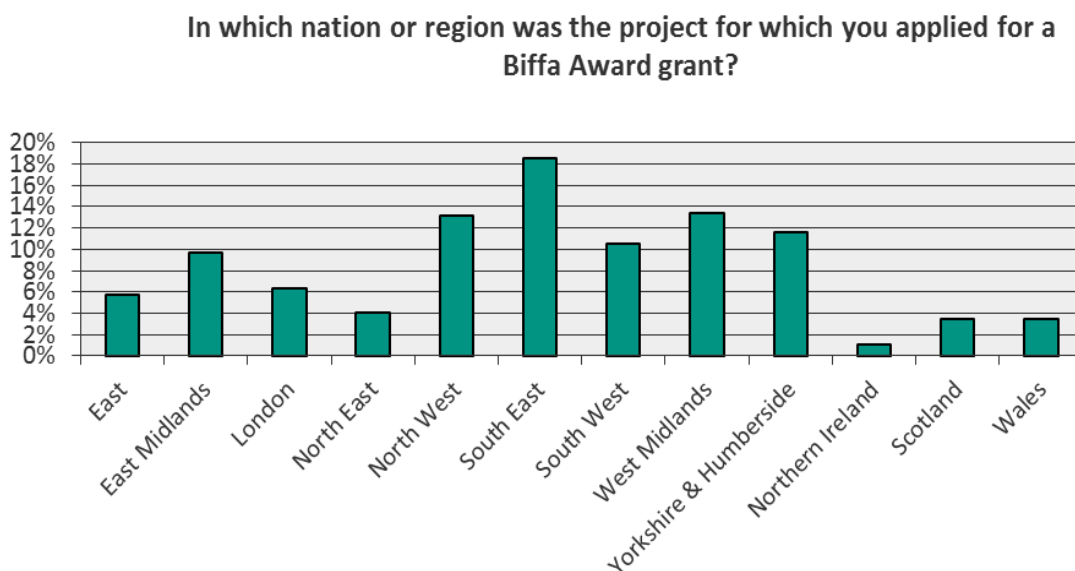
3.24 The survey of successful applicants counted numbers of projects rather than grant values, revealing a rather different profile to the above, suggesting that the South East hosts lots of smaller projects (having more than 20% of all projects but only 8% of all grants), with the reverse true of the North East (having 10% of all grants but only 5% of all projects).

Figure 3: Spatial Distribution of Grants



3.25 The survey of unsuccessful applicants reveals relatively minor differences to the above. For example, the top four regions for seeking grants (in terms of number of grant applications rather than by value) were South East (20%), East Midlands (13%), South West (12%) and Yorkshire & Humber (11%), whilst the four with the highest number of unsuccessful applications were South East (18%), West Midlands (14%), North West (13%) and Yorkshire & Humber (12%).

Figure 4: Spatial Distribution of Unsuccessful Applicants



Summary

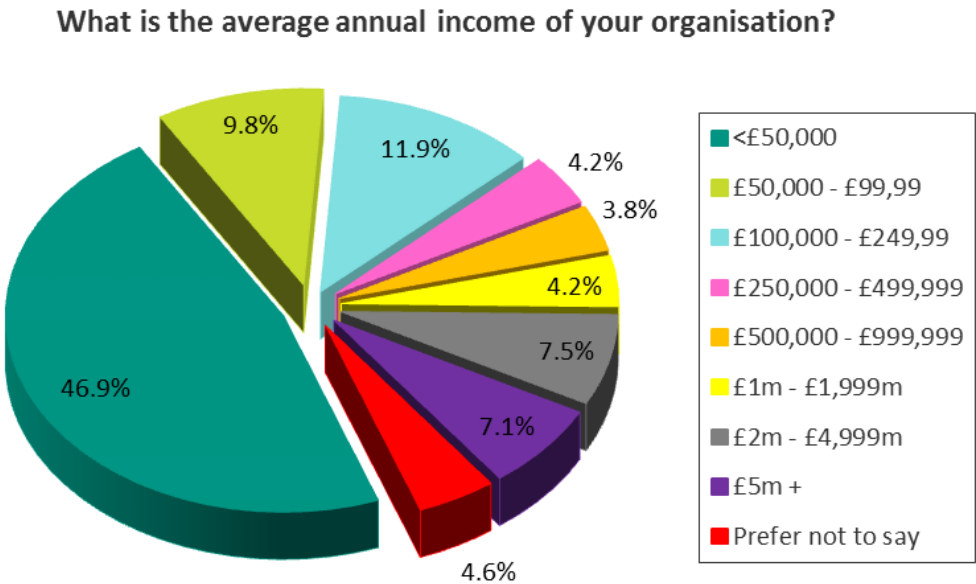
3.26 In summary, the Biffa Award Programme is well structured, managed and administered. Processes are robust and transparent. The Programme has evolved to the extent that there is little scope for improving these processes, but it has reached a point where structure needs to be considered, not least due to declining resources. The end of the Flagship Scheme provides an opportunity to focus more on Small and Main Grants, whilst retention of the Partnership Scheme ensures there remains scope for national-scale projects and those that fall within the Biodiversity Theme (which is under-represented in Small and Main Grants).

3.27 The variation in distribution of grants across the nations and regions of the UK is not a cause for concern, nor is it something about which much can be done. Of greater interest might be the socio-economic profile of the local areas in which projects are delivered.

4. Analysis of Projects and Unsuccessful Applications

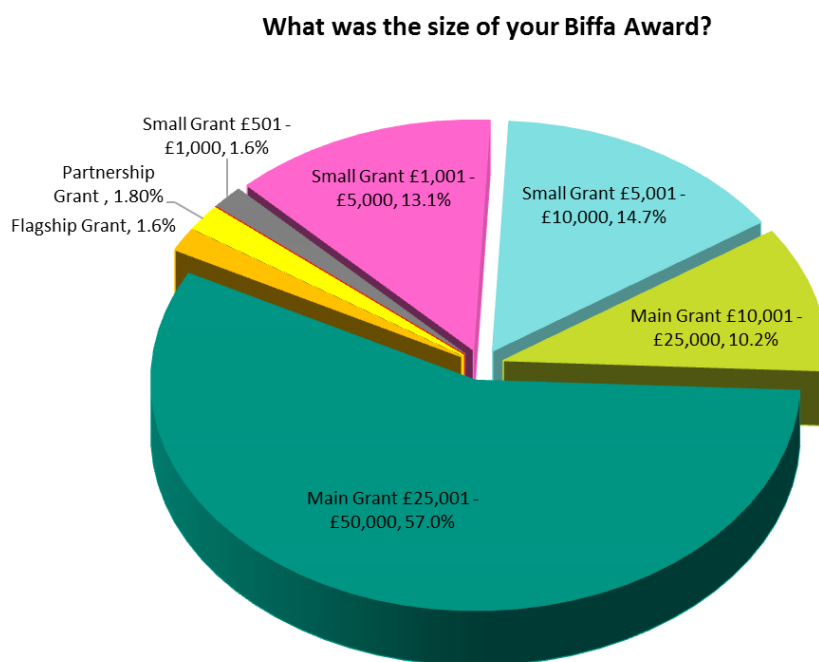
- 4.1 The whole of this section is based on responses to the evaluation surveys of successful and unsuccessful Biffa Award applicants over the period 2009-2014.
- 4.2 Most successful applicants who responded to the evaluation survey are relatively small organisations, with nearly half (46.9 per cent) having an annual income of less than £50,000. That said, nearly 1 in 5 successful applicants (18.8 per cent) have an annual income of £1 million or more.

Figure 5: Size of Applicants



- 4.3 Unsuccessful applicants who responded to the evaluation survey exhibit a slightly smaller size profile, with just over half (52.6 per cent) having an annual income of less than £50,000. At the other end of the scale, only 1 in 10 unsuccessful applicants (9.2 per cent) have an annual income of £1 million or more.
- 4.4 Survey responses from successful bidders suggested that within each of the grant categories, that there was a skewing towards the upper end of the range. In respect of Small Grants, only 5.3 per cent of respondents had been awarded £1,000 or less, with 44.7 per cent receiving £1,001-5,000 and 50.0 per cent receiving more than £5,000. Similarly, most of the Main Grants were above £25,000 and all of the Flagship Grants were above £250,000.

Figure 6: Size of Grants



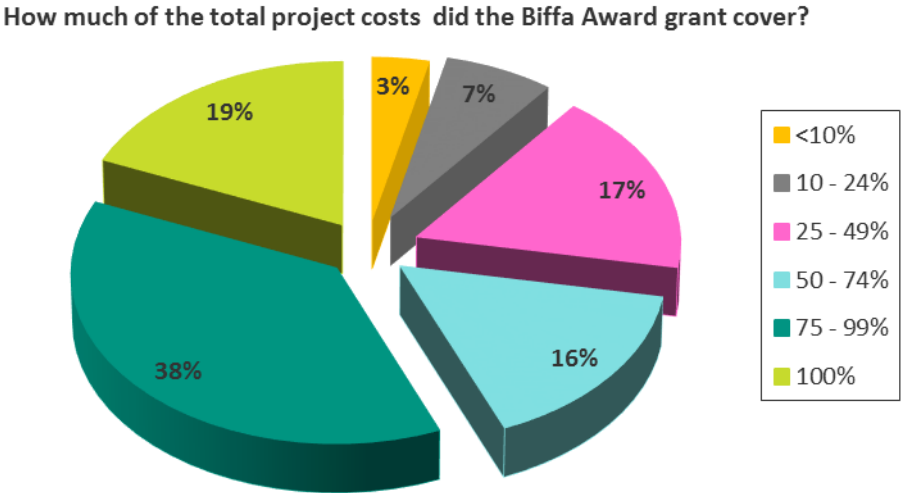
4.5 Comparing the profile of successful and unsuccessful grant applications by grant size, suggests that in relative terms least success was achieved in respect of:

- Small Grants between £250-500 (where there were no successful applications) and £5,001-10,000 (where the percentage of unsuccessful applications exceeded the percentage of successful applications);
- Main Grants of between £10,001-25,000 (where the percentage of unsuccessful applications exceeded the percentage of successful applications);
- Flagship Grants of between £150,000-250,000 (where there were no successful applications).
- Partnership Grants of between £500,000-750,000 (where there were no successful applications)

Table 3: Distribution of Grants by Size		
	Successful (%)	Unsuccessful (%)
Small Grant £250 - £500	0.0	0.3
Small Grant £501 - £1,000	1.6	1.3
Small Grant £1,001 - £5,000	13.1	9.1
Small Grant £5,001 - £10,000	14.7	17.2
Main Grant £10,001 - £25,000	10.2	16.6
Main Grant £25,001 - £50,000	57.0	47.0
Flagship Grant £150,000 - £500,000	1.6	7.9
Partnership £500,000 - >£1,500,000	1.8	0.6

4.6 It is interesting to note the relative importance of the Biffa Award grant to the overall project, not least in view of the preference of the Biffa Award Board to be the prime funder of activities. In 1 in 3 cases (35 per cent) the grant covered 75-99 per cent of the costs, and in nearly two thirds of cases covered at least half of costs. It is clear that in most cases the Biffa Award grant is crucial to the project proceeding. Furthermore, discussions with case study projects indicated that most were not optimistic of accessing alternative funding within a reasonable timescale.

Figure 7: Grants as a Proportion of Project Costs



4.7 Indeed, comparing requests of successful and unsuccessful applicants clearly shows that those bidding for grants that made up a relatively high proportion of project costs were more common to the former group than the latter.

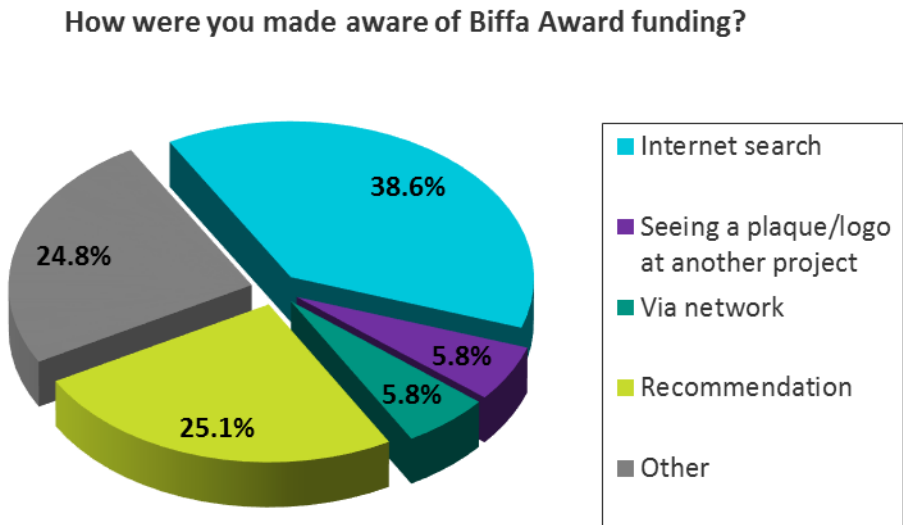
Table 4: Percentage of Total Project Costs Sought

	Successful (%)	Unsuccessful (%)
<10%	3.6	6.6
10 - 24%	6.9	14.2
25 - 49%	17.4	21.5
50 - 74%	15.9	19.6
75 - 99%	37.6	26.5
100%	18.6	11.7

4.8 The balance of funding came from a variety of sources, with local people (who contributed to 42.3% of projects) and local authorities (who contributed to 40.0% of projects) especially important sources. Charities contributed to 1 in 3 projects (33.5%) and local businesses to 1 in 5 projects (22.0%). In 1 in 6 cases (17.2%) projects also utilised other LCF monies, which perhaps raises wider policy questions about co-ordination between LCF bodies. Furthermore, amongst unsuccessful applicants this ratio was nearer 1 in 3 (30.2%).

4.9 In more than 1 in 3 cases (38.6%), successful applicants became aware of Biffa Award by undertaking an internet search, and in 1 in 4 cases (25.1%) did so as a result of recommendation. The former figure was even higher amongst unsuccessful applicants (47.4%). This suggests that search engine optimization is crucial to ensuring that prospective applicants find their way to the Biffa Award Programme. It also highlights the importance of the website offering clear and comprehensive information on the application process, as well as case studies of a variety of projects to which prospective applicants can relate.

Figure 8: Source of Awareness of Biffa Award



5. Programme Delivery

Application and Appraisal Procedures

- 5.1 The key aspects of the procedures for receiving, assessing, recommending, approving and rejecting applications to the Small Grants Scheme (SGS) and Main Grants Scheme (MGS) are broadly similar and are summarised below. They are enshrined within an Operations Manual which was put together by senior members of the Biffa Award team not long after they came into post (in 2007/08). This did not involve major changes to appraisals procedures but provided an opportunity for some tightening up and the introduction of more efficient practices, such as the adoption of templates for standard communications.
- 5.2 It is important to note that prior to making a formal submission, prospective applicants have the opportunity to contact Biffa Award staff for an informal discussion. Unusually for a grants scheme, contact details for team members are shown on the Biffa Award website. It appears that this approach helps both parties. Biffa Award staff are able to deal with queries quicker over the telephone than via multiple email exchanges, and subsequently can avoid having to contact applicants about poorly completed Expressions of Interest (EOI) and minimises the number of wholly unsuitable applications. For their part, applicants enjoy similar benefits in not spending any more time than they need to establish whether their project is potentially fundable and, if so, avoiding delays in the process by submitting an acceptable EOI. Providing clear guidance on the EOI and application forms seems to be a very sensible and helpful approach and indeed feedback from applicants suggested they had found this to be the case.
- 5.3 Applicants complete an on-line EOI form (this was paper-based until 2012) which is checked by an Administrative Officer for completeness (which may lead to a request for additional information) and then reviewed by the Grants Officer with responsibility for the region in which the project is located. Having assessed eligibility against set criteria (including confirming that the project is within 10 miles of a landfill site), projects are then either rejected or invited to make a full application. For most of the period covered by the evaluation this was paper-based, but is now on-line.
- 5.4 A full application is assessed by a Grants Officer using an Assessment Scoring Sheet and this may be subject to peer review. Thereafter, the Grants Officer and Deputy Programme Manager agree a recommendation (approved, reserved or rejected) which is further discussed with the Programme Manager before being forwarded in a written submission to the Biffa Award Board, which meets quarterly.

- 5.5 The Board can decide to approve the funding requested, reject the application or seek further information. In the vast majority of cases, Officer recommendations are endorsed, which appears to reflect the clarity of the case as set out in the paperwork circulated amongst the Board and the degree of confidence of Board members in the grants team.
- 5.6 As was observed by the evaluators, Board meetings dealt proportionately with applications under consideration, tending to accept officer recommendations in respect of smaller projects whilst having a thorough debate in respect of partnership bids. Amongst Board members there is a high level of confidence in the grants team, the systems and the assessment and decision making procedures.
- 5.7 The scoring system takes into account six key criteria and there are weightings (maximum scores) applied to each, with projects able to achieve a maximum score of 26 in the assessment:
- how well managed and financially sound the organisation is (max score of 4)
 - project management (max score of 4)
 - how well the applicant has shown strong evidence of need for the project (max score of 8)
 - how well the project has been costed out and the budget has been explained (max score of 7)
 - how robust are monitoring systems (max score of 1)
 - to what extent green technologies and innovation will be used (max score of 2)
- 5.8 The scoring system for grant application assessments is viewed positively by the Board and by the Small Grants Panel. If there are queries, members are free to raise these at the meetings for discussion.
- 5.9 Annual total allocations are divided on a pro-rata basis so each quarterly Board meeting has approximately the same amount of funds for approval (currently around £1.4 million per meeting). About 1 in every 2-3 applications is approved.
- 5.10 Unsuccessful applicants receive written notification within 15 working days of the Board meeting at which their application was discussed. The full process from receipt of application to decision can take up to six months.
- 5.11 Thereafter, the Grants Officer monitors projects to ensure they submit their first Claim Report Form within six months of the start of the project, that subsequent claims are made according to the Formal Offer Agreement and that they complete within one year (or two years for Rebuilding Biodiversity projects).

- 5.12 The Grants Officer must visit all SGS and MGS projects within one year of completion and complete a Site Visit Report Form. If the organisation is not registered with ENTRUST and has assets of more than £2,000, a further visit is required within three years of project completion.
- 5.13 Flagship Grants Scheme (FGS) projects are capital schemes, typically buildings-related. They must be of regional or national importance. Again, applications commence with an EOI, but these are considered by a Panel which meets approximately one month after papers have been forwarded to its members, to decide which EOIs will be invited forward to the next stage. Unsuccessful applicants are promptly sent a rejection letter.
- 5.14 Those who are successful with their EOI are invited to attend a presentation at which their bid is scored. Those organisations subsequently invited to submit a full application are visited (by the Grants Officer and Programme Manager), to discuss the project and any questions about the application form or process. The application is assessed by the Grants Officer and forwarded to the Board for a final decision.
- 5.15 Partnership Grants Scheme (PGS) projects involve funding the activities of robust organisations that can deliver national projects which are in line with Biffa Award's interests. Applications are restricted to the Cultural Facilities and Rebuilding Biodiversity themes.
- 5.16 In the first instance, the Programme Manager identifies robust organisations that could deliver national projects and meet the objectives of the Biffa Award Programme. Detailed discussions are held between the Programme Manager and key staff at the organisation in question in order to establish its credibility and capabilities. In due course, a brief project outline is taken to the Board and those that find favour are invited to submit a detailed proposal for further review by the Board. If this in turn is considered to be a suitable candidate, the Board will request a full application for funding which is then assessed in the usual manner.
- 5.17 In respect of all schemes, nearly two thirds of successful applicants (61.0%) described the application process as straightforward, albeit that twice as many thought it difficult as considered it easy. Amongst unsuccessful applicants this figure was slightly higher (63.0%), although almost all of the remainder described the process as difficult or very difficult. This could suggest one of three things: the application process is posing difficulties for some applicants and lessening their chance of success; inappropriate projects are not a good fit to the application process and hence encounter difficulties; and unsuccessful applicants are more likely to comment negatively about a process that rejected their funding bid.

- 5.18 Further discussion with case study projects revealed that compared with application processes operated by other funders, the Biffa Award Programme was not unduly complex or burdensome. There was also an acknowledgement that applying for funding was bound to require some effort and an acceptance of the need to report back on how money has been spent. In this context, survey findings appear to indicate that application and monitoring processes have been made as straightforward as could reasonably be expected, given requirements for good governance and responsible practice.
- 5.19 Informal feedback to Board members (largely gathered in the course of site visits to funded projects) supported the perception that grants team members are good at helping bidders, providing advice etc. This was very strongly endorsed in the case study interviews, with many funded organisations welcoming the fact they had been able to have constructive and helpful dialogue with the Biffa Award team, especially at pre-application stage. Applicant experience is that this helpful/hands-on approach sets the Biffa Award Programme apart from many other grant regimes that do not have the capacity or willingness to engage with organisations seeking to apply for funding for such projects. For their part, senior members of the Biffa Award team believe they have arrived at a process that is as straightforward and efficient as it can be, whilst maintaining high standards of probity.
- 5.20 Amongst **successful applicants**, suggestions for improvements included:
- a shorter decision time
 - a simpler application process
 - more support during the application process
 - more flexibility on where to display the Biffa Award plaque (given the need to recognise other funder contributions)
 - more guidance on the ENTRUST registration process, which was considered complex and time consuming
- 5.21 Amongst **unsuccessful applicants**, suggestions for improvements included:
- more guidance at the outset on the prospects for success and how chances for success can be maximized, aided by better website navigation
 - a simpler application process, tailored to different grants sizes and themes with less burdensome information requests and more clarity on match funding requirements
 - more support during the application process
 - faster and more specific feedback on the reasons for rejection

Project Implementation

- 5.22 The flexibility shown by the grants team has been greatly appreciated, enabling grant awardees to utilise money as and when required (rather than have to stick rigidly to the original timetable) and utilise monies to best effect (on additional project-related items) rather than incur an under-spend.
- 5.23 More than two thirds of successful applicants (69.0 per cent) described management and monitoring as straightforward, and three times as many thought it easy as considered it difficult.
- 5.24 In addition, nearly two thirds of successful applicants (62.2 per cent) described the grant claims process as straightforward and twice as many thought it easy as considered it difficult. Even more positively, nearly two thirds of respondents (62.0 per cent) described the payments process as fast/very fast, with only 2.7 per cent describing it as slow/very slow.
- 5.25 In practice, grant claims are paid without delay on receipt of an accurate/comprehensive claim (processed on a weekly basis). Unlike some funding sources that require expenditure to have been defrayed, Biffa Award will pay grants on proof of completion and work having been invoiced. This means that 30 day invoices pertaining to the project can be paid within that timescale without the applicant having to draw on other funds, i.e. the efficiency of the Biffa Award process ensures that grant recipients are not faced with cashflow difficulties. Payment of the final instalment of a grant requires photographic evidence of completion and of a Biffa Award plaque in situ (with the latter reported to sometimes cause delays).

Publicity

- 5.26 All projects are required to prominently display a plaque featuring the Biffa Award logo. However, both Board members and staff expressed concerns that not all projects complied. This was based on their experiences visiting some projects where plaques were discreetly hidden away. In visiting case study projects, the evaluation team had some similar experiences. Clearly, there is a need for Biffa Award to be given due recognition for the funding it has provided and this in turn ought to be clearly communicated to grant recipients as a condition of grant. One case study project commented that it would be helpful, if possible, to be given the logo in different formats so that they can reflect and be in keeping with “the local setting” (in this case a woodland where signage tends to be more subtle, and the organisation would prefer to use the Biffa Award logo in a format that can be transferred into the existing format of site signage).

- 5.27 More than half of survey respondents (56.1 per cent) thought publicity/PR requirements (e.g. displaying a Biffa Award plaque) to be positive, with a mere 3.9 per cent viewing it as a negative.
- 5.28 In addition, the grants team is making use of Twitter, and @BiffaAward has, at the time of writing, 1,131 followers. Although primarily viewed as a way for projects to share information, it may also have helped to raise the profile of the Programme. Very positive comments were also made about a promotional video (by “Fresh Cut”) showcasing a number of projects.
- 5.29 An important aspect of Programme promotion is the annual Biffa Awards ceremony. All projects whose grants were approved in the previous financial year are invited to apply for an award, and the shortlisted projects are invited to the ceremony. Up to and including 2014, the Award categories covered each of the four traditional Main Grant themes, plus a separate category for Small Grants. There is also an overall winner. In respect of each category there is a shortlist of 4 projects, so 20 in all (out of a total number of 260 that were eligible in 2014 and similar numbers in previous years). Decisions are made by independent judges for each category, supported by senior members of the Biffa Award team.
- 5.30 Based on informal discussion with those attending the 2014 Awards Ceremony, it was apparent that the event and the recognition it gave to projects was much appreciated. In almost all cases these are projects driven by volunteers who were appreciative that their efforts had not gone unnoticed. The cash prizes were not regarded as a huge motivation but were certainly welcomed in enabling projects to make good use of an unexpected windfall.
- 5.31 What is unclear is the extent to which projects have themselves been advocates of Biffa Award and, specifically, whether they have consistently credited Biffa Award as the funder (rather than simply promoted their project per se). That said, it seems reasonable to assume that a good many of the recommendations to apply to Biffa Award came from organisations who had themselves been successful previously.

6. Legacies

- 6.1 The enthusiasm amongst Board members for what Biffa Award has achieved and how it goes about supporting good projects is clearly evident. Programme data suggests that since April 2009 (the time of the last Impact Assessment) about 28 million people have directly benefited from project improvements and 484,000 hectares of land have been improved for biodiversity. However, our survey data (6.11) suggests that the former may be an over-estimate of impact and latter an under-estimate of impact.
- 6.2 The Small Grants Scheme is regarded by Board members as very important as it is believed to reach out to communities and can have a lot of impact for a relatively small investment. In some senses it is regarded as a pump primer, getting activity going.
- 6.3 Main Grants tend to be village/church hall refurbishments and recreation ground type projects which, for all they are clearly worthwhile, lack variety and tend to deliver similar sorts of benefits to similar sorts of people.
- 6.4 Anecdotal evidence suggests that one of the most significant impacts of a successful application is in boosting the confidence of the organisation and its local community. It is a demonstration that things can be done and thereby energises other community pursuits.
- 6.5 Only 1 in 13 unsuccessful applicants (7.7%) had already reapplied for Biffa Award funding, although more than 1 in 4 (28.1%) said they would in future and a further 39.6% said they might do so. Decisions not to reapply may be driven by a number of factors: an appreciation that this was not an appropriate funding source, a disinclination to go through a process considered to be difficult, no need due to success in securing alternative funding and no need due to the project being abandoned.
- 6.6 The evaluation survey of unsuccessful applicants revealed that in more than half of cases (57.1%) the project went ahead anyway. Furthermore, in three quarters of instances (73.7%) the project proceeded on the same scale (with 20.0% smaller and 6.3% bigger than was envisaged at the time of the Biffa Award application). However, whilst half of the projects (50.9%) proceeded within the planned timescale, very nearly half (46.8%) were progressed more slowly.
- 6.7 Half of the unsuccessful projects (49.7%) were funded by local people. With other significant contributors being charities (44.4%) and other Landfill Communities Funds/local authorities (both 36.8%). Whilst it is entirely understandable that different LCF schemes would develop different priorities, from a national policy perspective it is curious that more than 1 in 3 projects unsuccessful in applying for a Biffa Award grant should subsequently secure monies from another LCF scheme.

Community Impacts

- 6.8 The survey of successful applicants indicated that the most common impact was increased use of an existing community facility, reflecting the substantial number of village hall/church hall/community centre projects that have been supported. The second most common response was that the project had supported the expansion of one or more existing groups, with the third most common being that it had promoted greater community cohesion.
- 6.9 Amongst unsuccessful applicants whose projects proceeded by other means, the ranking of community impacts was identical. Furthermore, overall the impact was higher in each of the seven categories other than the most popular. This may relate to the fact that the most common source of alternative funding was local people and therefore more effort has been expended in garnering community support laying the foundation for higher levels of community engagement thereafter. This points to the possibility that Biffa Award grants may achieve higher levels of community impacts were they to account for a lower proportion of project costs than has typically been the case hitherto, with a requirement that a minimum percentage of match funding must be raised from local people.

Table 5: The Nature of Community Impacts		
	Successful (%)	Unsuccessful (%)
Increased use of an existing community facility	71.1	66.3
Supported expansion of existing groups	50.4	58.4
Promoted greater community cohesion	45.6	51.8
Established a new community facility	39.7	51.2
Helped survival of existing groups	34.2	40.4
Supported formation of new groups	29.9	40.4
Helped reduce anti-social behaviour	15.9	20.5

- 6.10 Amongst the two fifths of unsuccessful applicants whose projects did not proceed, there was believed to have been significant negative impacts arising as a result. Just over half believed that use of an existing community facility had reduced (53.3%), with a similar number (51.9%) reporting that activity amongst existing groups had diminished. In addition, 16.3% believed community cohesion had reduced, 8.9% reported that existing community groups had ceased to function, 5.2% that there had been a rise in anti-social behavior and 4.4% that an existing community facility had been forced to close.

6.11 Respondents to the survey undertaken for this evaluation estimate that around 5.8 million people have benefited from Biffa Award projects approved since 2009. Beneficiaries per theme are summarised in the table below. It should be noted that projected impacts by all projects at the time of their application are, on average 4.5 times bigger than those reported below. Given survey responses only accounted for just under half of all projects, this suggests some optimism bias as well as reflecting the fact that many projects are yet to generate their full impacts.

Table 6: Scale of Impacts By Theme	
Theme	Total number of People who benefitted
Community Buildings	576,255
Cultural Facilities	3,206,255
Rebuilding Biodiversity	187,381
Recreation	1,799,408
Total	5,769,299

6.12 It should be noted that the top three organisations in terms of reported numbers of people benefiting claimed a total of 2,150,000. As such, any attempt to extrapolate the 367 responses to this question to the total of 1,090 projects would run the risk of substantially over-estimating beneficiary numbers. Nevertheless, whilst it would be imprudent to treble the figures in the above table, it would appear reasonable (and indeed conservative) to say that Biffa Award funded projects have touched the lives of at least 1 in 5 people across the UK. Furthermore, survey data indicates that the average number of beneficiaries per Biffa Award project at 15,720 was more than double the average for unsuccessful applicants whose projects progressed by other means (7,624).

6.13 Whilst it would be crude to calculate ‘cost per output’, especially given the diversity of impacts on each individual, it is interesting to attempt a basic value for money calculation, however unsophisticated. Based on a grossing up of evaluation survey responses, it seems reasonable to suggest that around 12 million people may have benefitted from Biffa Award projects. Given that since 2009 £48,088,388 in grants have been awarded, this produces an average ‘cost’ of around £4 per person. Furthermore, as more projects come to fruition/mature, numbers of beneficiaries can be expected to rise, reducing the ‘unit cost’ figure to even more modest levels. Indeed, if beneficiary numbers do reach the levels predicted by grant recipients (around 25 million), cost per beneficiary would be less than £2.

6.14 Similarly, in respect of volunteers engaged and volunteer hours contributed, projects responding to the survey recruited nearly 11,000 people who gave a total of more than 270,000 hours. This relates to the whole of their project periods, which will have differed significantly (and some will be continuing).

Table 7: Volunteer Contributions		
Theme	Total Number of Volunteers	Total Number of Volunteer Hours
Community Buildings	3134	107,703
Cultural Facilities	1578	66,009
Rebuilding Biodiversity	3819	54,528
Recreation	2437	43,574
Total	10,968	271,814

6.15 Again, there is a danger in extrapolation, with the top three organisations for volunteer hours claiming 34,000 in total, although the risk of over-estimations appears much less in respect of volunteering than beneficiary numbers. Nevertheless, it seems entirely reasonable to suggest that Biffa Award funded projects have mobilised more than 20,000 volunteers, contributing more than half a million volunteer hours.

6.16 At 30, the average number of volunteers per Biffa Award project was fewer than the average for unsuccessful applicants whose projects progressed by other means (42). In respect of volunteer hours, respective figures were 793 for Biffa Award projects and 2181 for non Biffa Award projects. Combined with other survey responses in respect of funding and community involvement, this suggests that those unsuccessful with Biffa Award applications have relied on volunteering to a much greater extent.

Biodiversity Impacts

6.17 Interviewees indicated that good biodiversity schemes were relatively few in number and that some of the organisations putting forward such projects had failed to inspire confidence.

6.18 The survey of successful applicants indicated that the most common impact was increased visitor numbers, indicated by just over half of those replying to this question.

6.19 Amongst unsuccessful applicants whose projects proceeded by other means, the ranking of biodiversity impacts was identical. However, whilst the percentage of projects reporting increased visitor numbers was significantly higher than equivalent Biffa Award projects, significantly lower percentages cited each of the other three impacts.

Table 8: The Nature of Biodiversity Impacts		
	Successful (%)	Unsuccessful (%)
Increased visitor numbers	50.8	63.9
Increased biodiversity	44.4	23.6
Increased number of breeding birds	13.8	11.1
Reduced invasive species	12.2	5.6

- 6.20 In respect of the scale of biodiversity impacts, in nearly half of cases (47.1%) they related to plots of less than half a hectare. Anecdotal evidence suggested that many projects were substantially less than half a hectare, for example involving the cleaning up of a pond. That said, a significant proportion (20.0%) of projects related to sites of 10 hectares or more.
- 6.21 Projects progressed by unsuccessful applicants tended to be skewed towards small land areas, as a result of which relatively few were 10ha or more. Whilst responses did not allow for the calculation of a specific total, even if all of the larger projects were no more than 10ha in size, this would still suggest total land protected/enhanced of at least 550ha (almost certainly an under-estimate).

Table 9: Scale of Biodiversity Impacts (land protected/enhanced)

	Successful (%)	Unsuccessful (%)
<0.5ha	47.1	50.0
0.5 - 0.9ha	8.4	16.7
1.0 - 1.9ha	9.0	9.3
2.0 - 4.9ha	8.4	9.3
5.0 - 9.9ha	7.1	9.3
10+ha	20.0	5.6

- 6.22 With regard to the scale of impacts, as measured by the number of species protected, three fifths of respondents (58.5%) indicated an impact. In most cases (36.7%) this involved between 1-10 species being protected, but in a small number of instances (5.6%) involved more than 100 species being protected. Of course, whilst this offers a sense of scale, it does not necessarily indicate importance, as a project protecting a small number of very rare species might be regarded as highly valuable.
- 6.23 Amongst unsuccessful applicants whose projects proceeded by other means, it was also the case that three fifths of respondents (60.4%) indicated an impact. However, there was a skewing towards the lower end of the scale, and in half of cases (50.0%) this involved between 1-10 species being protected.
- 6.24 With regard to the scale of impacts, as measured by the number of habitats protected, three fifths of respondents (59.4%) again indicated an impact. In half of cases (49.7%) this involved between 1-5 habitats being protected. Again, whilst this offers a sense of scale, it does not necessarily indicate importance, as a project protecting a small number of very important habitats might be regarded as highly valuable.
- 6.25 Amongst unsuccessful applicants whose projects proceeded by other means, it was also the case that three fifths of respondents (62.0%) indicated an impact. Again, there was a skewing towards the lower end of the scale, and in nearly half of cases (46.0%) this involved between 1-5 habitats being protected.

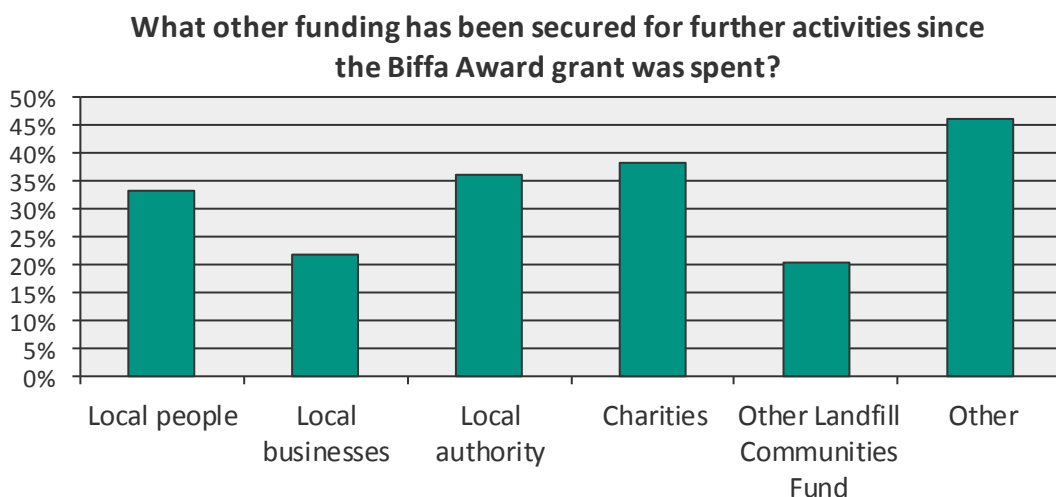
Table 10: Scale of Biodiversity Impacts (species/habitats protected)				
	Number of species protected		Number of habitats protected	
	Successful	Unsuccessful	Successful	Unsuccessful
1-5	35	18	71	23
6-10	17	6	7	4
11-20	10	0	3	2
21-50	10	3	3	1
51-100	3	0	1	0
>100	8	2	0	1
No Impact	59	19	58	19
Responses	142	48	143	50

6.26 Again, whilst responses did not allow for the calculation of specific totals, we would conservatively estimate that Biffa Award projects have protected well over 2,000 species and more than 700 habitats.

Post Biffa Award Activities

6.27 The single biggest source of financial support after the Biffa Award project was completed has been charities (who contributed to 38.5% of projects), followed by local authorities (who contributed to 36.3% of projects) and local people (33.3%). Local businesses contributed to 1 in 5 projects (21.8%) as did other Landfill Communities Fund sources (20.5%). Again, this perhaps raises wider policy questions about co-ordination between LCF bodies. Broadly speaking, sources of funding going forward were similar to those that had been utilised alongside Biffa Award funding.

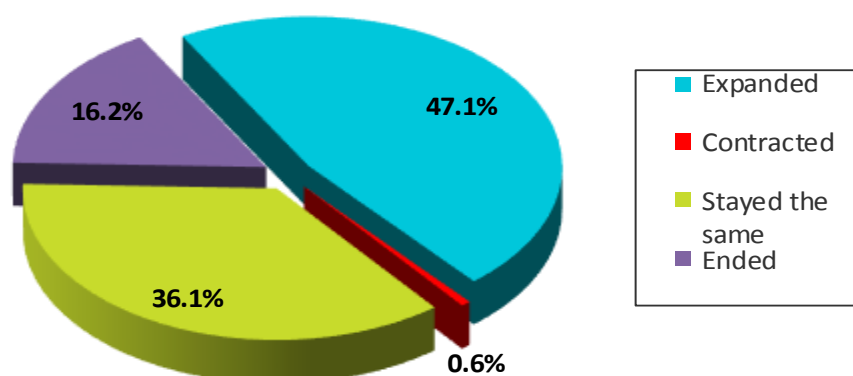
Figure 9: Succession Funding



6.28 Encouragingly, in almost half (47.1%) of cases projects have expanded since Biffa Award monies were spent and most of the rest have been sustained at the same level.

Figure 10: Project Sustainability

Since the Biffa Award monies were spent, has the project:



- 6.29 In organisational terms, it is apparent that many applicants have themselves gained a great deal as a result of delivering a successful project. Most commonly (in three quarters of cases) this related to garnering more support from local residents. In addition, more than half of applicants reported being clearer about their future direction and exactly half mentioned having recruited more volunteers.
- 6.30 Unsuccessful applicants whose projects proceeded by other means also report benefiting to a significant extent from key project legacies, albeit not as strongly as Biffa Award recipients tended to report.

Table 11: Key Project Legacies for your Organisation		
	Successful (%)	Unsuccessful (%)
More support from local residents	77.6	65.6
You are clear about your future direction	58.1	57.1
You have more volunteers	50.4	46.0
You are better equipped to bid for funding	49.0	39.9
Better relationships with other bodies	37.5	36.2
You have secured more funding	32.4	28.2
Better relationships with other funders	29.5	31.3
More support from local businesses	28.9	28.2

- 6.31 The main positives of the Biffa Award grant were considered to be as follows:
- community benefits – including improved local facilities, new local facilities, expanded provision and improved relationships with community.
 - funding – including enabling the project to go ahead, helping with the completion of the project and opening the door to other funding.
 - application process – which was seen as straightforward whilst the help from Biffa Award staff was generally considered to have been excellent.

6.32 In contrast, the main negatives were considered to be as follows:

- application process – which some applicants viewed as complicated, time consuming, lengthy and disproportionately difficult in relation to grant size.
- other paperwork – in particular registration with ENTRUST, absorbing more valuable volunteer time.
- match funding – reported to be difficult to find and/or manage.

Organisational Impacts on RSWT

6.33 Thanks to the efforts of the grants team, RSWT has established a reputation as a safe pair of hands when it comes to managing and administering a major grants programme. More than that, it has shown itself capable of developing processes that are fit for purpose and to be committed to taking a positive approach to support applicants (pre- and post- application). In short, RSWT has done all it can to try to ensure that good projects get the resources they need to succeed.

6.34 The organisation's enhanced reputation has been recognised by Big Lottery Fund, in entrusting it with management of the Local Food Programme. Internally, across the network of Wildlife Trusts the organisation is well placed to take forward other initiatives requiring co-ordination and similar skills sets.

7. Key Features of Success of the Biffa Award Programme

7.1 In summary, key characteristics of the Biffa Award Programme and its impacts are considered to be as follows (in no particular order):

- relatively easy to find via internet search.
- application process considered relatively straightforward by most applicants (though by no means all).
- support from the grants team (from application through to project delivery) is highly regarded and much appreciated, with the degree of helpfulness said by applicants/grant recipients to compare very favourably with other funding programmes.
- as a result of the above, grants are able to be invested more quickly than most other grants schemes and are able to be delivered highly effectively.
- preparedness to fund a high proportion of project costs (in more than half of cases it covers at least three quarters of total project costs). By making an early and significant commitment rather than await other contributions and fill the gap in funding, more money is spent more quickly than is the case with many other grant programmes. Indeed, this approach can be enormously helpful to applicants in triggering other contributions.
- funding is crucial, with two fifths of unsuccessful applicants unable to progress their project via any other means or on any other scale, which in turn was reported to have resulted in reduced use of existing community facilities, diminished activities amongst existing groups and weakened community cohesion, amongst other negative impacts.
- substantial community impacts (including social, economic and educational impacts), touching the lives of at least 1 in 5 of the UK population, most particularly through the provision of and enhancements to cultural facilities.
- substantial biodiversity impacts, with more than 550,00ha of land protected/enhanced, well over 2,000 species protected and more than 700 habitats protected.
- a very worthwhile celebration of the most highly regarded projects at a well organised Awards event, giving due recognition to those projects, providing opportunities for networking/sharing of good practice and representing a means of promoting the Programme to prospective applicants and government/other key bodies.

- 7.2 In addition to the above, there are undoubtedly significant benefits that have been generated but which have not been quantified. Prospectively, these could represent substantial values (within their local areas and in aggregate). This is apparent from a review of studies seeking to monetize the benefits arising from projects that are similar in nature to those that Biffa Award has supported.
- 7.3 For example, if the half a million volunteer hours that pertain to the projects funded over the period in question (2009-14) are taken as replacements for paid staff remunerated at the median hourly wage (the means by which the Office for National Statistics calculated the value of volunteering) this produces a value of more than £250 million.
- 7.4 Similarly, work undertaken by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Cabinet Office looked at the value of volunteering to volunteers themselves, based on their enhanced wellbeing. The calculation was based on how much they considered this enhanced wellbeing to be worth. For frequent formal volunteers, this came to a figure of £13,500 per year. Were we to assume that 1 in 10 of the 20,000 volunteers involved with Biffa Award projects could be described as 'frequent formal volunteers', this would suggest an aggregate value of £26.7 million per annum.
- 7.5 Whilst the figures above are indicative rather than precise calculations, they do demonstrate the prospective scale of the impacts of Biffa Award projects in terms of economic value.
- 7.6 In addition, there are a host of other values that could be calculated, based on:
- enhancing physical/mental wellbeing.
 - overcoming social exclusion.
 - enhancing employability.
 - promoting tourism.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 The decline in the amount of funding available necessitates a new approach to grant allocation. Based on the evaluation findings, we have carefully considered what recommendations might be made in order to help maximise the impacts of diminishing resources.
- 8.2 That said, in view of the way in which the grants team and the Board operate, it is apparent that the Programme has and continues to evolve based on experience. In that context, it would appear that most of the lessons have been learnt and acted upon. Nevertheless, the following recommendations are offered for consideration, adopting the key evaluation aims as headings.

Improving the Strategic Approach of the Programme

- 8.3 At this stage in the life cycle of the Biffa Award Programme there is a thought amongst some Board members that the time has come to focus more resources on disadvantaged communities. Where capacity is under-developed, this might mean projects being riskier than many of those funded previously, but this might be balanced by the prospect of substantial impacts in some instances. In addition, and whilst a less tangible outcome, helping to develop communities and fostering a sense of pride and achievement is often the end result. There is a belief that this is what the Programme ought to be doing and that achieving this in deprived communities would be especially valuable. This may be even more important in future given the decline in public sector and third sector support for deprived communities due to reductions in government funding.
- 8.4 Biffa Award grants may achieve higher levels of community impacts were they to account for a lower proportion of project costs than has typically been the case hitherto, with a requirement that a minimum percentage of match funding must be raised from local people. This would also have the benefit of helping to spread grant monies over more projects. However, it is acknowledged that raising funds locally may prove especially challenging within deprived communities. The compromise might be to demand contributions from local people in better off communities as a means of trying to match prospective levels of impacts of projects within deprived communities.

Improving the Operational Aspects of the Programme

- 8.5 Given that in more than 1 in 3 successful applicants and nearly half of unsuccessful applicants became aware of the Biffa Award by undertaking an internet search, this suggests that search engine optimization is crucial to ensuring that prospective applicants find their way to the Biffa Award Programme. Once on the website they should be provided with clear and comprehensive information on the application process, as well as case studies of a variety of projects to which prospective applicants can relate. The application process has to balance the need to be robust with the desire to be user friendly, and applicant feedback suggests that the current system has got the balance about right. Nevertheless, although most successful and unsuccessful applicants reported no difficulties with the application process, a significant minority did so. The move to an on-line application form is an opportunity to re-visit the form and ensure it is clear, succinct and visually appealing.
- 8.6 Where land or property is involved, ownership can be a vital issue. In particular, consideration might be given to whether it is appropriate to fund improvements to privately owned land/property where the grant enhances the value of the site/building (and/or neighbouring site/buildings) rather than being primarily for the benefit of local communities.
- 8.7 Visiting all projects (and some twice) is very time consuming and quite expensive (in terms of both the cost of staff time and travel/accommodation expenses). Consideration ought to be given to only visiting projects above a certain grant/project size and/or outsourcing this role, were the latter to prove more cost-effective. Noting that 1 in 6 projects utilise other Landfill Communities Fund monies, there may also be merit in entering into a reciprocal arrangement with another funder whereby visits can be undertaken to each other's projects, with costs shared. Another option would be to use Skype and/or have projects submit videos to demonstrate progress/latest activities.
- 8.8 Feedback from successful and unsuccessful grant applicants highlights the vital role played by the Biffa Award team. As resources diminish, there may be a temptation to seek to further reduce management and administration costs. However, it is essential that the requisite skills and capacity are retained in order to ensure that the fundamental integrity of the Programme is sustained.

Contributing to the Lasting Legacy of the Programme

- 8.9 In light of the sharp decline in funding that is anticipated, even more careful consideration ought to be given to how resources are allocated between the Partnership, Main Grants and Small Grants Schemes. There is a balance to be struck between national scale projects and those capable of generating significant impacts at the local level.

8.10 Given the trend in more of the larger organisations applying for smaller grants, and mindful of the desire to maximise impacts, there may be merit in limiting eligibility for grants up to a certain size to smaller organisations. Even now, nearly 1 in 5 successful applicants have an annual income of £1 million or more. It is therefore recommended that the Small Grants Scheme be restricted to organisations with an income below a certain level (possibly £250,000). In addition, all grants should represent between say 1-10 per cent of an organisation's annual income (restricting access to smaller grants by larger organisations and ensuring larger grants are not paid to small organisations lacking the capacity to manage them effectively). This suggested range is arbitrary and ought to be calculated by the grants team following an assessment of successful applications.

Helping to influence Relevant Government Policies

8.11 The Awards ceremony is an excellent event and as such would impress anyone in attendance. Every effort ought to be made to attract Government Ministers, Shadow Ministers and senior representatives of other key bodies (Biffa Group Ltd, Environment Agency, ENTRUST, RSWT etc.). In particular, the Awards ceremony could become a key part of influencing the thinking of Government Ministers and as such were it to be staged in/near Westminster this might enhance the prospects of having a Minister/Shadow Minister attend.

8.12 At a time when there is need to make a strong case to the Government that funding like this can generate substantial benefits, it appears that Biffa Award and its counterparts have no voice. There would be merit in discussions with their counterparts to co-ordinate communications with the Government in order to ensure they have a voice and it is heard. This is especially important given that the LCF is not sufficiently promoted as a single initiative, nor has there been an attempt to aggregate the achievements of the individual schemes. Addressing this issue by establishing a more effective lobbying mechanism ought to be Biffa Award's top priority.

8.13 Alongside this there would be merit in further exploring and seeking to quantify the economic and social benefits of Biffa Award/other programmes. Funded projects are having a major impact on the lives of individuals as well as communities and these benefits ought to be captured.

Appendix 1: Summary of Other Landfill Communities Fund (LCF) Schemes

SITA Trust

As at the end of December 2013, SITA Trust had supported more than 3500 projects with a combined value of more than £99 million. Beneficiaries were believed to have numbered 12 million residents and 40,000 businesses throughout the UK. Over the previous 12 months (1st January – 31st December 2013), SITA Trust committed more than £7.3 million to projects, which divided as follows: Enhancing communities (67 projects, £3,032,184); Enhancing communities, fast track fund (81 projects, £1,084,450); Enhancing communities, young people volunteering fund (10 projects, £170,233); Queen Elizabeth II Fields Fund (42 projects, £805,860); Enhancing nature, 41 projects (£1,493,536); and Heritage Fund (2 projects, £756,925).

Veolia Environmental Trust

The Trust primarily funds capital works, with a particular emphasis on improvements to existing amenities. The maximum grant available is £100,000. Since its formation, the Trust has contributed more than £55 million in support of 1,689 projects. In 2013 £4.7 million was awarded to 171 projects, covering: remediation of land; reduction of pollution; public amenities; conservation of biodiversity; and restoration of buildings of historic interest. Across these categories there are a number of project types, and in 2013 applications related mainly to Community Buildings (52%), Play and Recreation Facilities (24%) and Parks and Paths (18%).

WREN (Waste Recycling Environmental Limited)

Since its formation in 1997, WREN has awarded nearly £200 million. Awards are overseen by a Board and funding is delivered at a local level through a network of 23 Regional Advisory Panels, made up 200 volunteer members. It offers a range of grants including: Small Grant Scheme (£2,000-£15,000); Main Grant Scheme (£15,001-£75,000); Biodiversity Action Fund (£75,000-£250,000); and Heritage Fund (£15,001-£75,000). In 2013 WREN awarded £14.8 million to 355 projects with a total value of around £33 million.

Appendix 2: Case Studies

Community Buildings Theme

291 Community Association - Building Refurbishment/New Heating System

Overview of Organisation

The 291 Community Association Limited was established in 2010 and has eight volunteers who act as the management committee, of which four are directors. The Association is charged with developing and promoting the community spaces and facilities that form part of a network of buildings that form part of a complex for the Wesley Methodist Church on the High Street in West Bromwich town centre.

There has been a church on this site for more than a century, in various forms, usually in combination with other building developments. The 1930s development was replaced by the current church and attached rooms in 1974. Although most of the 1930s buildings were demolished when the new building was built in 1974, some of the rooms remained and form part of the community rooms that are currently being refurbished. The Church and its facilities have long played a role in community life, providing space for groups to meet, stage events etc.

The 291 Community Association was created to help focus specifically on the provision of community facilities and how they might be improved, in order to retain existing users as well as attract new user groups.

The Association would like to do more to reach out to new user groups, but being run on an entirely voluntary basis with no paid staff limits the amount of time available for promotion and the development of partner relationships.

Project Background

The community space facilities were suffering from lack of investment: various parts of the original flat-roof were unsound and water was getting in; toilet facilities were dated; heating facilities were inadequate; windows needed to be upgraded with double glazing; and disabled access needed to be addressed.

Whilst there was (and still is) quite a “shopping list” of repairs and improvements, the group prioritised these into phases or packages of work and successfully applied for a Biffa Award grant on two occasions. Whilst the items of work and costs differed, the principal aim of both was the same: namely, to help upgrade the community facilities and thereby improve the venue “offer” and retain and generate new community user groups.

The Community Association consulted the Sandwell Forum for Voluntary Youth Organisations, their own user groups and were encouraged to seek to improve the existing community facilities.

Around 500 people use the facility in a typical month of which 25% are under 18. Hence, the building plays an important role as a venue for a wide range of activities involving a variety of users.

Project Delivery

“Project 1” (applied for in 2011) was a grant of £50,000 towards £82,000 of overall costs for roof works, insulation, new double glazed windows and a new energy efficient boiler, some radiators and other heating system improvements. The heating system element of this project then had to be taken out because the costs were far greater than originally thought. In the end, the replacement of the roofs and high level windows alone cost just over £100,000.

“Project 2” (2013) was another £50,000 grant to improve the heating system, which involved a fundamental change to move the boiler room (which was located under the driveway, leaving it susceptible to flooding and making the system unstable and unsafe), together with new heaters and radiators in four community used rooms.

Combined, the projects have been managed by the group as essential works and they have plans to carry out more refurbishment to what is a quite awkward configuration of buildings, albeit all linked.

Project Impacts and Legacy

The building provides a regular venue for two locally important youth organisations: the Boys Brigade (50 members across 3 sections who meet at staggered times across a Friday evening); the Guides/Rainbows/Brownies (another 50 girls); plus 2 slimming clubs; an active ladies group which meets once a month (45 members); a men’s group (10-12 members) that meets once a month; a widows group plus others and a venue for an annual pantomime which has been running since 1948 and draws 1,200 members of the public each year. Groups cut across all generations from 5-8 year olds (Girls Rainbows) through to activities for the elderly.

The main impacts have related to the tangible improvements to the building fabric and conditions inside, with better insulation, double glazing, repaired roof plus a new energy efficient boiler. Prior to these works being undertaken, the venue had “lost” two groups due to the deteriorating conditions (and an enticing counter-offer from an alternative facility). It is believed that carrying out the improvements has meant the 291 Community Association has been able to retain existing user groups and has generated interest amongst other community groups in using the venue. Enquiries about hiring the facilities have increased and negotiations were underway with Age UK, with a view to it hiring the building for half a day a week.

In addition, the works should help to significantly reduce running costs, which will boost the organisation’s commercial and environmental sustainability.

It seems that the building will continue to need significant investment. Another phase of works was mentioned, involving decoration of the communal area, flooring repair/replacement and updating of the electrics.

Backwell Parish Hall – ‘Project Warmth’: Roof Insulation

Overview of Organisation

Backwell Parish Hall is located in the heart of Backwell village in north Somerset. The Hall extends to 100m² and has a capacity of 200 standing or 125 seated, as well as a committee meeting room which can seat 10 people. In addition, it has a well equipped kitchen. The Hall is 104 years old and was built on land donated by the Marques of Bath, with the cost of building raised by public subscription. The Parish Hall has registered charity status and is independent of the parish council.

There are ten trustees meeting monthly, two of which (the Rector of Backwell and the chairman of Backwell Parish Council) are ex officio. Of the remainder, four are elected at the annual meeting of Parishioners and four are appointed by regular users. The trustees are supported by four parishioner volunteers.

A number of modifications have been made to the building over the years. A new entrance and toilets were added in 1955, funded partly by a grant from the Backwell Victory Fund following the end of World War 2. In 1991 a new kitchen and disabled toilets were added. In recent times the Hall has been widely used for various events and special occasions, including clubs, classes, parties and meetings. In addition, some regular users, such as the Backwell Drama Club, have supported the hall for shorter or longer periods of time. Another 13 clubs and groups meet regularly in the Hall, ranging from three times a week to once a month.

Project Background

The project began with the intention of modernising the Hall to make it a warmer and more inviting, and thereby making it a more sustainable space. Initially, the plan was to purchase a bio-mass boiler, but investigation of the options and costs revealed that additional work would be required as the Hall roof had never been insulated and thus was completely unprotected, meaning that much of the additional heating would be lost skywards. Throughout the past 104 years the roof has never had insulation, resulting in dramatic heat loss which is felt particularly in winter, when heat displacement is evident from the snow melting on top of the Hall much faster than surrounding roofs.

The overarching project to which the Biffa Award grant has contributed intends to make the Hall an environmental exemplar and renewable energy hub promoting green improvements. The project has been formulated to take place in three stages across five years, with the first stage comprising improvements such as replacing guttering, ventilation tower refurbishment and renovation of the main hall floor. Phase two is the project that the Biffa Award has funded, involving the insulation of the Hall as well as replacement of an inefficient lighting system. The final phase will include the purchase and fitting of the originally planned biomass boiler, as well as solar panelling.

Whilst the Hall does generate some income from hire, the cost of this wider project was significantly beyond the scale of surpluses generated. The insulation work schedule under Phase 2 was initially quoted at £14,000, partly due to the need for hire of full scaffolding to create a temporary floor half way up the internal space of the Hall.

Project Delivery

The majority of the insulation project was funded through a Biffa Award grant of £10,000, with an additional £4,220 originally budgeted to have come from local donations and the parish council. The Backwell Drama Club acted as third party contributor, with a donation of £510.20. Three local contractors were asked to supply quotations for the work as well as some additional work replacing some unattractive and inefficient lighting which also required the scaffolding to be in place. The original budget was based on the cheapest of these quotes, but subsequently two of the three contractors were unable to undertake the work, with the final supplier asking for the much greater amount of £24,000. It was however found that due to the Biffa Award being in place, the committee were able to secure further support from the local community and parish council in order to reach the total necessary. The contractor was supported by 15 volunteers from the management committee and elsewhere who gave around 100 volunteer hours in assisting the work, with particular help from three of the trustees who helped manage and oversee the project.

The Biffa Award grant was approved in December 2013, but the committee had planned well ahead with regard to when the work would be carried out. This time allowed both for the raising of additional funds by local community members as well as for the closure of the Hall to be strategically timed to coincide with the school summer holiday 2014 when less usage occurred. The work was undertaken and completed between July 28th and September 5th, with only the committee room remaining in use during that period. There was daily monitoring and contact with the construction team, ensuring smooth running of the project.

The work was carried out in three stages: 1) protecting the Hall floor and putting up the full scaffolding layer within the Hall; 2) Fitting the 150mm solid internal insulation; and 3) covering with plasterboard and painting as well as taking the scaffolding down. The work went to schedule despite starting a day later than planned.

Project Impacts and Legacy

The insulation project had an immediate impact on Hall bookings, with a whist drive popular with older community members restarting promptly to favourable reviews regarding the increased warmth in the Hall. There has also been a steady increase in the number of bookings from the time that the project began. It is thought that the work carried out will lead to an increase of 200 more regular users per annum, up from 1,800 at present, with an increase in total footfall of nearly 10 per cent to 18,000. Further direct impacts will be felt over the winter period as the reduction in heating costs (and therefore CO2 emissions) become apparent.

The knock-on effects of the Biffa Award grant funded work are also regarded as being substantial. As the work carried out included the scaffolding being put in, the lighting works could then also be undertaken, replacing the unattractive and inefficient lighting system that was previously in place. The new lighting has made a big difference to several clubs and groups that use the Hall, such as the Backwell Drama Club which requires specific and more controllable lighting for the productions that they stage.

In summary, the Biffa Award grant is regarded as the catalyst that got the project underway; without the grant there is uncertainty that local people and businesses would have felt the impetus to donate their own time and money. The additional work undertaken alongside the insulation installation has meant the Hall is in an excellent position to move forward into the next phase of works, including the purchase of the biomass boiler, thereby achieving economic, social and environmental sustainability.

Harmston Memorial Hall – Building refurbishment

Overview of Organisation

Harmston village is a small rural community, with a population of 800, with limited community facilities comprising a church, a public house and a village hall (the Memorial Hall) with no shops or other significant businesses. The Memorial Hall plays a major role in engaging the local and wider community from all age groups by providing a favourable venue to host a number of activities and is the only facility within the village where these can take place.

The Hall was designed in 1920 for soldiers returning home as a recreational place to recover from the stress of war. The organisation is a registered charity, with a group of Trustees and a Committee which voluntarily manages the Hall on behalf of the village. The local community has limited “community space” and without volunteers dedicating significant time and effort into helping provide a facility for local community activities, the Hall would have fallen further into neglect.

Project Background

The idea to refurbish to the Hall was developed by the Committee in Autumn 2012 after several events demonstrated that the kitchen facilities were far too cramped and showing signs of wear and tear. The Memorial Hall is nearly 100 years old and the facilities needed modernising, upgrading and some reconfiguration to the layout of ancillary spaces. The population has doubled in size since the hall was built and the Trustees had built up a regular clientele of community users: The Parish Council, University of the 3rd Age, the Women’s Institute and the Young Farmers plus three types of fitness classes; and it is available for hire (private parties such as birthdays, christenings, funeral wakes and wedding receptions). Furthermore, the local Church and the Women’s Institute hold their own fundraising events at the Hall and there is a regular programme of Lincolnshire Rural & Community Touring events, which bring in audiences from all over Lincolnshire and beyond, in addition to the fundraising events put on by the Committee at intervals.

Recorded use of the Hall totalled 816 hours during 2012-13, equating to approximately 16 hours a week, averaged across the year. The popularity of the venue, whilst encouraging, was putting a strain on the building to meet expectations of users. Indeed, feedback from a spring 2013 survey of local residents emphasised the need to upgrade and modernise the Hall.

Project Delivery

In early 2013, the Hall Committee decided to establish a team to specifically manage the refurbishment project called “The Operation Heartbeat Team”. The project was costed at £122,000 which included an extension and refurbishment of the kitchen, new storage facilities and structural alterations for the toilets, with some refitting works.

A Grants team – volunteers from the Committee - was set up to research the grant funding opportunities and an Events team was established to develop a programme of fundraising, all acting in a voluntary capacity. “Community Lincs”, the community infrastructure organisation for Lincolnshire, was approached and from this a number of options were outlined (including Biffa Award grants) as well as an opportunity to attend a grants funding workshop. Four applications were made to grant funders and three of these were

successful, including £49,500 from Biffa Award. This provided the funding to successfully deliver Operation Heartbeat. Without the Biffa Award grant, only one element of the overall refurbishment work would have been delivered. In addition, there were offers of architectural and environmental services provided free of charge to the Committee plus residents who are in the building and supplies trades providing materials at cost price. Work was carried out between June - August 2014.

Project Impacts and Legacy

The Trustees reported that the community impacts have been “immense” in that there has been considerable support from local residents throughout the project. Many residents have organised fundraising events for the Committee and it has galvanised the local community and help rekindle a community spirit, notably by providing a space which helps bring together members of the established community with those in the more recent housing development (people who have moved into the village in the last 12-14 years). As such, having a usable hall has fostered greater community cohesion.

The whole community has encouraged and supported the project and as a result they are now involved in more activities within the village. The number of “Friends of Harmston Memorial Hall” has increased from 150 to 250.

Operation Heartbeat has not just been about delivering an extended and refurbished village hall but about reaching out and getting everyone to play their part in enriching their lives through community activity provided at the Hall. It is hoped that this cohesion encourages a spirit of self-reliance, enhancing the sustainability of the Hall. Since January 2013, there have been 34 fundraising events which have raised £20,000 in total.

Maintaining the Memorial Hall for future generations enables the local and wider community to continue enjoying a wide variety of activities and events bringing everyone together. Since the project started there has been a significant regeneration of interest and enthusiasm in the Memorial Hall and the events taking place there.

Hodsall Street and Ridley Village Hall

Overview of Organisation

The two hamlets of 'Ridley' and 'Hodsall Street' between Sevenoaks and Moepham are comprised of around 150 households and 400 residents. The community is widely dispersed and there are few nearby amenities. The Hodsall Street and Ridley Village Hall committee has 16 members and is supported by other community members who are active in planning, fundraising and running projects and events.

The Village Hall originally belonged to the Ministry of Defence and was acquired by the community in the late 1950's. The land around the hall was also donated to the community by the local pub and post office in the 1950s for the benefit of the community. Before renovation, the Hall was in a state of disrepair and was very difficult to heat, resulting in very low usage during the winter months. This led to a cycle of low usage and less maintenance. Furthermore the building is located amongst a number of listed buildings, within which the hall was considered to be an 'ugly duckling'. Interim repairs were attempted, including a coat of paint but this only provided a temporary aesthetic solutions. The committee members felt that they were not fulfilling their duties in providing a facility for the community and it was felt that the deterioration, if left unchecked, would have led to the loss of the building

Progress was made in 2008, when the Parish Council provided money to upgrade the toilets and, in 2010 a grant was secured to insulate the roof. It was recognised, however, that a more significant refurbishment would be necessary to safeguard the Hall as an "enabling asset" for the local community', as set out in the original 1957 Trust Deeds.

Project Background

Given the circumstances outlined above the Village Hall Committee began the process of planning and fundraising for renovations. The community bid for money to rebuild the hall in the mid-2000s but the application for funding was unsuccessful. A community survey was run in 2012 to ask what residents thought would most improve the usage of the hall and the following two aims were developed.

- 1) To improve insulation standards i.e. double glazing, and insulation in the walls and roof;
- 2) To improve the interior (e.g. heavy duty soundproofing) and exterior (replace rotten cladding).

It was anticipated that this would transform the comfort and energy efficiency of the building, leading to increased usage.

The Committee sought the advice of the Association of Village Halls in Kent and utilised materials provided by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations to investigate funding options such as the Big Lottery Awards for All. Ultimately Kent County Council provided £26,391 and the Parish Council pledged £10,000. The community fundraising included a 'Buy a Plank' scheme which raised between £4,000 and £5,000 towards costs and regular fundraising is also generated via initiatives such as a calendar with local photographs and a fete.

The trustees found out about Biffa Award funding via a Google search and successfully bid for £7,754 to purchase and install 11 new double glazed windows and fire exit and exit doors.

Project Delivery

The Committee felt that the application was relatively straightforward and did not see how it could be improved in any way. They found it beneficial to have one person as a contact as the forms did require a lot of data gathering and therefore a lot of time. The project was completed mid-2013 with no notable delays or delivery issues.

Project Impacts and Legacy

In 2012 the hall had 28 bookings which comprised of one off bookings for events such as family parties. The funding application included a target to increase the usage of the hall by 10% a year in the first 3 years. In 2013 the hall hosted 78 events and in 2014 to date (Oct) the hall hosted 170 events with a future 48 booking for the rest of the year. These booking far exceed the target within the application.

The nature of the bookings has also changed from one off events to regular classes such as weekly Thai Chi, Yoga, Craft and Camera Clubs as well as village events such as the monthly Big Breakfast and the Harvest Supper. Having the hall as focal point for village activities such as the Big Breakfast is thought to have brought people in these dispersed hamlets together, encouraging people to interact and get to know their community.

The Biffa Award funding of £7,754 represented a significant amount for this community project and was considered an essential component to the interdependent funding streams. The Committee felt that the overall project would not have gone ahead in the absence of the Biffa Award funding as other options had been explored and the community's financial contribution had already exceeded expectations. That said, the significance of Parish Council funding was highlighted in that it demonstrated local support.

The Committee see this project as the start of works at the village hall and are currently seeking permission for an extension to provide a larger kitchen and a small break-out meeting room as well as installing wi-fi and improving storage. The aim is to increase daytime usage by attracting local business courses and/or play groups who have asked for these additional facilities.

Leicester Secular Society – Building refurbishment

Overview of Organisation

Leicester Secular Society (LSS) is the oldest society of its kind in England, dating back to 1851. It has been in its current building in Leicester city centre since 1881. The building is owned by the Leicester Rationalist Trust which allows the LSS to use the building as its sole long-term beneficiary.

The Society promotes an inclusive and pluralist society free from “religious privilege, prejudice and discrimination” and supports various campaigns as well as being an advocate of free thinking.

At time of review the Society has a Board of 9 Directors drawn from an active volunteer base of 20 people and with more than 160 members in total. The skills mix of the key Directors is quite diverse, including a former Furth Education College Faculty Head, a private landlord, a former City Councillor and the President is a former Chief Executive of a medium sized housing association.

Project Background

The building is configured over three storeys, with a long term tenant operating a dance class on the first floor and a martial arts club in the basement. This project concerned the upgrading of facilities on the ground floor, which features a main hall and a configuration of ante-rooms and a kitchen.

The need to refurbish and reconfigure a number of aspects of the ground floor of the hall had been a concern for the organisation for some time. Some key issues were:

- a small office space was located within one corner of the main hall, which was far from ideal in terms of having a dedicated quiet office space and also reducing the main hall capacity);
- toilets and access points were not Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant or up to modern standards;
- a kitchen which was dilapidated and did not meet hygiene standards; and
- the main hall needed to be refreshed and improvements were required, including to the perimeter fixed seating, in the provision of a new door/fire exit point, repositioning radiators and installation of new lighting, an audio loop and better audio-visual facilities.

These works were necessary to bring the overall facility up to a higher standard and to help the LSS retain existing users as well as seek to attract new users. Whilst the facility is hired out at very reasonable rates (£31 for a morning or afternoon or evening), the LSS feared it could lose its place in the market for community space within Leicester. Accessible toilets and decent quality kitchen facilities were said to be minimum requirements for any organisation looking to hire a large meeting room.

Project Delivery

In 2012 a small Working Group (of three Directors) was established to focus on the refurbishment works, obtain costings and seek funding. The refurbishment works were estimated at £120,000. The organisation approached the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and negotiations progressed until HLF felt it would not meet its criteria and suggested Biffa Award as an option.

The Biffa Award grant together with the Society's own resources enabled £80,000 of refurbishment work to be delivered. New disabled access toilet facilities are set off the entrance point, new office and storage space has been created by utilising a redundant part of the building and bringing it into use; the kitchen is fully usable and of good quality; and the main hall has its original features uplifted through sensitive redecoration, lighting has improved and the projector facilities and audio-loop enable presentations to be delivered much more effectively.

Project Impacts and Legacy

The grant has been transformative in its impact. Bookings have doubled since the work was completed and room hire income has risen from £5,000 to £12,000 per annum.

LSS has also managed to attract daytime users. The hall is let for 2 days a week to a training provider running courses to help unemployed people into work. The array of bookings now includes meetings for: a number of trade unions; conservationists; a cycling group; an orchestra; crafts group; campaigning groups; Home Start; Leicester Social Forum; Leicester Women's Forum; WEA; an arts group; and yoga amongst others. One of the Directors has a monthly slot on Radio Leicester and promotes the venue on that programme plus referrals and a higher profile locally have all helped to generate more interest and this has been translated into more bookings.

With a city centre location it is a good venue for those tied to public transport and accessible in general terms. The facility upgrades afforded by the Biffa Award grant have enabled the organisation to promote the community space to (and have been successful in attracting) new user groups and the profile of LSS and the Hall has increased as a result.

Linskill and North Tyneside Community Development Trust - Heating Improvements

Overview of Organisation

Linskill and North Tyneside Community Development Trust was set up in 2003 as a not for profit company limited by guarantee and has since become a registered charity.

The Trust was formed to develop and manage the Linskill Centre with the aim of turning it into a successful, self-sustaining centre, providing the community with somewhere they can come to learn, relax and engage in activities. The Trust completed a community asset transfer of the centre in April 2006, agreeing a 30 year peppercorn lease with North Tyneside Council. Gradually over time, the Trust has invested in the Linskill Centre, securing capital grants and fundraising to improve the facilities at the Centre. In addition, by securing a five year revenue grant from the Big Lottery Fund, the Trust was able to fund key staffing posts to help develop the activities and services provided by the Centre.

Today, the Linskill Centre is a thriving community centre with 82,000 visits from people across North Tyneside community each year. The Centre has:

- 35 permanent tenants hiring space within the Centre
- 50 casual user groups who offer activities and classes on a weekly basis
- A community cafe open six days a week, providing affordable and healthy food
- Linskill Nursery - offering affordable and flexible full day childcare
- An events department providing large scale community events
- A community garden project providing space for volunteers to grow vegetables and fruit for our cafe

The Trust is nearing 100% financial sustainability by maximising the income generation approaches above and this will allow the organisation to become less reliant on grant funding and more financially secure for future generations to benefit from the Centre.

Project Background

Since Linskill and North Tyneside Community Development Trust completed a community asset transfer of the Centre in April 2006 the need to invest in improving the building has been a key requirement. The lack of investment in the years leading up to the community asset transfer meant that the situation was become more acute as time passed.

Annual surveys revealed that the heating was a key concern for users of the building. The boiler that served half of the building space was inefficient and often broke down meaning that during the winter months the building was uncomfortably cold for users. The maintenance team spent a significant amount of time and expense undertaking short term fixes to the system. A package of necessary improvements were scoped and resources sought, not only from Biffa Award but other sources.

Project Delivery

Awareness of Biffa Award grants was initially established via a link in the Funding Information North East (FINE) e-bulletin. Personal contact was made with a Biffa Award representative at a funding fair, and this discussion stimulated the decision to submit an expression of interest.

The previous inefficient and unreliable boiler was based in the basement. This area was prone to flooding, impacting upon reliability and access to the boiler. The new heating system is straightforward to operate remotely via computer. It enables temperatures to be set in different rooms and is simple for staff to monitor and control room temperature across the building.

The Biffa Award grant has been vital in funding capital works. The Trust is aware that limited alternative grants for capital work are available, for example, the centre is not located within a disadvantaged community, despite serving people from such areas and other vulnerable people, so is not eligible for relevant Big Lottery Fund grants. The Biffa Award grant has been invaluable, and the expectation is that without this grant then the improvements would not have been undertaken to date. Alongside improvement to the heating system the building has benefitted from double glazing and the recent addition of solar panels.

Project Impacts and Legacy

The investment in the heating system makes the facility more comfortable for those attending and reduces the Trust's energy consumption and carbon footprint. In total, improvements made include 35,000kgs in carbon saving per year and a reduction in annual energy bills of £9,000 per annum.

The improved heating system has reduced the maintenance burden, both in terms of direct cost and staff time. This has enabled greater time to be allocated to improving other parts of the building and improving the overall offer to tenants and the wider community.

A number of users rely upon the space being at a consistent and reliable temperature. For example, the Percy Hedley Foundation provides support on site for people with multiple physical disabilities and a comfortable environment is therefore essential for people that have particular medical conditions. Importantly, since the Biffa Award grant-funded improvements, the number of individuals supported by the Percy Hedley Foundation continues to increase.

Casual room hire continues to grow with community rooms being used by an increasing number of diverse groups of all ages and backgrounds. The variety of activities offered includes health, fitness, education, children's groups, employability and arts & crafts. The reception team, which manages the casual room bookings, employed an additional member of staff during 2013/14 in response to demand. The 2013/14 annual report highlights that monitoring and evaluation forms completed by users throughout the year were very positive.

Poppleton Road Memorial Hall, York - Refurbishment

Overview of Organisation

Poppleton Road Memorial Hall is located about a mile from York City Centre and sits on a 460 sq. m. site which includes hard standing and a garden. The Hall was founded in 1946 by local residents keen to establish a lasting memorial to their neighbours who had been killed in bombing raids during World War II, and while serving with the armed forces. A vacant site was leased from the LNE Railway Co. and a wooden hut acquired from a nearby RAF base.

By the mid-1980s it was apparent that old Hall had reached the end of its useful life. In 1990 it was rebuilt following a six year fundraising campaign in which a team of volunteers raised more than £30,000 towards the total cost of £130,000, the balance being met by grants from businesses, grant making trusts and York City Council. Immediately prior to the new build the site's freehold was acquired from British Rail Engineering Ltd.

The entire site including hard standing and rear garden surrounds are managed by the Hall Committee for Community benefit. Income is generated from hire of the 100 seat auditorium and a 15 seat meeting room, with hire fees kept reasonably low to maintain community use. There is no membership requirement and Hall hire is offered in the context of non-discriminatory policies, other than the sole restriction of not accepting party bookings for teenagers (following unfortunate past experiences). In line with its Planning Consent conditions, the Hall is available for hire from 0800-2300 Monday-Saturday and 0900-1900 on Sunday. Use of the Hall is promoted via a website (www.poppletonroadhall.org.uk), via the Hall's Facebook page and through the York CVS Citizens Guide.

At the time of the Biffa Award application, the Hall Management Committee had 11 members, now increased to 13 of whom 4 are Trustees and have vested in them responsibility for ownership of assets, with the charity itself being an unincorporated body that cannot own assets. All regular users can have a place on the Committee by right and any local resident with skills and time to offer is encouraged to come on board. The Committee meets every other month and also holds an AGM to which all local residents are invited. The Hall has two part-time staff (a booking secretary/caretaker and a cleaner

Project Background

Having fulfilled its role perfectly adequately over the first 20 or so years of its life, it was apparent that the Hall required refurbishment/repair. Users and local residents had reported loose and fallen pointing, prompting a detailed site inspection by the Hall Committee in July 2011. Up to that point, refurbishment/repair had been undertaken by a combination of Committee volunteers and Community Payback clients accessed through the Probation Service. However, it was apparent that some of the work required was more specialist, for example involving working at height for which the Hall Committee was not insured. The aim of the project was to carry out essential repairs to the exterior fabric of the Hall, keep it fit for purpose and enable it to continue to offer low cost accessible room hire for community activities.

The Committee has previously managed similar small grants: in 2008 it received City Council grants to develop a website and install new emergency lighting and heat sensors to meet new fire regulations; in 2009 BT Community Connections donated a laptop, router and a year's internet subscription, whilst Grassroots paid for a new combi boiler; in 2010 Big Lottery Fund paid for a projector and screen as well as a new carpet for the lobby area; and in 2011 improvements to the kitchen were undertaken. Since the Biffa Award funded work was completed, further grants have been secured from the Two Ridings Foundation, the Co-op Community Fund and the City Council.

The Biffa Award scheme was identified using the York CVS Funder Finder facility. Whilst there were other options, Biffa Award was an attractive option because it appeared accessible and straightforward. Experience through the application and grant claims process has confirmed the Biffa Award to have been one of the more user-friendly grant sources.

Project Delivery

The project was funded by a Biffa Award grant of £3,100 towards a total project cost of £3,258. This covered the costs of: render and pointing repairs (£1,070); fascia board renewals (£908); external wall repairs (£520); and roof tile repairs (£75). It was described as a short (2 week) and uncomplicated project, that started and finished in April 2012. The work was undertaken by a local building contractor, with support from 10 volunteers.

Given the time lag between applying for grants and success being confirmed, the Committee commonly adds a contingency to quotes received for undertaking work, in order to ensure that any cost increases in the interim can be covered. Whilst experience has demonstrated this is a prudent approach, it can lead to an under-spend where not all of the contingency is required. In this instance there proved to be an underspend on the budget, but those administering the Biffa Award grant consented to this being used on the garden to the rear of the Hall. Specifically, it paid for the removal of the remnants of play equipment left behind when a play group relocated, and the creation of an area of decking and seating. This has both removed a hazard and provided an attractive and useful amenity.

Project Impacts and Legacy

Although the assessment paper for the project anticipated zero impact, the works have helped to sustain use by the 2,000 people who access the Hall each year, generating a total of 12,000 visits (i.e. an average of 6 each per year). However, these numbers mask significant impacts on specific groups of people. For example, the Monday Club provides a group of 15-20 elderly people (most of them living on their own) with an opportunity to get out of their house and socialise with their peers. Consultations with group members clearly demonstrated the value they place on being able to come to the Hall – there being no feasible alternative venues – and the vital role it plays in combatting social isolation.

In addition, the Biffa Award grant has enabled the Hall Committee to conserve its financial reserves and/or avoid having to raise charges. It is policy to maintain reserves equating to six months' running costs. More generally, enhancements to the exterior of the building are expected to prove attractive to both existing and future hirers, helping the Hall to maintain and possibly even increase its income.

Open Doors; Open Hearts; Thriving Communities, Golcar (Huddersfield)

Overview of Organisation

St John the Evangelist is situated in Golcar, a rural village around 5 miles west of Huddersfield. It was established in 1850, and is managed by the Parochial Church Council (PCC), which comprises around a dozen members. In addition another 20 or so volunteers are involved in managing and maintaining the facilities. In respect of any alterations to/development of the building, the Church is accountable to the Diocesan Advisory Committee.

The church is open, staffed and available to the general public weekdays between 9.00am and 1.00pm and on Sunday from 8.30am until 12.30 pm. In addition, it is used extensively at other times by community and church groups. As well as being used as a church (for weddings, funerals and baptisms) community groups hire the space for their own regular activities as well as facilities being used on an ad hoc basis for meetings and family events unrelated to church services or established community groups. Use of facilities is promoted in a variety of ways, including the Friends of St Johns' newsletter (distributed by hand to local households), the Church Magazine and a website (www.johns4u.org). In common with many villages, perhaps the most powerful means of communication is via word of mouth.

Project Background

Although only 5 miles from Huddersfield, the topography of the area and poor transport communications engender a sense of isolation. This is felt most acutely by the elderly and those without access to private transport. Golcar does not have a village hall or central meeting place and there are no other community facilities nearby, other than the local youth club, which is fully utilised on evenings and on weekends. The Methodist Church is outside the centre of the village and access is particularly difficult for those with mobility issues.

In 1992 the Church building was developed to offer more flexibility, creating a meeting room, kitchen and toilets. This had the effect of significantly boosting the number of people using the facilities, including those with no connection to the Church. However, by around 2010 it had become apparent that the heating system was inadequate and was restricting use, particularly in the winter months.

In 2009 a feasibility study was commissioned and its recommendations were put on display in order to encourage further comments, which were incorporated into another round of consultations with Church users and the wider community. This took the form of open meetings, workshops, and surveys, with questionnaires distributed via local pubs, the library, doctors' surgeries, the post office, local museum, schools, a local drop by centre, charity shops etc. In addition, leaders of children's and young people's groups facilitated discussions amongst their members. Feedback identified that the main priority for the majority of local people was better heating.

Shortly in advance of submitting the Biffa Award application, the PCC secured funding for a new floor in the main church area and a replacement of fixed pews with moveable seating, in order to enable it to host additional activities, such as dances and larger parties. However, no such activities could be attracted without addressing the issue of poor heating.

Project Delivery

The aim of the project was to provide a warm and welcoming church building, available for a wide variety of community uses, without cold weather being a limiting factor. The project was taken forward by a Working Group, which comprised six volunteers including an experienced engineer. The Group operated within strict guidelines laid down by the PCC to which it was required to report on a regular basis. Whilst the Working Group made recommendations (e.g. on contracting) decision making resided with the PCC. Plans for the new system were approved by the Diocesan Advisory Committee, after consultation with its heating expert.

The procurement process involved inviting tenders from three contractors, each of which was scored against set criteria. As part of this process, the Working Group visited installations undertaken by each of the tendering companies. Although the Group was made up of volunteers, their approach was professional and extremely thorough.

The project has provided: zoned heating in the main areas of the Hall (nave & community room); a radiator and hot water supply in the disabled toilet; stand-alone gas heaters for use in the meeting rooms and administrator's office; and a new hot water system in the kitchen. It was completed within six weeks. Crucially, the system that has been installed is customised to the needs of the building. The draughts passing around stained glass windows cannot be stopped and so have to be heated, but in such a way as not to damage the windows. The system therefore involves new radiators and the re-commissioning of floor vents not used for nearly 50 years, as well as the installation of a new vent.

The total cost of the project was £48,738, with the Biffa Award grant covering around 90 per cent of this, with the balance met by a private individual. The accounts for the project were kept by the PCC Treasurer, who was not a member of the Working Group. The assistance provided by the Biffa Award team was greatly appreciated as was its understanding when it became necessary to modify the project slightly.

Project Impacts and Legacy

Users are now able to enjoy the facilities in greater comfort (no longer having to wear their coats in colder periods) and new activities are now possible (e.g. the Brownies having sleepovers). In the nave, an operating temperature of 18 degrees can now be achieved within three hours, marking a vast improvement on the previous situation.

The Community Room is now booked at almost all available times. The world renowned Colne Valley Male Voice Choir has performed in the building, with more than 200 people in attendance – something that would not have happened previously. Membership of the Community Choir, which meets weekly, has more than doubled. In turn, it is now able to stage three concerts a year, raising money for local charities. More 'Dinner with Friends' events can now take place, giving people living on their own more opportunities to socialise and thereby combatting isolation. In the context of Golcar Lily Day the Church is now the centre of activities, with hundreds of people passing through its doors. The ability to offer comfortable facilities has given the PCC the confidence to more actively engage local community groups and schools. In his context, there is a desire to provide better access to the parish registers and the artefacts for educational and cultural purposes. It is also important to note that the majority of users have no connections to the church, but clearly regard it as a valuable community amenity.

Thorncliffe Bowling Club

Overview of Organisation

Thorncliffe Bowling Club is a growing organisation operated solely by volunteers. The club is located to the north of Sheffield in the village of High Green on Thorncliffe Recreation Ground. It has been established for more than fifty years and has teams in a number of Sheffield leagues. Two bowling greens are open seven days a week from 31 March to 30 October. The public can attend and play at most times without booking, subject to payment of council green fees of £2.00 per hour or they can join the club for £20 per year. The club offers free coaching and loan of woods to bowl. Membership for the season is renewable every year in April, and entitles the member to either play socially, or to play in the Club Teams and Competitions. The Club regularly holds internal and external cup competitions, fun days on Sundays, charity days as well as an open day. Now the club has the necessary CRB checks and qualifications, it is hoped to train any age group to a competent level in crown green bowling.

There are currently 106 members with more than 250 casual visitors each year. Membership ranges from under 21 years to over 90 years and the Club welcomes new players of all ages and abilities to come and join. In the early 1990s Thorncliffe Bowling Club was one of the first clubs to allow women membership. They initially played with the men but quickly formed their own Ladies section with its own leagues and matches.

Project Background

The aim of the project was to provide additional shelters on the top green to enhance the spectator experience by offering protection from inclement weather. The bowling hut is too far away for people to take cover from the elements and still see the bowling. The shelters also provide temporary storage of bowling bags whilst teams (home and away) play matches as these have to be played whether it is raining or not. They also provide shelter for non-players who sit and score at these matches. Prior to the installation of the shelters, visitors from other clubs would often mention the lack of cover whilst scoring for other team members on the top green. It significantly improves disabled viewing on the top green as this has better wheelchair access. The club researched a number of different options before determining the most suitable design for the club.

Project Delivery

The shelters have been a success in improving the experience of players and spectators. Without the Biffa Award funding it would have taken 3 to 5 years of self-generated funding via raffles, car boot sales, etc. to build up the club's reserves to fund the installation of the shelters.

The project is one element of a wider programme of smaller improvements to enhance facilities/the environment. The Club is reclaiming weed areas for gardens to provide a flowered area just for people to sit even if no bowling is in progress. Topsoil removed to make space for the shelter was reused elsewhere on the site to form new flower beds. The club has committed time and effort to ensuring that the grant provided value for money. Volunteers prepared the ground and the concrete bases for the shelters, reducing potential external cost and minimising expenditure solely on the purchase, delivery and installation (i.e. bolting to the ground) of the shelters.

The club first became of Biffa Award funding via the South Yorkshire Funding Advice Bureau website. The application process was viewed positively, largely due to the previous experience of the Fundraising Officer in bidding for funding and the ongoing support from the Biffa Award grants team.

Project Impacts and Legacy

The Biffa Award funding has been a key factor in improving the offer of Thorncliffe Bowling Club, alongside a range of other improvements to both the bowling lawns and the players' hut that includes the changing area and kitchen. League competitions are now held at the club for the first time due to the higher standard of facilities. Spectator numbers have increased and more people from a wider catchment area are joining the club and participating in sporting and social activities.

Since the successful application the organisation is now part of a wider company limited by guarantee that is currently seeking status as a registered charity. This organisation – Thorncliffe Community Sports – also includes adjacent sporting clubs such as the tennis and football club. Together, there is a wider vision to transform facilities across the whole site, based upon a detailed masterplan previously prepared that considered the views of more than 500 local people. Progress has already been made with planned installation of a full size artificial football pitch adjacent to the bowling club and a new swimming pool at the edge of the site.

Wallasey Sea Cadets - Replacement of Old Central Heating

Overview of Organisation

Wallasey Sea Cadets “T.S. Astute”, is an independent Registered Charity, which dates back to 1938, moving to its current Headquarters at St James Hall in New Brighton, Merseyside, in 1985. Wallasey Sea Cadets is managed by a committee of 10 people and run by 24 trained voluntary staff. In addition, it is supported by a Parents and Friends Association, which helps with fundraising and other activities.

Its overriding aim is to enable young people (aged 12 to 18 years), irrespective of background or ability, to develop the qualities of self-discipline and leadership together with a sense of responsibility to themselves, their peers and to the community. There are more than 40 regularly-attending Sea Cadets and Royal Marine Cadets. The Cadets include young people with learning difficulties and/or behavioural problems, and a number from deprived backgrounds. Wirral’s rate of child poverty is 24.4%, significantly higher than the national average of 20.6% and Wallasey contains two of the most socially deprived wards in Britain. In the course of its activities, Wallasey Sea Cadets aims to educate young people to become better citizens by providing a diversion from anti-social behaviour, as well as addressing the problems of bullying and substance abuse.

Wallasey Sea Cadets is based in a regeneration area where there are little or no evening or weekend activities organised for young people. It stages activities four nights per week and at weekends with additional activities during the school holidays. Some of these activities enable participants to gain qualifications.

Project Background

The Hall is just over 100 years old and much of the heating system was original, old and inefficient, requiring a volunteer to come on site to fire up the system four to five hours in advance of meetings/activities, just to take the chill off the building during the colder months. The original coke-fired boilers were replaced by gas boilers some time prior to 1985 (when the Sea Cadets acquired the building from St James Church), but were approaching the end of their useful life. The remainder of the heating system comprised the original unlagged pipework and cast iron radiators. Annual heating bills approached £5,000.

Wallasey Sea Cadets receives no funding from the Ministry of Defence or the Royal Navy (although it does receive a small capitation grant annually from Sea Cadet HQ). However, being a uniformed group disqualifies it from applying for funding from a number of sources (some of whom wrongly assume a formal connection to the military). As such, almost all monies are self-generated, through various fundraising activities, seeking funding from a variety of bodies and individuals and requesting donations of equipment and labour.

The Sea Cadets use St James Hall for nine hours each week. It is also hired by a fitness group involving a number of older participants. It was previously used by Wallasey Tae Kwondo club weekly, by a training organisation regularly, however, these organisations no longer use the Hall as it was considered to be uncomfortably cold, and also on an ad-hoc basis by other community and charitable organisations.

Project Delivery

Fundraising for the new heating system began in May 2012, with the first donation being made by Dame Lorna Muirhead, The Lord Lieutenant of Merseyside. Subsequently, grants were secured from The Lord Leverhulme Charitable Trust, The Hemby Trust and The Bernard Sunley Charitable Trust.

In order to progress the project, the Sea Cadets approached a local developer (Neptune Holdings) who donated a boiler and the boiler manufacturers, Worcester Bosch, were then approached and they agreed to supply an identical boiler which the system requires to provide a boost in the colder weather and as back up. Subsequently, support was sought from a variety of other suppliers, who provided all of the copper pipe, copper fittings, radiator valve sets and insulation free of charge, and radiators and fan convectors at cost price.

The project was given a Biffa Award grant of £22,202, representing just over two thirds of the total project cost of £32,957. The Biffa Award grant paid for the installation of a modern heating system including zone controls, programmers and adequate insulation. A specific issue was the loss of heat in the main hall, which has a high domed ceiling. The new system utilises fan convector heaters in conjunction with de-stratification fans in the ceiling. Biffa Award monies also provided other amenities (e.g. new hand basins) and paid for the materials to renovate areas where the old system had been removed (the work being done free of charge by a parent of one of the cadets). The Sea Cadets will then cover the small annual service and maintenance costs from their core premises budget. At the same time, the hot water system was modernised to reduce the risk of scalding and Legionella, as well as provide a much more efficient and environmentally friendly means of heating water. In this regard, the agreement of those administering the Biffa Award grant to allow modest freedoms and flexibilities into project delivery was much appreciated by the Sea Cadets.

Project Impacts and Legacy

The heating system has transformed the Hall, which now offers a safer and more comfortable environment, helping to sustain core usage and, it is hoped in time, help increase the number of cadets in regular attendance and expand community usage. Use of the Hall is promoted via www.wirralwell.org and it is hoped that in being able to offer a more hospitable environment that more community groups will be attracted. It is anticipated that total user numbers will double to around 200 per week.

It is estimated that the main hall alone will save around 25 per cent of its previous fuel running costs. Hence the new system should help to both generate additional income and cut costs, making the Sea Cadets and the Hall more sustainable. In addition, the replacement of the original cast iron radiators has removed a hazard as, once the system did reach maximum heat generation, radiators became dangerously hot to touch.

Fundraising is now underway to raise £30,000 to refurbish the exterior brick and stonework at the rear of the building (which faces the sea), as well as £24,000 to refurbish the Cadets' boathouse, to provide more space and improved facilities. A local authority grant of £2,500 has already been secured. In this context, the successful delivery of the Biffa Award project has enabled the Sea Cadets to demonstrate that they can be relied upon to manage works effectively and spend money responsibly.

Culture and Recreation

Boston Castle and Courtyard Restoration, Rotherham

Overview of Organisation

Boston Castle and Courtyard are located within Boston Park, adjacent to each other. The Friends of Boston Castle and Parkland is a constituted voluntary group which was formed in July 2002 in response to an identified need to restore a neglected historical asset and, in doing so, tackle the anti-social behaviour taking place on the site. The land is owned by Rotherham MBC, with which the Friends Group works in partnership. The Group has formal (minuted) meetings on a regular basis and operates with a Chair, Secretary and Treasurer.

Project Background

This is part of a more ambitious and longer term three phase project, co-ordinated by Rotherham MBC Green Spaces. Phase one involved restoration of the exterior and interior of the castle. Phase two – this project – sought to improve a green space within the Park and refurbish the courtyard. Phase three was based on improvements to Moorgate Cemetery and the Chapel.

Prior to applying for a Biffa Award grant, the Friends Group (in partnership with Rotherham MBC) had applied for a £590,000 Heritage Lottery Fund grant to supplement a capital grant of £1.1 million from the local authority to undertake Phase 1 of the development, which was to include a purpose built learning room, café and a terrace. However, local authority cutbacks meant that the budget was reduced, albeit that most of the HLF monies were secured. Nevertheless, this meant that whilst all of the fundamental building works were completed and a roof terrace was built, the learning room and café were not developed. This in turn has had some negative impact on Phase 2 of the project, as such facilities might well have attracted more users of the amphitheatre area that the Biffa Award grant has funded.

The specific aim of Phase 2 of the project was to remodel the Castle courtyard and create a circular shaped amphitheatre with a paved performance area (the only such facility of its kind in Rotherham). This had been an unattractive space, made up of uneven and broken tarmac, interspersed with patches of grass. The intention was to provide park users with an attractive space to enjoy the park and participate in cultural events, as well as create a learning space. The design of the facility was informed by extensive consultations with a variety of groups as well as close liaison between the Friends Group and Rotherham MBC. It should be noted that in advance of the project there was a considerable amount of vandalism and anti-social behaviour taking place on the site which at times rendered that part of the Park a 'no go' area.

Boston Castle is open between April-October for 16 hours a week (from 11.00-3.00 on Tuesday, Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday). Boston Park is open to the public seven days a week, with pedestrian entrances to the site allowing 24 hour access. It was always envisaged that the Courtyard would be an open access facility, available to the public for use at any time.

Project Delivery

A Project Board was formed, with representation from the Friends Committee but mostly involving local authority staff and a dedicated Project Manager appointed by Rotherham MBC. The Project Board also included disability groups, which were able to advise on access issues and suggested the sensory planting scheme.

The Biffa Award grant provided £50,000 towards total construction costs of £90,852, with the balance being contributed by Rotherham MBC. Planning approval was achieved in advance of the grant application being submitted. These resources covered the remodelling of the current courtyard into a hard paved amphitheatre and performance area, formed into a circular shape with a spiral footpath around its circumference. In addition, a (low maintenance) sensory planting scheme has been installed in and around the courtyard, making the environment much more attractive. The project was delivered between December 2011 and June 2012, with the official opening on 4 July 2012.

During the consultation process, a number of people expressed an interest in volunteering their time during and after delivery of this project. In all, 15 volunteers were involved with the project as part of a work placement programme.

Project Impacts and Legacy

Approximately 150,000 people visited the park annually prior to the project taking place. It was anticipated that the development would attract an additional 20,000 visitors to use the park each year. Some of these new users were expected to be attracted by the park being a more attractive place to visit and socialise, and some were expected to be attracted to attend specific cultural events, including drama and musical performances. An Activity Plan was developed to ensure that the facilities being created were fully utilised. It was anticipated that a further 3,000 people would be actively involved with events, plays and from school groups.

There have been a few formal events, including drama productions staged by students from nearby Thomas Rotherham College. However, whilst an outdoor venue has its plus points, its vulnerability to inclement weather means that arranging to use the space carries some risk. The possibility of seeking funding to erect a cover was considered but thought to be impractical, and any demountable cover would require staff to erect and dismantle as well as requiring storage space and means of transportation.

The site has become popular as a spot to eat lunch during the week and for picnics on a weekend.

The successful restoration of the Castle followed by the creation of the amphitheatre and related works has encouraged the Friends Group and the Council to consider its next project, which is likely to be the neighbouring dell. A masterplan has been developed and a programme of works fully costed. This will open up the dell through the creation of new paths and incorporate features likely to appeal to children. As such, this new project will complement and enhance the work that has already been undertaken.

Bristol Old Vic Theatre

Overview of Organisation

At 250 years old, Bristol Old Vic is the oldest continually running theatre in England and the only producing theatre in the South West region. Located in a Georgian Grade 1 listed building in Bristol, it is one of the largest arts organisations in the city and contributes: a varied programme of productions; development opportunities for writers, producers and artists; education resources for schools; and support for community groups. Bristol Ferment, the artistic development department of Bristol Old Vic, provides support to artists developing new work, and an Outreach department seeks to engage with as wide an audience as possible.

Bristol Old Vic is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee, with day-to-day management overseen by an artistic director and executive director. At the time of application, the theatre supported 35 full time staff, 8 part time staff and 3 volunteers.

In the 2000s, the theatre experienced a challenging period with dwindling audiences from an 'aging' demographic. There was also a perception that programming was not engaging or at worst excluding diverse communities. Young people and community groups were benefiting from Bristol Old Vic's facilities on a regular basis, but the theatre was running beyond capacity. A need for an improved education and community offer was therefore identified, thus the theatre sought funding to undergo a significant two phase redevelopment.

Project Background

The major regeneration project was in planning for around 10 years and is being carried out in 2 phases. Phase 1, which began in 2008 includes the redevelopment of the backstage and auditorium areas. Fundraising is underway for Phase 2 which includes extensive changes to the front of house and is scheduled to begin in early 2016.

The Biffa Award project was part of the first phase of work to the backstage areas of the theatre, with £50,000 awarded to redevelop The Paint Shop. The funds contributed towards construction and refurbishment costs plus fixtures and fittings within this performance and rehearsal space. The first phase (costs for which totalled £14m) also included: climate control in the auditorium; new seating; reinstating the original "thrust" stage; movable seating to enable standing audiences; creation of a higher rake for the seating in auditorium; and delicate redecoration.

The backstage Paint Shop area was previously divided up into separate workshop areas for traditional set design methods. The production department (e.g. carpentry, metal work and painting) have been relocated to a new site on Albion Docks and the Paint Shop space has been transformed into one multi-purpose, flexible event and performance space within the main theatre complex. The space is available for community use such as: Bristol Old Vic's Young Company and visiting youth theatres. It has also allowed further development of the education programme and provided a performance space for events such as MayFest, Ferment and the Bristol Proms.

Project Delivery

The Bristol Old Vic is part way through a two phase development plan that was put together in 2008 following extensive consultation, research and design. The £50,000 Biffa Award funding was part of a £14 million redevelopment of the auditorium and back stage areas which was completed in 2011. Phase 2 is due to commence in 2016 and consists of a £19 million major development of the front of house areas.

The Bristol Old Vic describes the funding process as straightforward and provided a clear timeframe. The theatre considered it to be useful that they were required to be specific about how the money was to be spent, which encouraged focus and made it easier to define impacts.

Project delivery was delayed, with the project commencing a year later than expected (2011). This was because the work to the Paint Shop was dependent on the completion of preceding sections of the refurbishment which were delayed due to archaeological work following the discovery of multiple, and historically significant, human skeletons beneath the auditorium.

The team felt that a visit from Biffa Award/ENTRUST, in addition to completing monitoring forms would have been beneficial during this period to allow delays to be explained fully. In the theatre's experience, most awarding bodies do visit and this obviates the need to have to re-cap project details as often as was required in this instance.

Project Impacts and Legacy

The Paint Shop space now passes health and safety requirements to host a variety of activities. Currently, it is used by the Old Vic's youth theatre group, which is 20 years old and, with 340 member and a waiting list of 150 is the largest youth theatre outside of London. The youth theatre meets 30 weeks per year and costs £80 per term. The space is also used for work with schools. More than 1200 children from 30 schools have been hosted via school trips to the theatre in the last year. The theatre is seeking to expand engagement to 90 schools covering areas with the least engagement in the arts e.g. Gloucester, Radstock and Barnstable.

Growing the community and education work in the future will also allow the theatre to contribute to relevant sector strategies. Driven by the Arts Council, a focus for the sector in recent years has been engaging new and different audiences. It is hoped that the community and education work facilitated by The Paint Shop space will contribute to audience development aims as it is about creating new audiences as participants grow up being part of the theatre.

The new large entrance as part of the paint shop now allows touring companies to pull-up lorries and unload equipment very quickly and easily. The team at the Old Vic describe this as a very strong selling point when trying to attract companies to perform at the venue.

Importantly, the space will also act as the temporary entrance during the extensive front of house refurbishment due to start in 2016. The Paint Shop area will enable the theatre to remain operational during this major refurbishment project. The Paint Shop will be the temporary foyer and may include a temporary bar area. The theatre considers the Biffa Award funding to have been absolutely vital in enabling this to happen. Without it the space may never have been touched, which would have had a knock on effect on the ability to operate during the next major restoration project. The theatre therefore considers the value of the redevelopment to have been significant and far outweighs the £50,000 grant.

Burslem Cricket Club - New equipment

Overview of Organisation

Burslem Cricket Club was established in 1840. It moved to its current location, by Festival Park in Stoke-on-Trent, in 1997.

Aside from the cricket pitch itself (and a bowling green), the facility includes a pavilion which comprises a good sized function room and kitchen. Indoor and outdoor bowls (7 teams), plus the cricket clubs (3 senior and 5 junior teams) are at the core of the Club. Other users include football clubs (who use the changing room facilities) and a group that runs baby sensory sessions 2 days a week (3 groups on a Tuesday and 3 groups on a Friday).

The Club is strongly committed to its local community, believing participation in sport is a great way to keep young people “off the street” and engage them in positive activities. A number of BCC Members have been receiving training to English Cricket Board (ECB) Level 2 standard in coaching to help with the growing demand for cricket locally. The Club’s facilities are open all year round.

Project Background

Whilst the Cricket Club has maintained healthy numbers of users, it has continued to put significant effort into growing the numbers of people accessing its facilities. This has meant ensuring that it constantly seeks to enhance its facilities. The erection of practice nets was considered to be critical to helping the Club improve training facilities which in turn was expected to lead to a further increase in demand and meet a “gap” when the cricket season ends (October) through to when it re-commences (April).

Prior to the Biffa Award grant, any practicing outside the boundary meant that cricket balls could be hit onto the pitch whilst teams were playing, which was far from ideal and potentially dangerous. The club identified a need for enclosed cricket nets (three lanes) with an all-weather surface.

Project Delivery

The Club had applied to other funders previously but members considered themselves “amateurs at fundraising”. One option pursued was Sport England, but it would not fund facilities that target anyone outside the 17-25 age range.

The project itself was quite straightforward with the nets and run-up surfacing all installed without a problem. Quotations were sought from several contractors in order to ensure good value for money. The only real issue encountered was the need to secure planning permission for cricket nets – something of which the Club was unaware. This could have delayed the project by 15 weeks but the Club approached its Local Councillor to try and facilitate a speedier decision making process.

The helpfulness of the Biffa Award grants team at pre-application stage was recognised and the overall communication throughout (between funder and applicant) was welcomed by the Club. The advice provided was clear, concise and prompt.

Project Impacts and Legacy

The nets allow for practice both at times when matches are taking place but also, critically, into the winter months when other cricket clubs have to train indoors or close in the off-season. On Saturdays, from 9-12am, 12 young people can use the facilities for training and these are done on a rotating fortnightly basis so that 24 young people can train regularly on Saturday mornings. Training is videoed on camcorder so the coaches can provide feedback in more detail to help improve batting and bowling techniques. It provides those interested in cricket with a minimum of 3 months extra in a year when they can practice compared to if they did not have the Biffa Award grant-funded facilities

The quality of players is improving as the quality of training provision has improved and more are going through to county trial levels (currently the Club has u13 boys, u13 girls and u15 girls at county trials) which is good for the profile and reputation of the Club. In addition, the Club is conscious of being in a deprived area and the potential for the Club, its players and their achievements to help generate some positive recognition of the local area and inspire others to participate in sport and reap the benefits. These benefits include having a healthier lifestyle and feeling socially included. From a community perspective the Club brings people – young people and families – together, fosters a welcoming atmosphere and engenders a positive mentality to belonging to something, thereby providing a community focal point.

The Club promotes itself via Radio Stoke and the “6 towns” community radio station, on which it has a regular Saturday morning slot. In addition, the Club uses social media extensively with 1,500 followers on Twitter and a Facebook page that helps the club out to potential new members across the local community.

The Club has good links to local schools but the new facilities have encouraged them to push awareness to more schools. It is also linked to Stoke City FC’s partnership with the NHS to help raise physical activity levels amongst local people. Addressing obesity through physical activity is one aspect of the project, but the Club also sees teamwork and confidence building as issues that can be addressed through participation in cricket. The Club is considering approaching the local mosque to attract more Muslim players.

At a time when many community centres have been struggling to attract sufficient users, with ability to pay hit by personal financial constraints, Burslem CC has seen bookings increase.

The project has provided direct employment and career opportunities for local people to become coaches and gain qualifications.

The Biffa Award grant was the first such funding that the Club had accessed. It has given them confidence to apply for other grants and believes the experience will also have enhanced its prospects for success.

Dereham Windmill, Norfolk – Restoration

Overview of Organisation

The “Trustees of Dereham Windmill” is a charity, first established in 2004 but the grant applications to the Lottery Fund were unsuccessful and the windmill was boarded up in 2010 for safety reasons. The Charity was re-established with new Trustees in November 2011. The Trustees operate the windmill on a 25 year lease basis from the local Town Council.

Trustees have a variety of appropriate skills including project management. Two Trustees in particular have driven forward the organisation in recent years with their energy and enthusiasm. Whilst the focus has been on the Dereham Windmill site itself, the Trust has now built up a reputation locally for community action and has forged strong links and partnerships with local strategic agencies. The town, in Norfolk, has a population of 18,000 and this is set to increase with new housing development planned.

Project Background

Dereham Windmill was built in 1835 and is a Grade II listed building and the only surviving (of three) mills that ground corn in the local area. It is situated on the edge of the town and had fallen into a state of neglect.

A local couple, whose house overlooked the windmill, decided to do what they could to bring the windmill and the 1.3 acre site it is located on, back into some form of use. At that time it was in a state of disrepair and attracted alcohol and drugs misuse. The couple saw the need and potential to restore the windmill as a prominent and much-loved feature of the local environment. Moreover, they wanted to make active use of the windmill as a community facility and focal point and turn it into a viable project that would attract local people’s interest.

Previously, Trustees had examined options for restoring the windmill but had not explored in any detail any viable uses for the facility. With new Trustees revitalising the organisation in late 2011, the Charity set about consulting local people on what they would like the windmill to be used for. A number of ideas resulted from community consultation work, but a core mix of educational-based proposals emerged. These focussed on exhibition space for artists and for local school children to display their art work, local crafts, historical plays and to provide an “educational offer” to engage young people in understanding the historical importance of windmills to food production and as a local heritage resource.

Project Delivery

Trustees researched a number of funding options, including the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) which progressed positively until a technicality reversed the initial “support” shown by HLF.

Having secured a Biffa Award grant of £48,388, alongside other funding Grants, works began to install new windows, shutters and doors and lintel features, provide some new timbers, repair rot and install display boards and security lighting. A qualified Millwright was required to oversee works, as the nature of the restoration was highly specialist. Additional funding followed to reinstate the Windmill’s stocks and sails.

The windmill re-opened to the public in 2013 for the first time in 5 years and is open from 10.30am to 3.30pm on Wednesdays and at weekends. There are plans to provide more days and times in the week for public access but this will require additional volunteer time.

Project Impacts and Legacy

The Biffa Award grant was crucial in achieving the restoration of the windmill and its restoration as a much loved feature within the local community. This in turn has led to the Trustees having the confidence to progress to a second phase of works on the adjacent field, which will provide a visitor centre, toilet and refreshment facilities and some car parking. This new, £115,000 project has already succeeded in attracting a further Biffa Award grant together with support from the Garfield Weston Foundation, Dereham Town Council, Breckland District Council and the Paul Bassham Foundation and is due to be completed in Summer 2015.

The success of the project, and the efforts of the volunteer Trustees who have driven this forward, has put the windmill “on the map” again. Locally, it has generated significant interest, with schools actively using the site for educational reasons and to display art work (new exhibitions are staged each month) which has given young people a sense of pride in their work being displayed publicly. Local artists can apply for a residency on site.

The success of the project has energised other local community groups and some statutory partners, e.g. the local Job Centre Plus office has been engaged to look at how 18-24 year olds who are out of work could commit to volunteering opportunities at the site. With the Phase 2 project due for completion in summer 2015, there will be opportunities for volunteers to help with catering and as tour guides. By gaining hands-on experience, those who are out of work can boost their confidence, their inter-personal skills and their CVs with this opportunity. They will also receive references when applying for jobs. Volunteers who have already helped out have reported their confidence and social skills have improved immeasurably as a result of getting involved.

The project has boosted the volunteering spirit locally with some 70-80 people now providing voluntary support and a growing list of “Friends of Dereham Windmill” (numbering 100). Local businesses have been supportive too: a florist providing plants for the grounds at no charge; a photographer providing their skills at no cost; and a local student developed and maintains the website.

It has captured the imagination and energy of the community and has been turned from a problem site into a “jewel in the crown” which has acted as a genuine catalyst for local people, businesses and groups to come together. New requests have included using the windmill as a backdrop for wedding photographs and, with a marquee on site as a place to host wedding receptions. There is also a possibility of hosting an arts and crafts market and/or a farmers’ market.

Project achievements were recognised at the Biffa Awards 2014 ceremony at which it won both the “Cultural Facilities” category and the overall award for best project.

Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum, Inspiring and Engaging Everyone

Overview of Organisation

Westonbirt is the National Arboretum, the nation's museum of trees, attracting up to 350,000 visitors a year. It is internationally recognised for its collection of more than 16,000 specimens and its heritage landscape. The site is owned by the Forestry Commission, co-managed by the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum (FoWA). The FoWA charity was formed as a membership scheme for site visitors in 1985 and is now managed by 15 trustees. The day-to-day running of the site is funded through the Forestry Commission and the membership scheme funds provide sound financial reserves. Due to government spending cuts, the Arboretum now uses the membership funds to support staff costs and the project director post is jointly funded by both organisations. The membership funds also support site maintenance such as footpaths and marketing including signage and leaflets. Prior to 2011, most of the FoWA funding was provided through the membership scheme, which currently has more than 28,000 members but it was recognised that a longer term fund raising strategy would need to be developed and implemented in order for the Arboretum to be financially sustainable.

Project Background

The Biffa Award funded 'Inspiring and Engaging Everyone' project is one element within the wider 'Westonbirt Project'. The Westonbirt Project aims to improve the heritage value of the Arboretum by providing an "*inspiring, informative and engaging cultural experience*" and enhancing visitor learning. In order to achieve this, the project was divided into two phases. The first phase focused on redesigning the visitor's entry to the site by building a new Welcome Centre and accessible car park. The second phase (yet to be completed) aims to create a treetop walkway and new tree management centre.

The Inspiring and Engaging Everyone project focused on developing the Interpretation Zone and Information Plaza which will be housed within the new Welcome Centre. Prior to the project, the visitor information was situated at the Great Oak Hall, which was not much used by visitors. Building a Welcome Centre at the start of the visitors' journey aimed to create a logical flow, allowing visitors to learn about the cultural heritage, environmental issues and site management upon entry. Furthermore, the original car park was situated on a grade 1 registered landscape and a UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitat. By relocating it to the new Welcome Centre site has allowed the restoration of the natural grassland area.

Project Delivery

Alongside the Forestry Commission who helped to contribute to wider project costs, organisations such as English Heritage were consulted on the project plans. Natural England and Heritage Lottery Fund provided funding for the wider scheme. Natural England was consulted to help identify the site for the new Welcome Centre to ensure it worked with the environment and protected biodiversity.

In order to provide volunteering and training opportunities at the site, the Probation Service, Bristol Drugs Project and Groundwork were involved in project delivery. The Bristol Drugs Project built a ha-ha and drystone wall as part of the wider phase 1 developments. The RSPB and Community Wildflower Group were involved in the development of interpretation that would be used in the new Welcome Centre.

The project was given a Biffa Award grant of £500,000, which represented approximately 40% of the Welcome Centre's total cost of £1.3m and a fifth of the total Westonbirt Project cost. The team felt that without the Biffa Award funding, FoWA would not have met their fundraising target by November 2012 which would have had huge implications for the delivery of the project, which could have been delayed by a year.

Project Impacts and Legacy

The new Welcome Centre is now the first point of entry to the Arboretum, offering visitors the opportunity to meet staff and volunteers, an interpretation and learning area and an information plaza. There is a variety of interactive learning exhibits to engage visitors of different ages on the site's heritage, management and environment. The design allows members to be fast tracked and gives day visitors a much improved experience. Currently, the site attracts 350,000 visitors per annum and it is anticipated that this will increase to more than 400,000 due to the improved arrival arrangements and learning opportunities.

For FoWA, the new Welcome Centre has created a space to sign up new members. Previously, the charity used to sell its membership from the Great Oak Hall which is a building primarily used for events. A survey prior to the project highlighted that nearly two thirds of visitors did not know there was an information point at this site. Anecdotally, staff and volunteers believe there has been a marked rise in membership numbers.

The project has helped to increase the number of volunteers. Last year the Arboretum had approximately 250 volunteers, now 40 additional volunteers have been recruited to for the Welcome Centre. Their role is dedicated to enhancing the visitor experience by providing information and assistance around the Welcome Centre learning resources, supporting disabled visitors to access disability scooters and membership enquiries. There is now a formal volunteer training scheme in place and the centre is also trying to increase the diversity and range of its volunteers by creating weekend posts. There are also opportunities to be a site volunteer and help with tree plantation and maintenance tasks.

The complementary element of the Phase 1 Westonbirt Project which relocated and upgraded the car park has meant that the site is more accessible due to more disabled spaces. Also, by removing cars from the Grade 1 registered landscape, it can now be restored to rich grassland. The new car park site has been situated on land that wasn't registered or protected, allowing the topsoil to be utilised elsewhere.

A number of partner organisations are actively involved in this restoration project. For example the Cotswold Fungus Group, a local wildflower group and bees and butterflies groups help monitor the increasing number of species as a result of additional downs land areas and less invasive traffic.

Once Phase 2 of the Westonbirt Project is complete, the new tree management centre allows the site to be more efficient and improve their environmental credentials for example a new wash area for the sites tractors. The new treetop walkway will provide greater access to the Silk Wood, an ancient semi-natural woodland, which currently includes steep slopes unsuitable for mobility scooters. Building this walkway enables visitors to be closer to the trees, providing more interaction and interpretation with the history and cultural of the site. Furthermore, it is also hoped that the walkway will create a visitor destination to compete with other local tourist attractions such as Slimbridge Wildfowl and Wetland Centre and National Trust properties.

Harwell Jubilee Playground, Reconstruction

Overview of Organisation

Harwell Parish Council is a body composed of 11+ members, working together to serve the community of Harwell village in Oxfordshire. The Parish Council aims to bring local issues to the County Council's attention and support the development of the village, from land, planning and amenities to social issues and wellbeing.

Harwell Parish Council has owned the site of the Jubilee Playground since 1920 when the fields were purchased for recreation. Contours and mounds were added 25 years ago using soil from a small redevelopment in the village. At the time of the funding application, between 400 and 500 people were estimated to use the original play area.

The organisational committee that has overseen the reconstruction project was created for the purpose of managing the work, meaning that there was not a single entity or organisation in place with this remit prior to the project.

Project Background

The desire to redevelop the Jubilee playground was brought to the Council's attention following a petition to 'Save Harwell Playground', initiated by two students who attended a local school. An adult volunteer at Our Street Corner Youth Club, which the students were members of, encouraged them to raise the issue with the Council at the Annual Parish meeting. Following this, a small adult committee was formed to take the project forward, with the involvement of local teenagers.

The initiative started small with around ten people, and drew attention to the absence of sufficient play facilities in the village, particularly facilities to occupy young adults. The aim was to rebuild the village play area and install new and challenging equipment to suit all ages, in particular, teenagers, as well as young adults with learning disabilities.

Views of local residents, youth groups, schools and community groups were collected and informed the development of the project e.g. the nearby Home Farm Trust Unit was consulted on how the project could best serve young adults with learning disabilities. Playground firms were then contacted and several designs produced, with the community updated throughout the process. The resulting redevelopment was split into two stages, with Phase 1 involving the redesign of the original fenced area for under 12s, and Phase 2, involving the redesign of the area outside of this to be designated for older children or young adults.

Initially, smaller funding grants were sought (with varying success) following leads provided by contacts, as well as funds from local business and groups, for example, the local gardeners' club. Once momentum gathered and the project attracted greater community interest, larger grants were applied for and a £50,000 grant from WREN enabled the completion of Phase 1 of the reconstruction.

The Parish Council then applied for a Biffa Award grant to finance two particular pieces of equipment for the Phase 2 development, namely: an Inclusive Play Revolve (£5,685); and a Jupiter Play Seat Combination (£4,315 towards the total cost). The remainder of funding for Phase 2 was generated through a combination of funding from local businesses the local authority and various small grant schemes.

Project Delivery

The Council was extremely positive about the support and guidance provided by the Biffa Award team, describing advice given throughout the process as very helpful and valuing a visit to Harwell by representatives from the Biffa Award grant team. The prompt response following the expression of interest was also appreciated and overall, the Council was very positive about the application and delivery process.

A suggested area for improvement was to streamline the application process for small grants (in comparison to larger grant applications) to reflect the smaller scale of project; it was felt that some questions were repeated and that there were a lot of requirements to complete, though this was understood given the accountability involved in awarding funds.

The work itself went smoothly, fitting in well with the other pieces of construction that had taken place and not necessitating significant external management. Members of the committee did attend and oversee progress on a regular basis.

The delivery and management of project funds was overseen by Harwell Parish Council, who also acted as a third party funder. This meant that there were not any worries about drawing down of funds and the project team could complete without excessive concern in this regard.

Project Impacts and Legacy

The consensus was that without the Biffa Award grant, Phase 2 of the playground reconstruction either would not have happened or would have taken years longer to complete. It was felt that other funding options had been exhausted and that seeking additional sources would have significantly extended the project timeline.

Following the funding, a new community facility - which is accessible to all and open all hours - has been successfully established. The Council described the playground area as always well used and said it has supported a number of positive community impacts. In particular, the project has helped raise young people's self-esteem and meant that residents hold more positive attitudes towards them. Initial views on providing such a facility for older teenagers was that they would be likely to vandalise any equipment installed, but as the young people have been involved in the process and feel a sense of ownership this has not occurred; more positive attitudes towards teenagers in particular have been generated as a result of this. The provision of the equipment also provides teenagers with a place where they can enjoy themselves, be active and which they can be proud to have helped create a community asset. The playground has helped to tackle play deprivation, reduce anti-social behaviour and promoted greater community and inter-generational cohesion, representing a facility that was previously lacking and in which the community was initially reluctant to invest.

The more funding the playground has received, the more support it has attracted, and since the Biffa Award grant further monies have been provided. This includes £5,000 for the playground and £10,000 provided by the Council for four exercise machines. The positivity and success surrounding the project has also garnered greater community support for other projects, and £200,000 has since been secured to refurbish the village hall. It was reported that as a result of the project, residents now believe that other areas of the village can be improved and are more likely to 'get on board' with local initiatives.

The project was a nominee in the recent Biffa Awards ceremony, and has received attention as a positive example of what a village can achieve. It was a runner-up in its category.

Lister Residents Association: Lister Community Green

Overview of Organisation

Lister Residents Association (LRA) brings together home owners within a crescent of 15 houses that arc around a community garden (Lister Community Green). LRA was established in 1995. The ethos of the organisation is to strive for a “cleaner, safer, greener and more inclusive neighbourhood”, thereby creating a more attractive, healthier and environmentally sustainable environment for the benefit of the local community. Currently, 13 of the 15 houses on Lister Crescent pay £2 per week into a common fund which pays for the maintenance and upkeep of the Garden (one house is owned by a landlord and occupied by tenants, none of whom wish to participate in LRA and the other house is vacant).

The development and upkeep of the Garden is LRA’s main focus. In addition, it organises a Christmas Community Event each year, and has engaged in other activities on an ad hoc basis, for example, distributing health awareness packs locally on behalf of the NHS and community safety packs on behalf of the City Council/the Police.

Project Background

Lister Community Green (measuring about 100 feet by about 60 feet) is jointly owned and cared for by the residents on Lister Crescent. The land was acquired by local residents in the 1950s in order to prevent its use as a milk delivery depot. However, for decades the site was overgrown, neglected and unused, other than for fly tipping and as a congregation point for young people involved in anti-social behaviour. Over the past 10 years or so the site has been improved substantially. This commenced with the award of a grant of £6,700 from Riverside Housing, a local Registered Social Landlord, which paid for some basic. Subsequently, a series of other grants were secured to resource further phases of the development and to purchase garden furniture and outdoor games.

The garden is walled and accessed via a locked gate (designed to prevent access to those who may engage in anti-social behaviour) with each LRA member having a key. Grant eligibility requires access to the general public on at least 104 days per year, which may be a moot point in this instance. The uses of the garden are restricted (e.g. no ball games) in order to ensure that the lawn and shrubs are not damaged and to avoid conflicting uses.

At the time the Biffa Award grant was made, LRA had obtained a variety of art works for display on the site, including two statues of Demeter (the Greek Goddess of plants and planting) which now stand at the entrance to the garden. In one corner there is a display comprising a Native American totem pole, a family of African giraffe sculptures and two slate monoliths that had been commissioned to commemorate Liverpool’s 800th birthday and Capital of Culture status. In another corner are sculptures commissioned for Liverpool’s Capital of Culture celebrations and subsequently acquired by LRA (including a limited edition ‘Superlambanana’).

The LRA Committee is Chaired by a former Liverpool City Council Community Development Officer, and has a Treasurer and Secretary. It meets reasonably regularly, with occasional meetings open to all members and the project was discussed at a number of such meetings. In addition, residents were consulted via a community newsletter produced by LRA and hand delivered to 80-90 households locally. LRA also has a website (www.listerresidents.org) but believes that the most powerful communication tool locally is word of mouth.

Project Delivery

In May 2011 the project was awarded a Biffa grant of £1,200 representing virtually all of the cost of pruning four mature trees (£450), planting perennial shrubs and bushes (£450) and the purchase of equipment for a community composting scheme (£300). The project took around six months to complete. Through his previous role at the City Council, the LRA Chair was aware of a number of potential funding sources, including Biffa Award, which he considered especially suitable. Through the accumulation of member subscriptions, LRA would have been able to pay for the works itself eventually, but this would have taken a significant period of time and comprised the ability to plant bedding plants and carry out other similar works. The Biffa Award grant was therefore very helpful in accelerating progress, albeit the application and monitoring processes were considered somewhat bureaucratic relative to other grant schemes.

Project Impacts and Legacy

The pruning of trees has addressed the issue of having quite dominant and potentially unsafe structures on the site.

The perennial shrubs and bushes have been carefully selected to mature over time. Indeed, the Garden is not expected to realise its full visual potential for several years.

The introduction of 'Lister Compost Corner' has ensured that waste materials arising from work on the project as well as garden waste products from the gardens of Lister Crescent residents are recycled in an environmentally friendly/sustainable manner. This has had the dual benefits of reducing fly tipping/waste disposal and providing residents with compost at no cost to them.

It was estimated that around 300 people would benefit from the project each year. In practice, use is almost exclusively by residents of Lister Crescent (plus visiting family and friends), although an annual barbecue is staged in the Garden to which residents of neighbouring streets are invited. It is reported that some young people are involved in doing maintenance work and planting, as well as helping out at the annual barbecue, helping to secure their sense of ownership of the Garden and shaping its perception as a community facility (which may have helped minimise vandalism).

LRA has continued to maintain the site and sustain the Garden through the efforts of its volunteers and by successfully fundraising to resource further improvements.

Its achievements have been recognised locally, regionally and nationally. This includes North West in Bloom/Britain in Bloom Winner (various categories each year 2004-2014), North West Winner of The People newspaper Cultivation Street Awards 2013 and various others.

The project has provided significant benefits to those living adjacent to it, providing a pleasant environment within which family and community activities can take place. Albeit to a modest extent, it has encouraged volunteering (delivering health and wellbeing benefits to the individuals concerned) and promoted higher levels of environmental responsibility amongst local residents. Perhaps most significantly, it has engendered a significant degree of community pride, not least in promoting positive messages about an area about which external perceptions are commonly negative.

Lawford Parish Council Riverview Project - New equipment

Overview of Organisation

Lawford is a settlement within the district of Tendring in Essex and is under pressure to expand with new housing development. The Parish Council has responsibility for some community facilities, such as playgrounds and playing fields etc.

Project Background

The Parish Council had accessed Biffa Award grants previously and these had been assessed by the grants team to have been delivered successfully. This encouraged the applicant to believe that they had a good chance of success, provided they adequately articulated the need for the project.

Quite simply, the project focused on a children's playground where the roundabout needed to be replaced and the "fall-off" area required surfacing to bring it up to modern (BSEN) standards, as well as around the children's slide.

The playground itself is situated at the back of some houses and between two local schools so it attracts a lot of use, especially after school. It is also situated adjacent to an open green space which local people use and walk/cycle through. Approximately 1,000 local people are believed to use the site/playground regularly.

Project Delivery

A £5,000 grant was approved in 2011 as part of project costs of £6,529. The works were said to have been completed effectively and promptly. The facility is inspected by RoSPA each year as part of safety monitoring.

The helpfulness of the Biffa Award grants team at all stages was recognised as having made for a very positive experience.

Project Impacts and Legacy

The replacement roundabout and improved modern surface has meant local children can make more use of the playground and can use the facility much more safely. The project has provided a new lease of life for an important feature of the community, especially for children and families.

It has helped revitalise a key community space where children can enjoy themselves and therefore has encouraged them to spend time more outside engaging in physical activities. It is believed that parents have been pleased to have a safe outdoors venue to take their children to play, in addition to which it provides a location at which they have been able to meet and get to know other families.

The Parish Council has the ability and awareness, although not always the capacity, to review appropriate funding options for works like this project and apply for grant funding for developments within its community that form part of a wider programme of community investments. The impact on the organisation is therefore quite minimal as they have the skills to seek out and make a case for funding but the impact on the community is tangible for quite small sums of money that can make a real difference to the quality of life for local people.

Sapphire School of Gymnastics - New equipment

Overview of Organisation

The Sapphire School of Gymnastics, in Hemel Hempstead, is a charity and company limited by guarantee. It dates back to the 1970s, when a local gymnastics coach wanted to provide out-of-school-hours gymnastics classes to local young people. It employs more than 40 staff and has 10 volunteers. The current Manager was a regular participant and when the coach died in 1992 she agreed to help out and keep the club running and since then has led the organisation.

In 2013, having operated out of a local leisure centre, the school became a two site operation, occupying a large industrial unit. This was in response to helping address growing demand, which increased significantly as a consequence of people's interest in gymnastics from the London 2012 Olympics.

The organisation and demand for its activities and facilities would appear to be going from strength to strength, with 1,200 members and a long waiting list (of 600). It draws in people from a sub-regional catchment including parts of North London. The nearest alternative facilities are in Watford, Heathrow and Hillingdon.

The organisation has built some very good relationships with local Councillors, MPs and the local Mayor. It has also developed links with five local schools, two of which cater for pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN). The School's highest profile former member is Max Whitlock who won team and individual bronze medals at London 2012.

Project Background

Prior to the London 2012 Olympics, the School had a waiting list of 1,000 young people. In seeking reassurance about the viability of expanding, the School asked all those on the list if they would commit to using the new facility should it go ahead. They received around 800 such "commitments" and various site options were explored across the Hemel Hempstead area. The industrial unit now occupied was offered on a 10 year lease on favourable terms. Change of planning use was required and the Council was supportive of this.

Project Delivery

The School received funding from the Gymnastics Association which paid for the provision of an entrance area, seated viewing zone/gallery, office space and toilet provision. Thanks to the kind support of local traders/workers who heavily discounted their charges, this work was completed for around £30,000 rather than the £100,000 originally quoted.

A Biffa Award grant of £50,000 was requested (and approved) to cover the costs of some of the fixed equipment, which included asymmetric bars, beam and matting, vault run up and landing area, ballet mirrors and bar and the sprung floor area.

The project has kick started a five year expansion plan and a third unit may well be required to meet increasing demand. The organisation appreciated the support of the Biffa Award team at all stages, especially at pre-application stage, providing helpful, clear and concise advice.

Project Impacts and Legacy

The Biffa Award grant was critical to the School being able to transform the unit into a dedicated gymnastics facility.

Very few sports facilities are so well geared towards pre-school age whilst at the same time being able to cater for aspiring European, World and Olympic champions. The school caters for all abilities, from beginners and those who just want some “fun activity” to those who are serious about the sport. The School directly accesses people from the poorest local neighbourhoods in an attempt to be inclusive.

As an activity, gymnastics helps with balance, co-ordination and flexibility and has direct health benefits, both generally in terms of building muscle, encouraging healthier lifestyles and tackling childhood obesity and specifically in addressing ADHD and Dyspraxia. In addition, it encourages discipline and teamwork.

The School takes children from two SEN schools on Friday afternoons who would not otherwise have access to this kind of facility.

It has provided direct employment and career opportunities for local people to become coaches and gain Level 2 coaching qualifications.

From a community perspective it brings people: young people and families together, fosters a welcoming atmosphere and engenders a positive mentality to belonging to something – a community focal point.

The Biffa Award grant was the first such funding that the Club had accessed. It has given them confidence to apply for other grants and believes the experience will also have enhanced its prospects for success.

The Club’s positive experience of the Biffa Award grant and of dealing with the grant team has encouraged it to spread the word and tell others about Biffa Award grants and what they can help community organisations to achieve.

Springboard Project, Accessible Play Equipment

Overview of Organisation

Established in 1992, the Springboard Project is a community based charity which aims to increase the life chances of children and young people with disabilities as well as families with young children irrespective of ability or status. It provides a variety of safe, inclusive recreation opportunities and related services from sites in Horsham and Crawley, alongside outreach initiatives throughout the South East.

Springboard House, situated in Horsham, is one of two centres and offers indoor and outdoor play facilities to any family with young children, receiving around 30,000 visits per year. Facilities include a fully equipped sensory room, play room and an outdoor leisure garden. The garden includes picnic benches, swings, slides, a playhouse, large wooden play train area, sail shades, Jungle Walk, Adventure Maze and the current Biffa Award grant-funded 'Space Whirl'. The site aims to provide both outdoor and indoor play opportunities throughout the year, regardless of the weather, with many of the external play structures and equipment usable in (light) rain or wind conditions.

Serving a catchment area of around 20 miles, Springboard House supports a number of groups and activities, including: Horsham Grasshoppers disabled group, which offers holiday activities and a Saturday Club to around 80 members; Monday – Friday play activities for parents and young people; and 300+ family members (membership £10 per month). With a lack of alternative or similar services in the region, the Springboard Project provides a valuable community resource and acts an exemplar project for the local area.

Project Background

The charity's Jubilee Leisure Garden (named after the Queen's Golden Jubilee in 2002 when their major improvements first began) has undergone continuous development over the past 13 years in order to improve safety and develop opportunities for creative outdoor play. The direction of these developments is guided by consultation, feedback and suggestions from children and parents and, as part of this process, requests to install a 'Space Whirl Roundabout' were identified. A Space Whirl is an accessible roundabout ride for all children, including wheelchair users and those with a range of additional needs; it has spaces for two people seated (one seat with bars for younger children and a more open seat for older children) as well as a gated central area for a wheelchair to go.

It was hoped that this addition to the garden would improve the offer of inclusive and enjoyable play opportunities available. The original desire for the Space Whirl came from parents, who had accessed an accessible outdoor play park some distance away from the centre that had the same ride in place. They had seen how much the children loved the Space Whirl and therefore a started a petition; this alongside letters of support from local bodies were gathered to support Springboard Project's application.

Previous Biffa Award grants had contributed to work done in the Jubilee Leisure Garden, such as resurfacing of the 'Play Train' wetpour area. Being familiar with the Biffa Award scheme through previous applications, Springboard applied for £14,955 to contribute to the cost of the roundabout, necessary surfacing of the area and installation. Additional funding was provided by local people and the local authority. The total cost of the project was £19,656.28, including purchase and fitting of the ride.

Project Delivery

The Space Whirl was fitted within the timescale specified and to the high standard of safety necessary for children's play equipment. This included a laser-precision fitting process involving highly accurate calibration of the ride to ensure it was aligned exactly with the surrounding safety flooring, as well as not leaving any gap that a child might be able to insert their fingers into. The decision was made to improve the surrounding ground at the same time, making it brighter and more coordinated as well as acting to highlight the route through the Garden to the Space Whirl. It is also noted that the Space Whirl is able to remain in its place permanently without having to be covered, unlike some of the other equipment that require dismantling or covering in the winter in order to protect them.

One area that was raised as being worth consideration was regarding the application process, with a feeling that requirements placed upon small organisations in general were not proportionate to the timescale and size of the small award. This included a significant amount of paperwork in a short time (namely, three reports necessary in three weeks), which was described as overly 'bureaucratic'. As a small team, the application process took two weeks to complete and difficulties encountered included terminology which was tricky to understand and calculations for third party money. It is felt this was a large investment of time given the three week installation time for the Space Whirl itself.

The project was promoted via a number of methods, such as the local newspaper, membership handouts and newsletters.

Project Impacts and Legacy

Springboard Project describes the Biffa Award grant as having been 'significant' and 'fundamental' and that a Space Whirl installation would have been highly unlikely in the absence of the Biffa Award grant. It is believed that finding alternative funding of this magnitude would have proven challenging and could have delayed the project a number of years, if it was able to go ahead at all. The ride does not need further funding except for annual oil and maintenance which is taken into account in Springboard Project's day-to-day running costs, meaning that it is now running independent of the original Biffa Award grant.

Feedback from beneficiaries and parents has been extremely positive, with children expressing how much they enjoy playing on the Space Whirl and Springboard Project reporting that children 'make a bee line' for it when they visit the garden. As the equipment is unique for wheelchair users it supports inclusive play and has generated further recreational options for the young people to enjoy. The roundabout is designed mainly for children between the ages of 5-12, and Springboard Project currently provides services to 57 disabled children within this age bracket. In total, Springboard Project estimates that this installation has benefitted around 300 children and family members, with 50 volunteers engaged and 200 volunteer hours contributed. The equipment has also supported expansion of existing groups, been used as part of short breaks for disabled children, and helped achieve wider support from local businesses and residents. Supporting inclusion and equality in play also contributes towards the health and wellbeing of the beneficiaries.

Gaining the Biffa Award grant also allowed Springboard Project to leverage additional donations to fund the sail shades that were fitted around the same time as the Space Whirl. This is regarded as being one of the final pieces of the Garden, finalising the ensemble and so it is regarded that the Biffa Award grant-funded work has been intrinsic to the completion of their Jubilee Leisure Garden as a whole.

Rebuilding Biodiversity

Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT)

Overview of Organisation

Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) is an independent charity and voluntary organisation focused on nature conservation. It is one of the UK's largest Wildlife Trusts, with a vision to create *"a region rich in wildlife, appreciated by all"*. Established in 1959, the organisation has grown considerably over the past 50 years.

BBOWT belongs to a partnership of 47 Wildlife Trusts and covers three counties, including the upper Thames Valley and Chilterns. The Trust has 80 nature reserves, covering 1,700 hectares while its work is supported by around 53,000 members and more than 1,300 volunteers.

The overarching aim of BBOWT is to connect isolated protected areas to form 'Living Landscapes', helping to safeguard biodiversity. It is hoped that these connected ecosystems will increase climate change resilience and combat threats to wildlife. The strategy follows a holistic approach to increase engagement, foster shared goals and encourage positive action towards environmental objectives.

Activities of BBOWT include: reserve management; land acquisition; profile raising; lobbying; education; capacity building; income generation; and engagement. BBOWT has identified 19 potential areas for landscape-scale conservation schemes, in line with the Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, which were identified by the regional Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) forum.

The Trust has developed various funding relationships including individuals, corporate and philanthropic engagement, with membership packages contributing to core running costs. This ensures that the continued upkeep of the areas already overseen by BBOWT is safeguarded but does not give scope for further strategic projects.

Project Background

Following the organisation's shift in focus towards the current strategic objectives, projects such as land purchase and making links with local landowners were developed. BBOWT has received a total of six Biffa Award grants; three of these projects fell under the Rebuilding Biodiversity theme. One such project involved the acquisition of Leaches Farm in Buckinghamshire, for which a grant of £50,000 was requested. The farm was a 35ha area of lowland meadows and acquisition supported: safeguarding 25ha of species-rich grassland; restoration of two ponds; and opportunities to restore an additional 5ha of grassland. This supported landscape-scale conservation initiatives through expanding the existing Upper Ray Meadows Nature Reserve by 22 per cent. This enabled BBOWT to design a circular walk in the area and increase visitor numbers, for example, through guided flower identification courses.

Another significant project has involved restoring heathland at Greenham and Crookham Commons: a Biffa Award grant of £42,302 was requested for this initiative. The lowland heathland in this area is a rare and threatened habitat and had become colonised with secondary woodland. The project aimed to safeguard 20ha of heathland through addressing scrub encroachment, tree-felling and bracken spraying. This restoration supported a

number of species of wildlife which inhabit the area. The habitat management objectives contributed to the Living Landscape objectives, as well as supporting national targets. An increase in visitor numbers was also expected.

Project Delivery

As the funding for strategic objectives is not derived from income generated through memberships, alternative funding was needed via grants and funding appeals. Fundraisers considered the funder and project requirements and finance personnel developed a realistic budget, subsequent to which the Trust explored a number of funding options.

The delivery of the projects went smoothly on the whole, with works completed to schedule. During delivery of one project, the Environment Agency stopped some elements of the work following hydrological modelling which revealed negative effects to neighbouring land. This meant that the full project could not be finalised although earlier planning and aspects not related to river diversion could still be finished.

The Trust has described building a relationship with the Biffa Award team over time, which provided continuity for the funder and BBOWT alike. The Biffa Award team was said to have shown flexibility towards BBOWT when drawing down funding, and was described as never having been 'too demanding'. One small improvement suggested was to provide finance documents in Excel rather than Word. Multi-year funding allocations are also seen as preferable given the large-scale nature of the types of work undertaken by BBOWT.

Project Impacts and Legacy

The Biffa Award grant heathland restoration in West Berkshire was the first funding BBOWT had ever received towards a Living Landscape project and it directly contributed to moving the concept forward. This in turn has helped drive several new developments forward. This includes a 50 year management agreement with West Berkshire Council to assume management responsibility for nine council owned reserves and commons. Additional funding has since been received from the Heritage Lottery Fund to build on the success of the previous projects within the West Berkshire Living Landscape. The projects have also contributed towards publicity, gained support for Trust activities and attracted funders.

Over 3 years, a total of 15.1ha of lowland heathland have been restored. Heather and gorse started to recolonize and several rare heathland bird species were recorded for first time in a number of years. Evidence of increased woodlark breeding and nesting also has a direct link to Biffa Award grant funding. Other additions to the habitat included: visitor interpretation boards; bat boxes; felled trees creating new habitats; reptile hibernation and basking areas; and a pond development. A number of species of rare wildlife have been protected.

The heathlands project also delivered a number of community engagement impacts, with successful public engagement and education. Around 100 events, such as guided walks, were organised, which proved popular with visitors. In addition, a training course provided 13 places for Conservation Traineeships and 120 volunteers (with a core group of 50 people) were engaged in the project. Work to transfer these volunteers to fresh projects is underway. Furthermore, 30 articles were written about the heathland restoration. As a result, the restoration has improved the natural environment and the space for public access, resulting in a noticeable decrease in anti-social behaviour. Other benefits resulting from Biffa Award grant funding include better relations with partner bodies, greater clarity about future direction and enhanced levels of public support.

Without the funding, the Trust describes that the future of the land would have been 'unknown'. These areas may have been farmed, developed or built on, resulting in loss of habitats. The Trust describes the outcome of the Biffa Award grant-funded projects as a *"pretty wonderful success story."*

Overview of Organisation

The RSPB is the country's largest nature conservation charity, inspiring everyone to give nature a home. Together with their partners, they protect threatened birds and wildlife so our towns, coast and countryside will teem with life once again. They also play a leading role in a worldwide partnership of nature conservation organisations. The RSPB manage over 200 nature reserves across the UK and these support a diverse range of wildlife and habitats. They are supported by more than 17,000 volunteers and more than 1 million members. The RSPB has been successful in securing Biffa Award grants for a number of projects and sites across the country including this national coastal and floodplain grazing marsh project.

Project Background

Over the past 60 years, there have been substantial losses in the size and quality of this important UK BAP habitat. Losses of grazing marsh from the early 1930s to the mid-1980s are estimated as having decreased site area by around 40%. The exact current extent of grazing marsh in the UK is not known, but it is possible that there may be a total of 300,000 ha. England holds the largest proportion with an estimate in 1994 of 200,000 ha with smaller but equally important concentrations in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The RSPB was approached by the Biffa Award grants team to identify opportunities to improve the natural environment. As a result a number of options were developed in outline and presented to the Biffa Award team, who subsequently determined that an application should be developed based on maintaining, achieving favourable condition and restoring coastal and floodplain grazing marsh across the country in areas eligible for Biffa Award funding.

Project Delivery

The project approved included 3 years of funding focussed on 14 sites across the UK. A summary of the range of activity across some of the sites is detailed below:

- Vane Farm (RSPB Loch Leven in Scotland) – Approximately 50,000m³ of soil was moved to create five wader terraces and two main 250m earth bunds. 1500m of ditches were excavated, three scrapes created and seven sluices installed. There is now direct hydrological control over a 20 ha area of floodplain grazing marsh.
- Newport Wetlands (South Wales) – Removal of hedges and restoration of ancient features to restore SSSI ditch habitat within 54 ha of grazing marsh (to favourable condition) and provide a more attractive habitat for foraging lapwing and a home for more aquatic species including otters.
- Lough Beg (Northern Ireland) – Funding was used to recruit a member of staff to develop a conservation management plan to identify practical solutions to problems affecting 300 hectares prior to any physical implementation.
- Marshside (Merseyside) – Maintained 110 ha by de-silting ditches and adjusting the grazing regime by using native cattle. Trialling of anti-predator measures including llamas to act as - guards for ground nesting birds.

- West Canvey Marches (Essex) – Water controls and a new 3 ha reservoir are providing improved breeding and overwintering conditions across 131 ha for many priority species. This site is close to many people who can enjoy spectacular views of the wildlife.
- Otmoor (Oxfordshire) – Burying power cables and the erection of a predator fence has increased the breeding wader population. For example, the number of breeding lapwing pairs has increased alongside lapwing chick productivity.
- Lapwing Landscapes (Upper Thames Tributaries) worked on the catchments of the Upper Thames, including the Thames, Cherwell, Ray and Windrush. Across these areas, RSPB provided advice to farms and nature reserves covering more than 680 hectares. This has provided habitat for breeding waders and other associated grazing marsh birds including skylark, yellow wagtail, reed bunting and tree sparrow.

Habitat restoration does not happen quickly. It needs sustained funding over more than one year to achieve maximum benefits. The fact that funding was available over 3 years was critical to this project. The flexibility to move funding between projects during each year was also important in managing unforeseen challenges, such as unexploded artillery found at more than one site or adverse weather conditions

The flexibility to fund existing staff and not just contractors was important in managing the projects in a flexible and responsive way. Being able to purchase land with the Biffa Award grant was also a key benefit, enabling critical pieces of land to be joined or brought into conservation management.

A key benefit was the flexibility of the Biffa Award team in inviting the RSPB to put forward a bespoke biodiversity proposal that was not constrained by any criteria other than the need to deliver significant results for UK wildlife and habitats within the framework of LCF funding.

Project Impacts and Legacy

This programme had a national impact both in terms of meeting biodiversity targets and in demonstrating the value of targeted partnership funding.

At the commencement of the project targets were agreed against three UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) 2010 measures alongside further interlinked outcomes. The coastal and floodplain grazing marsh habitat targets below were met and in some place exceeded, as detailed below:

1. Maintained the extent of 1,443ha of existing habitat contributing to 0.67% of UK BAP target by 2011 was achieved;
2. Achieved the favourable condition of 1,049ha of existing habitat contributing to 1.94% of the UK BAP target by 2011 (35.5ha over original target);
3. Restored and improved 904.6 ha of land under inappropriate management contributing to 14.71% of the UK BAP target by 2011 (additional 195 ha over target);
4. Maintained populations of 50 UK BAP priority species that are dependent on this habitat; and
5. Maintained and improved naturally functioning floodplains and water quality to benefit the local community.

The project funding has left a clear legacy in terms physical improvements that continue to deliver benefits to wildlife and local communities.

Branching Out, Cambridgeshire

Overview of Organisation

Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust (BCNWT) has its main office base in Cambourne, Cambridgeshire, and is one of the 47 Wildlife Trusts across the country. It has amalgamated the Wildlife Trust functions across three counties and manages a number of nature reserves and wildlife facilities, with 95% of the area's population living within 5 miles of one of its 126 sites.

The Trust has a team of 89 (full time equivalent) staff and a volunteer pool of around 1,300 that it can draw upon, representing significant capacity. The organisation has two members of staff dedicated to funding/grant applications, together with the administrative and monitoring systems to be able to research into, apply for, secure and manage a variety of investment options. It has sound governance and a comprehensive range of appropriate policies. It has been in receipt of Biffa Award grants previously and currently is in receipt of a number of grants for various projects.

Project Background

The Branching Out project was designed to make improvements (protection and restoration) to seven ancient woodlands in Cambridgeshire. Ancient woodlands constitute some 1.2% of the country and are very important habitats for a number of trees, grasses, flowers (such as bluebells) and wildlife species (bats, birds, dormice etc.).

For much of the 20th century, it was government policy to grow as much wood as quickly as possible for the country to be self-sufficient in meeting its need for wood. This policy led to much of the countryside being planted with quick growing conifers and in ancient woodlands, natural habitat was destroyed as a result.

The project was designed to undo that work, to restore the deciduous natural woodland – which is “self generating” once conifers have been removed off site – and to enable people to enjoy these woodlands as they were traditionally.

Project Delivery

A Biffa Award grant of £45,380 enabled the Wildlife Trust to carry out a range of specialist works across all woodlands identified. This included the cutting down and removal of conifers, some public access works, deer control and other repair works. Brampton Wood was the main beneficiary with four hectares of conifers cleared. Other woodlands have benefited from similar works, including traditional coppicing and hedge laying.

The delivery depended on significant volunteer input (180 volunteers) and will continue to do so with many volunteer hours devoted to monitoring and surveying habitat and species and to acting as site wardens, for monitoring and security reasons.

Project Impacts and Legacy

The project has enabled the restoration of natural habitats and wildlife species are returning, enhancing the biodiversity of the ancient woodlands.

The project also has a strong educational impact with school children coming to see and enjoy the woodlands to learn about nature generally and the inter-dependency of species and habitats specifically. This helps educate the next generation about the importance of protecting ancient woodlands and stimulating an interest in the environment for future custodians of the countryside. Adults too can gain knowledge in learning about the importance of ancient woodlands and enjoy fresh air and exercise in beautiful environments. The project helps to raise awareness and the profile of environmental issues and can only have a positive impact for future decision making in terms of land use and planning.

The project has increased the levels of volunteers providing help, as site wardens and in monitoring species.

In addition, Brampton Wood is popular with local businesses for team building exercises and work parties, for example, Cambridge University Press visit each year for a day's 'coppicing challenge.' This helps to both promote the site/attendant issues and provide a revenue source to fund ongoing costs of maintenance.