
REPORT TO:	FINANCE & MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 7
DATE OF MEETING:	18 th April 2002	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	CHIEF EXECUTIVE	OPEN:
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	Peter Woolrich Ext: 5726	DOC: Industface.doc
SUBJECT:	Industrial Facelift Grant Scheme Replacement	REF: myfiles/committees/F&M/industface.doc
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	All	TERMS OF REFERENCE: FM08

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 That Member's approve in principle the establishment of an Environmental Improvement Grant scheme in Partnership with Groundwork Erewash Valley and that application for funding be made through the East Midland Development Agency's (EMDA) Environmental Improvement Programme.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To consider the establishment of a grant scheme to aid further environmental improvements in the District.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 The SRB2 Swadlincote Woodlands Programme included a small project geared towards the improvement of the older industrial areas. The Project was managed by Groundwork Erewash Valley and some £45,000 of SRB2 money has gone into small scale improvements at several industrial estates. The programme ended in March 2002.
- 3.2 The principle behind the scheme is to work with local businesses to carry out boundary/frontage improvements which contribute to improving the wider environment. It relies on businesses contributing at least 50% of the costs. It is not a grant that directly contributes to the business's profitability; although an improved business frontage/site may increase customer confidence. The overall aim is that incremental improvements can gradually encourage other businesses to start to make improvements.
- 3.3 EMDA has now rebranded the former Derelict Land Grant and Land Reclamation Programme in the form of the Environmental Improvement Programme. The programme is intended to provide funding to local authorities and voluntary organisations to enable them to reclaim derelict land for environmental improvement.

The fund is also available at EMDA's discretion for some types of land which are not derelict, including land stabilisation, clearance of unsightly land and the improvement of land in the public realm which creates wider benefits.

- 3.4 Groundwork Erewash Valley have indicated that they are willing to continue in partnership with the Council to implement a similar scheme but, as a formally constituted charity limited by guarantee, they are restricted, on the advice from the Charity Commissioners, to the carrying out only of a small fraction of the work outside their dedicated boroughs. This would prevent them from being fully responsible for such a scheme and limit involvement to the preparation and implementation of specifically identified improvements.
- 3.5 For the former working relationship to continue the Council would therefore have to be responsible for the management, co-ordination and administration of any scheme. The Council will be required to be the 'accountable body' in order to draw down the grant monies from EMDA once individual schemes have been completed. It may be possible to use the continuing 'Made in Swadlincote' Board and SRB procedures as an intermediary solution as these are to continue for a further year as part of the SRB Monitoring process. In the longer term more formal procedures may be necessary.
- 3.6 The scheme could be extended to include unused and unsightly land in the Council's ownership for which there is no commercial value although this may be a matter for consideration as part of the Asset Management review. However, there is the prospect of applying for grant aid through this procedure to extend National Forest tree planting, for example, on surplus sites in the urban area.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The Council will be required to fund the management of the scheme. This will normally be by way of staff time and an element of the grant award (usually up to 5%) is allowed towards management costs. However, in the event that the Council may wish to expand the scheme to undertake, for example, improvements involving surplus Council sites, then capital sums will be required to provide the appropriate matched funding.

5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 It is proposed that the Council establish an Environmental Improvement Grant to continue the work and success of the SRB2 Industrial Facelift Programme. This will involve the Council being the Accountable Body and managing the scheme in partnership with Groundwork Erewash Valley who will be responsible for implementation.

6.0 Background Papers

- 6.1 Environmental Improvement Programme East Midlands Development Agency 2001 Letter
Groundwork Erewash Valley