



Organisation Name	Chiltern Rangers
Project Name	Young People, Environmental Conservation Wellbeing Project
Funding Stream	Community Area Priorities
Total Cost of project	£23,600
Amount of Match Funding	£6,700
Amount being applied for	£16,900
Amount suggested	£16,900

## Project Summary

### Background:

Chiltern Rangers are a multi-award winning social enterprise. Their mission is to 'enhance the Chilterns habitats through conservation, education and community engagement'. They have worked closely with the local authorities since they spanned out from Wycombe District Council in 2013, and are keen to deeply embed their organisation with local communities as part of an active community board network. Chilterns Rangers pride themselves in genuine partnership working which includes supporting other community organisations to help increase their impact further.

### The Project:

In line with the board's local priorities, the aim of this project is to provide conservation activities for young people throughout the whole of the Community Board area. Chiltern Rangers will be partnering with a wide range of community organisations (primary schools, secondary schools, youth groups and specialist providers such as Princes Risborough Primary School ARP for autistic children and Barnados RU Safe Project supporting young people at risk of CSE), in order to engage young people in improving their local environment, for people and wildlife, with all the mental and physical health benefits that volunteering, learning new skills, working as a team, physical exercise and making a difference brings.

Chiltern Rangers will use their expertise to improve a wide variety priority habitats at sites including ancient woodland, chalk grassland, chalk stream and ponds etc.. This work will be done in line with both National and Local priorities. There is a focus on the delicate work of creating the right habitat for the threatened UK BAP priority species, the Duke of Burgundy Butterfly in partnership with Butterfly Conservation at several special sites. Lindengate are also supporting the project by donating hundreds of cowslips (the caterpillar food plant for the Duke) to the project.

Where possible (e.g. when Covid safe) Chiltern Rangers will join groups together in order to create more cohesion in the local area including older people e.g. through their partnership with Butterfly Conservation Upper Thames Branch and the Chiltern Society in this project. As they work with students they will be identify those who are ready and interested in the next stepping stone towards independent work experience with Chiltern Rangers. They have a programme of incremental steps which reduces anxiety and creates success for students with special needs.

There is time in the project to outreach to new youth and community groups (for both younger and older people) in order to provide opportunities for them to experience the benefits of volunteering, joining groups together at half term where possible. Chilterns Rangers have a growing partnership with Barnados RU Safe project supporting students at risk of CSE. They identify students with an interest in wildlife and in partnership they provide Stepping Stones to Work Experience volunteering opportunities to these very vulnerable young people. They have just started working with a student in a different board. The Barnados Project Worker reported that she saw the young person smile for the first time in a very long time during her first outdoor conservation session with them, which has led to Chiltern Rangers putting together a programme of weekly sessions up to Christmas in line with the student's needs.

**Chiltern Rangers have identified a need for this project.** They have been developing this project in partnership with the Community Board, landowners, professional partners and local schools and youth providers. The project has been designed to closely match the local area priorities, providing young people activities that benefit both their physical and mental health, and opportunities for older people to join in when that can happen. Chiltern Rangers activities are outside and follow rigorous Covid safe procedures.

**Partners involved:** As detailed above, this is a partnership project benefitting and involving many community groups in one project application. Chiltern Rangers hope that the following community partners will be involved (some are also detailed above):

Bledlow Ridge School, Barnados RU Safe Project, Princes Risborough Primary School ARP, Princes Risborough School, Princes Risborough Youth Club, Radnage Scouts, The Downley School, Home Group, Chiltern Wood Special School Downley Site, Mary Towerton, Young Farmers etc. with support from The Chilterns Conservation Board Chalk Cherries and Chairs Project, Lindengate and Butterfly Conservation Upper Thames Branch and Landowners such as BBOWT, the National Trust, The Chiltern Society and Several Private Landowners.

Chiltern Rangers estimate that 300 younger and older people will take part in the conservation activities. Visitors, both human and wild will benefit from the habitat improvements on ten plus valuable wildlife sites all over the Community Board, from the River Wye and Chalk Grassland sites in the South in West Wycombe, to tree planting in the North in Stoke Mandeville, and much of the Duke of Burgundy work on sites in the geographical centre of the Board in the Saunderton/Bledlow Ridge area.

### How does the project address local priorities?

The Community Board agreed its priorities on 9 July which included a priority for **Environmental and Climate Change**.

This project will contribute towards the subgroups objectives which are:

- To prioritise schemes and initiatives that helped sustain, grow and create recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic.
- To seek schemes and initiatives that had a sustainable and lasting effect on the North West Chilterns area, improving the built or rural environment and promoting or reversing environmental damage or climate change.

In addition to the subgroups objectives, this project will also:

- Promote healthy lifestyles (helping people be more physically active, eat more healthily, reduce their alcohol consumption).
- Bring people together.
- Improve mental wellbeing including promoting neighbourliness.
- Improve community engagement with disadvantaged and hard to reach groups with a wellbeing focus.
- Help to create a greener and more sustainable environment for the purpose of improving health and wellbeing

## How does the project align with the values, objectives and corporate priorities of Buckinghamshire Council?

This project seeks to deliver across multiple objectives to offer great value to the council. It works in highly valued partnerships with many other community organisations. It delivers against the corporate objectives of:

**Strengthening our communities** – helping create healthy resilient communities where people can take part and improve their place.

**Improving Our Environment** – these projects tackle at a local scale, the twin crises of biodiversity and climate change. They take place in or very close to the Chilterns AONB and have multiple environmental benefits including helping the River Wye an internationally rare chalk stream.

Chiltern Rangers practical work is linked to National Policy - The Government's 25 year Environmental Plan, and is based on best practise in the sector, especially the findings of the Lawton Report Making Space for Nature 2010 which addresses key issues for the environment. Notably that in order to succeed, their work needs to make the environment: bigger (in terms of area managed for nature), better (quality through active management) and more joined up (so that wildlife can adapt to climate change and other pressures such as urban development and infrastructure).

Their project work also contributes to achieving the targets set out in the Bucks Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and Chiltern Conservation Board's 2019-2024 Management plan too, so it is deliberately connected to delivering local strategic aims and adding value to these plans.

**Protecting the Vulnerable** – tackling isolation, mental health, providing young people across the Community Board areas with opportunities, creating diversionary activities.

**Increasing prosperity** – the projects will promote and enhance local culture and heritage , develop and foster lifelong learning including practical skills and transferable skills, working with schools and other community groups to embed a sense of place.

## How does the project achieve value for money?

Chiltern Rangers work is intrinsically linked to engaging our communities and the people within them, so it's a triple win: Environment, Places and People.

You will see this through the numerous sessions staffed by their Rangers. All staff are DBS checked, First Aid trained and highly competent. They supply all the tools for each session and have Public Liability insurance to £10 million. Chiltern Rangers have a community minibus available to help transport people, however, Covid has restricted the capacity to eight passengers from 16 and all need to wear a mask.

The Rangers will be working with community groups of all ages and abilities including from the hardest to reach communities and taking them out locally, to enhance local places; from rare chalk streams to glorious Chiltern woodlands to our chalk grassland biodiversity hotspots.

They will also be improving urban areas such as parks which link these all together. Chiltern Rangers will always try and engage people as close to home as possible to drive that sense of ownership and pride of place. As and when they can, the really good sessions will link groups from across the community, so young and older people, people with disabilities and those without disabilities get to work together.

The sessions by their very nature involve physical activity and so are a great way to improve physical health and mental wellbeing.

The sessions are outdoors at social distance and the Rangers have other anti-Covid measures in place, such as tool hygiene and gloves. There are risk assessments in place for sites and tasks as you would expect.

They have sought to secure match funding for all projects (potentially £4,950) and given the funding situation due to Covid, they have achieved this which is no mean feat. This ensures buy in from partners and means the funding the Community Boards provides goes further. The projects planned aim to get to the heart of our community and make a real difference from the start to people's lives and our environment.

These may well be projects which can be continued in the future subject to new funding becoming available.

**Extra added value:**

On certain sessions, Chiltern Rangers ask the attendees to bring a can or two for them to collate and donate to One Can Trust. They did this at a session on 22/10/20 with 38 year 11 students from a school who donated 93 cans!

The Rangers hope that they can collect at least 1,000 cans across our projects this year.

### Community Board Coordinator comments

This application has been fully assessed by the Environmental and Climate Change subgroup in line with the Community Board funding criteria, and based on this and the evidence above, it is recommended as a project which is suitable to receive funding from the North West Chilterns Community Board.

John Shaw from Chilterns Rangers also attended a subgroup meeting on 4th November 2020, where it was agreed that the aims of this project did meet the priorities of the subgroup, which provides an additional indicative view that this project should be funded.

**The applicant will be required to agree to terms and conditions, which include a monitoring agreement, as discussed with the Community Board Coordinator before the fund will be formally awarded.**