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030



Performance Reward Grant Scheme APPLICATION FORM

To be returned to:

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Area Board	Malmesbury
Form submitted by (contact for all queries)	Geoff Martin Yew Tree House, Cliff Road, Sherston, Wiltshire, SN16 0LN Tel 01666 840272 (office)
Name of initiative	Sherston Old School Project
Brief Description of Initiative	<p>The project objective is to purchase, renovate and convert for community and commercial use the Sherston Old School. Built in 1845 and extended in 1895, the school buildings are listed and occupy a strategic location on the High Street and within the Sherston Conservation Area. They have been unoccupied for at least 4 years and are in urgent need of restoration and renovation for gainful community use</p> <p>The conversion will provide new and expanded facilities for the Post Office (a newsagent, stores and major retail provider for the community) and help to preserve that amenity. The business currently operates in premises that are too small and, as a result, are more likely to be judged a candidate for closure under the review of such services. Without a Post Office, local residents are likely to have to travel to Malmesbury for all of the services currently provided.</p> <p>The Post Office will occupy about 30% of the Old School premises and the remainder will be available for new community and commercial users.</p> <p>It is expected that Wiltshire Council will operate a 'Rural Hub' within the building from which villagers can access the council's services as well as those of other organisations such as the Police, Citizens Advice and Age Concern.</p> <p>The site will also allow for new purpose built Pre-School facilities and for serviced small office facilities giving space for additional local employment.</p>

	<p>The project is to receive funding of £300,000 from two trusts with local connections. A condition for receipt of those funds is that the allotments are retained in their present position for at least twenty years and that the field behind the village hall, that was once used by the school, is transferred to the village hall on a lease for 125 years. It is expected that the village hall will be able to make considerable improvements to its condition and usefulness to the community once it has the permanent use of the field. Should the Old School Project not proceed then these additional benefits will be not received by the community.</p>	
<p>Please put a cross against the ambition(s) that this initiative will support</p>	<p>Building resilient communities</p>	<p>X</p>
	<p>Improving affordable housing</p>	
	<p>Lives not services</p>	<p>X</p>
	<p>Supporting economic growth</p>	<p>X</p>
	<p>Safer communities</p>	
	<p>Protecting the environment</p>	<p>X</p>
<p>Amount of funding sought</p>	<p>£125,000</p>	
<p>What will this money be spent on? (please show split between capital and revenue. For capital expenditure guidance – see Appendix 1 in the Bid Pack)</p>	<p>The funds will enable the capital cost of the necessary renovations to the building to be carried out without delay. This will render the building wind and water tight and available for occupation by the Post Office.</p> <p>Funds are separately available for purchase of the building and to pay legal costs (a combined total of £413,000) but the capital cost of renovation is not covered by existing funding.</p>	
<p>Please describe how your initiative will support the ambition(s) indicated above, and summarise the action that will be taken</p>	<p>To have a working and sustainable community is vital to residents and whilst many still work in the village and parish there has been a reduction in businesses in recent years. This is particularly true of retail outlets which have halved in number to seven since 1980. The largest employer, Stretchline Mill, has reduced its workforce from 100 to 35 within the last five years. The contraction in businesses and employment opportunities has not helped meet the needs of an increasing population.</p> <p>The village has two main shops, including a thriving Post Office that is operating in premises far too small to guarantee its continued existence. It has two pubs. It has an inadequate bus service.</p> <p>It has a new and thriving school drawing pupils from the local community and, in some cases, from farther afield.</p> <p>Nevertheless, shops have closed and the village High Street currently has only one commercial premises, the Post Office,</p>	

	<p>remaining. Commercial premises in the High Street are generally converted for residential use, the most recent being the butcher's shop.</p> <p>Sherston Old School premises are in a prime position in the High Street and are also under threat of conversion to residential use. It is the intention of this project to retain those premises for commercial use and thereby to preserve the character of the High Street and provide both increased employment opportunities and services for the community.</p>
<p>What makes this initiative a local priority (eg evidence from research and local support)</p>	<p>Residents have been kept involved by a series of newsletters beginning in May 2007 and by regular articles in the free Parish Council newsletter, the Cliffhanger.</p> <p>At a Public Meeting in 29 May 2007 all residents were told about the initial plans and asked to show support. Over 100 people attended and, on a show of hands, all but one person was in favour of proceeding with the project.</p> <p>In May 2008 a detailed Public Consultation was held at which a display of the plans was arranged in the Village Hall and the Church at which members of the project team were available to answer questions and explain the project in detail.</p> <p>A parish Survey was then undertaken and all residents asked to vote by secret ballot. Of 1,300 ballot papers issued, 722 were returned of which 691 (95.7% of those voting) were in favour.</p>
<p>How will you know you have been successful?</p>	<p>Success will be measured by the timeliness, efficiency and cost-effectiveness with which the Old School premises are brought into use for the community.</p> <p>If these measures are achieved as anticipated then the project will be self-sustaining and will provide the community with a valuable resource for the foreseeable future.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will you measure the impact? (may have more than one measure) 	<p>The project enhances the retail and commercial centre of the village as will provide additional community facilities and services with local employment opportunities for the wider Sherston community area. It will help the wider village area to continue to be as sustainable as possible. This is a once-only opportunity to acquire historic premises in the heart of the village and convert them for use by the community.</p> <p>The community will be the owners of the premises and will decide, as members of the owning organisation, how the project is to be run for general advantage.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is your improvement target (s), and when do you expect to achieve this/these? 	<p>Phase 1 of the project is to purchase the premises and renovate an agreed area for occupation by the Post Office. Legal contracts for the purchase are ready for exchange.</p> <p>Capital funds for the renovations are short of those necessary to enable the Old School steering committee to proceed.</p> <p>With funds from the Performance Reward Grant Scheme the project could move forward immediately.</p> <p>Occupation and trading by the Post Office is expected to commence nine months after purchase of the premises.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will you ensure that the improvement continues after the end of the initiative? 	<p>The Sherston Old School Project will provide a self supporting, sustainable amenity for community use. It will provide the assurance of continued and much needed services and jobs and will help the environment by reducing the need to travel to local towns for such facilities.</p> <p>The project will be self sustaining</p>
<p>Who will benefit from this initiative?</p>	<p>Sherston and its surrounding villages have a population of around 3,500 people of whom 1,800 live within the village itself. The village alone has provided 70 new homes (11% of additional housing, including social housing) in the last five years.</p> <p>Employment is provided by a mix of local agricultural, construction and other small businesses as well as by those who commute to the larger urban centres.</p> <p>There is a local bus service but this is scarcely adequate for those without their own transport. The nearest rail station is at Chippenham, 12 miles away.</p> <p>It is considered that the whole community will benefit from this initiative.</p>
<p>Confirm no unfunded commitments from this initiative</p>	<p>I confirm that there will be no unfunded financial commitments arising from this initiative.</p>
<p>What are the key risks to success and how will these be managed?</p>	<p>The principal risk is that the project is under funded at inception. The receipt of a Performance Reward Grant will ensure that this is not the case.</p> <p>Further risks are that tenants cannot be found for the premises and that the costs of development of the premises escalate beyond those that can be funded.</p>

	<p>Heads of Terms for a lease with the Post Office have already been agreed. Advice from a local letting agent has been obtained giving re-assurance about the potential letting yield of the premises. A surveyor has inspected and reported on the condition of the premises. Local design/build providers have been consulted and have given estimates of the cost of the works.</p> <p>It is considered that the Project has available to it the management expertise (see below) to successfully achieve the desired project outcomes.</p>
<p>Who will manage the initiative</p>	<p>The project has available to its intended managing Board suitable professional skills including persons with significant property development experience both locally and internationally, a property agent, a planning consultant, a chartered accountant and a solicitor.</p> <p>We expect these persons, with the added experience of others within the village, to be able to manage the project.</p>

Signed:

Chairman of Area Board

Dated: