



Dear Edward

I am writing to you in your role as Rutland County Council's representative on the Welland Valley Partnership, which has provided you with a good understanding of the works of the Welland Rivers Trust (WRT).

As you are aware, I took over the role of Chair of the WRT in mid-November, Dr Richard Spiers having stood down at short notice, due to a family health issue. He had been engaged in a twin-track strategy over the past 11 months to seek to secure more "free funding" for the trust (presently we have just £15k per annum from the Environment Agency) and, as a fall-back, a merger of the WRT with the soon to be formed Nene Rivers Trust, in Peterborough. I was asked to take on the role of Chair and progress the initiatives commenced by Richard.

I joined the WRT as a trustee in late May and have come to the view that it would be beneficial to all parties, including the members of the Welland Valley Partnership (that the WRT presently administers) that the WRT should seek to continue as an independent, catchment-based trust. We are located in Loddington and work closely with the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust and support the work of The Allerton Project. We can demonstrate good public engagement and the successful delivery of a number of projects. In the case of the latter it is recognised by all that if we had more resources there is so much more we could deliver! Over the 11 years of its existence however, the WRT has suffered from a chronic lack of working capital. As a consequence the Trust has never been able to develop beyond one Project Manager who has been both the bidder and executor of all the projects secured. (This compares with the three project managers for the Lincolnshire Rivers Trust, covering the Witham.) It has also meant that the management of cash on individual projects, specifically the receipt of grant income, is of great importance to the relations with our sub-contractors and indeed our viability.

Rutland County Council, rightly, recognise in its environmental "Vision" document the special relationship that people in Rutland have with the countryside around them, and that this is something to be celebrated and preserved for current and future generations. I believe that the WRT can greatly assist in this journey to ensure that Rutland will be a place where the natural environment and heritage are cherished and enhanced. The WRT can act as the local partner to deliver projects that support such long-term aims, and thereby meet the huge public desire for action on the climate and biodiversity emergencies. Importantly, in these difficult financial times, we can access grant funding to minimise costs to commissioning

parties. This also has relevance for the change required of farmers to meet the basis funding under SLI and ELMs.

I know that you have had a long-term interest in the maintenance of our water courses in Rutland, long before the formation of the Welland Valley Partnership in 2010. Whilst the Trust have received project work that has entailed payment from the various councils in the catchment, at no time in the existence has any local authority contributed directly to the finances (working capital) of the WRT, which stands in sharp contrast to the Nene and Lincolnshire trusts.

Aside from the direct support that we can provide to our county's environmental vision, public well-being and tourism, we could also better support education in the area of environmental awareness. Since its foundation the WRT has been engaging with schools, Scout groups and local natural interest groups and considers the delivery of educational support core to its objectives. Examples of this work include classroom sessions on river process, hands-on practical river dipping sessions and citizen science programmes on water quality. Going forward, in response to the challenges of the climate and biodiversity crises we seek to increase this output. Historically the delivery of this content has been done ad-hoc through our part-time Communities Officer (Supported by the Project Manager where required). The intention is to make the Communities Officer role full-time to support the development of a structured educational programme.

Our financial need is small and our ask from individual bodies is short-term. We seek to raise £60k in year one, and half that amount in year two, thereafter the flow of project work generated should allow a stable financial position to be achieved. The monies will be used to support a second project officer (to support our bidding and execution of projects), additional hours for the Communities Officer, and some limited administrative/ book-keeping support. We have already received modest sums from Openfields and those of the angling clubs in our catchment. It is also my intention to seek support from other Councils. My ask from Rutland County Council would be any sum, you might consider appropriate. I believe that the return the community would obtain from a modest investment will be repaid many times over in the years ahead.

I would be pleased to discuss this proposition with you at any time.

With best regards,

Chair, the Welland Rivers Trust