



European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)

Welcome to Epsom & Walton Downs – celebrating the equestrian heritage of this unique landscape



Full Application Status Report - 7 June 2019

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1.0 Background¹

- 1.1 The Epsom & Walton Downs is recognised for its unique racing heritage, however, it lacks a formal identity, sense of arrival, and supporting infrastructure for both residents and visitors alike.
- 1.2 Initial scoping had been undertaken to review possible investment in carefully selected entry signage, trail signage and visitor infrastructure to help improve the identity of the Downs and to create better linkages between the town centre and the wider Downs.
- 1.3 Increasing all-year round access to the Downs was included in the scoping, as was greater integration into the wider visitor economy 'offer' in both Epsom & Ewell Borough and adjacent East Surrey. This was in-line with a pan-East Surrey rural tourism project, also funded via the EAFRD programme via an earlier call.
- 1.4 The lack of local funding was identified as a key barrier to fulfilling this aspiration. We identified a possible funding opportunity via the final round of the EU's European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) programme. The Coast to Capital LEP area had a notional £3.5m EAFRD allocation across three measures: rural tourism, rural food and drink and rural business infrastructure. It was felt the potential Epsom Downs project had greatest synergies (and chance of success) with the Visitor Economy measure.
- 1.5 The EAFRD fund is a capital only fund, normally requiring 60% own funding, versus 40% grant funding. However, for public bodies with projects that do not generate income, the grant funding percentage can be increased significantly. Commercial funding applications are normally limited by State Aid De-Minimis rules, notionally £175,000 at prevailing exchange rates. Public sector applications are not limited by De-Minimis but the Rural Payments Agency, the body which assesses bids, assess whether bids demonstrate good value for money and economic growth outputs are considered, such as an increase in visitor numbers, extension of the season, and spin-off economic growth for related sectors.
- 1.6 The EAFRD programme has a number of stages; initially an outline expression of interest (EoI), which is assessed by the Rural Payments Agency and then passed to the local Coast to Capital area EAFRD sub-committee for assessment against local strategic fit. If both Rural Payments Agency and Local EAFRD committee agree, the Expression of Interest application is approved for development as a full funding application.
- 1.7 The EAFRD full funding application is a significantly larger and more complex process than the Expression of Interest application. It requires a full business case, which includes financial spreadsheets, quality supporting evidence, accurate costings, planning permission (if needed), written support from other partners and stakeholders and a full delivery plan. The step change between Expression of Interest and full application is considerable, hence there is currently approximately a +40% attrition rate between Expression of Interest and full application.
- 1.8 Some initial informal scoping was undertaken with the Jockey Club to gauge their support for a funding bid and whether they could provide some match-funding to support the application. Feedback from the Jockey Club was positive.

¹ Extract from Conservators Committee Report October 2018 (updated)

1.9 With the deadline for Expressions of Interest looming, it was decided to quickly develop an Expression of Interest application around the Epsom Downs project concept, in the knowledge that it could easily be adapted if invited to full application stage. The submission of an Expression of Interest application was without any commitment.

1.10 The Expression of Interest (Eoi) was developed around the following overarching theme:

“The project will celebrate the rural nature and equestrian heritage of the Epsom & Walton Downs, promoting the area as an all-year visitor destination through innovative signage, landmark gateways, visual interpretation and branding. Stimulating economic activity both up on the Downs and linking to nearby Epsom town” (50 word summary from the Eoi).

1.11 The focus of the Expression of Interest application was:

Our aim:

To sustainably develop the 600 acre Epsom & Walton Downs as an all-year visitor destination, recognising and celebrating the areas racing heritage and adjacency to the Epsom Racecourse.

Our objectives:

A: Using infrastructure, signage, and interpretation create a strong visual identity and branding for Epsom & Walton Downs, with clear connections to the racing industry.

B: Provide clear directional aids across the Downs to help visitors explore, including routes from the Town Centre to the Downs, with routes suitable for walking and cycling.

C: Use interpretation and innovative signage to provide historical information, points of interest, and links to accommodation, restaurants, local attractions (such as the Woodland Trust’s Centenary Wood) and other local businesses.

D: Provide three iconic gateways to the Downs.

1.12 The application also had to give a maximum 500 word justification for the project which was as follows:

The area is an important chalk grassland habitat and there are a number of rare plant species present in some locations on the Downs. These include three national scarcities; the Round-Headed Rampion, Bastard- Toadflax and Chalk Hill Eyebright. The variety of habitats also provides breeding and feeding places for several declining bird species such as the Skylark. Important populations of Small Blue and Chalk Hill Blue Butterflies are also present.

Interpretative and innovative signs will inform visitors of the rich, racing heritage and provide links to other local attractions such as the newly developed, Woodland Trust Centenary Wood and local businesses such as the Derby Arms, Rubbing House and Tattenham Corner pubs and the Holiday Inn hotel, increasing trade beyond corporate and local use to a popular, short break destination. We see the project significantly increasing economic activity and growth outside event and race days.

The new brand and sign scheme will promote the many activities that can be enjoyed on the Downs such as hack riding, flying model aircrafts, kite flying, rambling, nature conservation, dog walking, running and cycling it will encourage visitors to stay longer, explore wider, positively share the experience and return in the future.

New maps and signs will help visitors to navigate safely over 600 acres of open space and will serve to educate visitors on the importance and heritage of the horse race industry, which uses the open gallops on the Downs daily to train thoroughbreds.

Epsom & Walton Downs is a haven for outdoor enthusiasts and this project will seek to tap into this market and encourage tourism from this growing sector. As this project seeks to enhance the Downs as an area of outstanding, natural beauty this will benefit all surrounding businesses.

The Borough of Epsom and Ewell is largely overlooked as a rural destination, often perceived as being very urban, although the southern sector of the Borough is highly rural with both the Downs and Horton Country Park. We see the strengthening of the Downs offer supporting the wider aims of the East Surrey EAFRD tourism cooperation project and aspirations of Visit Surrey DMO. We see no displacement of visitors from other areas or other racecourses.

- 1.13 In light of the Expression of Interest development timeframes it was not possible to obtain accurate costings for the project. Instead estimates were used in the knowledge that if invited to full application, the project would need to be fully costed via a robust procurement process. The headline capital costs submitted were as follows:

Item (Capital)	Indicative Cost
Iconic Gateway's to the Downs on three key access roads c£25k each	£75,000
Epsom and Walton Downs branded signage and directional aids	£35,000
Epsom and Walton Downs branded interpretation signs and infrastructure	£20,000
Enhanced visitor facilities and infrastructure at viewpoint/car parks	£10,000
Development of a micro website to give online information via QR codes	£10,000
Sub Total Core Project Costs	£150,000
Match funding (5%)	£7,500
EAFRD Grant applied for (95%)	£142,500

- 1.14 In addition to the above core project costs, we included two revenue items not ineligible for EAFRD funding but would be needed to deliver the project to its maximum potential:

A: Development of Epsom & Walton Downs branding and visual identity at circa £15,000.

B: 'Welcome to the Downs' hospitality training for businesses, at circa £5,000. (For hospitality, food & beverage and retail businesses).

Both these items are outside the core project costs but will need to be reviewed and declared at the full application stage once formally costed.

- 1.15 The Expression of Interest was submitted by the application deadline and was assessed positively by the RPA assessor and local EAFRD committee. In late August 2018 formal notification was received that you had been invited to submit a full application. Within the letter of invitation, several clarifications were raised by the Rural Payments Agency, mostly technical, that would need to be directly addressed within any application.
- 1.16 The Rural Payments Agency advise that full applications can take up to four months to develop, especially if requiring planning permission. The Agency initially wished to have most applications assessed by end of March 2019, therefore the previous indicative project timeframes were: Full application submission in early January 2019, RPA assessment by late March 2019, Contracts agreed with RPA in April/May 2019, Project delivery in summer/autumn 2019.
- 1.17 These indicative timeframes in-line with the need for additional scoping and research have now been revised to: Full application submission in end June 2019, RPA assessment by September 2019, Contracts agreed with RPA in October 2019, Project delivery post contract but could be delayed until spring 2020 to allow for suitable weather. The RPA have approved these revisions and are in regular contact with the project consultant.
- 1.18 It should be noted that the invitation to full application is not a guarantee of funding, the full application process is still highly competitive and the full application pipeline of EAFRD projects is larger than the total fund available. However, the Expression of Interest attrition rate is high and historically well-developed and well-supported projects with the ability to deliver the agreed outputs score well and achieve funding.

2 Update June 2019

2.0 We undertook initial meetings with E&E officers, Chairman of the Conservators and representative of the Racecourse and Jockey Club. These were followed up with a partial site visit in January to the key zones within the EoI submission area.

2.1 The proposal to create a number of iconic gateways to the Downs areas was pursued at some length, considering options such as horse themed sculptures, iconic gateway structures. Local and national designers and suppliers were contacted, and the project requirements discussed. After some evaluation of research results, we concluded the following:

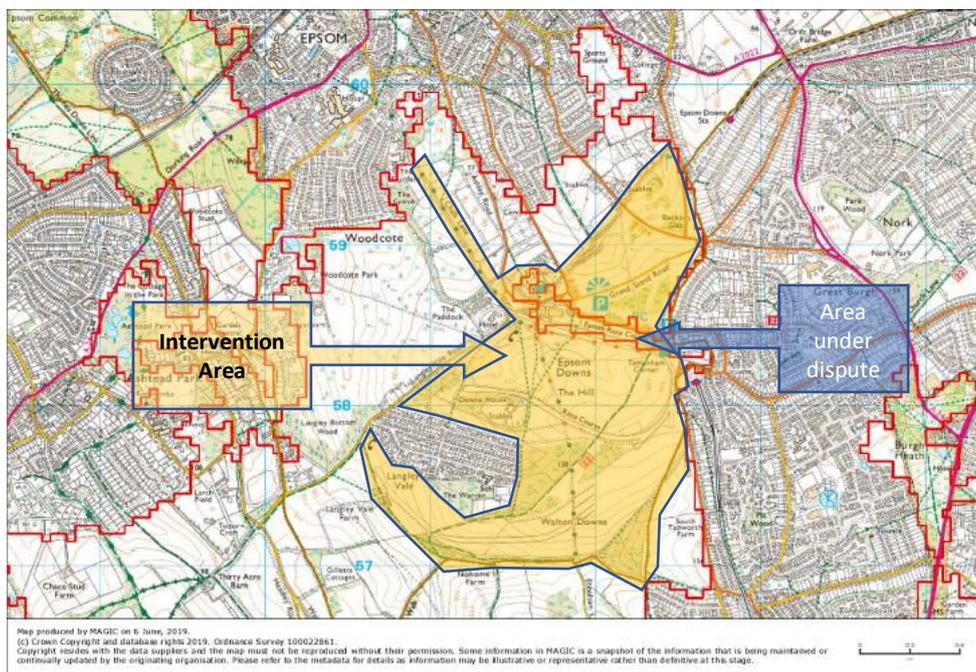
A: The obvious roundabout location outside the main stands presented significant civil engineering challenges that would in themselves utilise most of the grant budget as well as adding a huge extra complexity in dealing with service utilities and highway authorities.

B: Selection of alternative locations for iconic statues or structures was possible although indicative costs of commissioning such works were again looking prohibitively expensive in relation to the total grant budget and wider stated project delivery requirements.

C: Feedback from other EAFRD projects indicated that commissioning creative artwork was an extremely difficult process in which to adhere to the RPA's strict procurement rules. The requirement to have three like-for-like quotations was virtually impossible when procuring something that is a creative object.

2.2 It was therefore decided to continue the project development with the scoping focussing on the underlying rationale of the expression of interest within the stated objectives A, B & C rather than expending more time chasing objective D the iconic gateways. (see 1.11)

2.3 The extent of the intervention site (in orange shading) was to be partially dictated by the eligibility of the area for EAFRD funding (within red lines), this on Defra's 'Magic' mapping site showed a significant discrepancy across the main Tattenham Corner Road (B290) to which we had previously agreed eligibility with the RPA. Owing to changes in personnel within the RPA we again sought formal agreement of this area's eligibility, as would be key to the final application intervention area. This was confirmed via email and entered on our application file that would be sent to the full application assessor.



2.4 We undertook an initial site survey of the intervention area from the perspective of a new visitor to the Downs without prior knowledge, only having an Ordnance Survey (Explorer 146 1:25 000 scale) map for reference. This initial survey indicated a number of significant challenges for the project:

A: Ordnance Survey maps only show the national footpath, bridleway and traffic free cycle route networks, alongside some recreational routes with public access. The Down's has a completely separate network of hack routes and permissive routes across the whole intervention area, not shown on the OS maps at any scale.

B: An E&E produced graphic of the Downs hack routes and permissive routes are primarily shown at some entry points on maps which are generally very old and in poor condition. There is a draft newly designed hack route map but it is not yet 100% accurate and a casual visitor would not know of its existence or where to find it.

C: There are some conflicting permissions between OS shown footpaths and official Downs hack routes e.g. footpath no: 49 running parallel with the eastern boundary of Langley Vale is also a hack route, visitors using purely the OS map would only expect pedestrian use along this section of the path, whereas in reality hack riding is permitted.

D: For cyclists there are a number of options, as well as the official bridleway network as shown on the OS map, there is the national cycle route 22 (NCR22) running across the Downs diagonally plus E&E's own 'Bike and Hike' route running predominantly on bridleways but also on permissive routes and hack routes, shown only the E&E website PDF download.

E: Overlaid with the above complexities there are the racecourse gallops and training areas some of which are clearly defined, other less so and some within the training areas are moved by the groundmen depending on grass conditions. In some areas such as adjacent to the Ebisham Lane entry point there are bridleways, hack routes and gallops all running in close proximity in parallel with each other with a plethora of signs and markers.

F: If the above did not cause confusion, the additional layer of time restrictions for certain hack routes and wider time restrictions for dog walkers, would challenge the most dedicated of leisure user. One such junction has a combination of national bridleway, Bike & Hike, unrestricted hack route, restricted hack route and racecourse gallop all within a few metres of each other. We have not included zone for flying model aircraft.

2.5 In light of the above we have undertaken two more detailed site visits, one accompanied by members of the Operational Services Team to help give us additional narrative to our surveys. To date we have taken around 200 photos of the intervention area, specifically focusing on the main junctions and routes.

2.6 We have also been looking at the available mapping of the area which currently encompasses a number of sources, all not necessarily showing the same information:

Ordnance Survey Explorer 146 1:25 000 (<https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk>)

Defra Magic Mapping (<https://magic.defra.gov.uk>)

Public footpaths – Surrey Interactive Map (<http://surreymaps.surreycc.gov.uk/public/viewer.asp>)

Public Bridleways - Surrey Interactive Map (<http://surreymaps.surreycc.gov.uk/public/viewer.asp>)

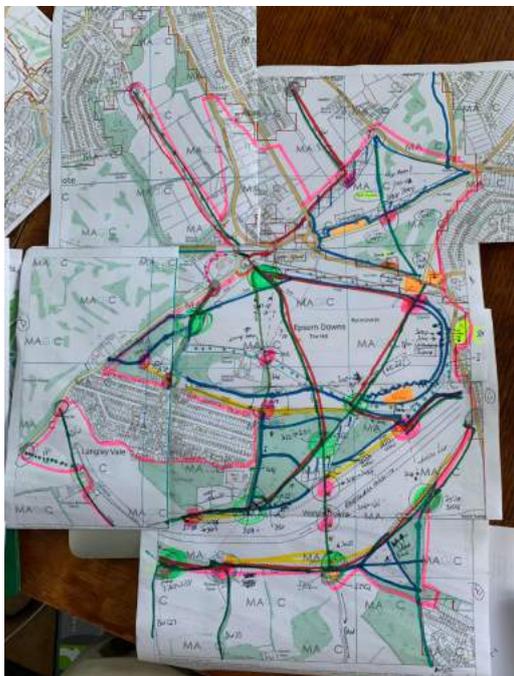
Public cycle routes - Surrey Interactive Map (<http://surreymaps.surreycc.gov.uk/public/viewer.asp>)

National Cycle Route 22 – Sustrans map <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/map-ncn>

Epsom and Ewell Bike & Hike (<https://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/RBHB>)

The Downs Hack Routes (New designed map in development)

- 2.7 The site surveys also took on board the feedback from the Racecourse and Jockey Club regarding conflict between leisure users and professional users, especially during the morning restricted periods. We took particular note of the sectors north of Tattenham Corner Road including the viewpoints along Grandstand Road with a view to assess how best to promote these for casual leisure use during the restricted periods.
- 2.8 The site surveys have revealed a plethora of signs, markers, posts and boards of varying designs, ages, conditions and ownerships all across the project intervention area. Most are permanent but some are only put in place at specific hours by the Downskeepers. A previous signs audit undertaken by the Operational Services Team a few years ago was especially useful in helping us quantify the scale of the challenge to effectively signpost the Downs to accommodate all users.
- 2.9 The hack route markers shown by coloured arrows and red crosses are the most confusing to a casual leisure user, as are bespoke to the Downs and have some colour conflicts with national signage e.g. a yellow arrow on the Downs designating no hack access before midday, whereas nationally a yellow arrow indicates a footpath open to walkers only. Many of the hack route markers are damaged or have had their direction arrow overlays removed.
- 2.10 To try and unpick this high complex intervention area we initially manually marked up the Defra Magic map and identified the areas of conflict where walkers, cyclists, leisure riders and potentially professional riders could come together. We have now started work with a graphic designer to create a series of maps and map layers showing the various designations and conflict zones which will be needed as supporting evidence for the full application. The initial draft is shown below, which is being developed over the coming weeks with multiple layers to identify the various designations.



- 2.11 Parallel with this we have been researching potential suppliers of signage, interpretation boards, way markers, rural seating and litter bins who could supply the project. These have been contacted for initial guide pricing to help with the project development.

3 The Current Proposal

- 3.0 The EAFRD funding is 100% predicated around developing the visitor economy therefore all our project interventions must be viewed through this perspective, rather than the underlying rationale around safety and replacement of signage, way markers etc. To have any chance of success in securing the EAFRD grant funding the project must focus on creating a leisure 'product' for walkers, riders and cyclists visiting the Epsom Downs.
- 3.1 Our experience in securing nearly £600k EAFRD grant funding for West Sussex County Council Downslink project and over £210k for a local vineyard is that we need to meet all the EAFRD fund criteria head on. We need to show a solid business case, the strength of the applicant, the ability to deliver within the contract period and to have a legacy plan in place for ongoing maintenance. We will also need to show a wide range of evidenced partner and stakeholder support for the project.
- 3.2 Our current proposal focused on delivering the stated aim and first three objectives within the EoI, as covered earlier, we will make a case to the RPA for the deletion of objective D:

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Our objectives:

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B: Provide clear directional aids across the Downs to help visitors explore, including routes from the Town Centre to the Downs, with routes suitable for walking and cycling.

C: Use interpretation and innovative signage to provide historical information, points of interest, and links to accommodation, restaurants, local attractions (such as the Woodland Trust's Centenary Wood) and other local businesses.

- 3.3 This will be delivered primary via the introduction of an extensive package of new interpretation boards, information signage, way markers, simple seating and leisure route development across the Downs intervention area. These will be in-keeping with the rural context of the Down primarily manufactured from quality hardwoods and natural materials.
- 3.4 We have had preliminary discussions with the Head of Planning at E&E and at present she believes such signs packages should be covered under Permitted Development within the Planning Act. This also seems to concur with the terms of the Parliamentary Act for the Downs which makes reference the provision of notices and signs. Although both Acts are subject to individual interpretation, we believe the installation of such infrastructure for the public good and safety should meet both Act requirements. We need to submit a formal request to the Head of Planning to secure a letter of confirmation of this for our full application.
- 3.5 In order to quantify the range of financial funding we would need to deliver such an extensive package of new signage infrastructure across the intervention area we produced an indicative draft specification to secure initial draft costings from selected suppliers. These costing estimates are now being received and evaluated.

3.6 The indicative packages include the following items:

<p>Please note these are indicative and not final designs they are to show the sort of materials available to the project within our anticipated budget.</p>	
	<p>Entrance Signs at the key access points into the Downs. Designs can incorporate simple stylised carved or etched ‘branding’ of the Downs and its racing heritage. Boards can have full colour mapping in UV protected panels. Reverse of signs can accommodate statutory bylaw notices.</p>
	<p>Interpretation boards, designed to be lower than entrance signage, tilted at an angle lectern-style to aide viewing at viewpoints and larger uprights at key points including the main car parks. Information panels can be map based but with annotations to show highlighted points of interest or items of educational value. Again, can be branded with the chosen design and at selected sites.</p>
	<p>Warning signs, at present the warning signs at conflict points especially with gallops are poor quality and in poor condition. This type of high quality, heavy duty wooden sign would be an option to replace the warning signs at gallops and training areas.</p>
	<p>Finger signs, there is a need for multiple finger signs across the whole intervention area, some will need various marker infills designating the differing route types. There will be differing number of arm requirements which has an impact on unit costs.</p>
	<p>Waymarkers, there is need for multiple waymarkers across the whole intervention area including specialist ones for the hack areas as well as ones showing standard bridleways, footpaths and cycle routes. Differing number of infill indicators at multi-user intersection points will impact on unit costs.</p>
	<p>Benches, there are a number of bench options from very plain and functional, through curved shaped to intricate ‘interpretation’ benches. There are a number of location options with excellent views that would be ideal.</p>

	<p>Wish list, branded litter bins at selected sites. Picnic tables at the Tea Hut with various options available, from traditional ‘heritage’ style to bespoke, and different seating number configurations.</p>
	<p>Mobile signs, there are a number of mobile signs placed across the Downs by the Downkeepers at various times of the day. We would look to include a high-quality robust design within the project remit.</p>

- 3.7 The current indicative costings to install packages of the above across the whole intervention area including all the main access points onto the Downs see 2.10, excluding signage removal, delivery, installation and VAT are coming in at circa **£160,000-£170,000**.
- 3.8 The draft specification has included all crossover points and conflict areas, plus a number of viewpoints within the Downs in terms of additional seating, but the requirement for combinations of finger post arms and wayfinder icons may add to this, alongside items from the core ‘wish list’.
- 3.9 Our experience with the RPA in other applications is that if a compelling case is made to increase the stated EoI budget based on more accurate costings and evidenced justification, such an increase in budget can sometimes be achieved. We would need to look carefully at the application business case to see whether such an increase could be justified.
- 3.10 Should such justification not be achieved, the scope and specification of the packages could be proportionally reduced to the original EoI level by focusing on visual identity, interpretation and trails, and priority multi-user intersection areas.
- 3.11 The indicative prices we have received so far exclude the removal of old signage and costs of installation the new signages. We have been advised that this could amount to 30-40% of the total indicative costs. We are in discussion with E&E whether the man-hours to do this could be supplied as an in-kind contribution to the project. This in-kind contribution would be ‘below the line’ from the intervention rate calculation but would maximise the capital grant element. Further discussions are needed, but initial feedback is supportive.
- 3.12 We will also need to build into these costs any design fees for the graphic artwork and mapping, artwork and set-up costs for the racing heritage etched or engraved branding, project management of final siting and installation.
- 3.13 We have also noted that across the intervention area there is quite a quantity of plastic barriers that are in a very poor condition, many broken, some repaired with gaffer tape and some virtually fallen over. Some of these barriers are used to corral the horses into the gallops and confusingly some are also used to corral leisure users of the pathways away from the gallops. These would be outside the eligibility scope of this project, and would need to be addressed separately.
- 3.14 In terms of match funding the RPA initially expressed a preference for local authority infrastructure bids to show some matched funding, i.e. we showed 5%. Later guidance indicates for projects generating no income the RPA are taking the applications as 100% grant funding but counting the partner match funding as outside the core figures.

- 3.15 This approach should not technically impact our application, we are hoping that the initial request for £20,000 of revenue funding from the conservators (as per October 2018 report) remains, as does the £7,500 contribution from the Jockey Club. This will give the project £27,500 of unrestricted revenue funding to support the pure capital grant from the RPA at whatever level we finally achieve from the current EoI figure of £142,500.

4 Timeframes

- 4.0 Assuming all the above is accepted we are currently preparing the full application including, final costing specifications for quotation, application narrative, financial evidence, business plan, planning evidence, supporting evidence and partner/stakeholder support, plus liaison with the RPA.
- 4.1 We will need to liaise closely with E&E officers over planning status (as previously shown); with the S151 officer over the financial figures required; with the Operational Services Team over the specifics details within the full application; legal over the on-going maintenance commitments post project and procurement to ensure we align with both E&E and RPA procurement rules.
- 4.2 We hope to be able to submit by end of June or very soon after. Our discussions with the RPA indicate a degree of flexibility with the June date if we are waiting for information from suppliers or letters of support etc.

Simon Matthews/Sandra Grant - June 7, 2019