

Community fund application – community assessment

June 2019

Grant requested: £2,500



Name of applicant	Dianne Parkes
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Name of your project	Witney Wonderland
Why are you applying for the grant? (in no more than 50 words)	<p>We wish to create a fabulous Christmas festival at St Mary's Church & grounds, illuminate 30 large Christmas Trees (inside the church) and further illuminations along the path and the trees in the churchyard and Church Green.</p> <p>The whole community will be freely invited to come together to celebrate the true spirit of Christmas. (With Witney being a dichotomy of 'the haves' and 'the have nots' and the rapid population increase in Witney we believe this is an important festival on the Witney calendar)</p> <p>We've engaged schools, music, arts, dance & drama organisations in Witney area in a program of creative development opportunities culminating in a 6 week Witney Wonderland festival at St Mary's Church, Witney. The festival will especially inspire</p>

	<p>young people with learning difficulties through live performance and inspiring workshops.</p> <p>We are also encouraging the over 55's to watch, listen and enjoy the performances.</p> <p>The festival commences at 6.30pm on Friday 29th November (following the official Town Council Christmas Lights Switch on) and we are working with the Switch on working party, The Rotary Club and Round Table.</p>
<p>How much will your total project cost?</p>	<p>£15,000</p>
<p>How much have you raised so far?</p>	<p>£6,000 of corporate sponsorship has been paid. A further £3,500 has been pledged.</p>
<p>How much are you applying for from Cottsway?</p>	<p>£2,500</p>
<p>Have you received a grant from the Cottsway in the past?</p>	<p>Yes</p>

Please indicate the funding aims your project will meet:

YES	Services and activities for young people and/or older people.
	Services and activities that address rural issues and tackle rural exclusion and social isolation.
	Services and activities that will benefit the environment.
	Services and activities that help prevent debt, provide financial advice and reduce poverty.
YES	Services and activities that contribute towards getting people online and reduce digital exclusion.
	Services and activities that contribute to an inclusive and active community.

Please tell us how your project meets the funding aims

Our event involves working with 300+ young people mainly between the ages of 11-18 in Witney and the surrounding area.

The whole community is invited to freely listen, watch and enjoy participating in the arts workshops. We are especially keen to include residents of social housing and disadvantaged members of the community.

We are also encouraging participation from Witney area special needs schools and young people who may have had limited opportunities in life to watch performances or to be involved with the performing arts.

We have engaged the support of professional performers from a variety of backgrounds to ensure a vibrant, diverse and fully inclusive event.

We are organising this community event with Toby Wright, Dean of Witney and The Parish of Witney share our aims to make this a fully inclusive event and to use St Mary's Church and grounds for it's intended purpose, i.e. as a principal building for the enjoyment of community events

What activities will the project offer?

ARTISTIC ACTIVITIES

The arts activities will run over a 6-week period (from 29th November - 6th January) each attracting an individual audience. Last year (the first festival) we had over 7,500 visitors to the festival.

We're creating a dynamic program of activities & workshops to give Witney's community inspiring opportunities to engage with the arts. e.g. We wish to involve live inspirational performers &, explore all aspects of performing arts, allowing 300+ children to participate in a range of arts workshops and performances.

This year's theme is retro, and we'll be encouraging Witney's community to dress for the occasion and be involved.

A range of costumed roaming performers (stilt walkers, acrobats, magicians).

N.B. costumed children from Witney's schools and clubs will also be performing.

Stage Performances include:

'The Fabulous Lounge Swingers' performing well known numbers.

'Swing Patrol' Swing Dancers performing a swing dance workshop.

'Windrush Choir' performing carols around the Christmas Trees

'Cotswold's Voices' a 40-member strong choir performing 'Carols By Candlelight'

Oxford Imps Staging audience participation comedy

Francis Rumsey and Windrush Choral Society Chamber Choir performing a recital on the theme of the Orgelbuchlein chorale preludes for Advent.

Talented young people can perform solo/duo on stage and we'll be especially encouraging children with physical disability (West Oxfordshire Wheelchair Dancers) learning disability and from ethnic minorities (e.g. Naveeda Shah will be performing).

Arts Activities include:

Children making Christmas Tree Decorations from recycled materials

(We will also stage a Christmas tree decorating parties for children to enjoy on 27th & 28th November)

Beatrice Hoffman staging a drop-in clay sculpture workshop (making animals)

Christmas Tree Festival:

Children's charities in West Oxfordshire will be freely given a Christmas Tree and lighting.

Children's charities involved are Helen & Douglas House Hospice, Seesaw Child Bereavement, Joss Searchlight Children's Cancer Support, Yellow Submarine, Disability, Aspire Oxford, Unlocking Potential, promoting social inclusion for children who have survived adversity & West Oxfordshire Wheelchair Dancers.

Christmas Market

This year (at the request of Witney Town Council) we'll also be staging a Christmas Food & Gifts market running over a 2-day period (29th & 30th November).

Members of the public will be freely invited to sample food and drink.

How has the community and/or Cottsway residents been consulted in this proposal?

We've consulted with local schools and with a focus group regarding the type of event they would like to see to draw the community to the heart of town.

Feedback from visitors age 65+ included:

'It's marvelous, I'm not just asking you, I'm imploring you to do this again'

'What fabulous events, such delightful surroundings, this is the true spirit of Christmas'

Feedback from children included:

'This is the best day I've had in the past 3 months. Thank you, thank you, thank you'

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Our focus groups wished to stage a unique and affordable (i.e. FREE entry) family days out to watch, listen and enjoy participating in workshops and the Christmas market.

The group wished to create a community event that would give young people a sense of belonging with possibilities of working closely with professional performers They also wished to stage a music for the over 55's to watch, listen and enjoy participating in workshops. The focus groups felt that there are insufficient community music events in Witney targeted to this age group.

How will you ensure promotion to Cottsway residents?

We will ensure poster promotion in areas of social housing in the following towns:

Ducklington

Minster Lovell

Eynsham

North Leigh

Curbridge

Long Hanborough