

Bid to bring scheme to town could rely on finding £100,000

Bus fund team send out an SOS

by Robert Andrews

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A TEAM of organisers behind an idea to bring an SOS bus to Newmarket are appealing for a cash injection to get the scheme up and running.

As revealed in the *Journal* in October, a number of agencies connected with the town want to bring a specially equipped night-time bus to Newmarket.

It would be used on the High Street and at the July racecourse to provide clubbers and racegoers with a safe haven, offering first aid, chill-out facilities and arranging transport home.

Newmarket's Community Partnership, Racing Welfare, Forest Heath Council and Suffolk-based drink and drug abuse agencies have already pledged to donate an initial £50,000.

But now the project needs to secure extra funding – around

£100,000 per year – if it is ever to actually get off the ground.

"The running costs would be a lot," said Sammy Manzaroli, substance misuse officer for western Suffolk.

"Although it is only a ball park figure, I would think annual costs could be around £100,000 per year.

"Newmarket would benefit because it would make the town a safer and more prosperous place at night time."

Mr Manzaroli said he hoped someone connected with the racing industry would get behind the scheme with some financial backing.

"Similar schemes have been successful because they have been supported by organisations

like the police and local businesses," he said.

On top of the initial cost of fitting the bus, more cash is required for medical equipment and a volunteer team of staff.

Mr Manzaroli said he hoped he could arrange for one of the already established buses to be brought to the town centre for people to see.

"Ideally, this would mean a presentation in the High Street."

The scheme was first introduced in Norwich in 2001 after two youngsters died on a night out.

Nightclub owners came together with statutory and voluntary agencies to work towards preventing further tragedies.

● **Anyone who would like to know more about the SOS bus can visit the Racing Welfare homepage at www.newmarketracingpartnership.co.uk.**