

TRAILS, ACCESS AND VOLUNTEERING

Summary: To report on key activity during the period

Recommendation: That the Executive Committee notes the report

Report by: Rebecca Jones, Access and Volunteers Lead

MEMBERS OF THE COTSWOLD TRAILS AND ACCESS PARTNERSHIP (CTAP)

- Becky Jones, CNL Access and Volunteers Lead
- Margaret Reid, Chair and Board Member
- Tess Jackson, Natural England
- Mike Cripps, Head Voluntary Warden
- John Bartram, Chair Cotswold Way Association
- Michele Holden, Gloucestershire Ramblers
- Nicola Chidley, Gloucestershire Rights of Way
- Cheryl Hannan, BANES Rights of Way
- Fiona Argyll, Worcestershire Rights of Way
- Karen Hayes, South Gloucestershire Rights of Way
- Richard Holmes, Gloucestershire Access Forum
- Sally Graff, Cotswold Tourism

MEMBERS OF THE WARDEN'S EXECUTIVE

- Head and Deputy Warden – Mike Cripps and Sarah West
- Chairs of all five districts
- Access and Volunteers Lead, CEO, Trails and Access Officer

MEETINGS SINCE THE LAST EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- CTAP meeting held online on 26 October 2023. The next CTAP is due to be held on 2 May 2024.
- Wardens Executive Meeting held on 23 November 2023. The next meeting is due to be held at Greystones on 19 February 2024.

ACTIVITY IN THE PERIOD

1. Cotswold Way National Trail

- Additional funding for the purchase of oak signposts, drainage work at Cold Ashston and surface improvements in Winchcombe totalling £26,022 has been agreed to be spent before 31 March 2024.
- Projects completed so far include a new route along the road verge at Kingcombe Lane, Chipping Campden and surfacing at Stanton and surfacing at Weston, Bath. Further surfacing work on the Lansdown mobility route is planned for completion in March.
- The CNL team greatly appreciates the ongoing and increasing support from the Cotswold Way Association who funded work at Stanton and Kingcombe Lane.
- Ramblers Worldwide Outdoor Trust have funded £689 for the purchase of Cotswold Way waymarkers.
- We are working with National Trails UK (the new umbrella charity supporting the Trails) to arrange a Cotswolds based conference, to celebrate 75 years of National Trails and showcase Trails and raise awareness amongst funders and wider networks. The conference will be held at the Leonardo Hotel in Cheltenham on 16 May 2024.
- The Cotswold Way will also be hosting the annual Trail Officers event on 17 May 2024 at Cleeve Hill.

2. Removing Barriers (Access for All) funding

- Nina Stubbington has been appointed to the role of Grants and Access Officer that will follow on from her current contract, meaning that we retain her until March 2025. The new role, Grants and Access Officer, focuses on managing the Removing Barriers – Access for All funding.
- The deadline for project proposals was 15 December 2023 and projects initially shortlisted on 9 January. Projects received totalled £763,554 with £254,381 to allocate before 31 March 2024. A further meeting to agree / further explore the shortlisted bids will take place on 17 January, with projects due to begin work from April 2024.

3. Bathscape

- Our main contract to deliver the access element of the Bathscape Project completed in August 2023.
- A very successful 'thank you' event to mark the completion of the access element of the project and provide an opportunity to thank the volunteers and everyone else involved with the work was held in the Bath Assembly Rooms on 19 October.
- Nicole Daw (Trails and Access Officer) has created a series of five video trails, based on the most accessible of the 18 routes created to target a range of audiences around Bath, as part of a short-term Bathscape funded contract. A further five will be completed before 31 March as part of the additional funding.

4. Volunteering

- The 2024 annual Volunteers Conference will be held on Friday 14 June at the RAU, with the theme of Rivers and Waterways.
- There are currently over 400 active Cotswold Wardens with two first aid and safety courses to be held in March 2024 for 100 volunteers.
- The online autumn series of talks for volunteers on the themes of Farming Schemes, VIP Going Underground and Grasslands were held between October and December.

DECISIONS REQUIRED

- None

JANUARY 2024