

GENERAL UPDATES

Summary: To provide the Board with an update on activities across the organisation.

Recommendation: That the Board notes the various updates.

Reviewed by the Executive Committee: Yes / No

If yes, the Committee's comments: N/A

Report by: Simon Smith – Development and Special Projects Officer
 Mark Connelly – Land Management Officer
 Scott Mills – Project Officer
 James Webb – Partnerships and Fundraising Officer

EXTERNAL BIDS

1. Key points to note:
 - The pause on main Heritage Lottery programmes due to their Covid response is impacting on a number of initiatives. Latest intelligence is that main programmes will not be reopening until 2021 and then only partially or even not until 2022. Officers are keeping the situation and its consequences under review.
 - The National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative has similarly been held up, though the signs of it resuming are more hopeful and the next round has been announced.
 - There has been a focus on developmental activity around nature recovery through Big Chalk and engaging young people.
 - We have submitted an expression of interest to the Green Recovery Challenge Fund for a programme broadening engagement in partnership with Wild Oxfordshire and Young Gloucestershire.

CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP

2. The remit of the working group is to:
 - Review the Climate Change Strategy for the Cotswolds AONB
 - Understand how climate change is likely to impact on the ecosystem services and special qualities of the Cotswolds AONB.
 - Recommend to the Board any follow up review, where required, of relevant position statements and guidance
3. The Working Group has met three times; 25 June 2020, 6 August 2020 and 16 September.
4. Members of the Group are Richard Lloyd (Chair), Brendan Costelloe, Norman Kay, Dom Morris, John Matthews, Chris Crookall-Fallon (CDC Climate Change Officer). Lucy Demery has just joined the working group, bringing finance and legal expertise.
5. Progress to date includes:
 - Discussed national and local context

- Discussed the 2012 Climate Change Strategy and how to approach it's review
 - Drafted revised soils and water and Woodland and trees sections for discussion
 - Drafted a set of high level principles for nature based solutions
 - Received a presentation and discussed the proposed Nature Recovery Plan (NRP) for the Cotswolds and the Big Chalk proposal.
 - To ensure consistency it was agreed that Richard Lloyd joins the Nature Recovery Plan Working Group
 - Discussed the approach to renewable energy and the Renewable Energy Position Statement in light of the Board's response to the Stroud Local Plan
6. Actions for the next meeting on 23 October:
- Review amended Woodland and Trees section following discussion and comment
 - Draft the revised Energy, Economy, Biodiversity and Historic Environment sections for consideration.

FUNDRAISING WORKING GROUP

7. The newly formed Fundraising Working Group consists of Brendan Costelloe (Chair), Liz Eyre and Phil Chapman.
8. The group first met in May to discuss the Kingfisher Trail. Feedback from the group was instrumental in the early development of the project. Members provided ongoing support, which helped refine the project.
9. The group has recently received an update on the progress of Caring for the Cotswolds. Feedback from this update will be actioned once the new website has gone live.
10. Looking ahead, there will be more opportunities for the group to get involved as the Kingfisher Trail goes live and we look to grow the membership of Caring for the Cotswolds.

COTSWOLDS CHAMPIONS STEERING GROUP

- 11 The first Cotswolds Champions (CC) Programme Steering Group meeting took place on 9 June 2020. Members include Scott Brown, Mark Connelly, John Mills, Ben Stokes (CCB member for South Glos) and Garry King (CCB SoS member). All present. Angela Bence-Wilkins, Principal Planning Officer – Landscape, at South Gloucestershire Council, subsequently agreed to join the Group as an external member. The meeting primarily involved agreeing upon CC Programme objectives and processes for assessing project proposals and releasing funding.
- 12 The following project proposals were also considered at the 9 June meeting:
 - a. **Rail Corridor Enhancement Project:** Proposal to co-deliver the project in partnership with FWAG_SW approved (using c.£200k mitigation sum). The process of setting up the 'partnership agreement' has helped establish new options for collaborative working and funding arrangements between CCB and partners. The project will highlight FWAG_SW as a valued CCB partner whilst also bringing their expertise and specialist skills to the project, most notably in respect to natural capital mapping, stakeholder engagement and

project design specification. The project will initially focus on delivery at seven target sites for mitigation planting in winter 2020/21.

- b. **Caring for the Cotswolds (CftC):** Proposal to channel £25,000 through CftC approved. This will ensure some Network Rail funding supports small grants for community-led projects, allowing the CC Programme to focus on major projects only, whilst also avoiding running parallel small grant schemes.
- c. **Kingfisher Trail:** Proposal to support project with £25,000 grant approved, enabling the project to get underway.

13 The second CC Programme Steering Group meeting took place on 22 Sept 2020. All members were present. The following projects were all appraised:

- a. **Rail Corridor Enhancement Project:** Review of progress to date, phase one of the project. Engagement with land managers is going well and the project is on track. The Steering Group also assessed a proposal to plant a community orchard at Old Sodbury, one of the sites identified as a target for lineside mitigation. A grant of £8,700 was approved, subject to certain conditions being met. The project is being led by Richard Wilson, Avon District Cotswolds Voluntary Warden, working with local community group, Sodbury Woodland and Nature.
- b. **Little Avon Catchment Improvement Project, Bristol and Avon Rivers Trust (BART) - £48k grant approved:** Supporting a catchment-based project was a stated ambition of the Cotswolds Champions Programme. This project aims to improve management of the headwaters of the Little Avon, which lie mostly within the AONB, near the rail corridor. It is hoped that this will lead to a catchment-wide programme of works and attract additional funding. It will be delivered by BART working with local land managers. BART are also very keen to work more closely with the CCB going forwards, and very happy to be showcased as a Cotswolds Champion. The Environment Agency and Bristol Avon Catchment Partnership are supportive of the project, which positions the CCB well in an area where we have not had much involvement with the catchment partnership to date. A grant of £48 was approved, subject to certain conditions being met.
- c. **The Golden Valley - Communities for Insects, Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust (GWT) - £20k grant approved:** Showcasing the work of the Wildlife Trusts in the AONB was a stated ambition of the Cotswolds Champions Programme. This project is a current priority for GWT and their preferred option to be considered for a Cotswolds Champions Programme grant. The Golden Valley lies deep in the heart of the Cotswolds, a mosaic of grassland and woodland on gently rolling banks which run 4km from East of Stroud Town to Sapperton. Here, GWT, working in partnership with the Royal Entomological Society (RES) and local landowners, aims to drive forward sustainable action for insects and create a national exemplar for nature's recovery. The project will initially cost a total of £126k, with Biffa being the main potential funders. A Cotswolds Champions grant of £20k was approved, subject to other funds being secured. The Steering Group felt confident that this was a well-developed and important project that we should be part of in some capacity.

Supporting documents

Appendix A. External Bids Update

OCTOBER 2020