

## PROJECTS AND FUNDRAISING

**Summary:** To review the progress of the Projects and Fundraising Working Group, and the Engagement Team.

**Recommendation:** That the Executive Committee notes the report.

**Report by:** James Webb, Partnerships Lead

### BOARD MEMBERS REPRESENTED ON THE GROUP

- Ellie Fujioka (Chair)
- Emilie Brignall
- Ben Dent
- Jon Grantham
- John Swanton (Independent)

### ENGAGEMENT TEAM

- Rebecca Foster, Grants Coordinator
- Helen Komor, Outdoor Learning Officer
- James Webb, Partnerships Lead
- Rowan Wynne-Jones, Water Restoration Officer

### RECORD OF MEETINGS

- 19 May 2026 – in person (Caring for the Cotswolds grants panel)
- 7 July 2026 – in person (Caring for the Cotswolds grants panel)
- 9 November 2026 – in person (Caring for the Cotswolds grants panel)

## 1. Strategic Partnership work

### Common Connections

CNL has partnered with National Trust and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust to develop a large-scale nature recovery and engagement project. National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) will be investing £150 million into 20 projects during their current strategy period up to 2033.

Protected Landscapes must be at the core of any project.

- “Common Connections” was approved in Dec 2025 with a grant of £206,000 towards a planning phase.
- The planning phase is being led by Ben Spencer, Project Manager who started in April 2026. Ben’s role is being hosted by National Trust.
- The project area is a section of the Cotswold escarpment from Cleeve Common in the north to Stinchcombe Common in the south.
- The vision is to connect high-quality habitat along this section of the escarpment and engage the people that live and work in the area.
- If successful, the delivery phase could be a £ multimillion project lasting 5+ years

The following feasibility work is underway:

- Grazing Management Ltd have been appointed to undertake mapping and a feasibility study on species rich grassland management.
- Consultants have been appointed to support bid writing, governance and evaluation.
- A StoryMap has been produced to help communicate the project vision to communities and stakeholders. It can be viewed on the CNL website here:
- <https://www.cotswolds-nl.org.uk/our-work/people-and-access/common-connections/>

## **2. Engagement team delivery**

### **Caring for the Cotswolds**

This is our own grant scheme for the Cotswolds. It is supported by businesses who wish to keep the Cotswolds a special place to live, work and visit. In July 2025, the scheme received a significant boost with a £250,000 grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF). The grant supports a dedicated Grants Coordinator (Bec Foster) to manage the scheme over the next three years, until July 2028. In that time, the scheme will distribute £130,000 in small community grants, as well as providing opportunities for young people to join a youth panel and take part in paid placements. We will also develop a climate competition for young people.

- We have successfully run three Grants & Youth Panels in local secondary schools where Board members and students assess the applications together.
- In total 19 new projects have been supported with a combined grant value of £70,179.
- In July we ran our first paid work placement for nine young people (18-25) in Stroud.
- The second work placement week is scheduled for October in Cirencester.
- We are launching a climate competition this autumn for scouts and guides in the Cotswolds.

### **Access to Nature**

Helen Komor, Outdoor Learning Officer, leads our Access to Nature partnership with CNL, Gloucestershire Community Rail Partnership, and World Jungle. The project is financed through a three-year grant from Ernest Cook Trust, as well as many smaller pots of money that support core and activity costs. The project runs until August 2027.

- Year one of the project (Sep 24 – Aug 25)
  - 1,191 young people directly engaged (target was 750)
  - A further 317 engaged through wider partnership work
- Year two of the project (Sep 25 – Aug 26)
  - 652 young people directly engaged (target was 500)
  - A further 267 engaged through wider partnership work
  - Focus on deeper and sustained engagement with small groups of young people
- The project has reached some of the most isolated and disengaged young people in the Cotswolds and urban fringe. They have been given the opportunity to take part in workshops, days out to locations such as Cleeve Common and Westonbirt, work experience and residential.
- A successful application to the National Lottery Community Fund has attracted £14,500 towards the partnership with Gloucestershire Hospital Education Service. Fortnightly sessions will be offered, starting Sep 26, as part of this work.

### **The Great Big Climate Circus**

This project is being led by Creative Sustainability and World Jungle with CNL as a supporting partner. It is being funded through a National Lottery Community Fund grant of £1.5 million (total project value = £2.1 million) and went live in January 2026.

- The circus will visit three locations per year and offer climate related activities, presentations, music and poetry (Stroud, Dursley & Gloucester in summer 2026).
- CNL will provide seasonal climate activity sessions for young people to get involved in, delivered by Helen Komor, Outdoor Learning Officer.
- CNL payments over the project lifetime total £53,629 and cover salaries, training, management fee, and professional expertise & support.

### **Freshwater Focus**

Rowan Wynne-Jones, Water Restoration Officer, leads our river catchment work. The project is financed through the Water Restoration Fund, a grant managed by Wild Oxfordshire on behalf of the Evenlode Catchment Partnership. The project runs until July 2027.

- The work builds on the hugely successful Everyone's Evenlode project and is broken down into a series of annual milestones
- The milestones include some large research pieces of work that reflect on the findings of Everyone's Evenlode. They culminate in a series of reports that will help inform and shape a future CNL rivers-based project.
- There are also some delivery milestones that involve river-based learning and community engagement
- A webpage showcasing Rowan's work can be found here:
- <https://www.cotswolds-nl.org.uk/our-work/education-and-resources/freshwater-focus/>

### **Corporate volunteering**

In 2023 CNL formalised its offer to businesses looking to spend the day volunteering in the Cotswolds, either for corporate social responsibility or team building. We have a set price and provide an itinerary and risk assessment in advance. As well as getting useful work done, this initiative contributes to our second purpose: "helping people understand and enjoy the Cotswolds". Highlights include:

- We have welcomed 17 different groups (approx. 195 people)
- Work has included building over 100m of dead-hedge, woodland management, creating reptile habitat and scrub bashing
- Has raised £6,000

### **DECISIONS REQUIRED**

- None

### **NEXT STEPS**

- Draft a Fundraising Strategy

### **SUPPORTING PAPERS**

- None

SEPTEMBER 2026