

## **FARMING AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE COTSWOLDS AONB**

**Summary:** To present the updated proposal for Farming and Rural development in the Cotswolds AONB and identify future actions to promote and develop the proposal.

**Recommendation:** That the updated proposal for Farming and Rural Development in the Cotswolds AONB is noted and the next steps agreed.

**Officer Ref:** Mark Connelly, Land Management Officer (01451 862006)

### **Background**

1. The Executive received a progress update on the development of a farming and rural development proposal at their last meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2017. Prior to the Executive meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> November, the second farmers working was held at Guiting Manor Farms and Chaired by Lord Bathurst. The meeting confirmed that the proposal was along the right lines and chimed well with other proposals, coalescing around a set of common strands. The meeting, however, felt the draft proposal needed to be more Cotswold specific and that this could be achieved by adding a few references to the 'Cotswolds' and some Cotswold specifics and by developing a table identifying the Cotswold features, the reasons/benefits of supporting them through agri-environment and the intended goals/outcomes.
2. It was also agreed to hold a third meeting after the release of the Government's 25 year plan
3. Attached as Appendix 'A' is the current version of the proposal with additional Cotswolds references included. The table is in development with an early draft considered by the Conserving and Managing Sub-committee on 15<sup>th</sup> January.
4. The proposal for Farming and Rural development in the Cotswolds matches well with the Government's aspirations and direction of travel in the 25 year plan to improve the Environment published on 11<sup>th</sup> January<sup>1</sup>.
5. The 25 Year Environment Plan seems to support a two-tier approach to agri-environment (page 42 of the Plan) which matches the Cotswolds proposal. The 25 year plan also highlights soil health, tree planting 'where appropriate', natural flood management and landscape scale restoration of wildflower rich grassland. There is no mention of designing a scheme for areas such as the Cotswolds, but there is a commitment to work with land managers and others to consider the role of a new environmental land management scheme. Proposals on a new system are due for consultation in the spring.

### Next steps

6. It is important that the Board continues to promote and gain support for the Cotswolds Farming and Rural Development Proposal. This includes:

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<sup>1</sup> A green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/673203/25-year-environment-plan.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/673203/25-year-environment-plan.pdf)

- Holding a third meeting of the farmer's working group
- Engaging with Natural England and Defra, seeking to secure the Cotswolds AONB as a pilot for the development of the future agri-environment and rural development scheme. Andrew Sells, Chairman of Natural England, when visiting the Board in October was keen that we raised the idea of a pilot with Lord Gardiner on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2017. Following the visit, the draft Farming and Rural Development proposal was sent to Lord Gardiner who in turn forwarded it to 'relevant officials in Defra'.
- Discussing the proposal and the idea for a Cotswolds pilot with the NFU and possibly the CLA
- Seeking support and alignment with National Parks
- Via the NAAONB link with other AONBs interested in promoting locally designed and delivered schemes.
- Discussing with and seeking support from organisations such as the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG), the Wildlife Trusts, National Trust etc
- Briefing local authority partners on the Farming and Rural Development in the Cotswolds AONB proposal and seek their support for a pilot in the Cotswolds
- Engage in the consultation, due in the spring, on the role of the future environmental land management scheme.

**Supporting Paper(s):**

**Appendix 'A' – Farming and Rural Development in the Cotswolds AONB**