

“COTSWOLD’S LIVING LIMESTONE” EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Summary: To present an update on the development on the “Cotswold’s Living Limestone” project proposal.

Recommendation: That the report be noted.

Officer Ref: Simon Smith, Project Development and Business Planning Officer

Background

Progress to date

1. Officers and Board members have been investigating the potential of a National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) proposal based on the historic heritage of the Cotswolds. After much discussion and reflection this process started formally with an internal workshop held in January 2018. It was attended by; George Lambrick, David Thackray, Hedley Ringrose, the Board’s Land Management Officer and the Business Planning and Project Development Officer. A key outcome was the idea of a project premised on the central idea of Cotswolds stone.
2. The wealth of ideas generated at the first workshop were further developed and used as a starting point for a stakeholder’s workshop held in August 2018. The Board was represented at this workshop by David Thackray, the Land Management Officer and the Business Planning and Project Development Officer. The idea was well received and further developed into the project described in the expression of interest **Appendix ‘A’**.
3. In brief the project will secure and conserve a representative suite of heritage assets and use them to tell the story of Cotswold limestone. People within the Cotswolds and in particular people from the communities surrounding the area who do not currently access it will be directly involved in these conservation projects and will have new or greater engagement with the area.
4. The match with both of the Board’s purposes and many of the policies in the AONB Management Plan is very strong. Policies supported include;
 - CE6.1 Historic Environmental and Cultural Heritage. Conservation through management.
 - NE2.5 Access and Recreation. Opportunities to increase understanding and enjoyment. Particularly for deprived communities from surrounding urban areas and those who do not traditionally visit the AONB.
5. The Heritage Lottery Fund closed its programmes in late summer 2018 whilst it undertook a strategic review. Rather than wait, a project proposal form was completed and circulated to internal stakeholders whilst the HLF was closed over the winter of 2018/19.
6. The Heritage Lottery Fund relaunched itself as the National Lottery Heritage Fund on the 30th of January with revised grant programmes and application

processes. The original project enquiry form was rewritten to fit the new grant programme and expression of interest form and then circulated to stakeholders at the beginning of May 2019 with a deadline for comments of the 17th May 2019.

Next Steps

7. At the time of writing (16th May 2019) it is intended to submit the expression of interest on the 23rd May 2019. NLHF state that they aim to respond within 20 working days so we should hear by mid-June 2019. It may be longer as they are no doubt inundated having only recently opened their programmes following a hiatus. All dates are tentative but a possible timeline could be a development stage application in September 2020. A full application in December 2021 and 4 years delivery starting in April 2022.
8. Subject to a positive reaction from the NLHF the Board will need to agree to proceed to a delivery phase application. This will require a much more rigorous look into project proposals and budgets along with developing a clear understanding of who will lead them, where they will occur and where the match funding will come from. No partner has currently come forward to offer match funding for this project.
9. The budget in the expression of interest is tentative and will certainly change if the project gets worked up in more detail. Based on similar projects a development stage of £170,000 and a delivery stage of £1.8 million are possible though the size of the project is likely to be dictated by availability of match funding.

Supporting Paper(s):

Appendix 'A' - Cotswolds Living Limestone EOI May 2019