**TASK AND FINISH GROUPS AND WORKING GROUPS**

**Summary:** To receive a progress update on the Board’s task and finish groups and working groups.

**Recommendation: That the progress updates be noted.**

**Author:** Martin Lane, Director (01451 862000)

**Background**

The report below provides a summary of the work of the task and finish and working groups from early September until late November.

**Caring for the Cotswolds Task & Finish Group**

* + Date of next meeting: tba.
  + Last Caring for the Cotswolds new member event (10 October 2018) was cancelled due to a lack of response.
  + Our intention is to plan a ‘thanks’ event for existing members (to which potential new members will also be invited) for Christmas /New Year.
  + With the last few contributions, the scheme has now raised £36,013 overall.
  + Calls for funding applications closed on 31st October.

**Rural Skills Task & Finish Group**

* + Date of next meeting: Friday 30th November, postponed from 7th November.
  + This re-scheduled meeting will target i) market analysis and pricing for core Rural Skills training programme); ii) review of Rural Skills programme for schools; iii) proposed development plan for Rural Skills programme; and iv) review of Cotswolds Conservation Board hedge-laying competition**.**

**A417 Task & Finish Group**

* + Meeting held with Highways England (HE) on 22nd October to discuss earlier requests for information, concerns over land bridge options and suggestions for improvements to Option 30. HE is appraising the alternative suggestions. HE have recognised that the engagement process is not working as well as it should and are exploring improvements.
  + HE led workshop held 7th November. Board’s suggestions for alternative solutions, in particular how the A436 links to the A417 featured and are under appraisal. Discussions ongoing over aspects of design.
  + Strategic Stakeholder Panel meetings held on 24th October and 29th November.
  + Date of next meeting: tba

**Dark Skies Task & Finish Group**

* + Met on 9th November
  + Working draft of report considered and text amendments and additions agreed. Finalised via email.
  + Dark Night Skies and Artificial Light position statement to be completed for February Exec.
  + Date of next meeting: No further meeting planned.

**Walking & Exploring Working Group**

* + Cotswolds Trails and Access Group – David Kerr volunteered to attend the CTAP meetings as Board member for W&EC.
  + Engagement with young people – Princes Trust pilot project was a success. Officers to press Members in future to help with access to funders. New work planned with Glos Univ Students Union.
  + Visit England bid to end in March 2019 with new footage and itineraries for the Cotswold Way National Trail targeting the Dutch, German and American audiences.
  + Gateways Project –progressing variation to original bid to RPA, 8/10 locations have now been visited and re-engaged. Wardens will undertake the majority of work, funding is for materials only via claims to RPA, no overheads or staff time covered, but £ can be used as Match-Funding.
  + Map and Guide reprint circulated, congratulations! Recommendation that next issues of paper resources in 2019 should be reviewed for amalgamation.
  + Discoverer Pass – good recent meeting, suggest issuing a retrospective Purchase Order with evidence of advertising actually printed. Maintain pressure, action 2 weeks!
  + Explore The Cotswolds – Printed
  + Date of next meeting – Tuesday 8th January 2.30pm

**Planning & Infrastructure Working Group**

* + Meeting held on 17th October 2018.
  + The Working Group has discussed a number of issues, including:
* the protocol for how the Planning and Landscape Officer engages with the Group on planning-related consultations;
* the work programme associated with the Group’s Terms of Reference;
* the consultation status of the Board (both legal and actual)
* the challenge from the External Funding Working Group to secure more income for the Board through planning-related work.
  + Priorities for the next few months will include the Planning and Landscape Officer ensuring that the Group is appropriately consulted on planning-related issues, developing a protocol with local planning authorities and responding to the challenge of the External Funding Working Group.
* Date of next meeting: 10th January 2019.

**External Funding Working Group**

* Met on 4th September. Discussed and noted the external bids paper. Considered match funding in particular. Inviting a professional fundraiser to their next meeting. Discussed;
  1. The adoption of things; lengths of PRoW, trees, walls etc.
  2. A landscape memorial, book of acknowledgement/remembrance to encourage donations & legacies.
  3. Corporate approaches, the group is refreshing earlier work undertaken by officers.
* Have challenged the Planning and Infrastructure Working group and intend to bring a challenge paper for all Board members to the February Executive and then the full Board in March.
* The group will be exploring not for profit/charitable mechanisms and structures and also models for developing entrepreneurial activity, initially around countryside management/consultancy.
* List of items for sponsorship drawn up by Officers for October meeting.
* Meeting of 23rd October postponed.
* Date of next meeting: 6th December following the Board meeting

**New Working Group to be established in January 2019:**

**Glorious Cotswolds Grasslands Working Group**

* **Remit**: To support the delivery of the Glorious Cotswolds Grasslands project and the establishment of the Cotswolds Meadows Service.
* Support and monitor project progress against indicators and targets
* To advise on the establishment of the Meadows service as a self-financing operation.
* To provide an interface with the land managing community of the Cotswolds including farming, equine, conservation bodies and highway authorities.
* **Timescales**: January 2019 to March 2022
* **Proposed membership**: 3 Board members and 3 external members
* **Officer Lead**: Mark Connelly and Grasslands Project Officer

**Supporting papers:**

None