**GLORIOUS COTSWOLDS GRASSLANDS**

AGENDA ITEM 14

**Summary:** To present an update on Glorious Cotswolds Grasslands.

**Recommendation: That progress be noted.**

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

**Background**

1. Following the successful bid to the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation earlier this year, recruitment of the two project staff, a project officer and part-time assistant project officer, is currently underway.

2. Glorious Cotswolds Grasslands is a 3 year project to establish the Cotswolds AONB as the largest connected network of wildflower rich grassland within the band of Jurassic limestone between Portland and Hull, to significantly raise awareness of its importance and function and to establish a Cotswolds Meadow Service to continue the work into the future on a commercial basis. Over the three years the project aims to create/restore 100ha wildflower rich grassland to extend and link existing grassland sites. To achieve this, the project proposes to:

* Use GIS and knowledge gained from SoMM to identify sites for creation and restoration.
* Identify and contact farmers and landowners, organising meetings and workshops to promote wildflower rich grassland and its value and advantages. This includes new sectors, particularly equine
* Collect seed and green hay from donor sites and spread on receptor sites
* Undertake habitat management with volunteer groups
* Provide small grants for infrastructure such as fencing and pasture pumps
* Promote and facilitate collaborative grazing where a grazier can operate across adjoining land ownerships
* Advise farmers and land managers on the management of wild flower rich grassland.
* Promote the ecosystem services provided by grasslands such as livestock health, carbon sequestration, water management and better quality products.
* Promote the importance and benefits of wildflower rich grassland at events.
* Develop an arts project to engage and work with schools and colleges.
* Work with communities and the highway authorities to identify and restore road verges as part of the grassland network.
* Research the feasibility and launch a self-financing advisory and delivery service - the Cotswolds Meadow Service to provide advice and practical services to continue the restoration and creation of wild flower rich grassland.

3. The application to the EFF was for £211,356 towards a total budget of £287,106 across 3 years:

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| Staff (1.75 fte) and operational costs | £204,970 |
| Advisory visits and task co-ordination | £16,247 |
| Equipment, tools and materials | £3,677 |
| Community engagement and farm demonstration events | £24,524 |
| Meadow Service feasibility | £5,500 |
| Skills and training | £18,393 |
| Small grants | £13,795 |
| **TOTAL** | **£287,106** |

The difference is made up from a private donation, contribution from income from the auction of the trail Hares and Medlock Trust totalling £80,750.

4. A working group is to be established to advise, guide and monitor progress. An essential part of the working group’s remit will be to assist in the establishment of the Meadows Service as a self-financing mechanism to maintain the project beyond the funding support. The working group is to meet in January in advance of the project starting.

**Supporting Paper(s):**

None