

CONFIRMATION OF CARING FOR THE COTSWOLDS GRANT AWARDS

Summary: To provide an update on grants awarded following closure of 4th call for projects in April 2019.

Recommendation: That the report and grant awards be noted.

Officer Ref: Edward Bonn, Rural Skills and Grants Officer

Progress to date

1. Caring for the Cotswolds (<https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/looking-after/caring-for-the-cotswolds/>) encourages business members participating in the scheme to raise grant funding via contributions from their clientele and match funding, which support a range of environmental and landscape projects across the Cotswolds AONB. These projects are focussed on:
 - Conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the landscape.
 - Managing and restoring habitats for wildlife.
 - Managing and improving footpaths and bridleways.
 - Looking after the area's distinctive historical heritage.
 - £44,139 has been contributed to Caring for the Cotswolds from business partners to-date, comprising donations from clientele and match funding.
 - £6,325 is restricted contributions mainly for the Cotswold Way.
 - £7,563 is management costs applied as 20% of contributions after restricted contributions deducted. This covers scheme promotion and delivery. Cotswold Way expenditure is already subject to management costs recovery.
 - £21,455 has been allocated as grants during previous calls for projects.
 - Up to £8,796 was available for the recent call for projects.

2. In response to the recent call for projects, 19 grant applications were submitted by the deadline in April 2019. 9 applications were rejected, 2 applications advised to re-apply to the Sustainable Development Fund concluding in May 2019, and 8 grant offers were made. These 8 grant offers were made on 12th and 15th April 2019 respectively, with three offers already accepted by the applicants, and the remaining 5 under consideration. The projects offered grant are summarised below:
 - Ascott Martyrs Educational Trust. Installation of plaques and interpretation for Ascott Martyrs memorial seats in Ascott under Wychwood.
 - Batsford Foundation. Two phases for completion of wildflower Meadow restoration project, involving overlaying clay subsoil and sowing with native wildflower seed.
 - Chipping Norton Theatre Ltd. Restoration of original foundation stones, as part of refurbishment project for theatre's frontage.
 - Design for Lighting Ltd and Starlit Skies for Bath. Site visits and associated reports by professional consultancy to improve lighting practices and quality of dark skies for Bath and its environs.

- Limpley Stoke Parish Council. Interpretation for public open space with focus on local wildlife and biodiversity, involving data from local environmental records centre, and its link to the wider Cotswolds AONB..
 - Minchinhampton Commoners Committee. Installation of additional water troughs and pipes to improve grazing throughout Minchinhampton Common, thereby improving sward length of grass and resulting conditions for wildflowers and butterflies.
 - Quenington Parish Council. Footpath leaflet for selection of walking routes in local area, with grant offered on the basis that leaflet includes information for potential contributors to Caring for the Cotswolds, in addition to its grant funding opportunities.
 - Sustainable Woodstock Foundation. Development of recently established orchard by installing countryside furniture (benches; heritage entrance) for visitors and habitat features to improve biodiversity (bird boxes; a bog garden).
3. A total of £8,293 from the available funds of £8,796 has been allocated, with £503 remaining for unrestricted funds.
 4. These projects are due to be delivered between May 2019 and April 2020, due to the various time-scales involved.

Next steps

5. Dates for a new call for projects will be identified once unrestricted funds increase to a meaningful sum.

Supporting Paper(s):

None.