

PROJECTS AND FUNDRAISING

Summary: To review the progress of the Projects and Fundraising Working Group, and associated activity.

Recommendation: That the Executive Committee notes the report.

Report by: James Webb, Partnerships Lead

BOARD MEMBERS REPRESENTED ON THE GROUP

- Brendan Costelloe (Chair)
- Ben Dent
- Ellie Fujioka
- John Swanton
- Nigel Adcock

RECORD OF MEETINGS

Working Group meetings this FY:

- 26 April 2024 – online (Caring for the Cotswolds grants panel)
- 17 July 2024 – in person

Relevant meetings this FY:

- 22 May 2024 – Cotswold Way Association Partnership meeting
- 9 August 2024 – Cotswold Way Association Partnership meeting

1. Funding bids

National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) – Landscape Connections

NLHF will be investing £150 million into 20 projects during their current strategy period up to 2033. Protected Landscapes have to be at the core of any project. Key themes are nature recovery and communities.

CNL has partnered with National Trust and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust. Over the autumn, the partners have met to discuss the project and develop an Expression of Interest. A final draft is in circulation and will be submitted in January. Assuming a positive response, we will then apply for a development phase grant, which can last up to two years and be up to £250,000. A development phase is necessary to plan, cost and define the delivery phase. It would probably involve employing a Project Manager who would broker the partnership agreement, sign up landowners and source match funding. The delivery phase would follow, and this could last as long as eight years and be up to £10,000,000.

National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) – Caring for the Cotswolds

We have submitted a draft bid for a £250K project that will increase our grant making to £50K per year for three years and provide dedicated resource to the scheme. As part of the project, we will also be able to offer enhanced youth opportunities such as paid placements and a climate action competition.

Wessex Water Foundation

The project is to restore or create a total of 40ha of species-rich grassland (8ha per year for five years), using Glorious Cotswold Grasslands (GCG) well established model. The bid, submitted by Anna Field, is for £25,000 per year for five years covering the GCG's key costs and will take place in Wessex Water's operational area.

2. Delivery

Everyone's Evenlode

Since April, the team have delivered outdoor river sessions to 756 children. Most of these fell in June and July when the team delivered geography GCSE field trips and Science/ geography days to Cherwell School and Burford School. This required an all-team effort with significant support from the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens. Alongside this, community outreach has been immense with 35 different events reaching 906 children and 1,256 adults. Jennifer Lanham is leading a targeted and sophisticated programme of events.

This is the final year of the project, although we have a four-month extension until 31/07/2025 that will enable us to complete the academic year. The total project value is £218,780, spanning 16 months and the grant has been paid in full. In the autumn, we secured £11K of additional capital investment for project equipment. The project directly supports three employees: Rosalind Marsden, Rowan Wynne-Jones and Jennifer Lanham, and contributes towards core costs.

Outdoor Learning Officer

In partnership with World Jungle and Glos-Oxford Community Rail Partnership, we successfully applied to the Ernest Cook Trust (ECT). We were awarded £20K per year for three years towards an Outdoor Learning Officer: a role CNL has wanted for some years. Helen Komor joined us in September 2024 and has made an instant impact. She has visited schools, charity youth providers and potential host locations and has defined the focus area and target audience. The ECT grant covers approx. 50% of the salary and on-costs over three years. The match funding for year one was paid for using the Defra RevEx budget and we are raising the match funding for years two and three from other sources.

Generation Green 2

Generation Green is a seven-party consortium, including National Landscapes Association (NLA), to deliver the Defra funded project – *Nights Under the Stars - Generation Green 2*. CNL is delivering 20% of the NLA's overall target, which is a combination of day visits, farm visits and residentials. The project is aimed at children that wouldn't otherwise have the opportunity to take part in these activities. We are delivering some of these experiences in-house but most of it is being delivered by trusted partners – like Jamie's Farm in Wiltshire.

	Q2 (Jul-Sep)	Q3 (Oct-Dec)	Q4 (Jan-Mar)	Total
Day visits	43	83	125	251
Farm visits	28	108	8	144
Residentials	40	29	82	151

The work attracts a per head fee that is paid to the lead delivery partner, as well as a management fee of approx. £12K. We have also taken on some extra responsibilities to help coordinate the programme more widely on behalf of NLA. Helen Komor is leading on this work, and this will attract additional income.

A417 Dark Skies

The Technical Lighting Design Guidance is now nearing completion having taken longer than expected due to working out the best approach on Environmental Zones and Landscape Visual Impact Assessment. The guidance will be going to the Board meeting in February for adoption.

Five sites along the A417 corridor have had their lighting assessed. Four have moved to design and costing. The quotes received have exceeded the total budget for delivery of £50,000.

Therefore, three are moving to delivery to be completed by 31st March 2025. More details can be released once the three projects being taken forward have signed agreements.

3. Grant making

Access for All: Removing Barriers Programme

Grants and Access Officer, Nina Stubbington, manages this programme, under which we have £254,391 to spend in this FY 2024-25. This Defra funding is to remove barriers and improve access to and within the CNL through capital projects. The funds have been allocated to 25 different projects, with 19 being delivered by partner organisations and the remainder by ourselves. Due to adverse weather throughout the year, on-the-ground works have been slow to get started and so as of December 2024, 11 projects have completed and 43% of funds have been spent. However, we are on track with all projects to claim by mid-March 2025, and by February 2025 we estimate 85% of the budget to have been spent.

The Grants and Access Officer position has been funded by the British Mountaineering Council (BMC) and as a result of this relationship, BMC have helped spread the word of this important work by highlighting Access for All projects in multiple online articles; with more to come online, on social media, and in print.

Caring for the Cotswolds

This is our own grant scheme for the Cotswolds. It is supported by businesses who wish to keep the Cotswolds a special place to live, work and visit.

At the start of the year, eight new projects were approved. Several of these have already completed. In addition, nine projects that were approved last FY have successfully completed and claimed this year. In total, 13 projects have completed this year, and we have paid £18,000 in grant claims. These projects are spread across the Cotswolds and support conservation initiatives, heritage, access and education.

National Grid's Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI)

Applications can only be made by the 30 National Landscapes and National Parks towards projects that reduce the visual impact of National Grid's electricity infrastructure and enhance the quality of the landscape. Projects have to be within a 3km range of specified pylons. Each NL/NP has a set amount available for allocation - we currently have £700k still available (subject to a National Trust Lodge Park phase 2 application already underway). There is an upper grant limit of £300k for any one project and match funding of 25% minimum is required. There is no limit on the number of projects active – but guidance is for fewer/larger projects. Any funding applications must be done directly via the Cotswolds National Landscape and any grant awards must flow through the CNL. Currently, the Landscape Enhancement Initiative does not cover any development costs or grant management costs of the CNL.

- We are preparing to launch a call for projects aiming for the National Grid Panel meeting to be held on 24 October 2025. Caroline Regan is leading, with support from Simon Smith, Mark Connelly and James Webb.
- We are finalising the timetable but will kick-off with a webinar in mid-April
- Final EOIs will be submitted to the National Grid mid-July for approval.
- If approved, Applicants will have August to mid-October to develop their full applications.

4. Partnerships

- West Oxfordshire District Council
- Cotswolds+ LVEP – Sustainability and Biodiversity group.
- Outdoor Learning Officer – partnership between CNL, World Jungle and Gloucestershire Community Rail Partnership.
- Three corporate volunteering days held so far this year for the Boeing Sustainability team, Valpak, Xerox and Innova.

DECISIONS REQUIRED

- None

NEXT STEPS

- Develop bids to the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

SUPPORTING PAPERS

- None

JANUARY 2025