

**FARMING IN PROTECTED LANDSCAPES**

**Summary:** To present a summary of progress to date of year 4 of the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.

**Recommendation:** That the report is noted

**Report by:** Mark Connelly, Land Management Lead, Scott Brown, Farm Engagement lead, Caroline Regan, Programme Administrator, Maria Carter, FiPL Comms and Engagement Officer.

**INTRODUCTION**

1. Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) is scheduled to end as a grant programme on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025. The CNL's allocation for the financial year 2024/25 is:

Project grants	£1,766,746
Administration, Advice and Guidance	£244,194
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£2,010,940</b>

A further £132,608.00 (£122,785 for projects and £9,823 for CNL overhead) has been successfully secured from the Historic Building Restoration Fund held centrally by Defra for two projects to restore traditional stone barns.

**YEAR 4 – PROGRESS TO DATE**

2. FiPL is progressing very well. The Panel in the latter part of 2023/24 approved £1,153,942 of grant leaving £612,803 for the current financial year. This head start significantly helped with managing FiPL during the year as we head towards the conclusion of the grant programme. The panel has now met three times assessing 43 projects of which 35 have been approved with a total grant value of £666,027. The last Panel meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> September approved more projects than could be funded at the time but this gave us some projects in-hand that could be given the go-ahead if funds became available from underspend.
3. Since the September panel meeting underspend has been accrued from the Advice and Guidance and Admin budgets and from project underspend. This enabled two pre-approved projects to be given the go ahead.
4. Managing the project pipeline as we near the end of the programme with a fully allocated budget is a delicate act of discouraging new enquiries and managing expectations among potential applicants, whilst also maintaining enough interest and potential leads to 'mop up' any additional finding that becomes available, for example though returned project underspends, and to potentially re-start the pipeline should the programme be extended.

5. Before Christmas a large project did have to cancel their funding agreement, which has returned £63,278k to the grant pot. This was not wholly unexpected as we keep in contact with agreement holders. Fortunately, we have been able to act quickly and generate a batch of up to 20 new applications from enquiries we had on the 'waiting list' and other known leads. These will be assessed by the panel on 22 Jan, or by the CNL's Land Management Lead if under £10k. The total requested grant value is expected to be well in excess of the funding available. This is helpful, as we still need options to reallocate any further underspend that may come in, though we are not expecting anything of the same size

**FiPL at a Glance for year 4, 2024/25, as of 9 January 2025.**

• Total allocation (project grants, Admin, Advice & Guidance)	£2,010,940
• Total grant available for projects (significant amount already allocated during FY23/24)	£1,766,746
• Yr 4 grant allocation as at 9/1/2025	£1,852,618
• Grant available for allocation as at 9/1/2025 (includes underspend accrued and forecast, excludes overprogramming)	£62,045.00
• Total projects assessed (excl Historic Building Restoration)	43
○ Under £10k (14)	
○ Over £10k (29)	
• Projects approved during 2024/25	35
○ Total grant awarded in Y4	£666,027
○ Total project value	£1,051,850
• Total number projects active during 24/25	74
• Total number of applications deferred (can be resubmitted)	3
• Total number of applications rejected	8
• Total number of projects approved then withdrawn	2

**Legacy, events and communications**

6. A Conference event on 5 February 2025 entitled, 'Farming in Protected Landscapes – Building Resilience for the Cotswolds' will celebrate the programme and outline the aspirations for its future. This event will be held at the RAU in Cirencester. All Board members are invited and encouraged to share about the event with their networks. Maria Carter and the team have been busy working on a booklet that will be issued at the event and sent to key stakeholders in the days before the event. An electronic version

will also be published on our website. We hope news about the programme may generate some regional/farming press headlines, as the impact of FiPL has been significant for the farming community and beyond.

7. After the CNL website refresh has been completed, three FiPL case studies will be added to our FiPL page. 'The FiPL Ripple' story featured in the latest edition of the Cotswold Lion publication, updating readers on the programme. We have also held three FiPL farm walk events, in September (Bruern Farms and Public House Farms), October (Kemerton Estate) and November (Jamie's Farm) with the final event on 17 January (Eastleach Downs Organic Farm), weather permitting. We have attracted between 10-15 delegates per visit and CNL Board members have supported these, for which we are grateful.
8. The Cotswolds National Landscape have been praised by Defra for supporting the national campaign on social media to promote and share stories about FiPL (#fiplfriday).

*'On behalf of the whole Defra FiPL team, I just wanted to take the chance to thank you for your continued contributions to our social media engagement plan. Cotswolds is among a small handful of landscapes that have engaged the most, posting almost (if not) every fortnight since this initiative began in August. Your individual contributions will have reached thousands of people by this point, and no doubt this has had a positive effect for the programme, raising the profile of FiPL and sharing good news stories with the public. We encourage you to keep up this great work and thank you once again for your help!'*

We continue to share good news about FiPL on our social media channels.

### **2025/26 and beyond**

9. At the Executive Committee meeting held in September 2024<sup>1</sup>, we were able to announce that Defra had confirmed funding to extend FiPL Admin for six months to September 2025 and FiPL Advice and Guidance for two years to March 2027. The extension to September 2025 was to ensure the FiPL programme was properly reported back to Defra and the programme concluded. The expectations of the extension of the advice and guidance roles has still to be clarified. We have not heard anything further from Defra on this since May last year.

### **SUPPORTING PAPERS**

There are no supporting papers.

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<sup>1</sup> CNL Executive Committee FiPL progress report: <https://www.cotswolds-nl.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Item-7-Farming-in-Protected-Landscapes.pdf>