

TRAILS, ACCESS AND VOLUNTEERING

Summary: To report on key activity during the period

Recommendation: That the Executive Committee notes the report

Report by: Rebecca Jones, Access and Volunteers Lead

MEMBERS OF THE COTSWOLD TRAILS AND ACCESS PARTNERSHIP (CTAP)

- Becky Jones, CNL Access and Volunteers Lead
- Margaret Reid, Chair and Board Member
- Tess Jackson, Natural England
- Mike Cripps, Head Voluntary Warden
- John Bartram, Chair Cotswold Way Association
- Michele Holden, Gloucestershire Ramblers
- Nicola Chidley, Gloucestershire Rights of Way
- Cheryl Hannan, BANES Rights of Way
- Fiona Argyll, Worcestershire Rights of Way
- Lindsay Purdie and Karen Hayes, South Gloucestershire Rights of Way
- Sally Graff, Cotswold Tourism

MEMBERS OF THE WARDEN'S EXECUTIVE

- Head and Deputy Warden – Mike Cripps and Sarah West
- Chairs of all five districts
- Access and Volunteers Lead

MEETINGS SINCE THE LAST EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- 6 June - CTAP meeting held at the Royal William, Painswick, followed by a walk to look at CW improvement works at Painswick Beacon. The next CTAP is due to be held online on 26 Oct.
- 22 May - the Cotswold Wardens Executive Meeting, the next one is on 20 Nov.

ACTIVITY IN THE PERIOD**1. Cotswold Way National Trail**

- The full grant of £106,669 (including additional uplift funding of £12,240 and additional project funding of £30,000) was claimed.
- The 2023/24 grant has been offered at £76,669 including a further uplift funding of £12,240.
- Projects to be carried out along the Trail during the year include a new route along the road verge at Kingcombe Lane; surfacing at Stanton; further surfacing work on the Lansdown mobility route; surfacing at Weston, Bath.
- The CNL team greatly appreciates the ongoing and increasing support from the Cotswold Way Association who are funding two of the major projects, together with gates and Ecogrid surfacing materials for challenging conditions around gates.
- National Grid's Cotswolds Visual Impact Provision (VIP) undergrounding project is progressing and a further update workshop was held on 19 August in Cheltenham, with representatives from walking and cycling groups attending.
- We are working with National Trails UK (the new umbrella charity support the Trails) to arrange a Cotswolds based conference in May 2024, to showcase Trails and raise awareness amongst funders and wider networks.
- The Cotswold Way will also be hosting the annual Trail Officers event the same week as the conference to share ideas for the future.

2. Removing Barriers (Access for All) funding

- The audit for Year 1 of the Removing Barriers funding has been successfully completed, with no further queries from Defra.
- An online launch event for the 2024/25 funding will be held on 20 September, and informal expressions of interest have already been received.

3. Bathscape

- Our main contract to deliver the access element of the Bathscape Project will be completing in August 2023.
- A 'thank you' event to mark the successful completion of the access element will be held in Bath on 19 October.
- Nicole Daw (Trails and Access Officer) will be creating a series of ten video trails, based on the most accessible of the 18 routes created to target a range of audiences around Bath, as part of a short-term Bathscape funded contract.
- The new Circuit of Bath Volunteer Rangers are now active in their new roles and being supported by Nicole and the Cotswold Wardens.
- All the agreed 18 walks around Bath and the Circuit of Bath routes are now on the CNL website and the Bathscape website at [Walking Archives - Bathscape Landscape Partnership](#)
- Nicole has done an amazing job forging new partnerships with communities in Bath through a series of walks and activities for groups including Bath Mind, the Carers Centre, Carr's Wood Day Service, Age UK Dementia Group, Girl Guides, Sight Support and Lansdown Park Academy. More recently Nicole has worked with a Ukrainian refugee group with whom she continues to work with.

4. Volunteering

- The annual Volunteers Conference was held on 9 June and was a great success. There were three speakers from the Forestry Commission, Woodland Trust and an Estate Woodland Manger with site visits in partnership with Natural England, Woodland Trust, Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, Bathurst Estate and private landowner, Alex Robinson.
- The 2024 conference will be held on 14 June at the RAU (theme to be agreed).
- The Cotswold Warden's Constitution, written in 2005, has now been updated and the new version agreed by all Districts and CNL's Finance and Governance Committee.
- There will be an autumn series of talks for volunteers on the themes of Farming Schemes, VIP Going Underground and Grasslands.

DECISIONS REQUIRED

- None

SEPTEMBER 2023