

## 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
- Nicole Daw, Trails and Access Officer
- 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
- Fiona Argyll, Worcestershire Rights of Way
- Karen Hayes, South Gloucestershire Rights of Way
- Richard Holmes, Gloucestershire Access Forum
- 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, CEO, Trails and Access Officer

### MEETINGS SINCE THE LAST EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- CTAP meeting held 8 May 2024 at Cold Ashton Village Hall with a walk in the afternoon. The next CTAP is due to be held on 16 October 2024.
- Wardens Executive Meeting held on 14 August, 2024. The next meeting is due to be held at Robinswood Hill on 13 November, 2024.

### ACTIVITY IN THE PERIOD

#### 1. Cotswold Way National Trail

- The final grant claim and condition monitoring quality standards report was submitted to Natural England in May for £75,100.62 taking the total grant claimed from Natural England for 2023/24 to £102,691,
- The grant for 2024/25 is no change from previous years at £64,428 for core grant to include employee costs, running costs, volunteer support and projects. In addition, there is £12,241 for capital projects only. This is also subject to 25% match funding.
- Becky and the Chair of CTAP have been sitting on the Funding Formula Review Group. When originally set up, the funding formula group was to allocate the main NE budget to the NTs based on parameters, e.g. distance, number of SSSIs, SAMs, length of offroad sections, exceptional events, etc. There have been reviews over the years and they are now having another review to consider the coast path. Consensus is that the model works, but the model does not consider climate change and the impact on the Trails and the need for more core grant to cover increased costs. The Trails budgets have not been increasing with inflation and the Cotswold Way is one of only two who pay VAT on costs, thus reducing the budget further.

- NTUK are looking to advocate for increased core funding.
- The CNL team greatly appreciates the ongoing and increasing support from the Cotswold Way Association who are funding work along the Trail at Uley.
- A contract has been given to Experience Community for a feasibility study looking at a potential long-distance Cotswold Way route suitable for off road mobility scooters either along or mirroring the Cotswold Way where possible. The project idea was first conceived by the Cotswold Way Association and the initial study will focus on a section of the Trail between the National Star College and Chipping Campden, with the report expected in December. Funding for £17,462.40 (incl. VAT) has been sourced from a combination of Removing Barriers, Cotswold Way Association (5,000) and the Defra uplift funding.
- The NTUK conference was held at the Leonardo Hotel in Cheltenham on 16 May 2024 and was a great success, attended by Trails across England, Scotland and Wales with key speakers including Rebecca Pow, MP and Marian Spain, Chief Executive of Natural England.
- The Cotswold Way hosted the annual Trail Officers event on 17 May 2024 with a meeting and walk for Trail Officers and Natural England and NTUK employees from across the UK

## 2. Removing Barriers (Access for All) funding

- All project submissions have now been received, reviewed and offers have been made for the distribution of the allocation of £254,381. Project funding has been allocated to a variety of partners including the Woodland Trust, National Trust, Chipping Campden School, Radway Parish Council, Stroud Valleys Project, Beckford's Tower, Srubditch Farm and Wiltshire County Council.

## 3. Bathscape

- We continue to work well with the project, with support for the walking festival in September and the delivery of a contract for map skills training this year.

## 4. Volunteering

- The Cotswold Wardens achieved an outstanding 51,351 hours during 2023/24. These figures include leading 319 free guided walks for 4,173 participants; planting 1433 trees; giving 55 talks about the wardens and the CNL; installing or repairing 146 gates and clearing 77,133 m of paths and bridleways. Wardens work in partnership with a wide range of organisations and landowners including Butterfly Conservation, all the local County Councils, parish councils, Wychwood Forest Trust and Wessex Water.
- The 2024 annual Volunteers Conference was held on Friday 14 June at the RAU, with 130 people attending and the theme focusing on Rivers and Waterways. These conferences act as an informal training day with afternoon site visits and, more importantly, as a thank you in recognition of their amazing achievements.

## DECISIONS REQUIRED

- None

September 2024