

TRAILS AND ACCESS UPDATE

Summary: To review the progress of trails and access activity

Recommendation: That the Executive Committee notes the report

Report by: Rebecca Jones, Access and Volunteers Lead

MEMBERS (Cotswold Trails and Access Partnership - CTAP)

- Becky Jones, CNL Access and Volunteers Lead
- Ed Macalister Smith, Board Member and Chair
- Margaret Reid, Head Warden
- Tess Jackson, Natural England
- Mike Cripps, Deputy Head Warden
- John Bartram, Chair Cotswold Way Association
- Michele Holden, Gloucestershire Ramblers
- Alan Bentley, Gloucestershire Rights of Way
- Cheryl Hannan, BaNES Rights of Way
- Fiona Argyl, Worcestershire Rights of Way
- Lindsay Purdie and Karen Hayes, South Gloucestershire Rights of Way
- Sally Graff, Cotswold Tourism

MEETINGS SINCE THE LAST EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

1. One meeting has been held since the May Executive, on 2 August - with the next one scheduled for 19 October 2021.
2. The meeting agenda covered updates from Trail partners, progress on accessibility work, Natural England website updates and funding formula review, Bathscape project and 50 years of the Cotswold Way celebrations.
3. Natural England are currently undertaking a review of funding for National Trails with input from Trail representatives and Trail Chairs. Current Funding is agreed until 31 March 2021.
4. There are personal safety issues along the Trail near the Tormarton interchange and a temporary diversion has been put on place whilst a longer-term solution is sought with the neighbouring estate. Landslip issues at Wooton Hill continue to pose problems with the route and are being assessed. The long term diversion at Ebley has been removed following completion of the bridge repairs.

OTHER ACTIVITY

5. Nicole Daw, Trails and Access Officer (0.6FTE), joined us in June. Nicole's role includes the completion of the **Bathscape Access Project** contract by 2023. Nicole has made great progress on the first target to identify and waymark the Circuit of Bath route; way-marking and initial path improvements have been made in readiness for the Bathscape Walking Festival by the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens with support from the Ramblers, Avon Wildlife Trust, BaNES Highway Authorities, the Bathscape team, Julian House and landowners.

6. The belated **50th anniversary of the Cotswold Way** celebrations will run from Saturday 11 September (when the relay walk starts in Bath to coincide with the Bathscape Walking Festival) and end in Chipping Campden on Sunday 19th with a celebratory event at Chipping Campden School. The relay has been organised by our Head Warden, Margaret Reid, and supported by the Cotswold Wardens. Robert Welch has produced a relay baton and a limited edition Cotswold Way chopping board (with sale proceeds going to fund Cotswold Way projects). John Lewis is supplying the catering for the Sunday event. The celebration has been a true partnership with the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens, Ramblers, Cotswold Way Association, John Lewis and Robert Welch all working with ourselves.
7. The Cotswold Warden **guided walks** resumed in May and continues online with a hybrid booking system that allows the booking of some walks if requested by the walks leader.
8. The popularity of walking and cycling continues to increase with the **self-guided routes** downloaded from the CNL website in August reaching record numbers of 27,597 and cycle route downloads at 8,553.
9. Recruitment of **parish wardens** has accelerated over the last year and two Zoom training sessions have been held to train new wardens and equipment distributed to wardens wishing to take on the role of looking after a parish, regularly walking the rights of way and working with local communities and landowners to improve access, supported by warden working parties and the Highway Authorities.
10. A number of **new Trumper routes** have been identified along the Trail at Lansdown, Stinchcombe and Coopers Hill and are being assessed for works, funding, permissions. A pilot project is being run by the South District Wardens to look at a wider range of walks for those with varying disabilities.
11. Potential **underspend at Natural England** has provided an opportunity to carry out further work along the Trail to be completed before March 2021. Ideas will be currently being submitted and we will await the outcome.
12. Potential **additional funding** for accessibility improvements along the Trail may also be available from Natural England and so a number of ideas, including the above Trumper routes, have been submitted.
13. **Visit England has provided funding** through Cotswold District Council for the creation and promotion of two short routes based around Bourton-on-the Water. The aim is to ease visitor pressure in the village and encourage walkers to use the rural paths radiating from Bourton.

DECISIONS REQUIRED

14. None

NEXT STEPS

15. Awaiting final decisions and contracts for the Natural England work and Visit England funding.
16. Input into discussions on the funding formula for National Trails through the CTAP Chair.

SUPPORTING PAPERS

- None

SEPTEMBER 2021