

COTSWOLDS CHAMPIONS

Summary: To update the Executive Committee on progress to date

Recommendation: That the report is noted

Report by: Scott Brown, Farm Engagement Lead

Key activity and progress

1. There has not been a great deal of development since the September 2021 update. Below is a summary of where things stand.
2. The £500k Network Rail funded programme will run until March 2023 (originally January 2022). This will mainly benefit the Rail Corridor Enhancement Project, where progress has been slower than hoped and an additional winter planting season will help. Some of the other supported projects are also still in progress and will benefit from ongoing programme admin support.
3. A total of £196,205 has now been allocated from Project Sum, representing almost all of the forecast £204,000 available for project expenditure in this account. £75,900 has been claimed and the remaining sum is scheduled for payments within the coming year. The range of supported projects represents a good variety of priorities, partners and stakeholders, as intended for the Cotswolds Champions programme:

Project	Value of grant	Key outcomes/stakeholders
Caring for the Cotswolds (CNL)	£27,900	Supporting community-led activities that benefit CNL statutory purposes
Kingfisher Trail (CNL)	£25,000	Working with artists and arts-orgs to increase public understanding and enjoyment of CNL
Headwaters of the Little Avon (Bristol Avon Rivers Trust)	£48,000	Working with landowners to assess and address water quality, biodiversity and land management issues in catchment
Golden Valleys (Glos Wildlife Trust)	£20,000	Co-fund collaborative nature recovery project between GWT, Royal Entomological Society and landowners in Chalford area
PEBBLE (Wiltshire Wildlife Trust)	£19,305	Establish farmer cluster and engage local communities to implement catchment management plan for the By Brook
Net Zero Landscape Officer (CNL)	£56,000	Improve climate literacy, stakeholder engagement and project development in CNL to achieve workable net zero targets

4. The Mitigation Sum (also with a forecast £204,000 for project expenditure) is being used to fund the Rail Corridor Enhancement Project, which we are co-delivering in partnership with FWAG South West. The majority of project budget is yet to be spent and progress is still slower than hoped, although we do now have more time to deliver than originally expected.

5. FWAG's primary involvement as project partner is to map natural capital on participating landholdings and provide land use management advice, including on the design of lineside planting schemes. This is going reasonably well. FWAG are also now supporting the development of a new farmer cluster, 'Cotswolds Edge', that includes landholdings within the rail corridor and extends north/south along the escarpment.
6. To date, no further sites have yet benefitted from lineside planting to help lessen the visual impact of rail electrification works. Old Sodbury and Newhouse Farm are the only two, but these sites are where the impacts were most acute. We continue to engage with Badminton Estate and their tenants where other opportunities for lineside planting exist. We are also exploring other opportunities for landscape enhancement in the area.
7. Over the coming year we intend to further ramp up engagement with Badminton Estate, their tenants and other land managers in the area, in a bid to finalise project budget allocations and delivery plans by the end of FY 22/23.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION – none

JANUARY 2022