

GLORIOUS COTSWOLD GRASSLANDS STEERING GROUP

Summary: To review the progress of Glorious Cotswold Grasslands (GCG)

Recommendation: That the Executive Committee notes the report

Report by: Simon Smith, Nature Recovery Lead

MEMBERS OF THE GROUP

- Nick Bumford
- Rebecca Charley
- Stephen Dawson (external)
- Mark Smith (external)
- Isabel Ross
- Cate Le Grice-Mack

MEETINGS SINCE THE LAST EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

1. The Steering Group met on the 27th September 2022. They reviewed the seed harvesting season to date and the first reports from the sowing season. This being the first year without significant core funding from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation financial performance and programme development was also reviewed.

OTHER ACTIVITY

2. The record-breaking 2022 seed harvesting season (2,040kg) was followed by an equally record-breaking sowing season. The weather fortunately changed to become wet enough to soften the ground and 122 Ha in over 60 land parcels were overseeded. This increased scale of delivery has been matched by an increase in botanical surveying to ensure quality.
3. Matt Gregory a student on placement from the Royal Agricultural University supported the team throughout the season and made a significant contribute to its success.
4. In addition to landowner contributions, this season's work was supported by Severn Trent (grassland restoration) and FIPL (capital purchases). Additional work to identify suitable sites for restoration is being funded by Thames Water through the Evenlode Smarter Water Catchment programme.
5. Volunteers have supported; seed harvesting and spreading, botanical and habitat surveying and autumn/winter habitat management.
6. The programmes financial performance has matched its operational delivery. The expected year end balance is expected to improve on the original budget and break even. Reaching this milestone in the first year without a significant core funder represents a significant achievement.

DECISIONS REQUIRED

7. There are no decisions required from the Executive Committee

NEXT STEPS

8. The next meeting of the Steering Group will take place in autumn 2023 following the seed collecting season.
9. The primary focus for development is the designated funds grassland restoration programme which is based on the Biodiversity Net Gain methodology. It will increase the scale of the programme significantly. The first tranche of set up and feasibility costs have been approved but receipt is pending legal agreements. Work is proceeding to enable delivery to schedule following legal agreement.
 - Forward budget and risk register have been completed.
 - Recruitment of a new team member is in hand.
 - Necessary capital purchases are ready to be placed.
 - Storage facilities have been sourced.
 - A provisional offer to landowners has been developed and the team are lining up the first cohort of sites.

SUPPORTING PAPERS

- There are no supporting papers

January 2023