

**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 has not met since the last reported meeting of April 2022. It does not meet during the peak seed harvesting season.

**OTHER ACTIVITY**

2. The 2022 seed harvesting season ran from the 28<sup>th</sup> June to the 25<sup>th</sup> August. A relatively short but intensive season with the hot dry weather leading to seed setting early. The weight of total seed harvested was 2,040kg our best season yet (1,517kg in 2021). furthermore because of the early setting the species diversity of seed collected was improved.
3. During this 59-day period (including weekends) there were 36 harvesting days over 43 different harvest fields. The intensity of this season's seed collection highlighted the risk of mechanical breakdown at this critical time. This makes it particularly good news that Farming in Protected Landscapes has funded a second seed harvester which has been ordered.
4. Autumnal seed sowing has commenced with >1ha being completed in August. A full sowing schedule is being scheduled take place over the next eight weeks during the optimal seasonal period. Rain is now needed to soften the ground for scarification and seed settling and the forecast is good for this.
5. Botanical surveys were completed on around 30 recipient sites and 12 previously un-surveyed donor sites. Three 2019 recipient sites were also surveyed showing some good results with spectacular photographs.
6. We hosted a summer work experience placement with a student from the RAU and there have been at least two volunteers out every day seed harvesting. Volunteers also helped with a number of botanical surveys. The Farming in Protected Landscapes grant application of £6,381.94 for winter volunteer habitat management work was approved.

7. The team have been meeting new recipient landowners over the summer and are on target to deliver 30ha of restoration in the Severn Trent area as well as restoration work at a high-profile site, Pittville Park in Cheltenham.
8. The team are attending the CNL stand at the Moreton Show on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> September with a view to meeting new land owners.

#### **DECISIONS REQUIRED**

9. There are no decisions required from the Executive Committee

#### **NEXT STEPS**

10. The next meeting of the Steering Group is scheduled for 1pm on 27th October 2022 in the back room of the Snooty Fox in Tetbury. As this is the first year the programme has operated without external core funding the group will be monitoring financial performance as well as operational performance closely. Financial reporting to date has been positive.
11. A number of further developments are progressing including:
  - Working with a farmer cluster, FWAG and the Floodplain Meadows Partnership to develop a FIPL bid for a floodplain meadow restoration feasibility study along the river Windrush
  - Identification of meadow restoration opportunities through the Evenlode Smarter Water Catchment Programme
  - Biodiversity Net Gain funded grassland restoration.
  - We are close to entering into an arrangement with a local garden centre to supply small quantities of our seed to individuals. This will both promote the programme and remove the need for the team to handle requests for small amounts.

#### **SUPPORTING PAPERS**

- There are no supporting papers