

TRAILS, ACCESS AND VOLUNTEERING

Summary: To review the progress of trails, access and volunteering activity

Recommendation: That the Executive Committee notes the report

Report by: Rebecca Jones, Access and Volunteers Lead

ACTIVITY IN THE PERIOD

1. **‘Celebrating 50 years of the Cotswold Way’** - events were held during the week beginning Saturday 11 September 2021, where The Deputy Lord Lieutenant for Somerset, Edward Bayntun-Coward, and Bath Life met the walking team at the start of the relay walk from Bath Abbey. Our thanks go to Head Warden, Margaret Reid, who organised the relay walks. The walks were led by Cotswold Voluntary Wardens and attended by Board members, voluntary wardens and team, Ramblers and employees from John Lewis and Robert Welch. On Sunday 19 September the final leg of the relay finished at the Cotswold Way marker stone in Chipping Campden, where the Mayor of Chipping Campden welcomed walkers and Robert Welch welcomed everyone into their shop. Over 70 guests were then invited to Chipping Campden School to share memories of the Trail and enjoy refreshments provided by the John Lewis Partnership. Speeches were given by Kate Ashbrook (former Ramblers President), Margaret Reid (Head Warden), Keith Sisson (Cotswold Way Association) and Ed Macalister-Smith (Chair of CTAP). Robert Welch hosted a Cotswold Way window display, commemorative book and display in their Chipping Campden shop to promote the celebrations. Robert Welch also designed and produced an oak and silver baton for the relay walk and a limited edition Cotswold Way oak chopping board from which £1,000 of proceeds have been donated to maintaining the Trail.
2. **Bathscapes** - The Circuit of Bath walking route has been marked and initial route improvements carried out by Wardens, Ramblers and Nicole Daw, our Trails and Access Officer. Nicole and Wardens led a series of walks for the Bathscape Walking Festival (11–26 September) and work is now in progress for the creation of a series of maps/ description pdfs and GPX files covering the circular route for the Bathscape/ CNL website. Nicole is also working to support the creation of 19 further walks as part of the agreed project and further improvement works after April 2022.
3. **Guided Walks** - The Cotswold Wardens have led two further walks with groups from the Friendship café in Gloucester in 2021 and four further walks are planned for 2022. A Caring for the Cotswolds grant has been secured to provide walking equipment for the group and we will be giving a presentation to the group as an introduction to ‘safe walking in the countryside’ on 20 January.
4. **Additional funding** - for accessibility improvements along the Cotswold Way National to the value of £75,000 was approved by Natural England in October and the projects require completion and spend by 31 March 2022. A further 25% of this figure has been secured from partners. Projects include (a) the repair of the Trail section at Wotton Hill damaged by landslip, (b) installation of three people counters, (c) bridge installation in Winchcombe and (d) improvements to steps, drainage and surfacing at Coopers Hill.

5. **People counters** - the three people counters were successfully installed along the Cotswold Way at the end of November at Dyrham Village, Broadway Hill and Coaley. The latest footfall figures from installation to date are Dyrham (936), Coaley (2,403) and Broadway Hill (12,823).
6. **New routes in Bourton** - Visit England has provided £10,000 of 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 visiting the village to use the rural paths radiating from Bourton. The walks will also be promoted to local residents as short, easy routes. The routes will be waymarked from the village and PDFs created with maps and descriptions to support new walkers. Meetings have been held with Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust as one of the routes identified links Bourton to their site at Greystones, and the aim is to create an easy access route with two-way gates being installed by the Cotswold Wardens to enable pushchair/ mobility scooter access. The site is a scheduled monument and so permissions have been sought for works but consents are currently subject to delays. The project aims to complete by 31 March 2022.
7. **Access for all** - further site meetings and project assessments have been carried out on a number of potential new mobility scooter routes along the Trail at Lansdown, Stinchcombe and Coopers Hill. A pilot project is being run by the South District Wardens to look at a wider range of walks for those with varying disabilities.
8. **The Cotswold Way Association** - continues to support work along the Trail with a large scale project completed in Autumn 2021 to improve surfacing for mobility scooters at Leckhampton Hill, supported with a £7,500 donation from HF Holidays to the charity. CWA are set to launch a new Cotswold Way Companion Guide in the Spring.
9. **The new Charitable Incorporated Organisation for National Trails** - National Trails UK, was registered by the Charity Commission in November. The interim Board have been working in support of setting up the new organisation and are looking to recruit Trustees from a range of backgrounds with the right blend of knowledge, skills and experience to help set up and fundraise for the new organisation. The recent Government response to the Glover Review has indicated that the new charity will form part of the proposed National Landscapes Partnership.

DECISIONS REQUIRED - none

NEXT STEPS

- Completion of Cotswold Way core grant funded projects by 31 March and grant claim submitted to Natural England (total annual grant £63,929).
- Completion of Cotswold Way 'additional funds' projects (£75,000) by 31 March and included in grant claim submission to Natural England.
- Completion of Bourton walks project by 31 March and grant claim for £10,000 submitted to Cotswold District Council.
- Volunteering Policy to be completed for adoption by the Board in February 2022.

SUPPORTING PAPERS - none

MEMBERS OF THE COTSWOLD TRAILS AND ACCESS PARTNERSHIP (CTAP)

- Becky Jones, CNL Access and Volunteers Lead
- Ed Macalister Smith, Board Member and Chair
- Tess Jackson, Natural England
- Margaret Reid, Head Warden
- 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

MEMBERS OF THE WARDENS EXECUTIVE

- Head and Deputy Warden
- Chairs of all five districts
- Access and Volunteers Lead

MEETINGS SINCE THE LAST EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- One CTAP meeting has been held since the September Executive Committee, on 19 October 2021, with the next one scheduled for 14 March 2022.
- The Cotswold Wardens held an executive meeting on 15 November 2021 – with the next meetings scheduled for 28 February and 23 May 2022.

JANUARY 2022