

**FARMING IN PROTECTED LANDSCAPES**

**Summary:** To present an update on progress of Year 2 of the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme

**Recommendation:** That the report is noted

**Report by:** Mark Connelly (Land Management Lead), Scott Brown (Farm Engagement Lead) and Caroline Regan (Programme Administrator)

**Summary**

1. As we head towards FiPL's third and final year, things are going well. We are on track to allocate our full 22/23 budget and supported projects continue to deliver on their agreements with few issues. We are also satisfied that the range of enquiries and applications continues to represent a good spread of outcomes, farm types and locations, whilst we also consider where further targeted engagement may help address any gaps or imbalances.
2. The programme is also performing well nationally, with the majority of other protected landscapes also reporting good progress and positive feedback being returned from Defra and ministers.

**Progress**

3. We've sustained a consistently good level of new enquiries and applications in progress, which made us confident in allocating the full programme budget for 22/23 and developing the pipeline for 23/24, for which there is a relatively limited amount of budget remaining. Consequently, we have taken a fairly 'light touch' approach to promoting the programme locally over the past few months, largely focussed on encouraging applications for seasonally dependant works this winter. Nationally, the programme has received attention in the farming press, whilst Defra also continue to promote the programme via their comms and media channels, which has also increased awareness locally.
4. Feedback from applicants and stakeholders suggests that the programme is now reasonably well-known among farmers and land managers in the Cotswolds, with several reporting that they were signposted to us by a friend, colleague or consultant, for example, if not via websites or emails, etc. Whilst this is good, we do still continue to review engagement, aiming to identify any issues and opportunities for improvement. We assume there are still many potential applicants who are not aware of the programme, and we are extremely keen to continue using this opportunity to build deeper and stronger ties with the CNL's farming community.
5. Since the last update in September 2022, we have convened the Local Assessment Panel twice, on 19 October and 1 December. Across both meetings, we considered 17 applications, of which 15 were supported. In addition, we considered 2 projects under £5,000, with 1 being supported, the other on hold. This gives a total of 16 projects supported since September, bringing the total to 73.
6. We awarded a total grant of £598,166 to the 16 successful applications, listed in Appendix 'A'. The total value of these projects is £1,027,670.

7. Overall, during this financial year, the team have managed a total of 58 projects, 34 of which have been approved this financial year.
8. We have now committed most of the £857,000 project grants budget for this financial year, with around £20,000 remaining to be allocated and spent before 31 March. A proportion of this £20,000 consists of underspend from projects already completed and claimed during this financial year.
9. As at the end of December 2022, we have reimbursed a total of £156,818 to projects. We expect to reimburse approx. £100,000 during the next 4-5 weeks with the remaining balance towards the end of March/early April.
10. We are now entering the year-end phase of FiPL with the usual juggling of the small sum left to allocate along with any money that may come back due to agreed projects coming in costing less than expected or not able to complete during the financial year. There are a number of small applications that should use the remaining grant and any small sums 'returned' due to lower-than-expected costs. We will be looking to line up a couple of applications to use any larger sums that may need re-allocating last minute as well as looking at costs allocated for claim in 2023/24 that could be brought forward. Our objective is to return as little of the grant as possible to Defra.
11. Tasks relating to managing live agreements, administering claims and assessing completed work continue to take up a greater proportion of our time as expected and we continue to meet Defra's requirements in terms of monitoring and reporting. Quarter 4 also sees a quarterly return to Defra along with year-end project summaries and possibly lessons learned during 2023/24 as required by Defra last year.
12. In addition to the scheduled monitoring and reporting requirements, we are also contributing to a number of other Defra requests. This has included submitting application documents for two projects chosen randomly as part of a national audit, and supporting national programme evaluation work being conducted by an external consultant.
13. One of the greatest challenges we still face is managing the way FiPL forms part of the government's Agricultural Transition Plan and relates to post-Brexit policies. For example, ongoing uncertainties around new schemes impact farmer confidence, whilst ag-inflation and reductions in BPS continue to put a squeeze on farm finances, all of which may reduce their willingness to invest in projects. FiPL does still appear to have made a positive impression in the grander scheme of things, though.
14. Recent changes to Countryside Stewardship payment rates may also present some challenges. For example, the way this is implemented will impact our budgets, possibly causing issues. Applicants that have already signed agreements may also resent not receiving the new rates (if applicable), especially for works yet to be completed. On the upside, the new rates may attract some new applicants and make previously unworkable options viable.

### **Looking to 2023/24**

15. The grant budget for 2023/24 is £765,092 from which £496,617 is already allocated to multi-year projects leaving circa £295,000 for allocating to new projects. The project pipeline remains strong but we continue to encourage new applications, particularly from new applicants. The

panel is due to meet on 2 February and will primarily be considering applications for delivery during 2023/24.

16. We plan on doing more to communicate and promote the programme's impact and project outcomes in 23/24. We are in the process of updating our published list of supported projects and developing some case studies. We have also recently published five short video case studies on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/@cotswoldsfarmingforum6058/featured>). These will be featured in future comms and promotional materials.
17. Year-end will also provide us with an opportunity to review the programme's impact to date and consider what our priorities and workplan will be for the final year accordingly.

**Supporting paper:**

- Appendix 'A' - FiPL Projects approved between 19 October and 1 December 2022

JANUARY 2023

Item 7, Appendix A – FiPL Projects approved 19 October and 1 December 2022

No.	Applicant name	Project Name	Project Summary	Total Project Value	Total FiPL Grant awarded
COT-055	FWAG – Ed Bonn	Woodland pathway - FWAG	Working the woods: a practical training programme for coppice and woodland restoration.	£77,649.98	£40,799.98
COT-062	Cotswold Farm Park	Cotswolds Farm Park - increasing accessibility and understanding	Creating better visitor accessibility and interactive experiences to promote a greater understanding of farming, conservation and landscape management.	£245,062.00	£109,809.60
COT-067	Jamie's Farm	Carbon Auditing at Jamie's Farm	Conducting a carbon management plan on Jamie's Farm Bath, to identify carbon mitigation and sequestration opportunities and for educational purposes.	£3,433.20	£2,574.75
COT-068	Sapperton Wilder Project	Sapperton Wilder - Citizen Science centre of excellence	Developing a citizen science centre of excellence for farming and nature's recovery in Gloucestershire.	£234,708.46	£82,810.89
COT-069	North Eastern Cotswolds Farmer Cluster	NEFCF Windrush Floodplain Meadows Restoration Plan	Produce a strategy for floodplain meadow management and restoration in the Windrush floodplain and tributaries identifying restoration opportunities that are short, medium, and long-term prospects based on the data collected.	£82,182.44	£65,522.44
COT-071	Glos Orchard Trust	GOT Fruit Trees for Climate Change	Planting and protecting 600 fruit trees of apple, plum, pear and cherry. Part a project to plant trees for climate change.	£74,060.00	£60,060.00

No.	Applicant name	Project Name	Project Summary	Total Project Value	Total FiPL Grant awarded
COT-073	Cleeve Common Trust	Cleeve Common Machinery	Equipment to improve grassland and scrub management on Cleeve Common.	£35,233.80	£28,187.04
COT-074	Church Farm	Church Farm Silvopastoral Enterprise	Traditional orchard restoration and creation as part of development of silvopastoral enterprise.	£55,260.50	£54,318.50
COT-075	Central Cotswold Hills Deer Management Group	Central Cotswold Hills Deer Management Group - Aerial Survey	Extensive arial drone surveys to inform deer management planning.	£15,000.00	£12,000.00
COT-076	Whittington Court	Oak and Beech Planting	Planting a series of groups of oak trees (30 in total) in the fields close to the A40. Planting 20 beech trees to restore roundels.	£5,425.00	£5,425.00
COT-077	Broadfield Farm	Capital Works	Hedge laying, dry stone walling and pond restoration.	£36,379.00	£30,975.00
COT-078	Painswick House Farm	Hedges and Trees	Habitat creation - 1 hectare priority habitat, pasture woodland with wild flower meadow. Restoring 800m native hedgerow boundary with native wildflowers.	£29,460.00	£19,247.00
COT-079	Manor Farm, Chedworth	Hedge Planting	Planting 840m of hedgerow with native hedgerow plants, including fencing to protect from grazing livestock. This will provide new habitat and improve connectivity, provide shelter for livestock, and help protect soils.	£13,860.00	£12,903.00

No.	Applicant name	Project Name	Project Summary	Total Project Value	Total FiPL Grant awarded
COT-080	Friends of Leckhampton Hill & Charlton Kings Common (known as 'FOLK')	FOLK - equipment	Replacement of old and unreliable mower and brushcutter used by FOLK volunteers on the SSSI site to conserve and improve the unimproved limestone grassland, maintain tracks and trails for public access, protect and visually expose historic features and Cotswold stone walls, open up distant views from the site.	£6,088.56	£5,784.13
COT-081	Hawkwood Centre	Hawkwood barn renovation and interpretation	Restore Hawkwood's historic hay Barn to support community rural crafts education and training; create interpretation in the land with 6 x information boards and enhance connectivity to the land through digital interpretation and audio trails.	£104,671.10	£58,552.66
COT-083	Heritage Graziers / James Allen	Cotswolds Parataxonomic Biodiversity Baseline Surveys – Empowering Farmers	To implement biodiversity baseline surveys, training farmers to be able to continue monitoring so changes can be tracked against changes in land management practices, including moving to regenerative grazing.	£9,196.00	£9,196.00