

## Kingfisher Trail 2021

**Summary:** To present a proposal for the Kingfisher Trail 2021.

**Author:** James Webb, Partnerships and Fundraising Officer.

**Recommendation:** That the Executive Committee approves these documents and recommends that they are taken forward to the June Board meeting for adoption.

### 1. Background

- In 2018 the Board partnered with Florence Beetlestone to run the Cotswolds Hare Trail. The Hares were painted by recognised and upcoming artists and then installed at a variety of tourist attractions, hotels and venues.
- A total of 86 Hares in three different sizes were located across the Cotswolds. An enjoyable activity for families, residents and visitors, the Hares were widely visited over the course of the summer.
- Board members may recall that one of the Hares was located in the grounds of the Old Prison, which proved to be popular with visitors. The interest generated by the Hares was the motivation for attractions like the Old Prison paying a fee to host the Hares.
- In the early autumn, the Hares were auctioned off and these were the two forms of revenue generation. The Board invested £12,000 and this generated a £30,000 return, as well as receiving the initial investment back. In pure financial terms, the 2018 Trail was a success and helped with the Board's finances at a difficult time. However, running the trail was not without its challenges. The partner often relied on hand written notes, rather than IT so information sharing was impaired. This impacted on communications and general organisation. Running the trail also required significant CCB employee resource, often at short notice, as roles and responsibilities were never defined or ascribed.

### 2. Kingfisher Trail 2021

- We will be working with The Art of Fundraising; a well-established and professional company with a tried and tested model. They have an excellent track record of successfully delivering sculpture trails in the UK and Ireland. The shortcomings of the first trail have been eliminated by working with The Art of Fundraising.
- A recent example of their work is the 2017 'Moor Otters' trail. It was incredibly successful with net income of £60,000, which was equally allocated to three projects: Junior Rangers, Invasive non-native plant control and Repairs to footpaths and bridleways. The trail was also hugely successful in terms of public engagement and was run in partnership with Dartmoor National Park Authority. For more info, see: <https://www.dartmoor.gov.uk/enjoy-dartmoor/moor-otters>
- Coronavirus has ceased activity this spring and it seems likely this will continue into the summer - followed by a recovery. We would like to start putting plans together now for a sculpture trail that will launch in April 2021, to capitalize on the upward trajectory of the recovery. It will also be well timed for better spring weather and a general increase in community celebrations and outdoor events.

- As the country comes out of the Coronavirus crisis, the Kingfisher Trail will convey a positive message about engagement with nature. A common theme throughout the crisis, and amongst survivors of the Coronavirus, is the desire to connect with nature; hear bird song, see wildflowers in bloom. A simple appreciation of the natural world.
- The kingfisher itself is a survivor; pollution from heavy industry, Victorian collectors and non-native predators all contributed towards population decline. However, in recent decades its numbers have grown and it has returned to many waterways. It represents adaptability and resilience.
- A beautiful bird that is easily recognised by the public, its reliance on both land and water captures the imagination.
- The Kingfisher Trail will in fact be a series of trails focused on and around the rivers in our region: the Thames, Severn and Avon and their tributaries. This clustered effect will create a strong story for many of our towns and villages to work together and celebrate what makes the Cotswolds special. For example, the heritage link with the wool trade centred on rivers that powered the mills. The strategic clustering will drive interest and footfall.
- This approach will allow us to work with businesses and communities inside and outside of the AONB.
- There will be 50 kingfishers in two different sizes. This number allows us to link the Kingfisher Trail with the end of the 50th Anniversary of the Cotswold Way and ensures hosting is perceived as exclusive. Kingfishers will be at host locations from April – August inclusive.

### **3. Key outcomes for the Board**

- The trail has the potential to generate upwards of £60,000 of unrestricted surpluses for the Board.
- Should the Board approve this proposal, an early decision will be made on the projects that will receive support (the surplus funds). This will form a key part of the pitch to headline sponsors of the trail. Careful consideration will be given to align the projects to the Glover Review.
- One of the ideas is to employ a part time Education Officer to work with schools and volunteers in communities inside and outside of the AONB. We could consider partnering with organisations to share the employee resource, for example conservation NGOs and sponsors.
- The education programme could include a water focus; using the local catchment to create learning opportunities and access to the countryside.
- The Education Officer would also be able to maintain momentum between Trails and help build interest as the next one approached. Not only will this meet our purpose of understanding and enjoying, it will be a key motivation for businesses and communities to support the Trail as hosts and buyers.
- The funds could also be used for targeted conservation work, thereby meeting our purpose of conserving and enhancing. It is envisaged that this element of work would be directed through the Caring for the Cotswolds grant scheme. Projects could have a water focus with small projects like schools building a pond to larger projects that addressed catchment wide issues to improve water quality.
- Caring for the Cotswolds has an excellent track record of supporting practical conservation projects with defined outcomes. Examples include:
  - A grant to support river restoration work on the River Coln. Installation of in-stream flow deflectors created deeper pockets in the riverbed, providing refuges

- for fish. The varying depths and current speeds also enabled river plants such as water-crowfoot to thrive providing cover for fish and habitat for invertebrates.
- A grant to support the Pearl-bordered Fritillary in Cirencester Park, the butterfly's last remaining site in the county. Targeted conservation work included the planting of 700 violets, the butterfly's food plant, along the edges of rides in order to strengthen the population and create new colonies.
- It meets two of our ambitions – (1) To promote the Cotswolds AONB as the Walking and Exploring Capital of England and (2) To ensure that communities and businesses within and around the Cotswolds AONB identify and celebrate being part of a nationally recognised landscape.
- Visiting the sculptures will be family orientated, inclusive and free. The cluster approach promotes healthy activities including, walking, cycling, family days out and general wellbeing to locals and visitors. In this respect, it could be an early win re. the Glover Review – using the trails as a way of engaging young people and families in the towns and cities around the AONB that don't currently visit the countryside.
- The environment will be a key consideration; most of the clusters will aim to offer routes into Cotswolds by train or bus.
- It could tie in very nicely with the Gateways project – each Gateway town hosting a sculpture.

#### **4. Finance and resources**

- We are exploring the possibility of collaborating with Cotswolds Champions - the name of the programme set up with the Network Rail money.
- The Cotswolds Champions programme aims to develop a suite of projects that showcase how we work with key local partners and stakeholders to deliver the Board's statutory purpose.
- With outcomes spanning fundraising, the arts, community engagement and access – together with the potential to finance additional projects – we believe the Kingfisher Trail is a distinct example of how we can bring people together to support, participate in and benefit from our work in a variety of ways. As such, it's a good match for the Cotswolds Champions programme.
- We are seeking £25,000 of funding from Cotswolds Champions, which would be supplemented with £35,000 from the Board's reserves to cover the £60,000 upfront cost of running the trail. The £60,000 upfront cost will be recuperated by the Board and an additional surplus of up to £60,000 is forecast i.e. £60k out & £120k in.
- Employee time, namely James Webb and Alana Hopkins, will be adequately covered (financially) within the project budget.
- The Trail could be held once every two years and would ultimately become self-sustaining, growing each time.

**Appendix A** - The Art of Fundraising proposal

**Appendix B** – Cashflow forecast