

SUBJECT:	LIVING LEVELS LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP SCHEME
MEETING:	Individual Cabinet Member Report
DATE:	12 April 2017
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	All Severnside Wards

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To seek approval to an in principle commitment to share the financial risk relating to match funding to allow the Stage 2 application to Heritage Lottery Fund for the Living Levels Landscape Partnership Scheme to proceed

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 To approve an in principle commitment to RSPB Cymru, as lead partners, to share the financial risk relating to match funding for the Living Levels Landscape Partnership Scheme to a maximum of £91K spread over the three years of project delivery (2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21) commencing in financial year 2018/19.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 The Living Levels programme is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and the partnership, led by RSPB Cymru, has been awarded a first-round pass under the Landscape Partnership scheme. The programme is now in its development phase secured by a grant of £321K to work up the second-round submission in the form of a Landscape Conservation Action Plan (LCAP). A further £2.5M has been ring-fenced by HLF to fund the delivery phase of the programme. The project is on track for a second round submission to HLF in August 2017. If stage 2 approval is gained the delivery phase will be 3.5 years from early in 2018.
- 3.2 The programme area extends across the Levels from the River Rhymney in Cardiff to Chepstow and in Monmouthshire embraces the whole area south of the M4 and Chepstow.
- 3.3 The Partnership has six core partners: RSPB Cymru (the lead body), Gwent Wildlife Trust, Natural Resources Wales, Newport City Council, Monmouthshire County Council and City of Cardiff Council; joined by other delivery partners, currently Gwent Archives, Cardiff Story Museum, Sustrans, National Trust, Bumblebee Conservation Trust and Bug Life.

- 3.4 Since the award of the development grant considerable progress has been achieved through the activities of partners and a small project team. This includes extensive community engagement; completion of a landscape character assessment and green infrastructure strategy; completion of a destination management plan (incorporating interpretation, access and marketing) and development of delivery programmes for interventions reflecting the wide scope of the programme (see Appendix 1): All intended to meet the programme's objectives of recapturing and enhancing the natural and historic heritage; celebrating its stories; providing new opportunities for learning, developing skills, participation and investment; and encouraging and providing access for all; to build capacity and resilience for the long-term.
- 3.5 The total cost of the delivery stage of the Living Levels is £3,463,000, to which £2,544,200 HLF grant will be applied. The draft budget assumes £899k of match funding including £354k of in-kind support from the partners. The cash shortfall requiring match funding is therefore £545K. The partners are working together to actively pursue match funding opportunities including a resubmission of a Sustainable Management Scheme fund bid to Welsh Government later this year reflecting feedback on an initial bid; an RCDF bid, Leader and Visit Wales funding, landfill tax credits and other corporate funding.
- 3.6 However because of the lead in times involved it seems likely that there will be at least some level of funding gap at the time of submission for stage 2 in August. In order for the RSPB as lead partner, to submit the stage 2 application, their charitable Trustees will need assurance that they are not carrying unmanageable financial liabilities. The Living Levels Partners' Board has therefore discussed an approach to sharing the financial risk of a shortfall across the core partnership as being the way to give the RSPB the necessary confidence. At this stage what is being sought is an in principle commitment from partners.
- 3.7 Shared equally between the core partners, this amounts to £91k over three years per partner (i.e. a potential 'contribution' of £30.3k per partner in each of the years 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21). At this stage this is a financial risk the core partners are being asked to underwrite and represents the worst possible case scenario, which realistically has a low prospect of occurring. Once the outcome of the stage 2 submission is known in November 2017 the financial picture will be reassessed (having heard from other funding bids) to confirm the final sums required to proceed. It is only at this stage that more formal undertakings from each organisation will be required alongside the other formal project delivery documentation.
- 3.8 Given the substantial benefits of securing the £3.5M investment across the Levels communities and the opportunities for the scheme to significantly enhance existing delivery relating to countryside access, destination management and tourism promotion, cultural activities, volunteering and activities for children and young people it is recommended that the requested undertaking to underwrite the financial risk be provided. Should a funding gap still exist in November 2017 the situation will be revisited but given the opportunity to enhance and extend existing programmes any required match funding at

that time can be considered against the relevant revenue budgets for these activities within the Tourism, Leisure, Culture & Youth Service.

4. REASONS:

- 4.1 To provide sufficient reassurance to allow the Stage 2 application to Heritage Lottery Fund by RSPB Cymru as lead partner on behalf of the Living Levels Landscape Partnership to proceed.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 5.1 The detailed resource implication are set out in paragraphs 3.5 to 3.8 of the main report. At this stage the financial risk represents the worst possible case scenario, which realistically has a low prospect of occurring. However should there be a remaining deficit the Directorate attaches such importance to the multiple beneficial and multiplier impacts of this programme that it is prepared to re-direct funding from currently approved budgets.

6. WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS IMPLICATIONS (INCORPORATING EQUALITIES, SUSTAINABILITY, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING)

- 6.1 The aim of the Living Levels landscape partnership scheme is to reconnect people and communities to their landscape and provide a sustainable future for this historic and vibrant place. It has a strong correlation with all of the Council's Well-being objectives; promoting the benefits of the natural & built environment; providing opportunities for children and young people; providing opportunities for businesses and communities and for people's well-being through participation in volunteering etc. It also contributes to delivery of the Biodiversity & Ecosystem Resilience duty and Forward Plan; specifically Objective 6 to support landscape scale projects and partnerships to maximise delivery.
- 6.2 A Future Generations Evaluation is attached. This includes Equalities and Sustainability Impact Assessments (attached as Appendix 2).

7. CONSULTEES:

- 7.1 Cabinet members, SLT and Head of Tourism, Leisure, Culture & Youth.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

- 8.1 Living Levels programmes (under development) (Appendix 1)

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Appendix 1: Living Levels programmes (under development)

Theme	Project title	Type of project
Natural heritage and sustainable management of natural resources	Regional Green Infrastructure Strategy	A legacy strategy to ensure the on-going provision of GI beyond the end of the project
	Targeted Natural Heritage Restoration	Contracts for active land management to restore natural heritage of Gwent Levels landscape
	Pollinating the Levels	Advisory service/ Awareness raising/active restoration
	Invasive non-native species project	Monitoring/ Awareness raising/control
	Fly-tipping - black spots to bright spots	Awareness-raising and enforcement activities against Fly tipping, stakeholder action group
	Payments for Ecosystems services	Research/ study and map Gwent Levels Ecosystem services and set up a pilot for a GL PES scheme
	Orchards and community enterprise	Grant scheme for active restoration/advisory/ social enterprise
	Sustainable farming	Setting up demonstration farms (sustainable land management), economic analysis of Gwent Levels Ecosystem services and policy proposals for future of agricultural support in GL
Access, interpretation and marketing of the Welsh Levels	Interpretative sculptures and tide markers along Levels promoted routes	A sculpture trail based on putting 'people' in the landscape to bring the stories of the Levels to life; Installation of tide markers at key network of LL sites
	LL Primary and Community hubs - orientation and interpretation for visitor welcome.	Orientation/ interpretation panels. Includes Living Levels map and 'You are Here' information. Tide markers to be integrated to design as appropriate
	Lighthouse Inn -Eastern Levels Gateway project	Opening up the Lighthouse Inn as a new Gateway to the Wentloog Levels.
	Development of print resources, imagery and video to promote Living Levels Destination	Photography and Film - content production;
	Seasonal programme of events	Celebration of Levels Events programme - annual and linked to Visit Wales theme years
	Inspire! Churches on the Levels	Orientation/ interpretation panels at exterior and interior of churches and those which are open), telling story of Church role in Levels.
	Loops and links - walking the Levels	Promotion of walking routes on the levels

	Loops and links - cycling the Levels (including installation of cycle racking at key strategic sites). Maesglas underpass mural and Percoed Reen/Duffryn community art project included.	Promotion of cycling routes on the levels; Infrastructure installation
	Levels welcome signage and Brown and White highways signage scheme and signage to support additional linkages from improved walk and cycle routes to the established network.	Business cluster brown signage; welcome signs placed underneath village welcome signs.
	Relief model of the Levels drainage system and historical timeline	Model/interpretation
	Destination Marketing	Destination marketing for the Gwent Levels
Skills, learning and community engagement	Identifying Local Wildlife sites	Surveys/ awareness raising
	Recapturing the Historic Landscape	Public engagement/digital maps and GIS system
	Stories from the Levels	Public engagement/ exhibits - recording oral histories and exhibitions
	Learning programme	KS3 and KS4 education activities and teacher training linked to Gwent Levels natural and historical heritage, self-led educational activities at key sites across Levels
	Heritage Skills	Workshops/ events/training
	Ambassadors programme and Community engagement toolkit - training package	Training/skills
	Community art project - reviving the past	Community art project - artworks displayed during calendar of events