

FARMING IN PROTECTED LANDSCAPES

Purpose

To advise members of the progress of the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.

Recommendations

That the JAC endorses the allocations of the Local Assessment Panel for the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.

Key Issues

- Each AONB and National Park in England has an allocation from DEFRA to administer the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme for farmers and land managers to provide benefits for nature, climate, people and places.
- The Local Assessment Panel meets regularly to determine applications for Farming in Protected Landscapes grants and has approved the full allocation of funds for 2021/22.
- The recruitment of a Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer is underway to assist farmers and land managers applying to the programme.

Reasons

The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme allows farmers and other land managers in England to liaise with the AONB Unit and apply for funding to improve public access, and deliver bigger and better outcomes for the environment, for people and for places.

Following DEFRA guidance, applications need to demonstrate that proposed projects help deliver the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan and must deliver against at least one of the following items under the four key themes:

Climate

- More carbon is stored and/or sequestered
- Flood risk has been reduced
- Better understanding among farmers, land managers and the public as to what different habitats and land uses can deliver for carbon storage and reduced carbon emissions
- The landscape is more resilient to climate change

Nature

- There is a greater area of wildlife rich habitat
- There is greater connectivity between habitats
- Existing habitat is better managed for biodiversity

- There is an increase in biodiversity

People

- There are more opportunities for people to explore, enjoy and understand the landscape
- There are more opportunities for more diverse audiences to explore, enjoy and understand the landscape
- There is greater public engagement in land management, for example through volunteering

Place

- The quality and character of the landscape is reinforced or enhanced
- Historic structures and features are conserved, enhanced or interpreted more effectively
- There is an increase in the resilience of nature friendly sustainable farm businesses, which in turn contributes to a more thriving local economy

The Terms of Reference and membership of the Local Assessment Panel are attached (Appendix 1 & 2). The Local Assessment Panel determines applications over £5,000. Applications under £5,000 are delegated to the AONB Manager for decision.

Implications

After budget reprofiling and additional allocation, the Wye Valley AONB Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) budget for Year 1 of the programme is £101,525.08. Eight projects have been approved by the Local Assessment Panel, fully allocating the Year 1 budget. Multiyear applications have also been approved using Year 2 and 3 allocations.

Project number	Farm / applicant	2021/22 (£)	2022/23 (£)	2023/24 (£)	Total to date (£)
WV001	Grazing Management	4,938.75			4,938.75
WV002	Nature's Nest	6,746.70	951.00		7,697.70
WV003	Wye & Usk Foundation	14,942.00	31,658.00	22,925.00	69,525.00
WV004	Townsend Farm	33,064.20	32,466.00		65,530.20
WV005	Ballingham Parish Council	11,662.00			11,662.00
WV006	Lewstone Farm	4,498.00			4,498.00
WV007	Sandford Farm	994.88	484.03		1,478.91
WV008	Whitethorn Farm	600.00			600.00
Advice and Guidance	AONB costs	19,500.00	29,826.00	29,826.00	79,152.00
Admin	AONB costs	5,000.00	17,544.57	17,544.57	40,089.14
Total to date		101,946.53	112,929.60	70,295.57	285,171.70
Total budget		101,525.08	219,405.94	219,405.90	540,336.92
Allocation remaining		-421.45	106,476.34	149,110.33	255,165.22

Approved projects are outlined below:

WV001 - £4,938.75: for the development of a hard standing porous cattle handling area to enable safe handling of cattle used for conservation grazing of species rich grassland sites in the Gloucestershire part of the AONB.

WV002 - £7,697.70: for the purchase of electric bikes and associated equipment, establishment of hiring system, information panels interpreting features of the landscape, and advice and enhancement for an area of meadow grassland.

WV003 - £69,525: for a 3 year project to undertake natural capital assessments for 26 landholdings across the AONB, identifying priority habitats, with particular interest in floodplain meadows. Establishing opportunities for delivery of improvements to the condition, connectivity and extent to habitats. Assisting with the development of applications for funding to enable work.

WV004 - £65,530.20: for a wide ranging 2 year project, including fencing to assist with the establishment of mob grazing, fruit trees for the development of an agroforestry orchard, standard trees to be managed as veterans of the future, hedge laying, track surfacing to enable all-ability access to regenerative agriculture and landscape features around the farm, and contribution towards development of self-service farm shop and café.

WV005 - £11,662: towards replacement of damaged bridge on permissive footpath.

WV006 - £4,498: for the development of education area in a woodland site and work to enhance toilet facilities for school visits to the farm.

WV007 - £1,478.91: for a range of innovative vegetation planting to prevent erosion and soil and water loss on poultry range.

WV008 – £600: for the purchase of deer high seats to enable easier control of deer and associated reduction in damage to orchards.

In addition to the eight grants awarded, a further 15 farmers and smallholders have enquired or been provided with advice about the FiPL programme, with at least four applications anticipated in the near future for work to be undertaken in Year 2.

The AONB Development Officer, Nick Critchley, is currently leading on the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme. Recruitment is underway for a Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer to take over the programme and assist farmers and land managers in applying for FiPL grants.

Background

The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme was originally announced in the Agricultural Transition Plan in November 2020 and launched by the DEFRA Minister in July 2021. (see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/funding-for-farmers-in-protected-landscapes>)