

FIELD TO FLOW LANDSCAPE CONNECTIONS LOTTERY BID

Purpose

To seek members' support for the submission of a Development Phase application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund Landscape Connections programme, following the success of the Expression of Interest for the Field to Flow project proposal.

Recommendations

That the JAC endorses the preparation and submission by the Wye Valley National Landscape Team of a Field to Flow Development Phase application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) Landscape Connections programme.

Key Issues

- Landscape Connections is a competitive grant programme open to National Landscapes and National Parks provided by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF).
- Projects can be up to 10 years (with 2 years development plus 8 years delivery) and up to a maximum of £10million.
- In March the Wye Valley National Landscape Team submitted an Expression of Interest for a proposed 'Field to Flow' project that would work with farmers and landowners and local communities to deliver transformative change across (sub)catchments flowing directly into the Wye Valley National Landscape.
- The 'Field to Flow' Expression of Interest outlined a 2 year Development Phase estimated at £467,000 followed by an 8 year Delivery Phase with a value of £12,674,000.
- In April NLHF confirmed the success of the 'Field to Flow' Expression of Interest and invited a full application within 12 months.
- A consultant will be procured to assist with the application process over the next 9 months. The proposed 'Field to Flow' project will be refined through liaison and workshops with key partners and stakeholder including the Wye Catchment Partnership, Farm Herefordshire, Wye & Usk Foundation, Wyescapes Project Board, the Wildlife Trusts, local Food Partnerships, NFU, FUW, CLA and other interested farmers and land managers.
- This is an opportunity to work cross-border at landscape scale to address key challenges facing the Wye Valley National Landscape.

Reasons

The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) 'Landscape Connections' is a grant programme open to those who care for or partner with National Landscapes and National Parks. Projects can be up to 10 years with a development phase of up to 2 years and subsequent 8 years of project delivery. Grants can be between £250,000 up to £10million. Funding is to:

- Support long-term projects which boost nature recovery and connect more people to our most treasured landscapes,
- Drive systematic change across the UK's Protected Landscapes,
- Put Landscapes into recovery; supporting habitats and species alongside rich cultural heritage in better connected, working landscapes,
- Landscapes strengthened as working landscapes, alive with nature and providing space for people to relax and connect with the environment.

Lottery guidance advises that projects:

- Have a Protected Landscape body as a key partner and have a core area of the Protected Landscape at their heart.
- Deliver work over a contiguous landscape, not on a theme over a wider area.
- Delivery for Nature Recovery, following the 'protect the environment' investment principle.
- Area can be any size but advised to focus on impact rather than scale.
- Address a problem and support systematic change.
- Farm advice as well as capital work is viable.
- NLHF want to see demonstrable change, where they can go to a project area at the end of the project and see lasting change.

The successful Field to Flow Expression of Interest identified that:-

Lower Wye Valley faces urgent environmental and social challenges that threaten its natural and cultural heritage. The River Wye suffers from declining water quality and pressures from unsustainable land management. Family farms, central to the character and economy of the valley, are under increasing strain, while connections between producers, consumers, and the wider community have weakened. These issues have created a disconnect between people and the landscape, reducing local understanding of how food, farming, and nature are interdependent.

There is a clear need for coordinated, long-term action to restore the health of the river and surrounding habitats while supporting the people who care for the land. It is recognised systems change is required. By working collaboratively with farmers, landowners, communities and partner organisations across England and Wales, this project will address systemic problems at a landscape scale. It will deliver river-friendly farming embedded within sustainable farm businesses, enhance biodiversity, and strengthen local food networks, helping to create a more sustainable, resilient, and inclusive Lower Wye Valley. This project will provide the catalyst for measurable change, reviving the landscape's natural systems, reconnecting communities with their environment, and ensuring the Wye Valley National Landscape continues to thrive for future generations.

Implications

The Lower Wye Valley's heritage is a tapestry of river, farmland, woodland, and communities shaped by centuries of farming and human connection to the landscape. The Wye Valley National Landscape is a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, at its core the River Wye Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The Wye was voted UK's favourite river in 2010. This heritage faces pressures from declining water quality, habitat loss, and weakening ties between people and place. It is a working landscape where nature, culture, and livelihoods coexist, offering powerful foundations for restoration and reconnection.

The successful Field to Flow Expression of Interest stated that:-

The Field to Flow – Lower Wye Valley Landscape Connections project will be a long-term, cross-border initiative working with farmers, landowners, and communities to strengthen connections between people and their landscape, restore nature and improve water quality.

Building on existing schemes such as Wyescapes, Farming in Protected Landscapes and Ffermio Bro, the project will focus on sub-catchments feeding into the River Wye, tackling ecological degradation and social disconnection. The project will help reconnect people with the land and food production, and consolidate and celebrate links between sustainable environmentally sensitive farming, local economies, and healthy river systems in and around the Wye Valley National Landscape.

We will deliver community engagement, connecting communities with local food production on farms working in harmony with the environment, through schools, citizen science, and local food initiatives and festivals, over an eight-year delivery phase.

We will support farmers and land managers to co-create and implement nature-based and river-friendly farming practices, enhance wetlands and woodlands, and pilot species reintroductions.

We will deliver measurable improvements in water quality, habitat connectivity, and embed river friendly farming approaches into sustainable farm business models. Sharing achievements will act as a catalyst for wider landscape recovery and systemic change across the Wye catchment.

The NLHF Strategy ‘Heritage 2033’ contains four investment principles that guide all their grant decision making. The successful Field to Flow Expression of Interest addressed these as follows:-

Saving Heritage - The Field to Flow project conserves the Lower Wye Valley’s distinctive natural and cultural heritage, and the Wye Valley National Landscape’s Special Qualities, by restoring habitats, improving water quality and supporting traditional family farms as integral parts of the outstanding landscape. It protects designated sites and species and fosters community pride in the area’s rich farming heritage. Knowledge sharing and community engagement will celebrate the connection between people, place, produce and landscape.

Protecting the Environment - Through advice and capital works grounded in River Friendly Farming standards and delivered with sustainable farm businesses, the project delivers tangible environmental outcomes: reduced nutrient and sediment runoff, increased biodiversity, species reintroduction and enhanced ecosystem resilience. Creation of wetlands, woodlands, and habitat corridors contribute to Local Nature Recovery Strategies, Wye Catchment Plan and Wye Valley National Landscape Management Plan, providing measurable improvements in river health and climate adaptation.

Inclusion, Access and Participation - The project reconnects communities with the landscape and farming through re-establishment of local markets, learning, participation and celebration. Schools, local residents, and volunteers will join farmers in citizen-science monitoring, farm visits, food education activities and festivals. By linking food production to place, it promotes access for people of all ages and backgrounds, focussing

on those less engaged with the countryside, ensuring everyone can benefit from and contribute to nature recovery and community cohesion.

Organisational Sustainability - Partnership working across the public, private, and voluntary sectors strengthens organisational resilience and shared capacity. The project will embed sustainable delivery models, co-create, nurture and develop nature friendly farm businesses, local food supply chains, farm networks, and community monitoring groups, that endure beyond grant funding. Utilising existing schemes and initiatives and green/private finance, the project ensures efficient use of resources, long-term legacy, and a financially and environmentally sustainable approach to managing the lower Wye Valley landscape.

The outline costings in the Expression of Interest are as follows:

The total project cost is estimated to be £13,140,654 over 10 years.

The estimated Lottery grant request to cover both Development and Delivery phases is £9,973,362 at 76% of the total project cost.

Match funding in the Development Phase is Officer in kind contributions from the Wye Valley National Landscape Team and Partner organisations. In the Delivery Phase, match funding will be in-kind through officer and volunteer time, as well as £2.88million to be secured through Private Finance and other public/private/3rd sector funds for Capital works on farm.

Development Phase [2 years]:

National Lottery Heritage Fund request = £406,000 (86.9%)

Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership in-kind = £61,000 (13.1%)

Staff Costs	£318,000
Consultant Costs	£80,000
Contingency	£8,000
In kind officer costs	£61,000
TOTAL	£467,000

Delivery Phase [8 years]:

National Lottery Heritage Fund request = £9,567,362 (75.5%)

Private Finance & other public/private/3rd sector funds = £2,880,000 (22.7%)

Wye Valley National Landscape Partnership in-kind = £226,292 (1.8%)

Staff Costs	£2,203,362
Capital costs – on farm habitat enhancements	£8,000,000
Local Supply chains / markets development (Capital)	£575,000
Vehicle	£80,000
Events, upskilling, education	£60,000
Consultant costs – Farm business planning	£400,000
Branding, marketing and supply chains	£125,000
Product Development	£50,000
Contingency	£929,000
Evaluation costs	£25,000
In-kind officer costs / hosting	£226,292
Delivery Phase TOTAL	£12,673,654

Since the success of the Expression of Interest, discussions have been held with Lottery staff, who will help guide the application process up to the submission deadline in April 2027. The application will then be assessed over a 3 month period, when further clarification may be sought. It will then be presented to both the Midlands and Wales Regional Committees before going to the Lottery Board of Trustees for determination.

It is proposed that a consultant is appointed to assist the Wye Valley National Landscape Team to collate the Field to Flow application over the next 9 months. This process will include refining the Field to Flow outputs through liaison and workshops with key partners and stakeholder including the Wye Catchment Partnership, Farm Herefordshire, Wye & Usk Foundation, Wyescapes Project Board, the Wildlife Trusts, local Food Partnerships, NFU, FUW, CLA and other interested farmers and land managers. The project area (map attached below) may also be refined.

There is an evolving range of supporting evidence and projects that lay excellent foundations for the proposed Field to Flow project, through scientific data, landowner engagement and identification of opportunities. These include the Wye Catchment Management Plan, Wye Living Labs research and local Citizen Science, the Wyescapes programme, the Wye & Usk Foundation's Resilient Rivers project, Farming in Protected Landscapes and Ffermio Bro programmes, the National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) and the Wye Adapt to Climate Change project. Field to Flow will learn from, complement and augment these projects, rather than duplicate or compete with them.

Background

'Field to Flow' was chosen as the title for the Lower Wye Valley Landscape Connections project as Field to Flow represents a journey from the rooted strength of the land to the ever-moving currents of connection:

Fields are more than soil, they are stories of nourishment, tradition and care.

Flow is movement of water, from clouds & rain, across fields, crops and drains to streams and rivers out into the ocean, it is also the flow of blood through our bodies and hearts — the lifeblood that carries stories of water and land forward, weaving people, farms, and communities into a living, breathing whole.

'Field to Flow' is therefore about transformations: from harvest to table, from individual to collective, from land to river, and from past to future. It is a vision of community and landscape where food, water, and people are inseparably linked in abundance and reciprocity, where we cultivate not only what sustains us, but also the connections that allow us to flourish.

Field to Flow envisions a future where thriving farms, flowing rivers, and resilient communities are inseparably linked; where landscapes sustain and communities grow. By connecting land, water, and people, we will cultivate nourishment, strengthen relationships, build resilience in the land and water and create abundance that flows across generations.

For further information see:-

[Landscape Connections](#)

[National Lottery Heritage Grants £250,000 to £10million](#)

[Application questions: £250,000 to £10million](#)

<https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/good-practice-guidance>

Landscape Connections

Catchments where confluence with the Wye is within the National Landscape boundary

