

## **FARMING IN PROTECTED LANDSCAPES: LOCAL ASSESSMENT PANEL**

Minutes of the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) Local Assessment Panel (LAP) meeting held on Tuesday 9 November 2021, from 17:30 at Eames Farm.

|                |                 |                  |               |
|----------------|-----------------|------------------|---------------|
| <b>Present</b> | Adam Taylor     | Angus Sprackling | Ann Briggs    |
| Jack Bentall   | Jennifer Walter | Kate Bull        | Pieter Montyn |
| Romy Jackson   | Sam Wilson      |                  |               |

### **Officers**

|                |                           |
|----------------|---------------------------|
| Richard Austin | Sarah Chatfield (Minutes) |
|----------------|---------------------------|

### **1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN**

1. Pieter Montyn was proposed as Chairman by Ann Briggs and seconded by Jennifer Walter. Pieter will serve as Chairman until July 2022.
2. Ann Briggs was proposed as Vice Chairman by Pieter Montyn and seconded by Jack Bentall. Ann will serve as Vice Chairman until July 2022.

### **2. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

3. Apologies were received from Charlotte Bartlett and Henri Brocklebank. Adam Taylor from the RSPB was welcomed as Charlotte's deputy. Henri provided written feedback on the agenda, which the Chairman raised during the meeting.

### **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

4. Richard Austin declared an interested with application CH003.

### **4. MINUTES**

5. None.

### **5. MATTERS ARISING**

The following matters arising raised at the meeting.

6. Terms of Reference. Richard circulated the final version of the Terms of Reference and confirmed that the document was adopted by the Conservancy Board on 08 November 2022. It was agreed that the LAP is acting on behalf of Defra, not the Conservancy, and that the membership on the LAP from the Conservancy and Natural England will not be subject to open recruitment in the future as their involvement is a prerequisite of Defra. Furthermore, Richard explained that the Terms of Reference outlined the appeals procedure, whilst noting that the timeframe for an appeal has been capped at 10 days by Defra from the receipt of the feedback letter. The acceptable grounds for an appeal are limited in scope.
7. Recruitment of a Farming & Grants Officer. Sarah updated the LAP that the Conservancy was unable to appoint an Officer following a period of recruitment in August and September. The Conservancy only received two applications. One did not meet the minimum criteria and the other withdrew his application after

interview, citing that he could not balance the needs of the job with his commitments outside of work.

8. In the absence of a dedicated Officer, the Conservancy moved to appoint a local farm advisor called Colin Hedley to help with the delivery of the programme until March 2022. Colin will be working one day per week on FiPL and will be the first point of contact for all applicants during that time. The Conservancy will review progress in the New Year and decide then whether to seek to extend the contract with Colin or try again and recruit a member of staff.
9. Recruitment of Administration Support Officer. Richard explained that there was a delay in appointing this role because he wanted the Farming & Grants Officer to be in post in the first instance and for that person to assist with the recruitment of this role. However, the Conservancy will now proceed with this recruitment soon. It will be a part-time post and the appointee will take minutes at LAP meetings.
10. Promotion of FiPL. Richard showed the LAP a spreadsheet of all the contacts the Conservancy has made so far with local farmers and landowners. 31 potential applicants have been contacted, and Colin is arranging meetings with individuals to help encourage applications to be submitted. Richard questioned whether the programme should be promoted on social media and in the press when there is finite number of people that can apply for funding, and we are already raising awareness with those people. A member said there should still be some promotion on social media. Richard agreed and the programme will be promoted in this way over the coming weeks.
11. Visit of the Defra FiPL Team. Richard said that the Team at Defra had been in touch and would like to visit the projects that have been supported by LAP. It is obviously a little early for the visit since there is not yet anything to view on the ground. Richard said he would explain that to Defra and encourage a visit in 2022 instead.

## 6. NEW APPLICATIONS

12. CH002: New Boundary Hedge between the West Wittering Estate and Cakeham Manor. Sarah introduced the project to the LAP. A member asked who claims the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) payments and how they will be affected by the FiPL agreement and whether SSSI Consent or Assent was also required. A question about native species arose and it was confirmed that the hedgerow would be consistent with the Countryside Stewardship guidance.
13. Subject to eligibility checks, the LAP was supportive of the scheme, agreeing the following scores:

| Project Outcomes (40%) | Value for Money (20%) | Sustainability (20%) | Delivery (20%) | Total Score | Score after weighting |
|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| 10                     | 8                     | 8                    | 10             | 36          | 9.2                   |

The grant request of £2,900 was approved, subject to the checks above.

14. CH003: Enhancing the Salterns Way Cycle Route. Richard introduced the project. The Conservancy, as the AONB Partnership, was encouraged by Defra to apply to FiPL. He explained that the works near Westlands Farm were greater than what

was shown on the map. He said wider width would allow two bicycles to safely pass each other. A member asked how long the new surface would last. Richard said between 20 to 25 years. A member asked when the project was due to start. Richard said Areas 1 and 2 has already commenced, and Area 4, which was the focus of the FiPL application, was due to start in 10 days' time. A member asked if the Conservancy had sufficient funds to pay for the project outside of FiPL. Richard politely said there was money, however this was an irrelevant question for this project, and all others, and the focus of the LAP needs to be on the outcomes, and not whether the project should be paid for by other means.

*Richard left the meeting.*

The chairman explained how this project strongly supports the priorities from Policy 9 in the AONB Management Plan, supporting access to the AONB and Health & Wellbeing opportunities. A member commented that this project only provided access and would prefer to see the funding go towards more farming-related initiatives. Another member commented that the value of the project was 52% of the funding for this financial year and it was too early in the programme to commit to such a large spend. A further member commented that a resurfacing project would not improve access as the route already existed. It did not seem good value for money as it was going to happen anyway. Another member commented that the project would benefit farmers as it would encourage the public to stick to the edge of their fields. However, several members felt that the benefits of the project to farmers was not clear and that the FiPL programme should support projects that help farmers through the transition period and prepare for ELMs. The overall view was that although the project will increase people's access to the AONB and it scored highly on this, FiPL is not the right funding for this project.

*Richard joined the meeting.*

15. The Chairman explained that the LAP decided to refuse the application because FiPL was part of the Government's Agricultural Transition Plan, and the cycle way proposal was not supporting that. A member added that using 52% of the total project funds for 2021/22 for one project seemed too high.

The LAP agreed the following scores:

| Project Outcomes (40%) | Value for Money (20%) | Sustainability (20%) | Delivery (20%) | Total Score | Score with weighting |
|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------|-------------|----------------------|
| 4                      | 4                     | 8                    | 8              | 24          | 5.6                  |

The grant request of £65,996.06 was refused.

16. CH004: Fencing and Gates at Itchenor Park Farm. Richard and Sarah introduced the project. A member asked whether there were any double funding issues with the existing Countryside Stewardship agreement. Another member asked for the cattle management regime and a greater explanation of the nature benefits. The LAP felt the application lacked detail. It was not clear whether the applicant was eligible for 100% funding, or whether it should be capped at 40%. A member said that FiPL should not pay for fences for fields that are already under an agreement to be cattle grazed anyway.

17. The grant request for £24,054.60 was deferred pending further clarification from the applicant, a check by Colin Hedley, and an eligibility check from the RPA.

**7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

17. Richard said to the LAP that the refusal of CH003 will really put the pressure on local farmers and land managers, and Colin Hedley, to find new projects over the next few weeks ready to be funded and delivered. There is now a high risk that all project funding will not be allocated by 17 January and spent by 31 March 2022. In this scenario, funds will be withheld by Defra and future allocations may be reduced. Richard encouraged the LAP to develop new applications as soon as possible.
18. Richard asked the LAP if they would like applicants to present their projects to the Panel in future. The Panel agreed to this because it would give them the chance to ask questions of the applicants at the time, and get the answers needed to make determinations. Richard said he would invite people to attend, but that it would not be compulsory.

**8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

19. The next meeting was agreed as Monday 13 December 2021, at Eames Farm, from 17:30.

The meeting closed at 19:30.

*P.p.*

Chairman