

FARMING IN PROTECTED LANDSCAPES: LOCAL ASSESSMENT PANEL

Minutes of the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) Local Assessment Panel (LAP) meeting held on Monday 17 January 2022, from 17:30 using Zoom.

Present Pieter Montyn (Chairman)

Ann Briggs Angus Sprackling Henri Brocklebank Kate Bull

Adam Taylor Charlotte Bartlett Sam Wilson

Officers

Richard Austin Sarah Chatfield Colin Hedley Rosie Chase (Minutes)

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

- 1.1 The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- 1.2 Apologies for absence were received from Jack Bentall and Romy Jackson.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 There were none.

3. MINUTES

- 3.1 The minutes from last LAP meeting, held on the 13th of December 2021 were agreed as a true record of the meeting and were signed by the Chairman.

4. MATTERS ARISING

a. Project financial summary

- 4.1 The AONB Manager, Richard Austin said that the main take away from the financial summary sheet is that there is a significant underspend, and there are just two weeks to identify projects to spend the money on or the funding will be lost. He was asked if there were any potential projects and he said there had been some rumours and suggestions but getting those ideas to the stage where full plans have been submitted has proven difficult. Colin Hedley said he will contact and support the potential funders to submit bids before the deadline.
- 4.2 A member from the RSPB said they were partners on several FiPL panels and that some appear to have secured funding into next year. Richard Austin said there was an opportunity to reprofile the grants some months ago, and this panel has money allocated for years two and three but if the first-year funding is not spent, it must be returned to Defra.
- 4.3 Colin Hedley said that he had a lot of interest from the contacts he had made, and that momentum and interest was building, which would hopefully translate into more schemes in the next two years.

b. Recruitment of Farming and Grants Officer and Admin Support Officer

- 4.4 Richard Austin said that progress had been made in recruiting a Farming and Grants Officer who was due to start work at the beginning of the next financial year and likewise an Admin Support Officer will also be recruited soon.

5. APPLICATIONS

a. CH009 Pitlands Farm, Up Marden, Sprayer and Wash Down

- 5.1 Sarah Chatfield provided a brief introduction to the project and informed members that the applicant would be joining the meeting at 6pm. The application is for a sprayer and wash down area and bio filter. The Applicant currently does the washing out in the field and is keen to minimise those activities by creating a lean-to extension with purpose-built wash down area. A bio filter will be included which will clean the water which can be used on crops. Three quotes have been provided and planning permission is in place. The applicant is sure that the project can be delivered by the 31st of March. Sarah went on to say that a double funding check needs to be made. There are some guidelines about bio filters which need to be checked, to ensure the site complies. There are some outstanding queries regarding a conflict with the countryside stewardship rates for biofilters and sprayer wash down areas and members discussed this having made enquiries with colleagues. A key condition of the FiPL funding would be the promotion of this project as exemplar best practice and the applicant has indicated he would be happy to do this.
- 5.2 The Applicant, Andrew Huxham, joined the meeting at 6pm and provided a summary of his application. He said he could only find two companies to supply the bio box kit, rather than the three requested.
- 5.3 A member asked if the use of a bowser would be discontinued with these new facilities. Mr Huxham said there was an upgraded tank with four thousand litres capacity. He confirmed that he would be coming back to the farm to fill up the sprayer each time in the new facilities.
- 5.4 Another member said she welcomed the bid for its positive effect on the environment. Following a question, the Applicant said he has put in buffer zones of wildflower meadows near the rivers, and this project is the next step to mitigating against the environmental impact his business is creating.
- 5.5 It was confirmed that there was sufficient space on the grassed area to take the processed water from the biofilter.
- 5.6 A member asked, should the application be successful, how the applicant would share the experience with others. Andrew said he would be happy to welcome farming and environmental groups at the farm to visit and ask questions.
- 5.7 Another member asked whether this activity would cover all types of sprayer residue such as nitrates, or just pesticides? Andrew confirmed that all the products for which they use the sprayer would be covered.
- 5.8 A member asked if the grass disposal area was near any water courses, and would the grassed area be monitored? Andrew replied that the site was nowhere near any footpaths or water courses and the rough grass where the wash would be being trickled, can be monitored by eye for any adverse changes. He went on to say that this was already a proven method. He would check EA regulations for disposal.

Andrew Huxham left the meeting.

Sarah Chatfield read out an email from NE which advised that the panel would need to give a detailed rationale, explaining why a project would benefit the harbour to be able to go over and above countryside stewardship rates. This rationale would need to be run past the FiPL Defra team.

5.9 Members discussed the scoring for the project and agreed the intervention rate. It was noted this would be subject to approval from the FiPL Defra team. Members were supportive of the scheme and commended the applicant as the scheme would not improve profitability for his farm but would impact positively on the environment.

5.10 Following a discussion amongst members, Richard Austin said that funding is not dependent on the applicant's financial status, but on the merit of the project. He said that as there is a large underspend and it made sense to uplift the increase in this case, if permitted by Defra.

5.11 It was resolved to score the project as follows

Project Outcomes (40%)	Value for Money (20%)	Sustainability (20%)	Delivery (20%)	Total Score	Score after weighting
8	8	8	8	32	8

5.12 The LAP asked if the intervention rate could be increased to 80% as there is limited commercial gain for the farmer and the project had high environmental value. The LAP were advised that Defra would have to be consulted on this to understand if this was possible under the requirements of the FiPL scheme. The LAP agreed they would wish to increase the intervention rate to 80% if approval from Defra could be obtained. The project was approved subject to the required double funding checks, the Environment Agency is consulted to ensure that the project is compliant with their guidelines and the applicant promotes his project as exemplar best practice and is an ambassador for FiPL for the length of the scheme.

Grant request £35,064 (65% intervention rate) (80% intervention rate £43,154)

b. CH001 Eames Farm, Thorney Island, Geo-Tagging

5.13 Sarah Chatfield said this project had been put on hold, but Defra have now agreed that the "no fence technology" can be trialled under FiPL. However, some further guidelines and criteria are expected. Defra also wish to have oversight of the project. This application will be postponed for discussion until the next meeting. Sarah thanked Angus Sprackling for his patience.

5.14 Richard Austin asked the panel members if there were any reservations on the use of the technology, could they please contact him by the end of the week to prevent any wasted energy in putting the project together.

5.15 An RSPB member said that the technology had been used on a reserve in Hampshire, that a number of hoops needed to be jumped through in order to utilise it, but that the cattle are now on the land, having had a winter. She encouraged Angus to contact her for more information.

c. CH007 Eames Farm, Thorney Island, Electric Fencing

5.16 Angus Sprackling outlined the application for funding for electric fencing, to enable cattle to be grazed on arable farmland which has not been used for this purpose

previously. Sarah said that a carbon audit would also be conducted as part of this project, with the intention of using the data to assist the farm in moving towards carbon neutrality. The practice of mob grazing the cattle on over wintering crops will help to sequester more carbon in the soil. The benchmarking software will show how the quality of the soil has been improved through the various projects.

- 5.17 Following a question, the applicant explained that the project will contribute to reducing carbon by combining arable and cattle farming, with manure going into the fields and cows feeding on the grass. A member said that the UK is (generally) producing meat in an efficient way and using best practice in terms of animal welfare and environmental benefit, unlike other countries.
- 5.18 NE confirmed that SSSI consent would be needed for any fencing.
- 5.19 Members were supportive of the projects and commended the applicant for their commitment to sustainable farming.

Angus Sprackling, Henri Brocklebank and Kate Bull left the meeting

- 5.20 Sarah informed the panel that three quotes were gathered for the fencing project. Only one quote was forthcoming for the carbon monitoring software, and instead that software was compared with the free programmes available. Panel members were asked to let Sarah know if they came across any other suitable software.
- 5.21 A member said that the electric fencing should last around ten years and the software would give the applicant the ability to monitor improvements over three years so the project should score well on sustainability.
- 5.22 Richard Austin said that if a project spans over two years, the money spent in year one will come out of the year one allocation and the year two spend will come out of the year two allocation.
- 5.23 It was resolved to score the project as follows

Project Outcomes (40%)	Value for Money (20%)	Sustainability (20%)	Delivery (20%)	Total Score	Score after weighting
10	8	8	8	32	8.8

Intervention rates were agreed at 80% for the electric fencing and 100% for the carbon software. Approval was subject to double funding checks that will need to be undertaken and SSSI consent. The Applicant will also be asked to share the results for the carbon testing.

Total Grant approved: £1,211.76

d. CH008 Lowerhouse Farm, Bosham, Fencing

- 5.24 Colin Hedley introduced the application for fencing to be erected in areas of the applicants farm which have partridge, geese and hares, but where there is little cover from people walking dogs that are out of control or walkers veering off designated paths. The landowner is already working with Chichester District Council to create woodland regeneration areas with fencing included.

- 5.25 A member said he did not see the benefit of the enclosed area as deer would be able to jump it and the only benefit would be to keep rabbits out. Colin said that he was unsure if the trees would be planted in tubes to protect them against deer.
- 5.26 Another member suggested having signage up to explain to the public why the work had been done, to avoid any fences being vandalised. She also asked if the land featured a right of way. Colin said the area was well used but there were no rights of way across the farmland. He went on to say that the work with Chichester District Council was a mixture of some natural regeneration and some planting and that contractors will be on site soon to conduct the work for the council led work. Therefore, it would be easy to tie in the additional fencing as part of this application.
- 5.27 Sarah said she spoke to the applicant about publicity and signage, but the applicant was not keen on having any. However, the panel said that they would want to make that as a condition of the funding.
- 5.28 The panel debated the value for money of this project and length and were divided on opinion. A vote was taken on deferring the application, with five people in favour of appraising the application now.

It was resolved to score the project as follows

Project Outcomes (40%)	Value for Money (20%)	Sustainability (20%)	Delivery (20%)	Total Score	Score after weighting
8	8	8	8	32	8

The project was approved subject to the completion of double funding checks and the condition that signage is put up to explain the project.

Total grant approved: £3034.00

e. CH010 Chichester Harbour, Coastal Grazing Marsh Feasibility Study

- 5.29 Richard Austin summarised the application. The Environment Agency have a £12,000 underspend which can be used as match funding, for this bid to commission a consultant to carry out a feasibility study.
- 5.30 A member said that it was important to get the engagement of the landowners and farmers and suggested that this was a condition of the funding.
- 5.31 Richard Austin said he was confident the work can be completed by the 31st of March.
- Richard Austin left the meeting.
- 5.32 Sarah Chatfield confirmed that the funds requested totalled £3,784, which represented a 24% intervention rate.
- 5.33 It was agreed that the outcomes of this study should be made freely available, and that it should be farming linked, with farmers consulted.

It was resolved to score the project as follows

Project Outcomes (40%)	Value for Money (20%)	Sustainability (20%)	Delivery (20%)	Total Score	Score after weighting
8	10	8	10	36	8.8

The project was approved subject to the outcomes of the report being available.

Total Grant approved: £3,874.00

6. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Thursday 27 January 2022 from 5.30pm via Zoom.

The meeting closed at 20.30.

Chairman