

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

Minutes of the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) Local Assessment Panel (LAP) meeting held on Monday 13 December 2021, from 17:30 using Zoom.

**Present**                      Pieter Montyn (Chairman)      Ann Briggs (Vice Chairman)  
Adam Taylor                  Angus Sprackling                  Jack Bentall                  Jennifer Walter  
Henri Brocklebank      Kate Bull                                  Romy Jackson                  Sam Wilson

### **Officers**

Richard Austin                  Sarah Chatfield

Colin Hedley

### **1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

20. The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed Colin Hedley.
21. Colin introduced himself, explaining his background. He said he has visited a lot of farms over the past six weeks and met some new people. Generally, he found that people are pleased there is support available from FiPL and that the LAP want to help them. However, Colin said there is still a lot of grey areas, and Richard and Sarah are trying to help clarify matters.

### **2. DECLARTIONS OF INTEREST**

22. CH005. Jen said the applicant was a client and friend, but she did not have an interest in the project.
23. CH006. Adam said that some fields on the farm plan are owned by the RSPB. Sam declared that he knew the applicant. Jack said the applicant was his cousin. Romy said the applicant is the NFU branch chairman.
24. It was agreed that Jack would leave the meeting when CH006 was discussed. The Chairman said it was sufficient only to note the other declarations of interest, without further action.

### **3. MINUTES**

25. The Minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record with one addition. On point (3) to add "Henri provided written feedback on the agenda, which the Chairman raised during the meeting."
26. With this amendment, the minutes of the previous meeting will be published on the Conservancy's website.

### **4. MATTERS ARISING**

27. Richard said that the Conservancy are likely to go out to recruitment for the Farming & Grants Officer and the Administration Support Officer in the New Year unless suitable candidates can be identified sooner.

### **5. NEW APPLICATIONS**

28. CH006: Using GPS Technology for Increased Accuracy of Fertiliser Application. In a change to the order of the agenda, the Chairman brought this item forward since the applicant wished to address the Panel directly.

Sarah introduced the project. The overall aim was to reduce nitrates and phosphates leaching into the Harbour, which would potentially benefit the wider landscape.

However, the FiPL programme cannot be delivered in competition with other Defra schemes. For instance, with the Farming Investment Fund there is a section for Equipment and Technology, called Precision Technology. The applicant will need to confirm that his project would not qualify for support from the Farming Investment Fund to be considered for a FiPL grant. Sarah said the applicant believes his project is outside of the scope of the Farming Investment Fund.

Furthermore, it would be helpful to clarify the extent to which water drains into Chichester Harbour and the wider Solent.

Finally, it was noted that the applicant has applied for an 80% intervention rate. Colin advised that the Farming Investment Fund is really for tried and tested equipment additions, whereas this application is for state-of-the-art equipment.

*The applicant joined the meeting. Jack left the meeting.*

The applicant said the landholding is 636 hectares, of which half they own, and half is owned by other farmers. He said they are from The Witterings area. The project was for a new fertiliser spreader which will utilise GPS guidance combined with part-width section control. The current spreader has to be controlled manually and the operator must guess where they have spread. It only has 4 sections which can be shut off, with the ranges of 7m, 14m, or not at all. This can lead to overlapping by up to 10-12 metres in parts of the field. The new equipment uses GPS technology to tell the spreader where it has been. Each side has 64 sections, giving a total of 128 sections which can be shut off, which means the overlap is no more than 20cm, significantly increasing precision.

The applicant said excess fertiliser is a waste for the crop since it will not be used and can then leach into the water courses. He said this is similar technology to that which they use on their crop sprayer.

The applicant confirmed that some of the land he farms drains directly into the Harbour, and the other areas drain southwards of Hale Farm into the Solent.

A member asked how the equipment deals with hedge or ditch management. The applicant said the discs on the spreader slow down so they do not put fertiliser where it should not be. A member asked about 80% intervention rate.

*The applicant left the meeting.*

The Members said the applicant cannot apply for 100% funding because he will make a commercial gain. A large proportion of the area is also outside of the AONB.

A member said she supported the application. Colin said there could be an educational side since it would involve the use of new technology and promoting best practice. A member said it is a good application, and it will reduce chemical applications. The members discussed the boundary, and whether drainage was an

issue. Members agreed that even if the land did not drain directly into the Harbour, it still drained into the Solent which is the same body of water that enters the Harbour.

A member proposed that the application should be supported for 80%.

A member questioned whether this would set a precedent for future applications. Richard confirmed that this project could be used as an exemplar case study to promote best practice, but this does not mean that any similar applications in the future would be granted the same amount of funding.

The intervention rate of 80% was unanimously agreed.

29. 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
8	6	8	10	32	8

The grant request of £14,600 was approved, subject to the checks above.

30. CH004: Fencing and Gates at Itchenor Park Farm. Sarah introduced the project. It was felt that the queries at the previous meeting had been satisfactorily answered. It was confirmed that the Countryside Stewardship agreement was only focussed on some of the land within the holding, and not everything. Colin said he felt the applicant had addressed the issues.

A member said she was unclear how the wildlife will benefit from the project. Colin said they will have the option to manage the land more flexibly if the new fencing is installed. The applicant does want the option to graze the land rather than just cut for forage.

A member queried the specifications of the fence and why FG2 was required. Colin explained that although the current fencing was suitable for cattle, the applicant wished to keep their options open for future grazing. Cattle grazing is in short supply in the area and the new fence would also open up opportunity for sheep grazing in the future, increasing the resilience of the business.

A member queried whether the applicant needed to graze as part of their CS option. Colin confirmed that they did not have to graze permanent grassland under their CS scheme, they can cut for forage. Having the fencing makes grazing a more viable option for them.

A member said the old fencing needs to be properly disposed of, and not simply burnt on-site. It was suggested that as part of the conditions for the funding, the old fence would need to be disposed of in an environmentally friendly way.

31. Subject to any final 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
8	8	8	10	34	8.4

The grant request of £24,054.60 was approved, subject to any final checks.

It was agreed that a condition of the grant offer is that the old fence is safely disposed of. It was also agreed that the offer letter would recommend that the applicant consults with the Conservancy's Ecologist for guidance to maximise the wildlife benefits.

32. CH005 Hedge Planting at Rectory Farm. Sarah introduced the project. A member said it is important that the applicant uses native and locally sourced species mix. Colin said future applicants need to provide clear maps, marked with existing hedges. A member asked about margin in the next field and additional information on future management of those hedgerows. The project needs to follow best practice.

A member asked about the wildlife strip. Colin said this buffer is usually permanent grass protecting a boundary feature, like from spray drift, ditches, etc. A member said walkers really appreciate the buffer zone.

33. Subject to any final 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	10	8	10	38	9.6

The grant request of £2,320 was approved, subject to any final checks.

34. The Chairman confirmed that CH007 Eames Farm would be determined by the Small Grants Panel. A member asked if the Conservancy was the applicant of this application. Richard confirmed that was not the case.

*Romy left the meeting.*

## **6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

35. The Chairman confirmed the date of the next meeting is 17 January 2021. The LAP changed the start time to 5.30pm, and noted it remains to be seen whether the meeting will be virtual or in-person.
36. Richard said that there is a possibility another meeting will be scheduled towards the end of January if any Year 1 funds remain to be allocated. No new Year 1 projects can be approved after 1 February 2021, and any unallocated funds will be returned to Defra at that point.

The meeting closed at 19:30.

P.p

Chairman