

Farming in Protected Landscapes

Minutes of the FiPL Local Assessment Panel (LAP) held at 3.30pm on Monday 28th March 2022 using Zoom.

Present Pieter Montyn (Chairman)

Jen Walter Romy Jackson Sam Wilson Ann Briggs

Henri Brocklebank

Officers

Sarah Chatfield (CHC) Richard Austin (CHC) Colin Hedley (CJH Farming Advice) Rosie Chase (CHC)
Suzie Robsin (CJH Farming Advice)
(minutes)

1.0 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

- 1.1 The Chairman welcomed attendees to the meeting.
- 1.2 Apologies for absence were received from Angus Sprackling, Jack Bentall and Kate Bull.

2.0 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3.0 MINUTES

- 3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 27th January 2022 at Eames Farm were agreed as a true record of the meeting.

4.0 MATTERS ARISING

Defra Update

- 4.1 Sarah Chatfield and Richard Austin have had a meeting with Defra to discuss Chichester Harbour's year one feedback to their FiPL team. They discussed some of the issues with implementing the scheme. Defra representatives said that some refinements are being made in year two, to make the process more efficient.
- 4.2 A member said that it was the time constraints which made the process most difficult, especially when farmers are busy with crops. He said that the scheme needs to be more flexible if it's to be successful. He outlined the potential risks to farmers who may be investing in equipment which may not be delivered on time. FiPL funding may be withdrawn, leaving them out of pocket. The AONB Manager said that Defra had said any unspent funds in year one would go back to the treasury and if the panel decided to continue supporting a project that was unable to be delivered in time for year one funding, the money would need to be taken from the year two allocation. Defra had said that the scoring procedure should consider the deliverability of the project and it's a risk that the applicants would have to bear. Richard Austin said that, when devising the conditions for funding, Defra had not considered issues such as staff sickness because of the new Covid position, shortages of materials and delays in delivery of machinery, which could impact on a project being implemented or the unforeseeable war in Ukraine.

- 4.3 It was agreed that the potential risks be communicated to applicants, so that they fully understand the implications of applying for funding. Richard Austin also suggested lobbying Defra for additional funding.

Recruitment Update

- 4.4 Steven Pick has been recruited as Farming Officer and will be starting work on the 25th April. Michelle Rossiter has been recruited as part-time FiPL Administrator and will start the same week.
- 4.5 The AONB Manager and the Local Assessment Panel thanked Colin Hedley for his efforts in gathering applications for the first year of funding and paving the way for more of the same in the second year. He went on to thank Sarah Chatfield for her efforts.

Year one project progress

- 4.6 Sarah Chatfield provided an overview of the progress to date – overall the panel has approved 12 projects with a total spend of £115,000 approx. Defra have asked each Protected Landscape to identify which projects are expected to be fully complete by the 31st March 2022. Based on this, the expected spend on completed projects in Chichester Harbour for Y1 will be £80,238.30
- 4.7 As not all projects will be completed in year 1, based on the figures today, she confirmed that £34,713.10 of funding allocated to year 1 projects will now come out of the Year 2 allocation if it is agreed that these projects are moved to Year 2.
- 4.8. The CHaProN Manager provided a presentation showing the progress of the projects including
- Geofencing technology (now complete)
 - New hedgerow at West Wittering Estate (now complete)
 - Fencing at Itchenor Park Farm (expected 75% complete by 31 March 2022, with the remaining work to be completed in year 2)
 - Hedge planting at Rectory Farm connecting two existing hedgerows, now completed using a Rangers' working party with volunteers to plant the trees.
 - The GPS fertiliser spreader project will be carried over as the equipment will not be delivered in time with £14,600 spend now allocated to year two funds.
 - Electric fencing and carbon analysis software – the equipment has been delivered on site and this project should be signed off within 24 hours of the meeting.
 - Fencing project at Bosham now complete.
 - Washer and spray down area and biofilter. Despite challenges this is on track to finish on time with a site visit booked for the next 24 hours.
 - Coastal grazing marsh project -the initial report has been completed, project complete.
 - No till drill- the equipment will not be delivered until September 2022- the project grant is for £12,054. The funding for this project will be allocated to year two budget.
 - Hay rake to help meadow management – the equipment will not be delivered in time. The value of this project is £1500. Funding will be allocated to the Year 2 budget.
 - Stoke fruit farm projects. Project nearly complete. Full completion is dependent on the delivery of signs, and it is hoped they will arrive on site by the 31 March.

Year two budget

- 4.9 Sarah Chatfield said that the total allocation for year two is £120,132 with £13,367 set aside to go on administration costs and £22,724 allocated for advice and guidance (both in this case will go towards the salaries of the new FiPL staff). This leaves £84,041 for project grants in Year 2. Deducting the amount of funding allocated to projects in Year 1 that we are expecting not to be completed, leaves £49,348 for new projects in year 2 which is significantly less than our budget for year 1. The AONB Manager has written to Defra to request more year 2 funding, but no response has been received as yet.
- 4.10 Members discussed the frustrations with the current process at length. It was confirmed that the reasons that projects were not being completed was because of machinery being delivered in time and labour shortages. Members recognised that the constraints and conditions of the funding, alongside the amount of time required to apply would deter applicants, especially with the risk that funding may not follow if projects cannot be delivered to Defra's timetable.
- 4.11 Richard Austin said that there were several farming funding streams from Defra and that the Farming Officer could assist local farmers to access these funds and carry out with engagement work with farmers. He went on to say that in order for Defra to release more funding, they would require evidence that there were projects ready to be delivered. He said that he suspected that all AONBs will have been hit by the delivery problems. Members agreed it was worth having projects ready to go should Defra release funds at short notice.

Expansion of the FiPL eligibility area outside the AONB

- 4.12 Richard Austin provided a presentation to members, showing the areas where FiPL funding could apply, including areas outside of the AONB. He said that he intended to publish this information on the website. Projects outside of the AONB would be funded where they have an impact inside the AONB and where they are innovative. It was asked whether schemes inside the AONB would take priority. Richard Austin said that was a possibility, but the scoring would still apply and contacts within the AONB had been made already.
- 4.13 Sarah Chatfield said that a new cluster of farms within the Manhood Peninsula were interested in developing projects and had been in contact.
- 4.14 A member said he felt it made sense that all of Hayling Island be included within the boundary. Members agreed to the AONB Manager's proposal to redefine the boundary to areas outside the AONB.
- 4.15 It was noted that there were two vacancies on the FiPL LAP Panel that were currently being advertised.

Date of next meeting

Monday 13 June 17:30 – at Eames Farm