

## **Farming in Protected Landscapes**

### **Minutes of the FiPL Local Assessment Panel (LAP) held at 5.30pm on Monday 26 September 2022 at Eames Farm, Thorney Island.**

#### **Present**

Pieter Montyn (Chairman)

Ann Briggs                      Stephen Johnson      Kate Bull

Richard Cowser      Sam Wilson

#### **Officers**

Steven Pick   Sarah Chatfield      Michelle Rossiter

#### **1.0 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN**

1.1 Pieter Montyn was nominated for Chairman by Kate Bull. This was seconded by Stephen Johnson. There being no other nominations, Pieter Montyn was duly re-elected as Chairman.

1.2 Anne Briggs was nominated for Vice Chairman by Pieter Montyn. This was seconded by Kate Bull. There being no other nominations, Anne Briggs was duly re-elected as Vice Chairman.

#### **2.0 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

1.1 The Chairman welcomed attendees to the meeting and welcomed Richard Cowser to his first LAP.

1.2 Apologies for absence were received from Romy Jackson, Jennifer Walter and Jack Bentall.

#### **3.0 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

3.1. Pieter Montyn declared an interest in both applications from Tom Monnington, CH018 and CH019. The family is known to him, no direct interest in the project applications.

#### **4.0 MINUTES**

4.1 The minutes of the LAP Meeting held on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> June 2022 at Eames Farm were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

## **5.0 MATTERS ARISING**

### **5.1 FiPL Finances Update for Year 2.**

Steven Pick, the Farming Officer, gave members an update on the finances of the FiPL Programme. Members noted the remaining budget for allocation in Year 2 (2022/2023) was £39,817. The amount already committed in Year 2 was £44,224 of which £16,100 had been paid to date to applicants for completed projects. Members noted that the remaining projects, which had received awards so far in year 2, were ongoing and would hopefully be delivered before the year end of March 2023. The Chairman commented that Angus Sprackling still needed to order his No Till Drill.

Steven reported the total amount requested this meeting was £37,649, which if awarded, would leave a remaining Year two fund of £2,167.98. He advised that the LAP would be able to start to allocate in advance from the Year 3 budget of £83,626 if required.

### **5.2 Coastal Grazing Marsh Study**

Sarah Chatfield gave a brief summary of the coastal grazing study that had been funded in part by a Year One FiPL Grant in partnership with the Environment Agency. The report studied the potential for coastal grazing marsh around the Chichester Harbour AONB. It was noted the report was now complete and members would be sent a copy via email. Sarah advised that discussions would now be held with local landowners as part of the CHaPRoN initiative to establish interest in the creation of Coastal Grazing Marshes, a Priority Habitat within the Chichester Harbour AONB. A panel member asked if local farmers had been consulted during the drafting of the report and Sarah Chatfield confirmed that a representative group for the study had been involved.

### **5.3 Letter of thanks from DEFRA**

The Chairman reported that he had received a letter of thanks from Lord Benyon of DEFRA for the hard work undertaken by the LAP in the first year. This had been circulated to the LAP by email together with a copy of the Chairman's response. The Chairman thanked the LAP members for their continued support of the FiPL Programme.

## **6.0 NEW APPLICATIONS**

*The applications were considered in reverse order in the meeting for logistical reasons but are recorded here in numerical order for ease of reference.*

**CH018 Thomas Monnington on behalf of Andrew Monnington and Partners – Hedge Planting and Fencing to Protect Hedges**

- 6.1 The applicant attended to give a presentation to the LAP. This project was for the planting 712m of native mixed hedging which would connect to existing hedgerows. In addition, the applicant requested 2327m of stock fencing to protect previously planted native mixed wildlife hedging. The fencing would also allow the 6.4 ha grass fields they surround to be sympathetically managed by grazing rather than relying on mechanical control. The aim was to create new wildlife corridors, increase biodiversity by the creation of new grassland meadow fenced areas and to improve carbon sequestration via grazing livestock rather than management via mechanical means. The applicant was working with Pete Hughes from Chichester Harbour Conservancy to develop a grazing strategy to ensure the best possible conditions for local wildlife.
- 6.2 A member asked if electric fencing would be a cheaper option for cattle fencing. The applicant responded that young cattle could be boisterous and electric fencing was inadequate particularly in fields which bordered highways as there was a high risk that cattle could escape onto roads. Electric fencing also did not provide a long-term solution as they did not keep dogs out of fields and were unpopular with local dogwalkers.
- 6.3 A member asked if the applicant had considered applying for Countryside Stewardship for this project. The applicant replied that the level of administration attached to these applications was quite prohibitive for small farms which did not have an office support team.
- 6.4 The Farming Officer emphasized that as some of the land in this application lay outside the AONB (but within the FiPL area), it was important to establish the benefits to the AONB. He reported that the proposed hedgerow project would help to establish an east to west wildlife corridor connecting the AONB to the wider landscape on the Manhood Peninsular. In addition, plans to graze more areas by the addition of cattle fencing, was very important for improving biodiversity. The applicant reported that the fencing would allow for greater flexibility of grazing and therefore allow the farm to retain and possibly increase their number of cattle, which would have a positive impact on the ecosystem and wildlife diversity. By having a greater area for the cattle to graze, a grazing plan could be delivered more effectively, especially during dry summers and prevent over grazing of sites. A member commented that the previously supported Coastal Grazing Report would be helpful to this project.
- 6.5 The applicant reported that he had grouped together a farm cluster across the Manhood Peninsula who were jointly working on environmental issues. They were also planning a biodiversity survey of the area to establish a base point. It would therefore be possible to monitor improvements in biodiversity if the project went ahead.

*Tom Monnington then left the meeting.*

- 6.6 A member highlighted the importance of supporting farmers with grazing cattle which could be brought in and out of the AONB area, as there were currently very few farms with grazing cattle within the AONB. Sarah

Chatfield commented that the CHC ecologist Peter Hughes was very supportive of cattle grazing and the biodiversity that it brought to an area. Supporting farmers to help make cattle grazing a more sustainable part of their business could lead to long term benefits for the AONB.

6.7 Following further discussion, the majority of the LAP decided to support the application with the following conditions:

- The hedge scheme must use only native hedge plants grown in the UK and no imports.
- The project must be completed by 31 March 2023.
- The Applicant should continue to engage with the CHC ecologist with regards to maximising the grazing potential for biodiversity.

6.8 Members agreed the scoring for the project as follows:

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

6.9 The intervention rate was agreed at CS Rates (BN11 for Hedging and FG2 for Fencing). The panel were advised that the applicant was funding the rest of the project.

6.10 The members approved the project. Grant requested £19,661.50

### **CH019 Thomas Monnington on behalf of Andrew Monnington & Partners – Low Disturbance Bar Tool**

6.11 The applicant attended to give a presentation to the LAP. This project was for the purchase of a Grange close coupled toolbar. When coupled with the existing farm set of discs and a seeder unit, cover crops could be planted in one pass. This would create a timely low-cost method of planting, by reducing the number of cultivations passes required to establish the cover crops and thus make it more achievable in terms of labour requirements. It was noted the Bar Tool could also be paired with the combination drill. This would remove the need for subsoiling in front of the drill after root crops thus allowing the farm to develop a one pass systems that suited the conditions using the existing machinery.

6.12 The additional green cover over winter would enhance biodiversity and provide an additional winter-feeding habitat for wildlife. The cover crops would also lockup any excess nutrients in the soil therefore reducing the potential for leaching of nutrients into nearby watercourses in and around the harbour. The project would also help to increase the soil health by helping to reduce soil and water runoff due to increased drainage in the

soil and a reduction of carbon release from the soil due to a more limited cultivation planting process.

6.13 The members were generally impressed by the tool bar and its flexibility for use with existing farm machinery to make various types of cultivations more environmentally friendly. The applicant commented that the tool bar combined innovative farming techniques with traditional farming to drive both efficiency and environmental benefit.

6.14 Sarah Chatfield said in terms of FiPL Criteria, it was very important to justify the impact of the Tool Bar on the AONB. The applicant responded that the machine was extremely versatile and could be used on all the farm's land. It would be particularly useful on the land in Birdham (within the AONB) as there the soil had underlying gravel. The use of the toolbar would reduce water runoff and therefore also reduce nutrient leaching from the gravel soils.

6.15 The applicant advised that he was keen to share best practice with other local farmers and had already set up a farm cluster group in the Manhood Peninsular comprising 4 or 5 farms, to drive forward environmental improvements.

*Tom Monnington then left the meeting.*

6.16 The members noted the intervention rate suggested was 60% to allow for the commercial gain that the applicant may experience.

6.17 A member commented that this project appeared to have clear ecological benefits, with improved soil resulting in greater biodiversity and less nutrient runoff into harbour and neighbouring waters. A member also commented on the importance of farm clusters whereby farmers were being encouraged to work together for environmental gains.

6.18 Members agreed the scoring for the project as follows:

Project Outcomes (40%)	Value for Money (20%)	Sustainability (20%)	Delivery (20%)	Total Score	Score after weighting
8	8	10	8	34	8.4

6.19 The intervention rate was agreed at 60%. The panel was advised that the applicant was funding the rest of the project.

6.20 The members approved the project. Total grant requested £11,132.40.

**CH020 Tuppenny Barn – Education and Food – Growing for all Seasons**

6.21 The applicant attended to give a presentation to the LAP. The applicant was a Charity offering unique outdoor learning opportunities for children, young adults and the wider community with a focus on those facing disadvantage. The Charity ran a programme of education, green therapy, and volunteer sessions in their organic classrooms. The Charity had the equivalent of 3 ½ full – time staff, many part-time staff and up to 70 regular volunteers who helped to deliver the charity programme of work. The education programmes, based around the environment and growing of food, linked in with schools and children in Years 6 to 8, young people and provided adult mental health sessions, some via NHS referrals.

This application was for upgrades to the polytunnel and propagation sheds to support a longer growing season and allow a year-round education programme of delivery and growing. The project included a lighting system for the polytunnel, allowing the extended use of the polytunnels into the winter months, two new potting and propagation sheds, to allow propagation and growing on of more seeds, and 6 wheelbarrows.

6.22 It was noted any income from the organic shop was ploughed straight back into the Charity to allow engagement with as many people as possible.

6.23 A member asked whether the Charity owned the land. The applicant confirmed the land was owned by the CEO so there was no risk the land would be developed.

*Anna Webb then left the meeting.*

6.24 A member commented that this was an impressive programme with many benefits. It was suggested that the FiPL panel visited the centre and the Farming Officer agreed to consider this possibility.

6.25 Another member said that it could be requested that the Charity circulate information about the AONB to the local community as part of their engagement programme.

6.26 Members agreed the scoring for the project as follows:

Outcomes (40%)	Value for Money (20%)	Sustainability (20%)	Delivery (20%)	Total Score		Score after weighting
8	8	8	10	34		8.4

6.27 The intervention rate was agreed at 100%

6.28 Members approved the project. Grant request £5,317.24.

### **CH021 Cobnor Estates- Wildlife Habitat Creation and Wildlife Workshops**

6.29 The applicant attended to give a presentation to the LAP. This project was for 30 wildlife boxes, an owl box camera for an existing owl box, swift calling systems and materials for free workshops to show locals how to build their

own wildlife boxes. The project aimed to improve the biodiversity of the area by increasing the population of swifts, house martins and bats on the Estate. In addition, the aim was to share the success of an existing owl box with locals via the installation of a webcam. The provision of workshops for the creation of bird boxes aimed to engage the public to undertake biodiversity enhancing projects at home. The applicant reported there had been a noticeable decline in bird and bat numbers in the area and the project was to attempt to address this decline. The applicant had requested advice from CHC Ecologist Pete Hughes on the species to target.

6.30 A member suggested the workshops for building bird boxes should take place over the winter in readiness for the spring breeding season. The applicant advised Cobnor Estate had a long history of providing workshops and therefore this would be achievable.

*Diana Beale then left the meeting*

6.31 A member queried whether the bird boxes workshops included labour costs and the farming officer confirmed no labour costs were being requested.

6.32 Members agreed the scoring for the project as follows:

Outcomes (40%)	Value for Money (20%)	Sustainability (20%)	Delivery (20%)	Total Score	Score after weighting
8	10	10	10	38	9.2

6.33 The intervention rate was agreed at 100% for the swift call lure, portable charging pack, owl box camera and DIY materials for bird boxes. CS rates (WB1 and WB2) applied for the wildlife boxes.

6.34 Members approved the project. Grant request £1,537.88.

## **7. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The dates for the rest of the FiPL year were noted as follows:

Monday 28<sup>th</sup> November 2022

Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2023

There being no other business, the meeting was closed at 8.35pm

Signed .....Chairman

Date