

Farming in Protected Landscapes

Minutes of the FiPL Local Assessment Panel (LAP) held at 5.30pm on Monday 28 November 2022 at Eames Farm, Thorney Island.

Present

Pieter Montyn (Chairman)
Ann Briggs
Stephen Johnson
Richard Cowser
Sam Wilson
Angus Sprackling
Romy Jackson
Jen Walter

Officers

Steven Pick Sarah Chatfield Michelle Rossiter

1.0 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

- 1.1 The Chairman welcomed attendees to the meeting.
- 1.2 Apologies for absence were received from Kate Bull.

2.0 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1. Steven Pick, Farming Officer declared an interest in application number CH022 – this application was made on behalf of his brother for the family farm.

3.0 MINUTES

- 3.1 The minutes of the LAP Meeting held on Monday 26th September 2022 at Eames Farm were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

4.0 MATTERS ARISING

- 4.1 **FiPL Finances Update for Year 2** – Steven Pick, Farming Officer, provided an update on the finances. Angus Sprackling confirmed that he had withdrawn his application for a No Till Drill (Application Ref CH011) on the basis of financial constraints to fund the remaining amount. The allocated amount of £12,054 had therefore been reapportioned to the Year 2 FiPL

fund. Steven reported that the LAP now had circa £14,500 left to allocate in Year Two to end of March 2023.

5.0 NEW APPLICATIONS

CH022 – Christopher Pick - Purchase of GPS Kit to allow precision farming using existing machinery.

- 5.1 The Farming Officer Steven Pick, presented this application to the LAP. He declared an interest in the application on the grounds that the applicant is his brother.
- 5.2 This project was for the purchase of two new GPS which would be fitted to the farms existing tractors to upgrade them to allow for precision application of sprays, fertiliser, and drilling to a 2cm accuracy. It would also reduce potential overlapping of applications to be reduced from 5 – 10% to 1-3% and therefore should reduce the volume of nitrates and phosphates from draining into the harbour. Over 90% of the land owned by the farmer is within the AONB and is within the harbour catchment area. In addition, the interrow cover crop drill would allow for seeds to be planted between the previous crop stems thus protecting the soil and further reducing runoff. Furthermore, the ability to keep the tram lines in the same place would reduce compaction and improve soil quality.
- 5.3 Steven explained this was a new product made in Holland the technology for which had been extensively tested. Delivery time was 6 weeks and therefore this application was being made against the Year 3 FiPL Budget. Members expressed concern about the reliability of the product, and it was agreed that any award should be subject to the applicant obtaining a money back guarantee if the product failed to function as promised.

Steven then left the meeting

- 5.4 A member commented that this was a very good “bit of kit” that had the capacity to decrease fertiliser use and reduce compaction. Another member queried the 80% intervention rate, commenting that it seemed too high as there would be some commercial gain to the farmer with improvements in cultivations systems. A member referred to the government Farming Technology Fund (FTF) which provided a lower level of support for GPS machinery of this sort. However, it was noted that the FTF was now closed with a possible reopening date of March 2023. However, the LAP noted that the FTF rates should be used as a guide.
- 5.5 There was generally support for the environmental improvements that precision farming would bring in terms of environmental benefits and improvements to soil quality.

5.6 Following discussions, LAP decided to support the application but with a lower intervention rate than was proposed.

5.7 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	10	10	8	36	8.8

5.8 The intervention rate was agreed at 40%.

5.9 The members approved the project. Grant awarded £3,582.

CH023 – Alastair Strange – GPS Fertilizer Spreader -

5.10 The applicant was unable to attend to give a presentation to the LAP. This project was for the purchase of a new fertiliser spreader which would allow for more accurate application of fertiliser, in particular nitrates and phosphates. The land farmed by this applicant drains directly into the harbour and the farmer is passionate about reducing chemical runoff from the farm. The new machine had improved border control and variable rate technology to apply fertiliser exactly where it was needed. The machine also allowed for the reduction of overlapping thereby reducing the amounts of nitrates and phosphates from reaching the harbour.

5.11 The LAP was unanimous in its support of this project and the environmental benefits it would bring.

5.12 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	8	8	32	8

5.13 The intervention rate was agreed at 45 %. The panel was advised that the applicant was funding the rest of the project.

5.14 The members approved the project. Total grant approved £10,271.25

CH024 Manhood Farmers Cluster Group (MFCG)

5.15 The applicant, Colin Hedley, attended to give a presentation to the LAP together with Tom Monnington and Andrew Gentle, Cluster Group Farmer and Suzie Robson, assistant to Colin Hedley. This project was to establish and develop the MFCG, building a profile, communicating with leading environmental groups, conduct whole farm surveys, develop individual and landscape wide projects and arranging specialist training such as for revival of Grey Partridge populations.

5.16 Tom and Andrew gave an initial presentation to provide the background to the project. They had first met together in Winter 2020 to discuss the reasons why the historical populations of Great Lapwing and Grey Partridges were no longer present in the local area. The MFCG was started with a group of 6 farmers. The farms covered a diverse range of farmland from salt marsh to cereal cropping and encompassed some of the highest yielding agricultural land together with some of the most environmentally important land in the UK. In recent years, farmers had worked with local communities, and the Cluster Group, with the acronym of LAPWING "Linking Agricultural Production with Integrated Natural Generation" was the next step forward. They reported that a collaborative group was now required to link wildlife corridors across the harbours and the aim for this application was to secure adequate resources to facilitate engagement with local authorities, other farmers, and residents to maximise environmental gains.

5.17 Colin Hedley followed with his presentation. He explained he had a background in farming, having farmed locally in Langstone and had set up a farm consultancy in 2002. He explained he was already supporting farm cluster groups in other areas, such as the Arun to Adur Cluster Group. His work for the MFCG would focus on the following:

- Establishment – of Legal Structure, Farmer Agreements, Website, Logo and links with other farmer cluster groups.
- Promotion – Engagement with local groups, communication strategy, Meet the local farmer projects, QR codes and visits with local groups.
- Baseline Data – Whole Farm conservation plans including biodiversity net gain assessment.
- Development – Organising Farm Cluster Groups, attracting new group members, preparing projects and training.
- Monitoring – Developing monitoring projects using camera traps and other technologies.

5.18 A member stressed the importance of obtaining baseline data for Lapwings and Grey Partridges so that improvements could be quantified. The merit of careful selection of target species was also discussed and it was suggested that this should be aligned with the Chichester Harbour

Key Species Policy. It was noted that the AONB ecologist had commented that the habitat for the Grey Partridge was very difficult to establish.

- 5.19 A member queried why the MFCG had not applied to the Government RPA Facilitation Programme for funding for the administration of this group. Colin responded Facilitation funding via this source has proven to be complex and unattractive and the FiPL scheme was viewed as a more positive route due to the local nature of the scheme.
- 5.20 A member expressed concern about the achievability of objectives given. Whilst some were quantifiable, others were less so. It was also asked whether the MFCG had considered other funding mechanisms. Colin replied that in their view the FiPL scheme was a good fit as DEFRA had placed emphasis on the creation of Cluster Groups. Members understood the importance of the creation of a wildlife corridor across the 3 harbours and agreed it was an excellent initiative to share knowledge and Nature Recovery Projects both with neighbours inside and outside the AONB. Members, however, expressed concern that at present only 1/3 of the MFCG, farmed land within the AONB. It was therefore suggested that the Cluster Group should be extended to other farmers within the AONB to improve the positive impact that this project could achieve for the AONB. It was also noted that the project should support the local objectives of the Chichester Harbour Management Plan.

Colin Hedley, Susie Robson, Tom Monnington and Andrew Gentle then left the meeting.

- 5.21 Members were extremely keen to support the project, but there was some concern about the size of the application which financially represented around 50% of the FiPL Year 3 budget. There was also caution about the project's ability to have a positive on the AONB and to locally support the Chichester Harbour Management Plan. There was considerable discussion on the matter and as a result, it was agreed that the application should be deferred and split into two parts

- 5.22 Application one for this FiPL Financial Year to March 2023

To fall within the current FiPL Financial Year, members stated that all these works would need to complete by mid-March 2023. Members agreed that a detailed breakdown of the work and activities that could realistically be achieved within this timeframe should be requested to cover the following:

- Establishment of the best legal framework for this group.
- Set up of legal framework.
- Establishment of a logo
- Website Creation – initial stages as practicable.
- Landmapping – preliminary work and background checks.

5.23 Application two for the next FiPL Financial Year to March 2024

The LAP suggested a separate application be submitted to the FiPL Programme for the financial year to March 2024 (Year 3 of FiPL) for the ongoing costs of the Cluster administration and projects. This application should be made once part 1 had been completed. . This would allow time for monitoring and review of the results of part 1 of the project, before part 2 was considered.

Members were keen to be as supportive as possible and highlighted the following:

- The Chichester AONB FiPL programme was unlikely to be able to fund 100% of the costs due to the amounts involved and the fact that the Cluster is not solely within the AONB.
- The LAP strongly encouraged the Cluster Group to research other Funding Opportunities. This should be a simpler process once the Cluster Group has its own separate Legal Entity with which to make applications.
- The LAP would require evidence of expansion of the Cluster group to recruit farmers within the AONB – expressions of interest from at least 2 AONB Farmers was suggested.
- Itemisation of costs going forward for the various Cluster Group projects and activities would be required.
- The LAP would require evidence that Part 1 of the project was having or had the capacity to make a positive impact on the environment of the AONB.

5.24 Members agreed that an Interim Meeting of the LAP should be called in the next two weeks to discuss the revised application. It was agreed this should be via Teams due to time constraints with Christmas approaching.

5.25. Members agreed the application should be deferred on the grounds detailed above.

6. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The date for the next meeting was noted as follows:

Monday 23rd January 2023

There being no other business, the meeting was closed at 8.05pm

SignedChairman

Date