



<u>Committee and Date</u> Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership 22 nd March 2022	<u>Item</u> 4
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UPDATE ON FARMING IN PROTECTED LANDSCAPES PROGRAMME

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Summary

This paper updates members on progress with the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme in the Shropshire Hills AONB.

Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to note progress with the programme and consider how they as members and their organisations can help support good uptake and applications.

Background

The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme is approaching the end of its first year (from 1st July 2021 to 31st March 2022), with two more years to come.

In the Shropshire Hills AONB 16 projects have been supported with grants so far and a further two are currently being finalised, some of which will continue into years 2 and 3. Five applications have been declined. Three projects have been amended for slightly altered delivery and one or two have not been able to complete all of their planned year 1 work, though most are on schedule. The Panel is working very well, with all members contributing well and collectively having relevant and useful knowledge.

We had the opportunity through Defra to reprofile a substantial amount of the Year 1 allocation into years 2 and 3 rather than lose this. The revised allocation for 2021-22 was £210,692 and the expected total spend £179,750 (including admin and advice costs), of which £102,447 is grants. Almost all of the expected underspend (£30,000 of £30,942) has been returned to Defra to enable allocation if possible to other areas within this Financial Year. This underspend represents approximately £15k from our projects' allocation and £15k from our original admin/guidance staffing budget.

For 2022-23 the budget available for grants is £814,981 and for 2023-24 it is £691,142. We have around £124k allocated for years 2 and 3 from projects already approved (including two still being finalised). At current levels of uptake this is still a fairly large amount of money and we will be doing as much as we can to promote the programme and attract good applications.

As planned, we have spread our resourcing of admin and advice of the programme across the team with Alison Jones taking the lead on provision of Advice & Guidance with support from Cath, Nigel and Mike. Joy has taken the lead on Administration and Management with support from Phil and Alison Kay. We are updating and improving the local priorities part of the guidance and have let small contracts for a few days of consultancy strategic advice to develop the priority themes of Climate and People which are less well represented in projects so far than Nature and Place.

Brief summaries of the grants awarded so far are available at

<https://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/help-to-look-after/farming-in-protected-landscapes/farming-in-protected-landscapes-projects>.

List of Background Papers
Full information and guidance for applicants is at https://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/help-to-look-after/farming-in-protected-landscapes .
Human Rights Act Appraisal
The information in this report is compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.
Environmental Appraisal
The recommendation in this paper will contribute to the conservation of protected landscapes.
Risk Management Appraisal
Risk management has been appraised as part of the considerations of this report.
Community / Consultations Appraisal
The topics raised in this paper have been the subject of earlier consultations with Partnership members.
Appendices
None