



NLHF LANDSCAPE CONNECTIONS - BRIEF UPDATE ON PROPOSED SHROPSHIRE HILLS BID

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Summary

This paper provides a brief update on progress towards a Shropshire Hills bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund's Landscape Connections programme.

Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to comment on the information provided.

Background

A project bidding to Landscape Connections needs to be ambitious and deliver transformative action for nature and people, and it requires a long-term commitment of 10+ years from partners. The Shropshire Hills National Landscape Team will not be able to be the lead applicant for a bid, as Shropshire Council will not take on this commitment at the current time without recovery of back-office costs (and NLHF do not allow this for local authorities).

The team believe the best chance of securing a project for the Shropshire Hills in this competitive programme lies with an application led by the National Trust. The Trust have run an internal process nationally to decide which project bids they would prioritise for being the applicant and lead partner – the Shropshire Hills proposed bid is one of two currently approved nationally, which is an important endorsement and step for us. The National Landscape Team need to be a significant partner and could perhaps be a joint applicant, though with the National Trust as the sole accountable body.

A project application is likely to be focussed on the Long Mynd – Stiperstones area, which can build on the recent work of the Stepping Stones project. For the application however, we do need to frame a 'new' project, not just continuation of existing activity, which Lottery will not fund. Following Lottery guidance the project would be called 'Shropshire Hills Landscape Connections', so it would not and could not be just more of the Stepping Stones project, and should not be thought of in this way.

The geographical area of a project could be different from that of Stepping Stones currently, and the boundary of a new project will be discussed. An application will need to be able to justify why a given boundary has been chosen in relation to the project's

proposed activities. There are clearly some strengths of the Stepping Stones area in terms of the data and evidence gathered, and engagement to date. This area is unquestionably the most important part of the Shropshire Hills National Landscape for nature.

Work is progressing to frame a new project proposal and will involve local partners who wish to participate. The first formal stage is submission of a brief written Expression of Interest with a target of the end of December, and there is a planned timeline for a full Stage 1 submission in summer 2025 for the two year development phase funding.

List of Background Papers None
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