



BRIEF UPDATE ON SOME SHROPSHIRE HILLS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE TEAM ACTIVITY

Responsible Officer Phil Holden, National Landscape Team Manager
e-mail: phil.holden@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 254741

Summary

This paper provides selected brief updates on recent activities of the staff team (this is not a full work programme update – these are made to the Partnership’s Strategy & Performance Committee).

Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to comment on the information provided.

Background

Farming in Protected Landscapes

In this fourth and final year of the programme we have allocated around £1.3million in grants which is 96% of the available budget. The team will work closely to monitor projects as the end of the Financial Year approaches, in order to make best use of funds where some projects may underspend. The programme as it stands is due to end on 31st March 2025, but Defra have secured funding to extend all FiPL staff roles for a further six months until the end of September 2025, and adviser posts until March 2027. Defra are also bidding within government for budget for continuation of FiPL grants up to March 2027 and we will know about this in the New Year.

Clun Headwaters eco-hydrology survey

Survey work is now complete and results are being discussed with landowners. See Appendix 1 to item 3 for further information on this in the case study.

Sustainable Tourism Charter verification

We have had confirmation that we have been re-awarded the Europarc Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas for a further five years. See item 10 for a progress update on implementation of actions in the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.

Capital projects

We are on course to spend all of the Defra capital funding allocated this year, mainly through projects working with partners.

Funding through the broad ‘nature and people’ themed capital budget is being spent through some grants distributed by the Shropshire Hills Landscape Trust, on a number

of sites through our Ancient Woodlands project, and through projects in partnership with Shropshire Wildlife Trust and the Environment Agency.

The 'Access for All' capital funding is being spent at a number of sites including the Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre, Glyn's Garden community site in Church Stretton, Nills Quarry, the Darnford Valley walk, Earl's Hill and Nipstone Rock.

Ancient Woodland restoration project

The project delivered restoration on four sites in the winter of 2023-24 and work is planned on an additional 6 sites in the current winter 2024-25. Getting the work done depends on a lot of variables including weather and contractor availability. The project is to be extended a further two years thanks to a very kind legacy received by the Woodland Trust which will support the project officer post at part time plus a small delivery budget.

'Nature Calling' arts project

Two team members are undergoing training in commissioning arts projects through the National Landscapes Association's Nature Calling project. Nature Calling is a £2M ground-breaking national art programme, funded by Arts Council England (as part of the Lottery funded 'National Significant Project' stream), along with DEFRA and English National Landscape teams. The project has commissioned artists from across a number of media and genres, including rappers OneDa and Still Shadey; artists Rob St John, Blandy and Locke, Matthew Rosier, Becca Gill; writers Louisa Adjoa Parker, Lee Nelson and Ayesha Chouglay; and collectives Sound UK and InStar. The project aims to engage people through arts activities, especially those who haven't previously or normally connected with National Landscapes. See <https://www.naturecalling.org.uk/>.

Landscape Connections

The Team are active in the development of a bid to National Lottery Heritage Fund's Landscape Connections programme (see item 4).

Teme Headwaters

Members of the team are working with partners including Severn Rivers Trust, Natural England, Environment Agency, National Trust and three farm cluster groups, to explore the development of a bid to DEFRA's Landscape Recovery programme, as well as other large scale funds. The proposal centres on the needs and opportunities for ecological recovery hand in hand with support for and evolution of upland farms in the Teme Headwaters, led by the aspirations of those farmers. The result aims to be landscape changes at a pace and scale, and capable of meeting the proposed vision:

- To provide future landscape resilience
- To revitalise our rural businesses/farm landscape
- To tip nature into recovery
- To revive our rivers
- To enhance rural connections

Defra funding

At present the team do not know what Defra funding we will receive for the coming Financial Year starting in March, which makes forward planning very difficult. It appears that the current year's 33% revenue uplift is not certain to continue, so we could be facing a real terms cut in budget.

Meeting with MP

Members of the team along with the Chair and Vice Chair are meeting Stuart Anderson the new South Shropshire MP at our office on 6th December to discuss the National Landscape and the work of the Partnership, Team and Trust.

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