

Revised Projects Programme 2007- 08

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Summary: The Natural England grant award for projects is significantly less than expected and requires a revision to the work programme including the postponement and down sizing of some projects.

Project Grants

1. The work programme was due to start in full on 1st April (some projects have been underway for much longer) but many are heavily reliant on Natural England grant aid. The Executive Committee considered the situation and supported the adjustments explained in this paper to allow work to begin as soon as possible, where sufficient resources were available.
2. The Board applied for project funding of £98,930 – the same amount applied for in 2006-07. Alistair Helliwell, NE team leader for the Chilterns, provided a verbal update on 3rd May informing the Board that it will receive a total offer of £32,000 for Chalk Streams, Chalk Downland and Commons projects. A minor re-allocation was suggested and verbally agreed. The details of the bid and offers are given in Table 1

Project	Total Cost	NE Grant applied for	NE grant awarded	Proposed Re-allocation of NE grant
Chalk Streams	44,300	22,000	22,000	22,000
Getting Close to Nature	30,000	13,000	0	1,000
Making of the Chilterns Landscape	10,000	5,000	0	0
Access For All	10,000	5,000	0	0
Chilterns Cycle Network	5,000	3,500	0	0
Countryside Close to Home	10,000	5,000	0	0
Visitor Survey	13,000	6,500	0	2,500
Commons	5,000	2,500	2,500	2,500
Chalk Grassland	20,000	10,000	7,500	4,000
Woodland Management	17,110	8,555	0	0
Ancient Woodland Survey	6,750	3,375	0	0
Discover the Chilterns Booklet	9,000	4,500	0	0
People and Places	11,000	5,000	0	0
Total	£194,160	£98,930	£32,000	£32,000

2. The shortfall in expected funding required adjustment to the programme.

Project	Notes	Recommendations
Chalk Streams	Chalk Steams Project Officer post can be retained and contract extended to 31 st March 2008. Environment Agency still to confirm their contribution but other funding in place	Proceed as planned and extend contract of project officer until March 2008
Getting Close to Nature	In its third year of an HLF grant supported throughout by CA/EN.	Reduce element of programme not supported by HLF grant and use ring fenced reserves from Friend of Red Kites scheme and donations to cover deficit (£6,000)
Making of the Chilterns Landscape	This project has insufficient funding in place to be started	Postpone to 2008-09 or until resources can be secured. Carry on with events and interpretation which can be accommodated from the core budget.
Access For All	This is a high priority and part of an ongoing work programme for which the Board has established a good reputation. The Board should seek alternative funds to keep as much of the work going as possible. In any event it would have been reduced in scale due to the access officer's maternity leave.	Reduce in scale and seek alternative funding possibly drawing on reserves and the SDF. (£3,000)
Chilterns Cycle Network	This is work in development (Chilterns Cycle way and Ashridge Cycle network) which will have to be slowed down and to a great extent delivered by other partners and volunteers. The CTC volunteers are doing much of the development work for the Chilterns Cycleway	Proceed but reduce scale of the Board's financial commitment, making use of reserves and/or SDF where possible. CTC and other volunteers may be capable of doing much of the development work. (£1,500)
Countryside Close to Home	This was a development of the access to woodland work undertaken over the last 18 months and would have added a valuable new part to the web site. It was largely a pilot project which will now have to be delayed.	Postpone until 2008-09.
Visitor Survey	The survey has begun and was grant aided by CA/NE in 2006-07. The survey is supported by a partnership which has provided the match funding - 50%. The survey is being undertaken this year to follow on from the 1997 survey to give a ten year comparison. It is important work which can underpin the review of the Management plan.	The survey should proceed as planned but the Board's contribution covered by reserves (£4,000). Other partners to be approached for additional funding.

Commons	Most of the funding, which has not yet been earmarked for specific commons, will be used to support work by local commons groups and the Chilterns commons Network	Proceed as planned, but on a smaller scale
Chalk Grassland	Most of the funding, which has not yet been earmarked for specific sites, will be used to support work by site owners and for training.	Proceed as planned, but on a smaller scale.
Woodland Management	This grant would have been used to engage the services of the Chiltern Woodland Project to advise on the management of small woodlands, in particular ancient semi natural woodlands and to provide advice and training on woodland heritage and archaeology. The Woodland Project will be severely affected by the lack of grant aid and the scale of advice offered is likely to be cut back and require the Project to levy a near commercial rate for its advice. The Project is likely to have to consider reducing its assistance in general to the Board and possibly even charge for that assistance currently given free.	Reduce the scale of the programme and consider allocating funds from reserves (£5,000). There is sufficient reserve remaining in the Forest Research Project fund
Ancient Woodland Survey	Surveys in Sussex have shown that up to 40% of ancient semi natural woodland was not included in the definitive inventory of ancient woodland prepared in 1992. The FC is now encouraging widespread re-surveying of ancient woodland as it is a national priority habitat - a significant proportion of the English total lies in the AONBs in the south east. This would have been a small scale pilot project to establish whether a full scale survey was needed.	Use reserves to proceed as planned (£3,375). There is sufficient reserve remaining in the Forest Research Project fund
Discover the Chilterns Booklet	The first edition was one of the most popular and highly praised of the Board's publications. The stock of 20,000 was exhausted in less than one year when it was expected to last for two. Some of the costs for a second expanded edition could be covered by income from visitor attractions and advertising but not all of it.	Delay and investigate alternative sources of funding
People and Places	This project has taken over a year to develop and secured a grant from the HLF which is time limited. It is a new area of work	Proceed as planned with an allocation from reserves (£3,000). Request funding support from The Chiltern

	and will be supported directly by The Chiltern Society and volunteers	Society (£2,000)
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3. To proceed as recommended will require release of reserves of up to £26,000. The draw on reserves could be reduced by donations, SDF grant for Access and Cycling projects and downsizing of projects and re-allocation of core budget funds. In practice it may be possible to reduce the draw on reserves to approx.£20,000.

Re-allocation of the Land Management Scheme Funds

4. The Executive Committee felt that the reserves needed to support the work programme should, in the first instance, be drawn from those recently allocated to the new Land Management Fund (£30,000). The fund would not be entirely exhausted by such a re-allocation, especially if other external funds can be sourced. Instead the Board should use what funds remain on a discretionary basis rather than promoting it as a formal grant scheme - in effect as a top up to the Sustainable Development Fund.

Recommendations

1. **The Board notes the impact of the shortfall of grant aid from Natural England and supports the adjustments to the work programme proposed by the Executive Committee.**
2. **To reallocate reserves allocated to the Land Management Fund to support the grant shortfall for projects, but to retain the scheme funded by the balance expected to be approx £10,000.**