

## 14. **FARMING IN PROTECTED LANDSCAPES PROGRAMME – ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE FOURTH YEAR**

### 1. **Purpose of the report**

To seek Member approval to extend the current arrangements for the delivery of the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme originally approved at the National Park Authority meeting on the 2 July 2021 (Min No 57/21).

#### **Key Issues**

- The Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme was created by Defra as part of the Government's Agricultural Transition Plan in 2021. It provides funds to allow farmers and land managers to work with Protected Landscape organisations (National Park Authorities and National Landscapes teams) to deliver projects which deliver outcomes under the themes of climate, nature, people and place and for Protected Landscape Management Plan priorities.
- FiPL has been extremely successful nationally and in the Peak District National Park resulting in additional funding and a fourth year of the programme for 2024/2025 being announced as part of the Environmental Improvement Plan 2023. Please also see the key findings from the interim evaluation - [Farming in Protected Landscapes: interim evaluation findings - Farming \(blog.gov.uk\)](#). The popularity of the programme, the importance of the local adviser, local flexibility and bespoke projects along with the value of the Local Assessment Panels are all highlighted.
- The FiPL programme National Framework (NF) guides the delivery of the programme for all forty-four Protected Landscapes. It has continued to be updated as the delivery of the programme has evolved. The NF requires grant funding allocations to be made, committed and spent in each financial year. The NF also requires any grant applications that are over £10,000 (originally £5,000 and recently updated to £10,000 to recognise the increase in project costs, the increase in Countryside Stewardship rates, the increase in the overall FiPL budget and the demands on the Local Assessment Panels) and under £250,000 to be approved by a FiPL Local Assessment Panel (LAP).
- Standing Orders require any grants over £30,000 paid by the Authority to be approved by Members (below that approval is by Head of Service). This would mean having two authorisation processes for grants over £10,000. Such duplication would significantly slow down the awarding process, hinder the smooth delivery of the programme and not be consistent with the NF requirements for the LAP. It is therefore proposed that relevant Standing Orders continue to be temporarily suspended for the FiPL programme only and the NF requirements be followed instead.
- In order to align the FiPL Programme with the annual grant funding agreements under which this programme is being delivered, this programme will continue to be delivered under the same powers. Section 72 of the Environment Act 1995 will be applied which enables the Secretary of State to make grants to a National Park Authority for such purposes, of such amounts and on such terms and conditions as he thinks fit. These powers will be applied in pursuit of the statutory purposes of National Parks. Onward agreements with grant recipients will be under the powers given to National Parks under Section 65 of the Environment Act 1995.
- The FiPL programme continues to be an important and timely opportunity for Protected Landscapes to demonstrate how a local flexible approach to support programmes for farmers and land managers can deliver practical outcomes to

support National Park purposes and objectives including, but not limited to, nature recovery and climate action. It continues to highlight the potential role of the Protected Landscapes organisations and their Management Plans in the delivery of future support schemes.

## 2. Recommendations

1. **To approve the extension of the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme for 2024-25, and to accept the additional funding allocated to the Authority for 2024-25 and**
2. **To continue to temporarily suspend the operation of Standing Order 7.C-3 for the delivery of the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme only, and to continue to adopt the requirements set out in the National Framework document for the authorisation of grants under that programme and**
3. **To continue to delegate authority to the Chief Executive Officer or their nominee to complete grant agreements authorised in accordance with the National Framework, in the standard form provided within the National Framework documents.**

### **How does this contribute to our policies and legal obligations?**

3. The continued delivery of FiPL will contribute to a number of our policies and legal obligations:
  - The 30 by 30 target through which the Government has agreed to conserve (protect) 30% of land by 2030.
  - All seven of the [special qualities](#), Aim One [Climate Change](#), Aim Two [Landscape and Nature Recovery](#), Aim Three [Welcoming Place](#), Aim Four [Thriving Communities](#) including many of the objectives with their targets and headline delivery of the National Park Management Plan particularly for Aims One and Two; and the [Authority Plan](#) Aims One, Two, Three and Four actions.
  - The Landscape Strategy 2023 was approved by Members at the Authority meeting in December 2022. It describes what is special about the Peak District landscapes, sets out the issues affecting the landscape and provides management guidelines to address the issues, conserve and enhance the landscape (minute reference 99/22).
  - The Peak District Nature Recovery Plan which has been developed with constituent Local Authorities and key partners and will complement the six future county-based Local Nature Recovery Strategies. Once completed the Nature Recovery Plan will sit as part of the NPMP and the revised Local Plan. The final draft will be considered by Members in March 2024.

### **Background Information**

4. At the Authority meeting on the 19 February 2021 (Min No 8/21) Members approved the 2021/22 budget, which included acceptance of FiPL funding. The programme was originally to run from mid-2021 to 31 March 2024.
5. At the Authority meeting of the 2 July 2021 (Min No 57/21) Members agreed to temporarily suspend the operation of Standing Order 7.C-3 for the delivery of the FiPL only, and to adopt the requirements set out in the FiPL National Framework document

for the authorisation of grants under that programme only. Members also delegated authority to the Chief Executive Officer or their nominee to complete grant agreements authorised in accordance with the National Framework, in the standard form provided within the National Framework documents. The full report can be found at [National Park Authority 2 July 2021 Farming in Protected Landscapes report](#) .

6. The project fund budget for 2024/2025 for the Peak District National Park is £2.3 million the largest allocation of the four years of the programme. The table below sets out the allocation of project funding over the life of the programme:

Financial Year	Project Fund Budget
2021/2022	£475,000
2022/2023	£1,213,103
2023/2024	£1,619,626
2024/2025	£2,303,589
<b>Overall Total</b>	<b>£5,611,318</b>

7. Programmes and Resources Committee considered a report on Landscape and Nature Recovery Aim Overview on the 26 January 2024. This report provides a summary of FiPL delivery to date. Please see the report and appendices at item 6 [Programmes and Resources Committee Friday 26th January 2024 Landscape and Nature Recovery Aim Overview](#).

### **Proposal**

8. The proposal is to seek Member approval for the 1-year extension of the programme and acceptance of further funding; the continuation of the temporary suspension of Standing Orders 7.C-3 for the delivery of FiPL only; and for the continuation of delegation of authority to the Chief Executive Officer or their nominee to complete FiPL grant agreements authorised in accordance with the National Framework, in the standard form provided within the National Framework.

### **Are there any corporate implications members should be concerned about?**

#### **Financial:**

9. The FiPL Project fund is provided by Defra and whilst the largest annual amount of the four-year programme for year four (2024/2025) is welcomed it is likely to prove difficult to spend to the actual full amount by the 31 March 2025. The target date for project completion in year four will be 31 December 2024 so that there is time for receipted invoices etc to be provided and the grants paid and evidenced to Defra together with the final year evidence. There is an additional allowance for the cost of the administration, advice and guidance which includes overheads of staff employed by the Authority.

#### **Risk Management:**

10. The main risk for the Authority is being unable to support farmers and land managers to develop and deliver projects and fully utilise the £2.3 million in year four. In order to mitigate this risk, it has been agreed with the Chief Executive and Finance Officer that the 2023/2024 budget will be over committed by up to £1 million in order to give grant

recipients the maximum amount of time to complete their projects during 2024/2025. It is considered important that the funds are spent well on projects that score well.

11. In addition, there is a risk that as the programme nears 31 March 2025 that programme staff will have to seek other employment opportunities and that there may be a lack of capacity to complete delivery of the programme. Options for the future of FiPL are actively being considered by Defra but the outcome of these discussions is not yet known.

**Sustainability:**

12. FiPL is a short-term programme originally from 2021 to 31 March 2024 and now extended to 31 March 2025. However, if the approach of more flexible local delivery and the value of trusted local advice and support continue to be demonstrated to work then this could further influence the future design of the new Environmental Land Management schemes and the role of Protected Landscapes in such schemes.
13. In addition, sustainability and legacy is one of the factors in the scoring system for applications so will be considered when applications are assessed.

**Equality, Diversity and Inclusion:**

14. There are no direct implications for equalities in the activities contained within this report. Indirectly, responding to landscape and nature recovery could have a positive impact on the nine protected characteristics by providing a more resilient environment.

**15. Climate Change**

FiPL funding will provide a number of opportunities for farmers and land managers to help address climate change issues under both the carbon and nature themes.

**16. Background papers (not previously published)**

None.

**17. Appendices**

None.

**Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date**

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