

Dartmoor Farming in Protected Landscapes

Local Assessment Panel

Wednesday 01 February 2023, 11:00-11:30, Teams

Attending:

Russell Ashford (Chair), Sarah Blyth, Dan Alford, Eamon Crowe, Alison Clish-Green, John Howell, Will Dracup, James Sharpe

Dartmoor staff attending:

Simon Pryor, Bea Dunscombe

Apologies:

Martin Perryman, Peter Harper, Layland Branfield & Ann Wilcocks, Mark Walker (Alison attending as substitute)

Applications over £5k

Lowertown Farm

Presented by James Sharpe

Summary of application:

Restoration of hedgerows damaged by previous growth to include a combination of traditional hedge-laying, tree shearing, bank restoration, casting up and protective fencing at Lowertown Farm.

Currently, the hedgerows are not in serviceable condition with gaps exposing earth banks leading to further damage. This project promotes better hedgerow management in the future, by producing a hedge with an abundance of growth therefore keeping fields safer for livestock and hedge-trimming, stock-proof, more environmentally friendly and cost effective.

Declarations of interest:

Alison declared that she is a trustee of the Dartmoor Preservation Association. However, it was agreed that this gave no concern regarding conflict of interest.

Discussion points:

It was noted that this application included the recent change in Countryside Stewardship rates.

Panel members expressed concern over this application's eligibility as part of a CS scheme. Whether this application is appropriate for FiPL funding was discussed. The panel considered whether the applicant could apply for CS funding this year - it was believed that their application was valid for this, and that they could get more funding under a different scheme. However, it was concluded that the applicant was keen to complete some works in this year's season of hedge working.

There was agreement with this point, and members commented on whether a Hedgerow and Boundary scheme would be a better fit for this project.

The Panel questioned the applicant's hedgerow plans - did we know if there were any mature trees in these hedges? Does the applicant plan to flail and lay all of the hedgerows in

their application – and if so, will they cut down mature trees? It was concluded that any mature trees should be preserved, and therefore we should include advice for the applicant to leave any mature trees where possible.

A question regarding the amount of barbed wire the applicant is using, and whether this is necessary? It was explained that generally barbed wire is only used when necessary to keep larger stock contained.

A further question regarding funding sought by the applicant – should FiPL grant all funds for this project at once, or can we spread it out? It was confirmed that the applicant's planned work is divided up due to the seasons – but we would lean towards approving this application in its entirety.

The Panel commented on the applicant's reasons for applying for FiPL. It was acknowledged that the application seems positive and the applicant, as a new young farmer, has good intention. It was mentioned that we would rather the applicant entered a scheme that they are fully comfortable with and will set them in good stead for future funding.

There was an explanation that FiPL is a transitional scheme, which aims to set applicants up for future schemes. This project would be a good opportunity to provide the applicant with a bridge to future funding.

The Panel commented on the tree work being set for next winter, might it be sensible for us to approve the hedgerow and banking work now – and then the applicant can re-apply later in the year if they haven't secured other funding for their tree work. However, there was reluctance from the Panel to divide the application up.

The Panel agreed that the following two suggestions should be made to the applicant, but are not conditions:

- Where possible, they must be mindful of trees when flailing and laying hedgerows, especially mature trees.
- The applicant is advised to consider other options for the second stage of application if possible.

Conditions:

None, but the applicant is advised to consider the above two points.

Decision:

In favour: 6

Against: 2

Date of next LAP meeting: Wednesday March 1st, 11am.