

FiPL Assessment Panel 27th Sept 2021 – Parke

Attendees

- Peter Harper
- Russell Ashford
- Martin Perryman
- Daniel Alford
- Will Dracup
- Layland Branfield
- Eamon Crowe

Apologies

- Helen Booker
- John Howell
- Quenton Steele

DNPA Staff

- James Sharpe
- Simon Pryor

Welcome

Kevin Bishop welcomed and thanked the Panel Members, explained the development of FiPL, stressed the importance of the scheme to Dartmoor and the desire to deliver it in partnership with farmers.

Election of Chair

The FiPL Framework requires the Panel is to elect their own Chair.

Peter Harper nominated Russell Ashford (recognising his role as Chair of Hill Farm Project). Russell accepted, there were no other nominations and so this appointment was agreed unanimously by the Panel.

The Panel recommended a modification to their Terms of Reference to enable them to appoint a Vice-Chair. On the assumption that this will be agreed by the National Park Officer, they went on to secure nominations for this role. Will Dracup was nominated by Russell; there were no other nominations and this was agreed by the Panel.

Action: James will put the modification to the ToR to Kevin, and if he agrees Will Dracup will be confirmed as Vice Chair of the Panel.

Applications over £5000

Application: DNP-FPL-149

- Objectives of project: Tree planting, wetland habitat, bracken control, paths
- Total grant requested: £20, 514
- Weighted score: 9.2
- Discussion
 - Wood pasture
 - Agreed it would provide good habitat, and fit in well, but is 30 trees enough?
 - Are there other native trees more valuable than sycamore for wildlife?
 - The use of Cactus tree guards was supported, and overall cost is good VfM; but the labour cost (per hour or per tree?) needs clarifying
 - Pond and wetland
 - Are the flags to be won on site? They will need to be laid carefully to create a surface safe for cattle.
 - Otter holt
 - Considerable debate over whether otters are likely to breed this far up the river, whether they will use the artificial holt and whether they will do more harm than good to other wildlife.
 - Project Officer to discuss these concerns with the applicants and seek evidence and rationale to justify the holt.
 - Bracken control
 - Support for the control of bracken, but serious doubts over whether this is the right method and machine for the task.
 - Experience has convinced some people that crushing is much better than rolling or cutting. A comparative trial would be very desirable.
 - Would like reassurance that this machine is robust and stable enough to cope with steep slopes and granite outcrops. Concern that the applicant may find maintaining and repairing this machine over 5 years is v expensive.
 - Use on other farms is welcomed, but would be good to know more about how this might be done?
 - Further information is requested from the applicant before approving this element; the % rate of funding will also be decided at that stage.
 - Top fencing of walls
 - Some doubts over just using 3 strands of plain wire; stockwire better and Clippex would be supported.
 - Confirmed that maintaining a stockproof boundary to the Common is the responsibility of the neighbouring owner, but not a legal obligation – so FiPL support is justified.
 - Footpaths, gates and signage
 - All supported
 - Birdboxes:

- Concern over whether untreated softwood would be sufficiently durable. Suggest either adding a felt roof, or use marine plywood.
- Conclusion
 - Approved in principle, but with two aspects on which further info is requested from the applicant via the Project Officer:
 - Further information on the evidence that otters are likely to be able to breed and will use the artificial holt;
 - Reassurance that the machine is robust enough for Dartmoor, and has proved to be effective at controlling bracken.
 - If these prove satisfactory to the Project Officer and Chairman, then the grant is Approved, with two conditions:
 - There is ongoing monitoring on use of the otter holt (this may require purchase and use of a trail-cam),
 - Some trials are done on the effectiveness of cutting using this machine v. rolling v. crushing with a ridged roller or similar.

Application: DNP-FPL-121

- Objectives of project: Restoration of 1.4ha sweet chestnut coppice with deer fencing
- Total grant requested: £12,038.25
- Weighted Score: 8
- Discussion
 - Question over whether an FC grant was available for restoration of coppice – it isn't.
 - Concern grey squirrels will damage the chestnut, but they are already being trapped on the farm, so traps have not been included in the application.
- Conclusion: Approved

Date of Next Meeting

Provisionally set for Oct 27th , but in the knowledge that the Chair and possibly the Vice-Chair may not be able to attend.

Members of the Panel will be sent applications a week ahead; it would be very helpful if they could flag up any major concerns or queries a few days ahead of the meeting so that Project Officers can seek further information from the applicant before the meeting.