



COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory Services Decision-making Meeting
Subject	HABITATS REGULATIONS: SUITABLE ALTERNATIVE NATURAL GREENSPACE SPENDING 2023
Wards affected	None
Accountable member	Councillor Juliet Layton Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory Services Email: juliet.layton@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Charlie Jackson – Assistant Director Planning and Sustainability Email: charlie.jackson@cotswold.gov.uk
Report authors	Jasper Lamoon – Infrastructure Delivery Lead Email: jasper.lamoon@cotswold.gov.uk Sophia Price – Heritage and Design Manager Email: sophia.price@cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	For the Cabinet Member to review officer recommendations on external bids for funding from the <i>Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace</i> (Cotswold Beechwoods SAC) funds held by the Council
Annexes	N/A
Recommendation(s)	<i>That the Cabinet Member agrees to::</i> <i>1. Approve the bid as recommended by Officers</i>
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Respond to the climate crisis• Make our local plan green to the core
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Officers from different departments (Heritage and Design, Forward Planning and Climate Action) were involved in the assessment of the bids



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 From March to May 2023, the Council invited bids from infrastructure providers and other relevant partners to access Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) (Cotswold Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation) funds.
- 1.2 The Council received one bid:
 - from the National Trust to access funds from the CDC Cotswold Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace Fund.
- 1.3 Officers are recommending approval of the bid to the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC SANG fund, as the project will help to deliver the required ecological and recreational mitigation.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 From March to May 2023, the Council invited bids from Infrastructure Providers and other relevant partners to access available Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) (Cotswold Beechwoods SAC) funds.
- 2.2 The CDC Cotswold Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace Fund is funded from financial contributions from planning applicants. These contributions are provided in order to deliver the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC Recreation Mitigation Strategy, ensuring that new development does not lead to increased recreational impacts on this internationally important wildlife site. The Fund is aimed at delivering mitigation that will encourage potential users of the SAC to visit other sites and not the SAC itself. Not only will this help prevent impacts on the SAC, but should also benefit biodiversity and local communities by creating new and improving existing greenspaces that will be accessible to all.
- 2.3 The Council received one bid:
 - from the National Trust to access funds from the *CDC Cotswold Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace Fund*.
- 2.4 The bid was assessed by an Officers' panel consisting of Sophia Price (Heritage and Design Manager), James Brain (Forward Planning manager), Chris Crookall-Fallon (Head of Climate Action) and Jasper Lamoon (Infrastructure Delivery Lead).
- 2.5 A scoring matrix was used to assess the bids, this matrix had been made public in advance for transparency.

3. Bid – Sherborne Big Nature Better Access

- 3.1 A bid was received from the National Trust for £26,000 from the CDC Cotswold Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace



Fund. The funding would be used to improve tracks and paths around the Sherborne Estate to make them accessible all year round and to everyone; and also to improve cycle infrastructure. These works form a key part of the National Trust's Sherborne Big Nature Better Access Project, which aims to create "a Cotswold landscape for everyone – where nature and people can thrive."

- 3.2 The accessibility works should encourage visitors (walkers and leisure cyclists) to use the Sherborne Estate rather than the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC and therefore are eligible for funding. Natural England have been consulted and have raised no objections to this use of the mitigation contributions.
- 3.3 For this reason, **Officers recommend approval of the bid.**

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The National Trust bid will deliver mitigation as set out in the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC mitigation strategy and lead to improved access to nature and the countryside for all.
- 4.2 Officers will continue to work with potential partners to develop further SANG projects.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 If the bid is approved, funding of £26,000 will be transferred from the Council's S.I.I.I. Habitat Regulation Assessment earmarked reserve which holds financial contributions from planning applications to deliver the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC Recreation Mitigation Strategy. There will be no impact on the Council's revenue or capital budget.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 None other than those identified elsewhere in this report.

7. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 If no suitable SANG projects come forward (or the Council does not agree to support suitable projects from the Fund) the Council will not be able to show that potential recreational impacts on the SAC are being mitigated and therefore, under the relevant legislation, planning applications may have to be refused.

(END)