

Item 6. Reorganisation of Resilient Heritage project programme

1. Summary

This paper puts forward some initial ideas for amendment of the Resilient Heritage project programme – including reshaping the application to resubmit (reduction in the bid amount, and timing), and looking at what activity needs to start anyway and therefore will come outside the project grant.

2. Background

Following the decision in March by HLF to refuse the application, which referred to uncertainty regarding Defra's decision on Conservation Board, it seems clear that a reapplication to HLF should now wait until the decision from Defra has been received. This would probably mean reapplication of the Resilient Heritage bid around September, so if successful it could be into 2018 before the project could start. Based on feedback from HLF, it will probably be wise to reduce the size of the bid, but also there will be some aspects of the work which need to start during 2017 anyway, and this will of course make them not eligible for the grant. As this was a joint application with the Trust, the trustees are also looking at what from the Trust's point of view needs to start anyway, and they are next meeting on 23rd May.

The things which most obviously need to start before an HLF bid is resubmitted are:

- Promotion of Friends scheme – this has been 'on hold' for a long time while the charity has been developed, and now that the Trust's bank account is in place, really needs to be progressed as soon as possible.
- Some aspects of communication and engagement – e.g. design and guidance for the Trust identity, technical upgrade for AONB website, new pop-up banners and general leaflet.
- Launch business engagement scheme – the current Sustainable Business Scheme is winding down due to declining interest (without significant ongoing staff input). If, along with the Trust, we can develop a new business scheme this year, we may successfully get some businesses to convert, and be able to close the Sustainable Business Scheme with an alternative 'offer'. If however a new scheme is delayed until 2018, we risk losing engagement and potentially having some negative perceptions around the scheme folding with no replacement.

These items had HLF project budget against them, and so any interim work will need to be funded in another way, probably from the core AONB budget. There was a logical flow in the Resilient Heritage project programme, with a phase of strategic work with expert help (for Business planning, Communications planning, etc), followed by a phase of implementation. With any elements we wish to retain in the renewed HLF bid, we will need to ensure that they have 'not started yet' (a condition of funding). This probably means pushing back the 'start' of processes around new Business Plans and Communication plans, and in the mean time progressing things which are more like developments of current work. This concept works better for the AONB Partnership than it does for the Trust, which has only just been established and really needs to get going.

If the Defra decision is positive on Conservation Board, the lead-in time may be long, but most of the previous Resilient Heritage application remains relevant, and resubmission could be quick with some refinements. If the Defra decision is negative, the urgent priority

will be to establish an alternative future governance structure, and most of what was in the first Resilient Heritage bid would at that point be premature. We could perhaps develop a different Resilient Heritage bid for support to look at the governance structure, but funding is probably not the limiting factor for our work this, and preparing another bid would very likely conflict with just getting on with that urgent work. It would probably be better in this scenario to shelve the Resilient Heritage reapplication until we know the different structure we want, when most of the items in the earlier Resilient Heritage bid will become relevant again.

For amendments to the bid for resubmission, some reductions in scale will result from starting one or two elements of the work. HLF feedback mentioned that the role of the Project Development Officer could have been clearer, so this would need working on. Decisions could also be taken regarding the duration, match funding etc for this post. Further feedback could be sought from HLF on whether for example to cut some of the expert development support, or perhaps the cash set-up costs for the independent body.

3. RECOMMENDATION:

The Transition Board is recommended to comment on the issues raised.

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Appendix 1 Resilient Heritage application budget and schedule (unchanged – for reference)