

Slowing the Flow at Pickering Project

Programme Board Meeting, 13 July 2009

Paper 09/01

The Defra Bid and Contract

Purpose

1. To outline the development of the 'Slowing the Flow at Pickering' project.

Defra Announcement

2. On July 4th 2008 the Environment Secretary, Hilary Benn, announced a £500,000 fund to facilitate the setting up of two national pilot projects to explore how land management can reduce the risk of flooding at the same time as delivering a range of other benefits.
3. A number of eligibility criteria were established against which expressions of interest would be assessed. These included:
 - There is a specific and well-documented flood management issue that could be alleviated by changes in land management;
 - The scheme will produce other benefits, such as (but not limited to) biodiversity, carbon sequestration or water quality;
 - The lead organisation is able to secure the land management changes necessary to deliver the flood management benefits;
 - Funding from Defra's flood management programme will be supplemented by contributions from other sources;
 - The benefits of the project will be measured and reported in accordance with an agreement between Defra and the lead organisation.
4. The Pickering Beck catchment was felt to be a strong candidate for consideration, not only because of the known flood problem at Pickering but also because of the extent of land owned by both the Forestry Commission and the North York Moors National Park Authority within the catchment. Durham University had also recently completed a successful project working with the local community to identify possible options to reduce flood risk in the town.
5. With the clear emphasis from Defra on demonstrating and measuring how land use change and management can help reduce flood risk it was decided to ask Forest Research, the national research agency of the Forestry Commission, to lead the development of the bid on behalf of a wider regional partnership.

Development Process

6. The bid was developed in line with the timetable published on the Defra website. The following were the key dates:
 - **29 August 2008** - expression of interest submitted to Defra;
 - **3 October 2008** - confirmation that the 'Slowing the Flow at Pickering' project had been shortlisted along with three other bids;

- **28 November 2008** - detailed proposal submitted to Defra. A copy of the text attached as Annex 1. Full copies of the bid, complete with maps and diagrams, will be available at the meeting;
- **30 January 2009** - confidential confirmation that the bid had been successful. The other successful candidate was Moors for the Future based in the Peak District;
- **17 March 2009** - national and regional press announcements about the success of the bid.

Defra Contract

7. Unfortunately there was a delay between the announcement of the success of the bid and the issuing of the funding contract by Defra. This led to a degree of uncertainty about the project, particularly in the local press. Confirmation of funding in the form of a Grant and MoU was received on 26 June and documents finalised and signed on 7 July. The Grant commenced on 1 June 2009 and will expire on 31 March 2011, with the possibility of a 12 month extension depending on the availability of additional funding. Despite the delay, an internal trawl for the Programme Manager post was issued within the Civil Service in **April** and five candidates were interviewed on 8 June. Simon Marrington of the North York Moors FD was the successful candidate and started work on 1 July 2009.

The delayed start means that the Grant will run for 22 months rather than the original 24 months. This adds further pressure on implementing the land management measures within the funding period. The value of the Grant remains at £247k, which will be split between project management (£157k), modelling (£25k), monitoring (£33k) and communications/reporting (£32k).

Action

8. Members are asked to note the content of this report and to raise any issues for clarification at the Programme Board meeting.

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