

Rother District Council

Report to	-	Cabinet
Date	-	4 November 2019
Report of the	-	Executive Director
Subject	-	1066 Country Walk Pathways – Grant Funding

Recommendation to COUNCIL: That the provision of £163,272.60 be made in the Council's Revenue Budget to accommodate costs incurred in delivery of the 1066 Walk Pathways project, to be recovered by way of grant from the Rural Payments Agency.

Head of Service: Ben Hook

Lead Cabinet Member: Councillor Mrs Earl-Williams

1. The purpose of this report is to update Members on our recent successful grant application through the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) under the European Agricultural Funding For Rural Development (EAFRRD) Tourism Infrastructure grant programme, for the 1066 Walk Pathways Project (WPP). £163,272.60 has recently been awarded by the RPA towards the cost of this project.
2. The 1066 WPP aims to significantly improve and enhance the signage infrastructure and promotion along the 31 mile Pevensey to Rye 1066 Country Walk route. The pathway route exists and benefits from enhanced maintenance by East Sussex County Council (ESCC); however improved signage and promotion is needed in order to raise awareness and increase usage of the route.
3. The Project's overarching aim is to support rural businesses by enhancing the 1066 Country Walk as a quality visitor attraction, encouraging longer visitor stay and spend, attracting a broader range of visitors and encouraging year round use.
4. The Project will create and install bespoke visitor interpretation panels along the route reflecting local history, visitor attractions, eateries, accommodation etc.; along with two bespoke sculpture pieces, bespoke seating and sculpture trails, and enhanced promotion of the route.
5. Our Cultural Development and Events Officer has developed the bid and has carried out the necessary investigations and negotiations along the route to support the project; with invaluable support from ESCC Rights of Way, South Downs National Park Authority, English Heritage, Ashburnham Place, 1066 Country Marketing as well as rural businesses on the route and expertise from other Rother District Council (RDC) officers.
6. An Expression of Interest was initially submitted to the RPA in May 2018. Regional competition was high which delayed the decision however we were

invited to make a full grant application in October 2018, which was submitted in January 2019.

7. There was significant interest in the EAFFRD RPA Tourism Infrastructure grant regionally and there were significant delays by the RPA during the grant assessment period; however in September 2019 Rother were formally notified that we had been successful with our bid.
8. In addition to the RPA grant funding of £163,272.60, financial contributions have been committed from 1066 Country Marketing, ESCC and Wealden District Council to a total value of £7,000, to support the costs of promotion and waymarking; with further 'in kind' support to the value of £7,500 from ESCC for their advisory role and the installation of enhanced waymarking along the route.
9. RDC will also commit the sum of £6,250 to the Project, to be met from the existing Tourism Budget. Delivery of the Project will take place over the next six months, with the final grant claim due to be submitted in June 2020.
10. RDC, while leading on the project, will be required to maintain the art installation for a period of five years. Whereas, the waymarked route will be maintained under the responsibility of ESCC as Countryside and Rights of Way Management.

Related Activity

11. The Cultural Development and Events Officer is also developing a sister project with partners, the 1066 Walk Puddings and Pathways Festival, which will work with local food outlets along the route to promote the walk and local businesses and, which will complement the enhancements to the walk route itself. This remains subject to securing funding at the present time but officers are working closely with potential funders.

Conclusion and Recommendation

12. The 1066 Walk was first established in the 1990s and has been well used since, but an injection of funds is needed to help improve the visitor experience and to raise the profile of the walk to make better use of its potential to benefit the local visitor economy. The grant award from the RPA provides much-needed investment into this local asset and represents excellent value for money when levered against the Council's commitment.
13. As the grant recipient and project lead, the Council will incur the costs associated with the delivery of the project and reclaim grant funding retrospectively from the RPA. As this is not currently reflected in the Council's budget, provision will need to be made to accommodate this.

Dr Anthony Leonard
Executive Director

Risk Assessment Statement

The grant funding will provide an injection of funding to enhance the 1066 Country Walk and will meet the majority of the project costs. External project management

costs are included within the grant award; and the Project will be monitored by Council officers and claims submitted through the Council's Finance team.

The RPA has confirmed that all funding commitments under existing EU programmes are fully funded and will be met irrespective of the outcome of BREXIT withdrawal arrangements.