

Burton Bradstock Parish Council

Budget Proposal for Delivering the Corncrake Management Plan 2017-2020

Purpose of Paper

To provide financial information about expenditure required for implementation of the Corncrake Management Plan 2015-2020 and to seek Parish Council support for it. The estimates are to assist the Parish Council with budgeting and to support fundraising initiatives for Corncrake.

Background

The Parish Council purchased Corncrake in 2013 to safeguard the visual and community benefits provided by the riverside fields. Parish Plan consultations ranked improving / developing Corncrake as a wildlife haven second of the Parish Plan Projects.

In 2014 a Corncrake Working Group was established to support the development of a management plan for the fields. A management plan 2015-2020 was approved and adopted by the Parish Council in January 2015.

With the help of the Village Volunteers, Larkfield Caravan Park staff and Dorset Countryside Service a number of the stated management objectives have been initiated. Practical projects have included; laying of recreation field boundary hedge, planting of 30 Fruit trees, stocking boundary hedges and sowing of yellow rattle seed.

Management Actions 2017-2020

Trees – planting of and protection for six standard trees in winter 2016/17 requires formal approval. Contributions have been received and further ones are being sought from the community.

Grassland – We are in year two of buying and sowing Yellow Rattle seed as a first step in diversifying the grassland species mix. Yellow Rattle is expensive (£120 per kg in 2016), but once we have an established population of Yellow Rattle we should be able to harvest and sow new areas from our own source. Depending on the success of the sowing in 2016, subject to review at the Parish Council meeting in September 2017, it is proposed to continue with seed purchase for a further two years.

It has not been possible to secure a grazier for Corncrake so help has been sort from a local farming contractor to cut and take away hay. So far hay cuts have been undertaken free of charge. The downside of this approach is that the PC has no control over timing of cuts. In a year of strong grass growth, and without a grazier, taking a second hay cut in late September would be good practice. A contingency budget is required to ensure hay cuts are done as and when required.

Fencing – It would be preferable to move to stock grazing for part of the year – ideally after the July hay cut and up to the end of October. The PC would need to invest in fencing and gates to protect Fruit Trees whilst allowing pedestrian/ tractor access.

Mowing of Paths – Having clear, mown paths went down well this autumn. Proposed that PC undertakes a monthly cut of the circular path from April to September, excluding August as the July hay cut will suffice (5 cuts @£40 each).

Scrapes – Creating scrapes/ wet areas is a proposal in the management plan. This would require hire of a small digger and an operator for half day/ to a day based on advice from a wetland specialist. Advice to be sought from the Environment Agency or Dorset Wildlife Trust.

Contingency – In allocating a budget it would be wise to allow a level of contingency to cover unplanned for expenditure, such as replacement trees, pruning of fruit trees and fence repairs etc.

Future Projects and Estimated Costs (at current prices)

Management Plan prescription	2017	2018	2019 and per annum	Comments
Six Standard trees	£1050			Offset by contributions
Species diversification of grassland	£ 120	£120		Review September 2017
Hay cuts July/ Oct	Free	Free	Free	
Fencing for stock grazing	300 metre @£3.00 metre = £900 plus 2 x pedestrian gates @ £150 each - £300 = £1500			Excludes installation. Possible volunteer effort.
Path Mowing	£200	£200	£200	Estimate 2 hours with a strimmer
Creating wet areas/scrapes	£170 hire digger £17 per hour driver = £250			
Contingency	£300	£300	£300	
TOTALS	£3420	£620	£500	

Securing Grant/ Financial support

A formal bid was developed and submitted to the “grow Wild” fund in 2015. The bid was unsuccessful. Sponsorship for purchase of standard trees has been received from Burton Bradstock Women’s Institute. Other local groups and businesses are considering offering support for tree planting which could amount to approx £400 toward estimated costs of £1050.

Securing grants toward conservation projects is becoming more competitive with many grants now being targeted at communities less ‘wealthy’ than Burton Bradstock. Support from the local individuals, groups and businesses should be pursued.

RECOMENDATION

Note progress in delivering the Corncrake Management Plan 2015-2020

Approve budget allocations for future expenditure on delivering the Corncrake Management Plan as set out in the Table above, such expenditure to be met from the Parish Plan Projects reserve.