

# **Cotswolds Ecological Networks Forum**

Terms of Reference – 31 December 2012

## **Purpose**

The Cotswolds Ecological Networks Forum (the Forum) exists to achieve and sustain coherent and robust ecological networks across the Cotswolds.

## **Objectives**

In pursuit of this purpose, the Forum will;

- Develop and deliver the Cotswolds' Nature Improvement Areas.
  - Identify and coordinate existing activity.
  - Identify and strategically fill gaps in activity through project development.
- Encourage and realise opportunities to increase habitat connectivity both within the Nature Improvement Areas and across the wider landscape.
- Identify and develop new ways of sustaining activity.
- Communicate the following key messages.

## **Key Messages**

- Wildlife needs to adapt to climate change through utilising large sites and permeable landscapes. Achieving this requires coherent and robust ecological networks.
- Coherent and robust ecological networks are an essential element of a fully functioning ecosystem and so are important in maintaining ecosystem services.
- The current fragmented nature of the Cotswolds' ecological networks means that they are not fit for purpose in terms of enabling our wildlife to adapt to climate change and in maintaining ecosystem services.
- The best opportunities for creating coherent and robust ecological networks are within the Cotswolds' Nature Improvement Areas.
- The way to create coherent and robust ecological networks is to make habitats better, bigger, more and joined as outlined in 'Making Space for Nature (2010)'.  
• Achieving and sustaining coherent and robust ecological networks will require new mechanisms, partnerships and ways of working with new audiences.

## **Geographical Scope**

The Forum's primary area of interest is the Cotswolds AONB; however the Forum will work across the AONB boundary where it makes sense.

The primary focus of the Forum's activity is the agreed Nature Improvement Areas however the Forum will also seek to deliver improved connectivity across the wider landscape.

## **Legal Status**

The Forum is an informal partnership. It does not constitute a legal entity in its own right.

## **Delivery**

The purpose and objectives of the Forum are achieved by the collective and collaborative effort of all its members, both developing new projects and by using existing mechanisms.

Any individual member organisation can take the lead on a project on behalf of the Forum.

## **Membership**

- The Forum's membership is open and self selecting.
- The only requirement for membership is that the member shares the Forum's purpose and objectives.
- Forum members normally represent an organisation although the Partnership reserves the option to invite individuals with specialist knowledge.
- There is no limit on the number of members from any individual organisation.
- Any member can withdraw from the Forum by notifying the secretariat.

## **Meetings**

- Meetings are open to all members.
- The frequency of meetings is not set. The date time and venue for each meeting is set at the previous meeting according to need.
- The chair for each meeting is agreed at the previous meeting.
- Any member can add an agenda item(s) through contacting the secretariat at least two weeks prior to the meeting.
- Decisions at meetings are agreed by consensus or if necessary by a simple majority of those present.
- Time limited and task based working groups can be set up by agreement at a meeting.
- Attendance at meetings is encouraged but is not a requirement.

## **Secretariat**

The Cotswolds Conservation Board provides the secretariat. In doing so the Board will;

- Maintain a membership list in the form of an e-mail distribution list.
- Produce agendas and papers for meetings.
- Record and circulate notes of meetings.