

Twyford Parish Council 26th Sept 2019

Compton Lock and Watermeadows Project: Updated accounts

Note by Chris Corcoran

This project originated in 2016 when a hole opened up in the east bank of the lock, behind the lockside steps, erected by TPC in 1999. Initially thought of as a task for volunteers it soon became clear that it was damage caused by 2014 floods and that the bank needed to be professionally repaired. In order to secure grants for this the project was expanded to include the repair of the watermeadow system, as this had also been damaged by floods. TPC approved the expenditure of £5000 in May 2017. The grants secured by TPC from the HCC, Compton PC and SDNPA helped TPC fund both the Lock work and also the scoping and specification for the further watermeadow restoration but did not cover the restoration work itself. Accordingly the project was split into two phases, the second phase, the aim of which was to deliver, in the first place, those aspects of Phase 1 that had been part of TPC's original proposal but had proved to be too expensive; phase 2 and TPC's contribution to it, were dependent on the securing of further grants.

Grants for the second phase have now been secured primarily from LEADER. TPC has also resolved in a series of decisions to contribute a total of £11,100 to Phase 2 as well as acting as administrator of the project. Then once the bulk of the funding had been secured by the LEADER, TPC then resolved to proceed with Phase 2. Phase 2 was then extended to cover unforeseen items that had arisen and other items not included in the LEADER grant; this additional expenditure was met by the further HCC grant, but with no further increase in the TPC budget.

The attached account shows the accounts of both Phase 1 and Phase 2.

Phase 1 was extended to include the signage required by our insurers and separately funded by our local County Concillors, Rob Humby and Jan Warwick. Phase 1 is complete, with all grants secured. The account shows that TPC's budgeted contribution was underspent by about £1400.

Phase 2 costs are based primarily on the tender for the main works of watermeadow restoration, the contract for which has been agreed. Committed expenditure is as set out at £39,368. The three sources of funding are the LEADER grant, the HCC grant and the TPC contribution of £11,100. Together these cover the full committed expenditure, with a sum in reserve of £6,095; of this £2000 is set aside for contingencies.

The account shows two additional items which have not yet been authorised for expenditure and a third has also to be added. The first is fencing. The posts around Berry meadow have been checked; much of it is no longer in a good condition and will need replacing. The most urgent length are along the west and east boundaries. This task is one for contractors. The sum of £2500 is available from the allocated funds and quotes are being obtained. The work may need to be phased over two years if it exceeds £2500. These will be reported in the usual way for authorization by TPC.

The second item is for advice on the application to renew TPC's Stewardship for the Meads, Berry Meadow and Churchfields Meadow for a further 10 years; this is due next year. The current agreement with DEFRA has yielded TPC approx £5,800 for the 10 years of its duration, plus grants for capital works in the first three years of the grant. It also underpins TPC's management of its farming land and supports its applications for other management and project grants.

The rules for the application are fiendishly complicated. The submission last time was made by our consultant, Jonathan Cox. Although much of the drafting can be done by Andy Coates, professional advice will be needed and possibly some survey work. The sum of £500 is allocated for this, the precise sum to be authorised in the usual way.

The final item is a new one. The Government has recognised that the Country's water resources are being over used and that this trend is rising while rainfall is less predictable. Greater control of water resources is required. As one element in this, the Environment Agency has been gradually bringing all forms of abstraction under control. This includes the flooding of Watermeadows. Consequently TPC needs first to register its Historic Use by filling in a application form; failure to do so will mean that the historic rights to flood will be lost; future floodings would then require a new licence with a higher fee and potential for refusal.

There are two immediate items of expenditure for TPC; firstly a fee of £135 and secondly advice on the filling in of the form itself. This form too is fiendishly complicated, involving an eleven step calculation of the quantity of water abstracted and then returned to the system. Penny Stokes ARICS of Giles Wheeler Bennet's firm has agreed to provide the necessary advice. It was only by chance that we were informed that the deadline for the registering of Historic rights is 30th Sept. This work is all in hand and may have been submitted by the date of the TPC meeting.

The Water Abstraction Licence costs will be met from the contingency; the professional advice is expected to be approx £200.

Recommendation.

1. Note the report and the attached account.
2. Authorise the expenditure as follows, subject in each case to Standing orders:
 - a. up to £2500 on fencing.
 - b. Consultancy advice for the Stewardship application
 - c. Payment of the Water Abstraction licence fee and professional advice