

## REPORT OF FINANCE MANAGER

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### **SUBJECT: VARIATION OF CONTRACT STANDING ORDERS AND THE CREATION OF AN EARMARKED RESERVE FOR A HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND BID FOR THE SKILLS IN ACTION II PROGRAM.**

#### **STANDING ORDERS VARIATION.**

Members may be aware that in March 2016 the Welsh Government awarded the National Park Authority an Access Grant of £105,000. The grant was in respect of a number of specific projects that included repairs to the gabion wall revetment of the byway at Point House lane, Angle with the budget for this project being £40,000. The grant conditions stipulated that the expenditure should have occurred in 2015-16, however, the Welsh Government have approved the carryover of certain projects, including this scheme, to be implemented in 2016-17.

The awarding of all contracts in excess of £25,000 is subject to the Authority's Financial Regulations relating to Major Contracts. This requires procurement from Sell2Wales framework. The procurement exercise would normally be undertaken by National Park Authority staff. This would entail the following tasks:

- Production of a tender drawing showing location of works, and repair details
- Production of specification
- Production of contract documentation, terms and conditions and forms of agreement
- Sell2Wales procurement – Single stage open tender
- Assess tenders and produce a recommendation

At present, due to staff caseload and sick leave there is a need to outsource this work in order to utilise the available funding within the financial year 2016-17. The Authority has already commissioned engineering consultants Atkins to undertake a condition survey and costed work programme of the gabion revetment at Angle. At the request of the Authority, Atkins have now indicated that they can undertake the tasks outlined above as well as contract management and site supervision if needed. The cost of this additional work would be in line with the Authority's Financial Standards.

The consultant will meet all the terms and conditions required by the National Park Authority's Contract Standing Orders and two members of the Senior Management Team will be present for the opening of tenders. In the circumstances this is considered to be a reasonable course of action.

## **SKILLS IN ACTION II PROGRAM**

The proposed project will build on the success of the original Skills in Action project, delivered as a partnership between Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority and Torfaen Borough Council.

Skills in Action II will be delivered through a training programme combining Level 2 Diploma in Work Based Environmental Conservation, practical skills certificates (e.g. chainsaw, trailer towing), individual interest short courses (e.g. ecological skills, communication) and a range of work experience alongside experienced professional staff. It will create opportunities for up to 24 traineeship places over 2 years.

The Skills in Action programme has shown the model can work with trainees with limited levels of formal educational attainment to build their skills, enable achievement of accredited training qualifications (in some cases for the 1st time for individuals) and develop knowledge and confidence to contribute to the environmental heritage conservation workforce.

The Authority is being asked to provide £15,000 as match funding towards this Heritage Lottery Fund bid.

### **Recommendation**

**Members are requested to:**

- 1) approve the course of action outlined in the above report in order to expedite repairs to the gabion revetment of the byway in the financial year 2016-17.**
- 2) approve the creation of an earmarked reserve of £15,000 to support a Heritage Lottery Fund bid for the next phase in the Skills In Action program. Funding will come from the General Reserve balance which at the end of the last financial year stood at £702k.**

*(For further information, please contact Richard Griffiths, Finance Manager extn 4815)*