

Report of the Chief Executive

Subject: National Parks Partnership and the UK National Parks Communications Team

Purpose of Report

To seek the agreement of Members to support the work of National Parks Partnership and the UK National Park Communications team for the next three years.

Background

In 2016, the 15 National Park Authorities of Wales, Scotland and England came together to set up National Parks Partnership (NPP), a Limited Liability Company to secure funding from corporate and other sources to support their work. The company was set up with a Board that included both representatives of National Park Authorities (NPAs) and also Non-Executive Directors with experience in areas such as funding and marketing. The then Chair of the National Park Authority (Councillor Mike James) sat on the panel that appointed the Board. The governing documents of NPP states that the majority of Board members must represent the NPAs. One of the Directors of NPP must represent a Welsh NPA and currently that role is undertaken by the Chief Executive of Snowdonia. NPP has also employed two experienced fundraisers to deliver its work and recently employed additional part time support.

While the original intention of NPP was to secure cash contributions, it became apparent that the majority of companies were either interested in providing in-kind support or making donations to a charity. This created a difficulty in securing sufficient income to cover the running costs of NPP. Due to this, in 2018 the 15 NPAs agreed to change the funding model of NPP by making an annual contribution of £10,000 a year to cover its running costs for a three year period. In addition, 9 of the NPAs agreed to set up a charitable organisation to support this fundraising work, called the National Parks UK Foundation. The Authority's Chief Executive is currently a trustee of this charity. Both these decisions were supported by the Authority at its meeting held on 7th February 2018.

Since this time the Authority has benefited from cash donations of £39,776 and in-kind support of £87,348 making a total benefit of £127,124.

One of the difficulties that NPP have found is that potential supporters and donors wish to deal with one organisation rather than 15 different NPAs. It is also difficult to show the collective impact of our work as most NPAs have different priorities and ways of working. To respond to this a Communications Team presenting communications across the UK National Parks was set up in 2019. Following a competitive tender process the team has been based in the Broads Authority and some of the work undertaken by the Team can be seen via the web site: [National](#)

[Parks UK // British National Parks](#). The Authority's Communications and Marketing Manager sits on a group of UK NPA Communication lead officers that supports the work of this team. The UK Communications Team currently employs two officers.

Business Plan 2022-2025

Over the next three years it is proposed that the current model of support is continued subject to the one change that the Lead NPA Chief Executive for Communications, who is currently the Broads Authority, joins the Board of NPP.

A one page summary of this Business Plan is provided as an annex to this paper.

Financial considerations

To continue the current level support over the next three years, it is proposed that each of the 15 NPAs contribute:

- £10,000 to support the work of NPP;
- An increasing sum starting with a year 1 contribution of £8,067, year 2 contribution of £8, 228 and a year 3 contribution of £8, 339 to support the UK National Parks Communications work.

Benefit of providing this support

NPP works at a scale that this Authority could not access on its own. While the success of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Trust was illustrated by a presentation to Members earlier in the year, the focus of the Trust is on local donations and fundraising. NPP restricts its work to working at a national level and targets companies seeking to support work across multiple National Parks, therefore there is no duplication of efforts.

Neither this Authority nor the Trust would have been able to negotiate a partnership with a company such as Columbia and therefore the internal and local fundraising activities and NPP complement each other.

The UK NPA Communications Team supports the work of NPP and contributes towards providing a unified approach for UK National Parks where appropriate and beneficial.

Risk considerations

There is an element of risk that our contribution of around £55k over three years will not lead to a payback from fundraising and donations. However, the experience over the past five years indicates that this is not likely. In addition, as more agreements are made the UK National Parks develop a good reputation as reliable partners which is likely to lead to more partnerships and funding being developed and secured.

When engaging with corporate partners there is a need to take account of reputational issues relating to each partnership. When NPP engages with partners there are opportunities for each NPA to comment on the suitability of that partnership and to not be included if they do not consider it a suitable agreement.

Biodiversity implications/Sustainability appraisal

Over the past year the focus of NPP has been on securing funding for activities that contribute towards Net Zero for Nature – [Net Zero With Nature - National Parks](#). While the Authority has not benefited from any funding to date it is hoped that over the period of this Business Plan the Authority can develop projects that will be able to access funding to support its efforts to tackle the loss of biodiversity.

Welsh Language statement

In undertaking the work the Authority seeks to ensure that all the work undertaken complies with the Welsh Language Standards for the Authority.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Members agree to support the work of National Parks Partnership and the UK National Parks Communications Team for the period 2022-2025 as outlined above.

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(For further information, please contact Tegryn Jones, Chief Executive, tegrynj@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk)

National Parks Partnerships and UK Communications

One page summary, three-year operating plan, 2022/3- 2024/5

1.0) Executive Summary: This is a one-page summary of the three-year Operating Plan prepared by National Parks Partnerships and UK Communications in November 2021 and which outlines these central services for the UK's 15 National Park Authorities for the period April 2022 - March 2025. The Plan has been developed through CEO level consultation in June and September 2021. The full plan provides information intended to enable NPAs to approve the continued funding of these services, such approvals required by no later than 31 March 2022.

2.0) An updated business case:

2.1 UK level commercial and communications services are key services for the UK National Parks when acting as a family, and have particular resonance in the light of the dramatic increase in the relevance of National Parks in relation to climate change and public health since 2020. The encouraging discussions with Defra during 2021, in relation to both NPP and UK Comms operations, are to be noted. Within its current business plan, NPP has generated **£3.97m** (£2.29m cash, £1.68m in-kind) of benefit to the NPAs to date.

2.2 Future income projection: Combining NPP direct and indirectly generated funds over the operating plan period 2022-2025 gives a projected figure of **£4.4m. £1.24m** of this will pass through NPP's books, a further **£3.15m** will be generated as a direct result of NPP operations but will pass via the UK National Parks Foundation (e.g. £500k of Estee Lauder funding) or directly to Net Zero With Nature/Revere pilot projects in National Parks.

2.3 Projected income and expenditure figures for this operational plan period 2022-2025 give a Return on Investment (ROI) for NPP operations of **5.2: 1**.

4.0) Governance arrangements and legal considerations

4.1 Full details are included in the Operating Plan, but in summary the current governance arrangements and structure of NPP LLP will continue to meet the needs of providing the services of the SLA and to underpin accountability to the LLP Members. This includes members approval of all NPP Board appointments; Annual NPP LLP AGM meeting and approval of the Annual Report and Accounts.

4.2 The one additional governance arrangement that the Board of NPP strongly recommends is the appointment to the Board of NPP of the Lead CEO for Communications; this will provide connectivity between NPP and Communications strategy and operations, which is essential to fulfil the SLA. This would take place in April 2022, and be subject to the approval of a majority of NPAs in line with NPP's articles.

5.0) Funding request

5.1 Provision of these central services will be based upon a 3-year SLA between NPP and the NPAs, with payment for services in April 2022/2023/2024. NPP will collect payments and allocate across the funding for UK Communications to the Broads Authority. At the meeting of 21.09.21, CEOs expressed clear preference for NPP/Comms services to be billed simultaneously and for NPAs to be charged the same subscription rate as each other. In previous years typical combined subscription levels for NPP and Communications totalled £16,000+VAT per NPA. The fees for the forward period reflect a modest increase in operational costs to deliver the outlined activities and ROI.

	2022/3	2023/4	2024/5
NPP requirement	150,000	150,000	150,000
Comms requirement	121,000	123,420	125,888
Total funding requirement	271,000	273,420	275,888
Per NPA per annum	£18,067	£18,228	£18,393

*including the Broads Authority