

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 21 SEPTEMBER 2006

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND – SIX MONTH REPORT

Report by: Claire Gingell, Sustainable Development Fund Officer

Summary:

1. This report summarises progress in operating the Sustainable Development Fund (the Fund) in its first six months of operation. The Fund opened on 1 April 2006 and will continue until March 2008, with a budget of £200,000 per annum.
2. The Sustainable Development Fund has to date supported ten projects throughout the New Forest National Park. The projects address a wide range of areas including; sustainable energy and building technologies, cultural heritage and arts, social inclusion, environmental education and sustainable transport.
3. The Sustainable Development Fund has currently allocated £100,268 over the current and next financial year to support projects, representing 25% of the available budget over the two years.

Recommendation:

To note the progress made by projects in delivering sustainable development within the New Forest National Park.

Resources and Corporate Plan:

£200,000 per annum grant and plus staff resource of one officer.

Corporate Plan Objective SE1 – Promote sustainable development within the National Park as the basis for the social and economic well-being of local communities.

Papers:

NFNPA 129/06: Cover paper

NFNPA 129/06: Annex 1 – Sustainable Development Fund Panel members

NFNPA 62/06

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Introduction

1. The Sustainable Development Fund (the Fund) has been in operation since April 2006 and will continue until March 2008, with a budget of £200,000 per annum.
2. Following a decision made at the National Park Authority meeting on 17 January 2006 (NFNPA 62/06), a Sustainable Development Fund Panel (the Panel) was established to appraise projects and make decisions on which projects to support. The Panel has met three times since April to appraise the projects that have come forward, with a further two meetings planned later this year. See **Annex 1** for a list of Panel Members.
3. To be eligible for the Fund, projects must demonstrate that they will encourage sustainable ways of enjoying and living in the New Forest National Park and further at least one of the National Park purposes.
4. Defra has set out a number of national priorities for the Fund including involving young people, combating social exclusion and encouraging links between urban groups and those resident in the National Park. In addition, the Fund should give priority to eligible projects that: demonstrate innovation or best practice; are able to lever in contributions from other sources or have little access to alternative public funding; bring organisations together to co-operate in tackling problems or promoting new ideas.

Applications

5. Since the launch of the Fund at the end of November 2005 the Authority has received 84 expressions of interest from individuals or organisations interested in applying.
6. Emphasis has been placed on providing strong project development support to both initial Fund applicants and to approved projects, and on establishing good working relationships with applicants.

7. The Panel has so far appraised fifteen projects, eleven of which were approved and four rejected. One project approved by the Panel has since been withdrawn by the applicant due to issues with securing match funding.
8. The projects that the Panel chose not to support were rejected for various reasons including not fully satisfying the Fund criteria, not sufficiently benefiting the National Park and concerns over the viability of business proposals.

Current projects

9. The Fund is currently supporting the following ten projects.

9.1 Archaeological Excavation Equipment

Total project cost:	£10,771
% project costs from the Fund:	15%
Amount of funding allocated by the Fund:	£1,657

The Fund has helped a local archaeological society purchase essential tools and survey equipment in order to conduct an archaeological excavation, designed to provide dating evidence to better understand the Forest's history. The excavation was conducted during August and findings are expected in November.

9.2 Eco-Dormitory

Total project cost:	£23,885
% project costs from the Fund:	75%
Amount of funding allocated by the Fund:	£17,910

The Fund has supported a number of sustainability and education features as part of the construction of an Eco-Dormitory for use by school children participating in residential environmental education programmes in the New Forest. Features supported include solar panels, 'eco-friendly' insulation materials and a specially designed display enabling children to measure their energy use during their stay and the amount generated by the solar panels.

9.3 Waterside Project

Total project cost:	£91,266.92
% project costs from the Fund:	40%
Amount of funding allocated by the Fund:	£36,674

An exciting two year project encouraging targeted sections of the Waterside community to access and use the New Forest in a positive way. A Waterside Community Ranger has been in post since July and is making excellent links with a range of community members and groups, especially young people, to tackle issues of anti-social behaviour on the

Forest. The Ranger is also encouraging groups of people who do not currently engage with the Forest to visit and enjoy it.

9.4 Sustainable Study Centre

Total project cost: £30,200
% project costs from the Fund: 73%
Amount of funding allocated by the Fund: £22,000

The Fund has supported the installation of a biofuel heating system, the wood for which will be obtained by the sustainable management of on-site woodlands, and rainwater harvesting system as part of the re-build of an environmental education facility. The systems will be incorporated into the learning experiences of visiting children. This project is not due to take place until 2007.

9.5 Forest Photographs

Total project cost: £6,172
% project costs from the Fund: 17%
Amount of funding allocated by the Fund: £1,045

This project provides opportunities, through a day centre, for people with mental health issues to visit and engage with the New Forest. Participants take photographs that they turn into a range of cards and calendars. This positive experience of the Forest results in an increase in self-confidence and self-esteem.

9.6 Sculpture Park Feasibility

Total project cost: £3,980
% project costs from the Fund: 75%
Amount of funding allocated by the Fund: £2,985

This project is half way through undertaking a feasibility study investigating the creation of a sculpture park within the National Park designed to interpret and reflect the special qualities of the New Forest. Sculptures would be chosen which interact with the natural elements and incorporate local, natural materials and traditional skills. A draft report, setting out the findings and outlining an action plan, is expected at the end of October.

9.7 Discover the New Forest

Total project cost: £12,688
% project costs from the Fund: 38%
Amount of funding allocated by the Fund: £4,050

This project is researching the needs of target groups in New Milton with regard to accessing the New Forest by public transport. The project has been underway for two months and has made contact with a range of local bodies in order to establish focus groups. These bodies include disabled groups, youth groups, play groups, holiday parks, New Forest Primary Care Trust, Age Concern and the train operators.

9.8 **Forest Schools Training**

Total project cost: £1,304.26
% project costs from the Fund: 50%
Amount of funding allocated by the Fund: £652

The Fund has supported two local individuals in training and qualifying as Forest School Providers (Forest Schools is a unique form of outdoor/environmental education focusing on woodland or forest settings). The individuals have completed the first stage of their training and are currently running trial sessions in two local primary schools.

9.9 **Sustainable Energy Study**

Total project cost: approx £5,000
% project costs from the Fund: approx 75%
Amount of funding allocated by the Fund: approx £4,000

The Fund has recently agreed to support the undertaking of a sustainable energy study at Lyndhurst Community Centre. The study will assess current energy use and investigate the most appropriate sustainable energy technologies for the centre. The study will potentially benefit many other community centres within New Forest villages as a template will be produced enabling centres to address their energy use. The project is currently awaiting quotes from a number of independent energy consultants.

9.10 **The Image Project**

Total project cost: £25,494
% project costs from the Fund: 37%
Amount of funding allocated by the Fund: £9,400

This project will help promote awareness and understanding of the special qualities (particularly the cultural heritage) of the New Forest National Park through the creation of an online image library. The library will contain 75% historical images obtained from the local communities and 25% new images generated by young people. Schools will be targeted, both to generate images and to utilise the library for research.

Analysis

10. The value of grants currently allocated by the Fund stands at:

April 06 - March 07 9 projects £54,328 27% of the Fund budget

April 07 - March 08 4 projects £45,940 23% of the Fund budget

11. The total amount of match funding levered in by the Fund through existing projects is £108,817 represented by £50,853 as cash, and £57,964

provided by in-kind contributions such as volunteer time or donated materials (£ equivalent).

12. Half of the current projects would not have occurred without support from the Fund. The remaining half may have taken place only on a significantly diminished scale.
13. 80% of the current projects provide models of sustainable development applicable to other areas, either within the New Forest National Park or elsewhere.

Monitoring and evaluation

14. A user friendly system of application forms, legal agreements and claims procedures has been developed to aid the monitoring and evaluation of projects. Key outcomes are agreed with project applicants at an early stage and written into their legal agreements. These are reported against in projects progress and end of project reports.
15. Each project is required to monitor against a number of standard performance indicators developed to aid the Authority in monitoring against targets, particularly those in the interim National Park management plan, those set by Defra and the Authority's own performance indicators. Standard project monitoring requirements include the number of young people involved in the project and the number of local businesses involved in the project. In addition to the standard indicators each project has specific monitoring requirements relevant to the project.

Recommendation:

To note the progress made by projects in delivering sustainable development within the New Forest National Park.

Sustainable Development Fund Panel Members for April 2006 – March 2007

Chair:

Barry Rickman

Representing environment and conservation interests:

Phil Marshall
John Durnell
Tony Cosgrove

Representing economic interests:

Jeremy Heron
John Sanger
Neil Miller
Chris Gwyn-Evans
Tim Brock

Representing community interests:

Jack Sturgess
Mike Cooper
Angie Hill
Richard Cuzens
Jane Halle
Annie Cooper
Harry Oram
Pat Thorne
Sam Dovey
Charlotte Boxall

With the exception of the Chair, Members attend Panel meetings on a rotation with all interests being represented at each meeting.