

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 28 MARCH 2007

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN THE AUTHORITY AND THE NEW FOREST NINTH CENTENARY TRUST

Report by: Jeff Haynes, Director of Understanding and Enjoyment

Summary

This report summarises progress of discussions to develop an Association between the Authority and the New Forest Ninth Centenary Trust, in relation to the operation of the 'New Forest Museum' complex in Lyndhurst.

Recommendation

To authorise the Chief Executive to enter a legal agreement to establish an Association with the New Forest Ninth Centenary Trust along the lines set out in this report and Annex 1.

Resources and Corporate Plan

Implementation of the proposals as set out would amount to expenditure over three years of up to £204,000, including £30,000 of in kind staff support. Real expenditure in 2007/8 of £71,000 would reduce to a maximum of £52,500 in 2008/9 and £50,500 in 2009/10.

Corporate Plan Objective U3: Improve everyone's understanding and awareness of the New Forest National Park, in particular hard to reach groups.

Papers

NFNPA 172/07: Cover paper

NFNPA 172/07: Annex 1: Schedule of funding to support the proposed Association

NFNPA 149/07: New Forest Ninth Centenary Trust: Potential Association Update

NFNPA 149/07: Annex 1: Study of a Possible Association between the New Forest
Ninth Centenary Trust and the National Park Authority to help deliver
National Park objectives.

NFNPA 127/06: Ninth Centenary Trust Partnership Proposal update.

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1 Background

- 1.1 At its September 2006 meeting (report NFNPA 127/06), members were informed of the progress on discussions with the New Forest Ninth Centenary Trust, on a potential agreement relating to the future operation of the New Forest Museum and Library complex, including the decision to share the costs of appointing a consultant to advise on the options for developing an Association. At its January 2007 meeting (report NFNPA 149/07), members considered the consultants' report which concluded that there are great potential benefits, to both parties, from the Trust and the Authority establishing an Association for the operation of a rebranded New Forest Centre. It recommend that the most beneficial contribution the Authority could make to ensure the success of an Association would be to make an annual grant to part fund a New Forest Centre Manager. Members noted the findings of the Report, and the potential financial implications of the proposals, and agreed that the principle of an Association should be pursued through discussions with the New Forest Ninth Centenary Trust.

2 Progress

- 2.1 Following a debriefing meeting at which the consultants presented their findings and answered questions from representatives of the Authority and the Trust, discussions and several further meetings have been held. The Trustees have accepted the package of recommendations put forward by the consultants, including the appointment of a Centre Manager, subject to sufficient funding being made available. In anticipation of reaching an agreement on an Association, the Trust has undertaken initial work on defining a job description for the proposed appointment. Officers have also met on site to consider the changes to external and internal signing, materials and exhibition displays, which would accompany any Association.
- 2.2 Discussions have focused on negotiating a package of proposals acceptable to both parties, which would secure ongoing benefits to the public. Both parties have now reached agreement on a package which we are recommending to the Authority for approval, and which is similarly being recommended to the Board of

Trustees for its approval. Susan Achmatowicz has led the negotiations on behalf of the Authority, supported by the Chief Executive and Director of Understanding and Enjoyment in consultation with the Chairman.

3 Proposed Association

3.1 It is intended that the Association should result in the delivery of the following principal benefits:

- A Centre Manager would be appointed by the Trust, initially on a fixed term three year contract, following a joint recruitment process. S/he would be responsible for overseeing and directing the operation of the Centre and managing the relationships between the Trust, the Authority and other partners. S/he would exercise financial control, prepare business and marketing plans to guide the short and medium term development of the Centre, and develop the Trust's links with the local community and with volunteers.
- The Centre Manager would report to a newly constituted Executive Management Group upon which the Authority would be represented.
- The Authority would also be invited to appoint a member Trustee to the Board of the New Forest Ninth Centenary Trust.
- The New Forest Museum and Library would be rebranded as *The New Forest Centre*, identified and signed in association with the National Park logo to encourage increased visitation.
- The existing exhibition element (currently labelled the 'museum') would be renamed and existing displays would be updated wherever necessary. Enhanced interpretation, planned jointly by Trust and Authority staff, would be planned and developed, focusing on describing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the New Forest *National Park*.
- The charge for entrance to the exhibition would be waived for educational groups and for accompanied children aged between 8 - 15 (for whom a charge is currently made). Whilst the Authority would continue to support other establishments providing interpretative experiences, the New Forest Centre would be seen as the principal interpretation centre serving the heart of the National Park.
- The effectiveness of the Centre's operation as a 'partnership centre' would be monitored by the Authority and assessed against the appropriate National Park Visitor Centre minimum service standards.

- 3.2 The closer working arrangements created by the Association should also help sustain or improve the ongoing work of the Trust which would:
- continue to maintain an archive and library (the Christopher Tower Library) providing the key collection of historic records relating to the New Forest, available as a resource to the Authority and to the general public,
 - continue to operate a retail facility which would also serve as an outlet for publications and merchandise which may be developed by the Authority,
 - continue to offer a programme of educational experiences, linked to the resources of the Centre, with appropriate support and input from the Authority,
 - The Trust would maintain and operate the existing range of facilities (meeting room, classroom, special exhibition area), involving the Authority in the planning of special exhibitions as appropriate.
- 3.3 A Visitor Information Centre, operated by the District Council, would continue to operate on site, but with both parties working to integrate its services with those of the New Forest Centre.
- 3.4 Our vision is that the Association will enable the Trust to establish a sustainable basis for operating the principal centre for interpretation and information about the New Forest National Park - at its centre. In agreeing to this Association, the Trust will embrace change through adopting clear, transparent and robust financial planning and accounting, and by taking an outward looking approach to further develop its links with the community, volunteers and other partners. Its Centre Manager will provide the required executive leadership, as recommended by the Consultants. The Authority will ensure the success of the Association and the delivery of the Authority's objectives for the agreement through entering into a legal agreement with the Trust, by developing close staff and member links between the two organisations, and specifically through participating in the joint Executive Management Group which will steer and monitor the work of the Centre Manager. The reducing funding package reflects the Authority's view that following an initial investment of both time and money, the management of the centre should become self-supporting.
- 3.5 The three year package of funding to support the proposed Association is attached at **Annex 1**. This indicates a total estimated investment in the Association of up to £204,000, spread over three years. This figure includes estimates of:
- support in kind from Authority staff;
 - an allocation of resources towards funding ongoing display and publicity enhancement;

- a sum to offset income foregone by allowing free admission for 8-15 year olds, which will be reviewed in response to any overall increase in income over the period, which is expected to arise as a result of increasing footfall;
 - a major commitment to supporting the new post of Centre Manager which is key to the success of the Association, with Authority support reducing from 90% of salary in year one to 75% in year three; and
 - small contributions will be made to support the Centre Manager on-costs, educational activity and the operation of the valuable Library and Archive.
- 3.6 The funding takes up almost one quarter of the programme spend for Understanding and Enjoyment in Year 1. The overall funding package represents a neutral position over three years for the Trust, when measured against its current budget, and not taking into account expected additional income.
- 3.7 A short legal agreement will be prepared to form the basis of an Association for an initial period of five years, but including a break and full funding review after three years.

4 Recommendation

To authorise the Chief Executive to enter a legal agreement to establish an Association with the New Forest Ninth Centenary Trust along the lines set out in this report and Annex 1.

**New Forest Ninth Centenary Trust / New Forest National Park Authority
Schedule of funding to support the proposed Association**

	Assumed Authority funding based on Consultants' Report (£)	Three year funding package All figures at current prices with agreement to link to RPI (£)		
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Centre Manager 90%-80%-75% reducing support	25,000	32,500	29,000	27,000
Operational partnership contribution	20,000	1,500	1,500	1,500
New support for expanded education programme	15,000	3,000	3,000	3,000
Visitor and Education marketing and promotion (first year fund)	5,000	Included in rebranding (below)		
Subsidised free entry for education groups and all 8-15 year olds	Included in support for Education (above)	7,000	7,000 max (review annually based on overall level of admissions and income)	7,000 max (review annually based on overall level of admissions and income)
Contribution to Library and Archive	Nil	2,000	2,000	2,000
Total cash to Trust	60,000	46,000	42,500	40,500
Estimate of additional income to Trust (from greater footfall, increased sales, fund-raising etc),		?	?	?
Cash to Trust, excluding entry subsidies and Centre Manager funding		6,500	6,500	6,500
Additional cost to Trust of Centre Manager 10%-20%-25%		3,500	7,000	9,000
Total cash gain to Trust above current budget		3,000	-500	-2,500
Rebranding and relaunching (signage, displays, publicity)	20-25,000	[25,000]	[10,000] Match fund pot	[10,000] Match fund pot
Support in kind from Authority staff		[10,000]	[10,000]	[10,000]
Total Authority investment	85-90,000 Initially then reducing	81,000	62,500	60,500

Notes:

Through this Association the Trust gains

- a full time manager for three years;
- free entry for education groups and young people;
- which should in turn increase footfall/income;
- rebranding and marketing (including potential licensing of use of the National Park logo on merchandise) to increase shop income;
- support in kind from the Authority; and
- an initial cash contribution of £3,000.

Authority *investment* over 3 years (assuming maximum subsidy for free entry, full use of match funding pot and in kind staff commitment) is £204,000.