

NFNPA 508/16

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 22 September 2016

New Forest Marque

Report by: Paul Walton, Head of Environment and Rural Economy

1 Summary

- 1.1 The Resources, Audit and Performance Committee has been considering the level of financial support to be given to the Marque in 2017/18. New Forest Produce Limited, which runs the Marque scheme has prepared a 3 year business plan which indicates the need for greater financial contribution from the National Park Authority than in recent years.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 At its recent meeting the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee (RAPC) considered the level of support given by the New Forest Park Authority to New Forest Produce Limited (NFPL) and its trading arm, the New Forest Marque. The RAPC paper is attached at Annex 1. This provides some background on the NPA's support for the Marque over the last 10 years. In total the Authority has provided over £150,000 in direct financial support to the New Forest Marque since 2005 and a similar amount again in terms of in-kind support (scheme administration, hosting staff, officer time etc).
- 2.2 The RAPC expressed strong support for the Marque and noted the current reliance of the scheme on the commitment of a small number of voluntary directors, anecdotal evidence that the Marque scheme is not as widely recognised as might be expected and that the scheme is unlikely to become self-supporting. There was a clear recognition of the need for ongoing financial and in-kind support from the NPA.
- 2.3 Since the RAPC meeting, NFPL has shared detailed financial projections for the next three years with National Park officers. Achieving the targets NFPL has set itself will depend on appointing a Marque Manager, to be in post by January 2017 in order to take on much of the work that has recently been done on a voluntary basis by the current NFPL chair. To ensure the best possible chance of recruiting a suitable candidate NFPL need assurance that the NPA will provide additional financial support for 2017/18 (£25,000 instead of the £15,400 provided in 2016/17).
- 2.4 The production of the 3 year business plan, accompanied by financial projections, will enable officers to work closely with the NFPL directors to ensure that the Marque delivers significant, and growing, benefits to the New Forest and that these in turn meet the NPA's objectives.
- 2.5 The New Forest Marque and its network of members are an important means of delivering elements of the Partnership Plan for the National Park, the NPA business plan and the 8 Point Plan for England's National Parks. Officers will therefore work with the NFPL to develop annual reporting that will show how the NFPL and Marque

are working in support of these plans – this in turn can inform the nature and scale of future NPA support.

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 That a grant of £25,000 be allocated from the 2017/18 budget to the New Forest Marque

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Papers: **NFNPA 508/16**
Annex 1: NFNPA/RAPC 307/16 The New Forest Marque

Equality Impact Assessment: **There are no specific equality or diversity implications arising out of this report.**