

NFNPA 515/17

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 19 JANUARY 2017

LOVE THE FOREST VISITOR GIVING SCHEME

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

Summary:

The New Forest Trust (NFT) is seeking the Authority's assistance in developing the Love the Forest Visitor Giving Scheme to raise funds for conservation and education projects within the National Park. Visitor Giving, is a method of inviting voluntary donations from visitors, inspiring them to put something back into looking after the places they love to visit. Similar schemes are run in a number of the UK National Parks and are a common feature of protected area management globally.

The Love the Forest scheme is well established but in need of a fresh stimulus following the departure of the previous scheme manager. The possibility of the Authority and NFT working in partnership to deliver the scheme was considered by the RAPC in November and approval given subject to the agreement by the Authority of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the NPA and NFT. The MoU is presented for consideration by the Authority.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Authority approves the Memorandum of Understanding.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Visitor Giving is a way of offering visitors the opportunity to contribute to the upkeep of places they love by providing a mechanism for collecting donations large and small which, collectively, can add up to a significant amount of funding. Schemes are operated in a number of national parks eg. Love the Broads, Donate for Dartmoor, Nurture Lakeland. In most cases the schemes have charitable status, enabling the managing body to access grants and corporate sponsorship and providing a framework for transparency and accountability for the receipt and investment of donations.
- 1.2 The NFT has operated the Love the Forest VGS since 2006. Primarily, the scheme involves a voluntary payment by visitors, through their hotel billing system. This money is distributed by the NFT in the form of grants to suitable projects. The VGS has raised £189,000 since it started in 2006, with a total of 47 businesses supporting the scheme. In 2015/16 the VGS generated income of £32,542 with 36 businesses participating.
- 1.3 In early 2016, the Authority was approached by the Trust to assist in planning for the future of the scheme and to form a closer relationship with the NPA in its operation. A number of options were discussed and an independent report was commissioned to identify a way forward. The report was based on a survey with participant and non-participant businesses in the Scheme to understand its potential for growth.

- 1.4 The report concluded that with the right management and support there was the scope to increase income and promoted the idea of a partnership between the NFT and NPA, with the Authority hosting and covering the cost of the development of the scheme in return for a proportion of the schemes receipts.

2 Love the Forest and the National Park Authority

- 2.1 The merits of the NFNPA's involvement in the Love The Forest scheme were debated by the RAPC on the 21 November (NFNPA RAPC 317/16). It was agreed that the Authority should work in partnership with the NFT to develop the Love The Forest scheme with an existing member of staff deployed to lead on recruiting new businesses to participate in the scheme, carry out direct marketing activity and co-ordinate promotion of the scheme within existing NPA channels.
- 2.2 A Memorandum of Understanding between the NFNPA and NFT was proposed to provide clarity on the roles and responsibilities of the two organisations as the partnership develops.

3 Memorandum of Understanding

- 3.1 Working in partnership carries an element of risk for both organisations, particularly with regard to the governance of the scheme and the potential for damage to the reputation of both parties should the scheme lose credibility amongst the public or participating businesses.
- 3.2 Meetings have been held with trustees of the NFT and the MoU sets out the expectations of both organisations for the effective management of the scheme. The draft MoU is attached at **Annex 1**.
- 3.3 The RAPC recommended this is trialled for one year and it is proposed that senior officers review progress of the scheme in October and report to the RAPC meeting on the 13 November. A final decision on whether to continue support can be taken by the Authority in early 2018.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Authority approves the Memorandum of Understanding.

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Papers: NFNPA 515/17: Cover Paper
NFNPA 515/17: Annex 1, draft Memorandum of Understanding

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