

NFNPA RAPC 307/16

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

RESOURCES, AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE MEETING – 5 SEPTEMBER 2016

The New Forest Marque

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

1. Summary

In March 2016 the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee discussed the level of financial support given to the Marque by the National Park Authority (NPA). Members requested further consideration be given to funding of the Marque for 2017/18. This paper provides an update on the performance of the Marque and recommends a number of ways in which the NPA might continue to support the Marque.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The New Forest Marque is run by New Forest Produce Limited (NFPL), a company established in 2004 to develop and promote the production, processing and distribution of local produce from the New Forest. Funding for the Marque scheme comes from membership fees, grants and the NPA, which also provides in kind support for administration, accounting and communications.
- 2.2 The NPA has provided a direct grant to the Marque for over 10 years. Amounts have varied in that time but for the past 3 years the grant has been £15,400 a year. In addition the NPA provides in kind support for administration (1 day a week), marketing through social media and the Marque website and most recently preparation of end of year accounts.
- 2.3 Grant funding from the NFNPA and successive LEADER programmes enabled NFPL to employ staff but in May 2015, with the LEADER funding ending and no additional grants secured the Marque Officer was made redundant, since when the Marque has been run on a voluntary basis by the Directors.
- 2.4 As a result of great determination and enthusiasm shown by the Chair and Board members the NFPL has overcome the loss of the paid staff and made some significant achievements in 2015/16. These have included:
 - Revising the membership criteria and fee structure: resulting in a 64% increase in revenue on the previous year
 - Additional directors recruited to the Board
 - An increase in the number of training and networking events for members
 - Preparation of a 3 year business plan
- 2.5 As a consequence the confidence in the Marque amongst its members continues to grow.

3. NFPL Business Plan

- 3.1 The Business Plan sets how the NFPL intend to secure the future prosperity of the Marque as a model which not only promotes local produce but seeks to enhance the wellbeing of the New Forest community.
- 3.2 The Plan sets out the Aims of the NFPL under three key headings of Sustain, Promote and Engage (Annex 1). The Plan seeks to increase membership by 25% (currently 135 members) by 2018, secure training for members and develop revenue streams. There is also an emphasis on raising awareness of the value of local food and the benefit to the local economy of successful Marque scheme.

4. National Park Authority support for the Marque

- 4.1 The National Parks 8 Point Plan regards food tourism as a core part of the visitor experience in National Parks and a recent study by Defra highlights the strong link between local food and drink and the health of the rural economy. It is reasonable therefore to expect that the NFNPA will continue to support the Marque with regular grant funding and in-kind officer support into the future.
- 4.2 However, the pressures on the NPA budgets are unlikely to ease in future years consequently the Marque will need to address as wide a range of the NPAs priorities as possible. The Marque business plan identifies the importance of generating support amongst smallholders and commoners and the benefits they could get as a result of joining the Marque; including access to land management advice, business support and marketing of produce. This is a welcome element of the business plan as it provides an additional opportunity for the NPA to encourage land management that sustains the special qualities of the National Park – helping to deliver on our first purpose as well as the socio-economic duty.
- 4.3 The Marque can also be a key partner in the NFNPA response to the Defra Great British Food Campaign. This 5 year campaign to celebrate the best of British food and drink has recently launched a grant scheme dedicated to championing local food (Annex 2) and will also be extending Protected Food Name (PFN) status to more British products. The Marque network can help develop a grant bid and also assist in securing PFN status for New Forest produce – particularly New Forest Pannage Pork. (Increasing the number of PFNs from National Parks is an ambition of the National Park 8 Point Plan. The PFN scheme is an EU managed scheme and following the EU referendum Defra are now considering how a British equivalent can be developed.)
- 4.4 With a Business Plan for the Marque in place and the NFPL having worked to withstand the loss of the Marque officer it will assist the Directors in their planning for 2017 to be able to confirm the continued support for the Marque from the NFNPA.

5. Recommendation

It is recommended that Members agree that the NPA continue to support the New Forest Marque in the following ways:

- 1 by continuing to provide in kind support for administration, financial accounting and communications;**
- 2 by providing a grant from the 2017/18 budget, the exact sum to be agreed as part of the 17/18 budget process and the receipt of a costed work programme for the Marque for 2017;**
- 3 by preparing a bid to the Championing Great British Food Tourism Grant (closing date for applications 26 September) and**
- 4 by working to develop Protected Food Name Status for New Forest products**

Papers:

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| NFNPA RAPC 307/16 | The New Forest Marque paper |
| NFNPA RAPC 307/16 - Annex 1 | New Forest Produce Limited Business Plan (Extract) |
| NFNPA RAPC 307/16 - Annex 2 | Championing Great British Food Tourism Grant Scheme |

Equality Impact Assessment:

There are no specific equality or diversity implications arising out of this report.

Contact:

Paul Walton
Head of Environment & Rural Economy
Tel: 01590 646631
Email: paul.walton@newforestnpa.gov.uk