
NFNPA RAPC 368/18

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

RESOURCES, AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE MEETING – 14 MAY 2018

NEW FOREST CENTRE AGREEMENT – INTERIM REPORT

Report by: Nigel Matthews, Head of Recreation Management and Learning

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report updates Members on progress towards agreeing a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) between the New Forest National Park Authority (NPA) and the Ninth Centenary Trust (the Trust) for work within the New Forest Centre (the Centre).
- 1.2 At its meeting in March, officers were asked to liaise with the Trust to draw up a four year MoA which is contractually binding and which contains key measurable and deliverable actions – and report back to the Committee in June. We had hoped to bring a costed proposal but this has not been possible within the time available. However, this is a useful stage in the discussions for Members to provide further advice, so that an appropriate MoA can be brought to the next meeting, on 10 September. Thereafter, we would hope to take a final proposal to the full Authority on 11 October.
- 1.3 Members also agreed at their last meeting that the current agreement be extended for six months (to the end of September) and that £10,000 funding per quarter for the Centre for quarters one and two of the 2018/19 financial year be approved within the 2018/19 Budget.
- 1.4 For reference, the Trust's activities, as described on the Charity Commission website, are: To describe and illustrate the historical development and distinctive nature of the New Forest through education, outreach services and a specialist reference library. Also to conserve and protect the character and amenities of the New Forest for public benefit.

2 Overarching assumptions

2.1 To ensure both parties have the same understanding of the rationale for NPA funding, officers have drafted two overarching assumptions.

a) Payments from the NPA to the Trust may be appropriate:

- for tangible, measurable outputs that are within the Trust's charitable remit and that also support National Park purposes
- where there is a net cost to the Trust or the activities would be beyond the Trust's capacity

b) Services provided by the Trust can usefully be listed as follows:

- services provided exclusively for the National Park Authority; these happen principally because the NPA pays for them
- general services that the NPA funding helps to support; the Trust is likely to want to continue these services but may not be able to do so in full if there is insufficient funding from other sources.

3 Services provided

3.1 Draft lists of services currently provided by the Trust in return for the current level of grant funding are provided below.

3.2 Services provided exclusively for the National Park Authority:

- a) Displaying 'Discover the National Park' on the front of the Centre and specific mention of the National Park in the displays inside
- b) Prominent front of house space for a map of the National Park, NPA literature and events promotion
- c) Prominent front of house space for the National Park travel ambassadors during the New Forest Tour season
- d) The option for at least one NPA-curated exhibition each year, including providing staff and volunteer help at exhibition previews and associated events
- e) Sale of New Forest Marque and other local goods
- f) Staff assistance when the NPA is engaging with key visitors to the New Forest
- g) About 20-25 days' free use of a room by the NPA for meetings, including the offer of an annual Members' Day
- h) Presence of a 'supported by' plaque with the National Park logo on the front of the building and on promotional literature.

3.3 General services that the NPA funding helps to support:

- a) Free entry to the New Forest Centre (Museum, Library and Gallery), seven days a week, in the heart of the New Forest, for approx. 360 days per year
- b) Employing paid professional Front of House Team to provide free responses to face to face visitor enquiries including promotion of recreational messages about how to care for the New Forest – informed by training and support provided by the NPA
- c) Staging a programme of (additional) temporary exhibitions each year including the Open Art Competition (run in partnership with the NPA), and organise and staff preview evenings
- d) Displaying content within the Museum (Arts Council England accredited) that inspires people to learn about the New Forest and explore it in sustainable ways
- e) Providing a bespoke education service for schools and other groups to aid understanding of the New Forest and inspire future generations to value and care for it
- f) Providing an outreach and events programme (including 20+ family activity days) to aid understanding of the New Forest and what makes it special
- g) Opening the Christopher Tower Reference Library 1.5 days a week and at other times by appointment, for people to explore and research the heritage of the New Forest.
- h) Collecting, conserving and interpreting objects and items that tell the story of the New Forest through the Museum and Reference Library
- i) Running the Centre to a high standard through the employment of a Centre Manager, Office Team and team of trained and motivated volunteers
- j) Stocking NPA sales goods (e.g. walking maps/leaflets)
- k) Providing online (web and social media) information promoting conservation, understanding and enjoyment of the New Forest

4 Additional project funding

- 4.1 The MoA is likely to confirm that the NPA would continue to consider the Centre (with its New Forest focus, central location and high footfall) as a place where it can develop new joint projects with the Trust to deliver National Park purposes.
- 4.2 As well as staff time, some of these projects could include the NPA providing financial contributions where agreed on a case by case basis; others could be made possible by external funding (e.g. permanent exhibitions within the museum).

5 Next steps

- 5.1 In parallel with agreeing the above overarching assumptions and the lists of exclusive and general services, officers now aim to develop a rationale that will help determine the monetary value of the services to the NPA – and thereby inform the amount the NPA could pay each year.
- 5.2 Various factors could be taken into account as the rationale is prepared, including:
- a) The NPA may wish to be closely associated with the Centre as it implements emerging development plans over the next five years
 - b) The Trust relies on core funding (from a range of sources) to enable it to run the Centre to a high standard, develop business and development plans, and attract external funding from sources that are not available to the NPA but which the Trust's charitable status allows access to
 - c) The NPA has provided grants to the Trust since 2007, helping to underpin growth in the Centre's, capability, activity and income – reductions in NPA funding could put these achievements at risk
 - d) The NPA now has much reduced funding from Government and tends to provide project funding to other organisations rather than ongoing core grants – the Trust's work might or might not be treated differently
 - e) Some of the 'exclusive' services benefit the Trust, e.g. through increased footfall and sales
 - f) The NPA promotes the Centre through a range of communications activities and provides staff assistance at events, education sessions etc.
 - g) In addition to its work with the Centre, the NPA now communicates its messages in a wide range of ways, including rangers, social media and Local Information Points
- 5.3 Guidance from Members would be useful in progressing the discussion with the Trust. This could include commenting on the draft overarching assumptions, exclusive and general services, and the factors that could be considered in developing a rationale to determine the amount to be paid to the Trust.
- 5.4 Officers will also work with the Trust to prepare suitable content for the MoA itself.

6 Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 1) notes the current stage in discussions with the Ninth Centenary Trust to agree a MoA with the NPA**
- 2) provides advice to officers to help bring discussions to a timely and mutually acceptable conclusion**
- 3) considers whether the NPA should commit at this time, to providing a third quarter payment at the beginning of October, and if so, how much this should be**

Papers

NFNPA RAPC 368/18 - New Forest Centre Agreement – interim report

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Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no equality or diversity implications arising directly from this report. The New Forest Centre has an Audience Development Plan and an Access Plan which together address potential equality issues.