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## NFNPA RAPC 372/18

### NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

### RESOURCES, AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE MEETING – 10 SEPTEMBER 2018

### NEW FOREST CENTRE AGREEMENT – PROCUREMENT OF SERVICES AND GRANT PROPOSAL

#### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The working relationship between the National Park Authority (NPA) and the Ninth Centenary Trust (the Trust) in relation to the New Forest Centre (the Centre) has gone through various phases. Early discussions after the National Park was established resulted in a formal Agreement between the two organisations (in 2007), payments from the NPA for specific outcomes and what became an ongoing grant to support the Centre. Regular (mostly quarterly) meetings have been held over the years to manage and monitor the implementation of the Agreement. Since November 2015, at the request of Members, the Trust has provided an annual report structured to show where the Centre's work is aligned with the NPA's business plan.
- 1.2 Both Trust trustees and NPA Members have expressed a desire to move into a new phase in which payments are clearly allocated to specific outputs. To this end, at the RAPC meeting in March, officers were asked to work with the Trust to draft a contractually binding, four year Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with key measurable and deliverable actions.
- 1.3 £30K was allocated for the Centre in the NPA's 2018-19 budget, with approval that £10K should be paid for each of the first two quarters. The most recent Agreement had been due to expire on 31 March 2018, but was extended to 30 September 2018, pending completion of the current discussions

#### 2 Services provided by the Trust to the NPA

- 2.1 In seeking to draft a MoA with measurable outputs, officers worked with the Trust to draw up a list of services that it provides, or could provide, exclusively for the NPA – and to cost their provision.
- 2.2 Exclusive services identified were:
  - Displaying 'Discover the National Park' on the front of the Centre
  - Prominent front of house space for a map of the National Park, NPA literature, TV screen and events promotion

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- Prominent front of house space for the National Park Travel Ambassadors during the 9 week New Forest Tour season
  - Space for a NPA-curated exhibition (12 weeks duration, inc. preview evening with catering and staff provided by the Trust)
  - Use of meeting rooms (20 half day sessions including refreshments). 9am-5pm only
- 2.3 The Trust has confirmed that the total cost of providing all these services is ca. £25K per annum. This is the Trust's calculation of its full costs, including overheads. For example, the cost of hosting the Travel Ambassadors includes Centre staff time associated with set-up and ongoing support, overnight storage, security, wifi and cover during breaks as well as loss of sales space. The costs also take account of the Trust's assessment of any benefits the services provide to its own operations (e.g. savings on staff time dealing with enquiries when the Travel Ambassadors are present).
- 2.4 During this process the Trust decided that it did not want the procurement of the services to be embedded in an ongoing MOA. Instead, the NPA would have the flexibility to purchase them, or explore alternatives, on a case by case basis.
- 2.5 The Trust has also recently decided to recruit a part time fundraising officer, develop a fundraising strategy, change the name of the Centre to the New Forest *Heritage* Centre and adopt a new strapline: 'sharing the history of the New Forest'.
- 3 How the Centre fits alongside other engagement methods available to the NPA**
- 3.1 When the National Park was designated, the New Forest Centre was identified as a key conduit for information provision, especially to visitors. At that time, the NPA had no rangers of its own, no mobile units and no public events programme; websites were basic, social media was in its infancy and mobile phones were for making phone calls!
- 3.2 Since then, the engagement options available to the NPA have grown significantly. We now have a rangers, seasonal rangers, apprentice rangers, education officers, travel ambassadors, a wildplay officer and a community archaeologist. Whilst we do still provide grants to other organisations, and thereby achieve our purposes through them, we more often share costs through partnership working (e.g. educational campaigns) and Local Information Points operate at minimal cost to the NPA because they are mutually beneficial. Engagement by digital means (especially social media) has grown enormously.
- 3.3 These options give us flexibility in where, when and how we communicate, including at locations where particular issues need to be addressed.
- 3.4 In this context, we expect, in addition to any procured services, to work with the Trust on mutually beneficial projects, including selected events, formal

education sessions, provision of NPA literature for the public, offers of training for front of house staff, the New Forest Knowledge project and project-specific interpretation opportunities (especially where external or restricted funding is available). We will also continue to promote the Centre through a range of communications activities.

- 3.5 The new working relationship between the NPA and the Trust therefore comprises mainly:
- services procured when needed
  - joint partnership working on specific projects

#### **4 Proposed payments during the remainder of 2018-19**

- 4.1 At this time there is also opportunity for the NPA to offer a contribution from available budget to support transition to the new arrangement. Members approved an allocation of £30K for the Trust within the NPA's 2018-19 budget. Had the NPA procured all the exclusive services from the Trust, this would have cost ca. £25K over the course of the year, of which £20K has already been paid.
- 4.2 Officers therefore propose that the NPA pays the Trust £5K to complete the purchase of services for this financial year.
- 4.3 In addition, it is proposed that the remaining £5K is paid as a one-off contribution towards the Trust's core costs while its new identify and fundraising strategy becomes established.
- 4.4 It is likely that the Trust will seek additional funding from the NPA's 2019-20 budget (and future years), but decisions can be made about this when we know what requests have been made and can assess the mutual benefits.

#### **Recommendations**

**It is recommended that the Committee:**

- 1) notes the decision of the Ninth Centenary Trust that officers should purchase from the Trust specific services as and when these are needed (outside of a MoA)**
- 2) recommends to the full Authority that the remainder of the £30K allocated within the 2018-19 NPA budget for the Centre is spent: £5K for services received and £5K towards core costs this financial year**