

NFNPA/RAPC 378/18

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

RESOURCES, AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE – 5 NOVEMBER 2018

LANDSCAPE ENHANCEMENT INITIATIVE– GRANT FUNDING FOR FRANCHISES LODGE

Report by: Sarah Kelly, Landscape Officer

Summary:

The New Forest National Park Authority is working in partnership with RSPB to put together a funding application for landscape enhancements at Franchises Lodge as part of National Grid's Landscape Enhancement Initiative.

1 About the LEI Scheme

- 1.1 National Grid's Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) is a grant scheme aimed at supporting projects that can deliver localised visual improvements and landscape enhancement schemes in English and Welsh AONBs and National Parks which contain or are impacted by National Grid's transmission infrastructure. The LEI grant scheme is in addition to and separate from the National Grid's Visual Impact Provision project which is seeking to mitigate the impact of electricity transmission infrastructure by undergrounding sections of overhead wires.
- 1.2 Applications to the LEI scheme must be submitted by either an AONB Partnership or National Park Authority but projects can be delivered on the ground by a range of partners. The Authority's role is therefore to enable other organisations to access the funds in order to carry out work on their land.
- 1.3 The grant scheme has a budget of £4m per year with up to £200,000 available per project, which is the maximum 75% grant. The remaining 25% must be provided via cash or in-kind contributions. An organisation can only have three live grants at any one time.

2. LEI Schemes in the New Forest National Park

- 2.1 The Authority has progressed two applications to date:
 - 2.1.1 Working with Fawley Parish Council to manage woodland and provide wild play facilities at Warrens Copse, Holbury: £35,000
 - 2.1.2 Working with Wiltshire Wildlife Trust to improve access and land management at Landford Bog Nature Reserve: £29,000
 - 2.1.3 The potential for a third application has been discussed with RSPB with reference to Franchises Lodge where the high voltage power line runs through the centre of the reserve. Whilst this is already a well wooded landscape and scope for mitigation opportunities such as additional tree planting is likely to be limited, there is considerable opportunity to contribute to ongoing landscape

enhancement objectives in areas of landscape influenced by the transmission line.

3. Franchises Lodge

- 3.1 RSPB's vision for Franchises Lodge is to complement the existing wider cultural landscape of the New Forest by maintaining the existing broadleaf woodland, enhancing areas of wood pasture and recreating open heath to create a nature rich bridge between two already internationally important areas – Langley Wood NNR to the north and the New Forest SPA to the south. The Landscape Enhancement Initiative is ideally placed to help provide funding to support this work.
- 3.2 It is likely that a funding bid to the Landscape Enhancement Initiative will focus on removing and controlling 62ha of rhododendron to help protect and manage the landscape's ancient woodlands and maintain a diverse age structure and species range, as specified in the management guidelines of the New Forest National Park Landscape Character Assessment. This will help to enhance the landscape in areas affected by the electricity transmission infrastructure and offset its impact.
- 3.3 There is also potential to gradually remove 50ha of conifer plantation to help restore parts of the site to heathland. Past planting of conifers on heathland is noted as a key issue within the Landscape Character Assessment.
- 3.4 It is likely that RSPB will seek funds of £200,000 from the Landscape Enhancement Initiative towards the cost of contractors as well as ongoing maintenance for up to three years, with the remaining match funds made up with a combination of their staff time and volunteer time. Our role is to enable RSPB to access the funds from the grant scheme. This involves officer time to discuss and develop the bid with RSPB. The Authority will not benefit financially from the funding.
- 3.5 The next application window will open on 21 January 2019. Once an expression of interest has been approved, a full application is required. Should an application be approved, it is unlikely that any work will start on site before January 2020.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee note the report.

Contact:

Sarah Kelly, Landscape Officer

Tel 01590 646686

Sarah.kelly@newforestnpa.gov.uk

Equality Impact Assessment: **The proposed project will help to increase access to the site for a greater diversity of people. There are no other equality or diversity implications arising directly from this report.**