

## NFNPA 578/19

### NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

#### AUTHORITY MEETING – 11 JULY 2019

#### FRANCHISES LODGE UPDATE JULY 2019

**Paper by:** Jim Mitchell, Interpretation and Outreach Manager NFNPA

#### 1. Introduction

The RSPB acquired a large 386ha land holding, known as Franchises Lodge, within the National Park in 2018 with the financial and organisational help of the National Park Authority. The NFNPA contributed £200,000 of reserves to the purchase of the northern part of the reserve, much of the remainder of which is made up of a large area of gifted land, so that this unique opportunity for landscape-scale nature conservation for the Forest could be taken. As part of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the NFNPA and RSPB, we agreed to annually update the Authority on progress and to enable members to inform and shape the management of the site.

#### 2. The past year

There has been excellent progress at the site since the acquisition:

- The RSPB worked with the NFNPA and wider partners over a period of months in 2018 to get to know the local community and the stakeholders in the New Forest. An extensive programme of community walks and meetings took place, involving mailing all local households, drop in events (also attended by NFNPA officers who helped answer questions) and presentations to quadrant meetings. This process now enters the next stage with their appointment of a permanent Site Manager and Community Volunteering Officer.
- The management of the site for nature conservation has started with an inception management plan meeting taking place in October 2018 (attended by NFNPA officers), archaeology and ecology surveying in partnership and securing of grant funds to enable further work to take place. This includes a major grant application to the Landscape Enhancement Initiative for rhododendron removal that has been led by NFNPA officers;
- The RSPB are engaging even more closely with Forest matters now that they are major landowner. This has included the recent discussions between conservation groups for a stronger, more aligned coalition for nature, and helping to shape the Recreation Management Strategy, sitting on the advisory group.

A more detailed report is attached in annex 1

### 3. The coming year

The priorities for the coming year are:

- To continue to develop long term landscape-scale plans for the site in the light of emerging ecological and historic environment knowledge.
- To work with partners to investigate opportunities to provide more access for people and explore what demand there is and what opportunities are available. This is highlighted in the MoU as working together with the aim of achieving a net decrease in recreational impacts on the adjacent New Forest SPA/SAC/SSSI as a result of the implementation of the Reserve.
- To work together on the communications protocol identified in the MoU, which will help guide on-site and off-site communications and agreed messages.

### 4. NFNPA involvement

Officers will continue to be actively engaged in all aspects of the reserve management and partnership working is strong between the two organisations. In addition to the annual report for members, we intend to include Franchises Lodge updates into the quarterly reports to the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee so that members can be kept abreast of developments as well as scrutinise them on a more regular basis.

### Recommendation

**To note the report.**

#### Papers:

NFNPA 576/19                      Report

#### Equality and Diversity Implications:

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

#### Contact:

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