

## AM 579/20

### NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

### AUTHORITY MEETING – 10 DECEMBER 2020

#### RESOURCE PLANNING UPDATE

**Report by:** Alison Barnes, Chief Executive & Nigel Stone, Head of Resources

**Purpose:**

This report is to provide Members with a brief summary of resource planning to be undertaken over the coming months to ensure the efficient and effective delivery of our Authority's elements within the overarching Partnership Plan.

#### 1 Drafting our Business Plan

- 1.1 Our current 3-year Business Plan is due for an update in 2021. The key themes and detailed areas of work for this Authority will be set out in this multi-year plan to be drafted in the coming months; it will be the plan for the work of our organisation as guided by the overarching Partnership Plan, which was the subject of the previous paper. The plan will set out 'what' we will do to deliver on the Partnership Plan in a way that works with and alongside our partners. It will also set out how we intend to go about our work - in the most effective and efficient way, making the best use of the resources we have available and identifying any additional needs. We often summarise this as our 'Excellence' workstream, setting out how we will be a high-performing organisation.
- 1.2 Members will recall that we refreshed our 2020/21 Work Programme in light of the changing landscape around our Climate and Nature Emergency declaration in January, the Glover review, Environment Bill and many other drivers. Since this time we have also built the impacts and changes brought about through the Covid pandemic into our work programme, many of which are still ongoing today.
- 1.3 This 'bridging period' is allowing us the time to carefully consider priorities and in particular to plan our response and capacity around those emerging issues and demands.

#### 2 Resourcing 'Net Zero with Nature'

- 2.1 Achieving our key Net Zero with Nature ambition within a rapidly developing policy and legislative landscape will require close cross team working, integration between policy, regulatory work and delivery projects that cross

our three areas of Planning, Environment & Rural Economy and Recreation Management & Learning.

2.2 In 2021 the new Environment Bill will place an emphasis on Biodiversity Net Gain, Environmental Net Gain, a Local Nature Recovery Strategy, Nature Recovery Networks, Green Infrastructure and Natural Flood Management. The newly published Agriculture Act sets out how farmers and land managers in England will be rewarded in the future with public money for 'public goods' – such as better air and water quality, thriving wildlife, soil health, or measures to reduce flooding and tackle the effects of climate change, under a new Environmental Land Management scheme (ELMs).

2.3 The Head of Environment & Rural Economy (E&RE) will act as sponsor for the Net Zero with Nature programme and draw on the knowledge and expertise embedded within the many professional disciplines that make up our organisation. To develop a coherent programme we are organising our resources and ways of working to closely align our policy and project work to achieve our aims.

This includes appointing 3 key posts:

- a Net Zero with Nature Programme Officer, to replace the vacant Sustainability Officer post
- a Nature Recovery Officer within E&RE, this will initially be a fixed term post working with the Wildlife Roundtable partners
- a Finance and Sustainable Performance Officer, within the Resources Team, to focus on achieving the Authority's own operational Net Zero target by 2030 (modifying a post which is currently vacant).

2.4 We will also combine our Communications and Fundraising capability into one team, to develop the approach to fundraising and securing grants and supporting our work with partners on nature recovery and connecting people with nature through communications.

2.5 During 2020/21 we established an officer working group, bringing together officers from across the teams to identify/prioritise projects which require funding, identify where that funding may come from and then allocate resources/assistance to officers in project development and funding bids. This greatly assisted our recent bid to the Green Recovery Fund. Projects are very often delivered in partnership with other Forest organisations and leverage in significant sums which would not otherwise be possible either by acting alone or from our limited Defra grant. A list of potential projects is now emerging and a draft prioritisation of the funding resources over the coming year is in draft. It is likely that our funding strategy will be the subject of a Members day in due course as decisions on direction need to be made.

2.6 In summary, over the next four to six months we will identify the priority work-streams that will drive our Net Zero with Nature ambitions through the emerging Partnership Plan and our own Business Plan. These will in turn determine our funding and fundraising priorities.

### **3 Improving our 'Ways of Working'**

- 3.1 In 2019 we launched our People Plan to define the characteristics and ethos by which we work and maintain a positive culture as a staff team, both internally and with partner organisations as 'Team New Forest'. This was fortunate timing given the impacts and strains from the pandemic which has since followed, requiring many significant organisational changes in a very short period of time. Staff have continued to say that they feel very engaged and supported at present and further input from them will be vital in the development of the final Partnership Plan / Business Plan documentation and delivery.
- 3.2 Our staff are our greatest asset and resource, and we will be further delivering the agreed People Plan actions as we go into 2021. For example, we will be drawing on our experiences during C19 pandemic of using new technologies and flexible working practices to increase efficiency and effectiveness whilst maintaining a dedicated, inclusive and productive place of work.
- 3.3 A members day session was held on 2 December in relation to the continuing development of our 'New Forest Voices' project, which is considering our approach to diversity and inclusion, as set out in the Glover Review's recommendations around 'Landscapes for Everyone' and 'New ways of Working'.
- 3.4 New Forest Voices is a large and important developing workstream about how we can support better engagement with our existing and potential (under-represented) audiences under three draft themes:
- Growing trust and understanding of each other, our audiences and of diversity
  - Enabling new experiences in and around the National Park for diverse audiences
  - Improving inclusivity in our ways of working in terms of our governance and workforce

### **4 Financial Resources**

- 4.1 The 2020 single-year Spending Review in November has increased the Defra budgets for 2021/22, with a particular focus for that funding around future farming practices post-Brexit and towards the green recovery post-covid. It was also announced that the pay award for next year is likely to be restricted to a small increase for the lowest paid workers only (as our Authority is part of the Local Government award).
- 4.2 Although an increased amount has been set aside overall for Protected Landscapes (£75m), we are yet to hear about our own specific 2021/22 National Park Grant determination. However, we have been informed that

we will be contacted to discuss this shortly and any further updates will be provided at the meeting.

## **5 Recommendation**

**It is recommended that Members consider and note the report**

### **Equality and Diversity Implications:**

There are no specific equality or diversity implications arising out of this report, however a full review of all our equality and diversity considerations, entitled “New Forest Voices”, will be undertaken over the coming year.

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