

AM 591-21

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 29 APRIL 2021

APPLICATION TO THE DEFRA GREEN RECOVERY CHALLENGE FUND

Report by: Fiona Wynne, Grants Officer

Summary:

As members will recall, the New Forest National Park Authority recently submitted an expression of interest to the Defra Green Recovery Challenge Fund with and on behalf of several organisations. This has now been approved by the funding panel and we have been asked to submit a full application to the fund by 14 May 2021. The bid seeks funding of over £50,000, and therefore member support for a submission is required.

1. Defra Green Recovery Challenge Fund

- 1.1 The Green Recovery Challenge Fund is aimed at projects that restore nature, tackle climate change, and create and retain jobs. The fund is open to environmental charities and partnerships that include at least one environmental charity. The funding is primarily revenue rather than capital in nature and for projects that are 'ready to go'.
- 1.2 The Authority is co-ordinating and leading a bid for the New Forest on behalf of several trusted partners. This collaborative approach is an illustration of how we are developing our role as a facilitator, enabling others to deliver for the Forest. We have the experience and track record in delivering this type of partnership project, winning resources, and supporting schemes such as the highly successful Our Past, Our Future Landscape Partnership Scheme. The new bid involves the Freshwater Habitats Trust, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Countryside Education Trust, New Forest Commoners Defence Association, and the National Trust. The bid is likely to seek funding of around £550,000 for a project value totalling around £800,000 (the difference being the match-funding from the partners), with most of the funding going to our partners.
- 1.3 Within the draft bid, the partners are proposing to work together to protect the National Park's rarest and most threatened wildlife hotspots, working outwards linking neighbouring areas via wildlife-rich corridors and thriving wetlands. If successful, we will develop and mobilise teams of volunteers, apprentices, entry-level environmental roles, and more specialist roles to support existing teams and boost overall effort and output to tackle the climate and nature emergency. This will provide or secure approximately 30 jobs, including at least eight entry-level positions, and use up to 40 other suppliers (training providers, tool suppliers and directly on practical habitat improvements), helping to tackle local skills gaps and increasing employability for many younger members of our Forest communities.
- 1.4 In relation to the Authority in particular, the bid is likely to include funds for an 18-month volunteer co-ordinator post and two further apprentice rangers. We will match-fund our

elements with our upcoming core-funded Nature Recovery Officer role which fits perfectly into the aims and objectives of the Fund.

- 1.5 If funding is approved, the programme of work will take place over 18 months from September 2021 to March 2023. At that stage, the partners would be required to sign a contractual partnership agreement.
- 1.6 The deadline for submission of the full bid is 14 May 2021, giving officers a few weeks to finalise its more detailed content with partners. This is the second round of applications and the fund is highly competitive. In the first round, over 600 applications were received, with 68 (11%) approved. Almost £40m was made available in the first round and a similar amount is available in this round.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that Members support the submission of an application to the Defra Green Recovery Challenge Fund as outlined in the report, and that authority be delegated to officers to take all action as necessary in this regard.

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Papers:

Authority AM 591-21: **Cover Paper**