

1. Context

1.1 Background

In 2008, the Authority prepared a funding strategy as a framework for fundraising activities to support the work of the Authority in delivering its core purposes and socio-economic duty. The strategy considered the most likely options for fundraising open to the Authority including grants, corporate sponsorship, donations, legacies, and sales. The strategy was reviewed in 2015 and further discussed with members in 2017.

In 2019, the Authority set up an internal funding group focused on making strategic decisions about where our time and effort is best spent. With a reduction in our core Defra grant, a renewed focus on tackling the climate and nature emergencies, the new draft Partnership Plan in the final phases of development and leadership of a green recovery from Covid-19, a new focus on income generation both for NPA projects and to help deliver the Partnership Plan is needed.

1.2 Finances

Grants remain the most likely and easily accessible source of fundraising for the Authority. In total, over £1 million in grant funding has been awarded over last 12 months including:

- £65k Defra Green Recovery Challenge Fund for Generation Green youth initiatives (£2.5m scheme with other English NPAs, Guides, Outward Bound and YHA). Funds for youth work, apprentice rangers.
- £200k (£350k project) National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) for Franchises Lodge habitat improvements
- £300k (£600k project) National Lottery Community Fund for PEDALL (also £50k from Sport England and £25k British Cycling)
- £23k (£70k project) Heritage assets Local Heritage Listing project (with Winchester City Council and IoW Council)
- £20k (£200k project) Health Education England partnership
- £20k Greenprint project (PfSH) to establish a framework to guide the economic recovery of the wider region
- £27k from various sources (including £5k from Love the Forest and £9k from Big Give crowdfunding campaign with NF Trust) for volunteering
- £220k (£580k grant) Defra Green Recovery Challenge Fund as part of an £850k scheme involving five New Forest partners in work up to March 2023
- £10k (£100k project) Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund
- £120k LEI grant to improve walking routes and restore landscape character (planting hedgerows, trees, removing vegetation) in five areas affected by the overhead power lines
- £4k from the University of Southampton for community engagement on climate change actions.

1.3 Key trends in fundraising

In addition to dramatic reductions in core funding from government over the last decade, the funding landscape has become more complex with a proliferation of specific, very short-term, and competitively accessed grants. Funders (and government) are also still focusing on short-term 12-to-18-month recovery of people and nature (green recovery) in response to COVID-19.

Key areas such as nature recovery, net zero, climate change, health and wellbeing are those areas funded in a short term and competitive manner (although long-term goals).

The National Park Authority is only able to apply for grants available to the public sector which restricts us from many large-scale environmental funding streams which only allow applications from registered charities. Fundraising bodies report that on average, a 20% success rate from grant applications can be expected.

In terms of our 'cause' and patterns of giving – a Charities Aid Foundation report found that 4% of donations in 2019 were to conservation/heritage causes (most donations were to animal welfare, children and young people medical research causes).

Schemes often require around 40% match funding to be successful, which is challenging to find.

1.4 SWOT analysis

Strengths

- Strong track record of grants because of our staff and experience and likely return
- Outcomes from developing strategies on health and wellbeing, net zero, youth, New Forest voices, and tactical plans as part of the Partnership Plan.

Weaknesses

- We haven't focused much on other forms of fundraising which requires a different skillset and potentially a longer return
- We previously invested in developing corporate partnerships (2014-15) but this was not very successful
- Amount of resource/time required to submit bids to grant funders.

Opportunities

- We have been approached by some local businesses in the last 12 months who are looking to demonstrate their CSR/climate credentials
- Our limited fundraising resources are used for both for the NPA and other Forest organisations
- Closer working relationship with the New Forest Trust to help fund Partnership Plan projects.

Threats

- The current approach has served us well, but conservation funding is so short-term now it is putting a strain on the little fundraising resource (one Grants Officer) we have
- Other organisations' expectations of help with applications – they are not set up to apply for funding in this way. This has become more acute since Covid and their resulting staffing issues.
- Charity partners have other priorities for their funding and are often unable to contribute match funding, which is usually as much as 40% of a scheme's budget.
- Major donors, legacies, corporate, individual giving – no skills/resources.
- People are more likely to donate to a charity than public sector.

2. Approach

2.1 Existing fundraising mix

A Corporate Partnerships programme was established in 2013 with a target to generate more than £50,000 per annum in income through company sponsorship. Securing direct financial contributions proved challenging and initial income projections were not met. Some of the more significant commercial opportunities for National Parks are now being explored at a national level through National Parks Partnerships (NPP).

Opportunities for income generation from investment and sales have been examined in previous years but no clear projects were identified. The Authority has no directly managed retail outlets so any returns would be small.

The Authority has a donations page on its website but has only received a handful of small donations in the last five years; it has however received a number of donations for talks by staff members each year.

As well as grants, we are working with the New Forest Trust to trial new forms of fundraising. These have included:

- Big Give crowd-funding campaign with the New Forest Trust
- Valentines Challenge community fundraising event with the New Forest Trust
- Events sponsorship (NPA Walking and Cycling Festival).

2.2 Prospect pipeline

Landscape Partnership Legacy Group:

- 10 original partners from the Our Past Our Future (OPOF) £4.5m National Lottery Heritage Fund scheme which ended earlier this year are continuing to liaise
- Some of the group, plus new partners, submitted a bid to the Green Recovery Challenge Fund to enable some of the OPOF schemes to continue and evolve, plus some new projects. The successful bid resulted in a grant of over

£539,000 which, with match-funding, represents a £800,000 investment in the National Park.

- The group provides a potential vehicle for a future partnership bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund and others.
- There is scope to invite RSPB, the Countryside Education Trust, St Barbe Museum in Lymington to join the group and any future bid
- However, as identified above in the SWOT analysis, match funding will be a barrier. Over £400,000 in match funding was secured for OPOF, much of which (£320,000) was from NPA reserves. Before the process of developing a bid is begun, we would need to discuss with Members how receptive they are to dedicating significant reserves to match funding.

National Parks Partnership:

The following opportunities have and are likely to help bring income into the New Forest:

- Net Zero with Nature programme with global impact firm Palladium to secure £240m for nature restoration projects. Founding partners are Santander UK, The Estée Lauder Companies UK & Ireland, Gatwick Airport, Southern Co-op and Capita
- Small grants have and continue to be received through a partnership with Clif Bar
- A five-year partnership with Columbia continues to provide staff clothing and marketing benefits.

National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative:

- A new three-year funding agreement for programme was launched in April 2021 to mitigate the impact of power lines on the landscape
- We continue to look for opportunities and are discussing with RSPB and the National Trust
- There are two application windows per year – September and May
- A further £120k has just been awarded for access and landscape character improvements.

New Forest Trust:

- The Love the Forest visitor giving scheme, which we administer on behalf of the New Forest Trust with the tourism sector, has effectively been on hold due to the impact of Covid-19 on the tourism and hospitality businesses. However, we have worked to identify two flagship projects – an extension to the Generation Green youth programme and the New Forest Code, which Love the Forest will be championing over the coming months.
- From initial research, grants open to charities offer the greatest likelihood of return of any of the fundraising options. If additional resources could be allocated, we could work with the New Forest Trust to research and help them apply for grants open to charities.
- We have and will continue to develop other fundraising mechanisms with the New Forest Trust:
 - Crowdfunding
 - Community fundraising
 - Major donors

- Legacies
- Events.
- All require additional resource, expertise, and marketing spend.
- The existing MoU between the NPA and the Trust is about to come to an end and is currently being updated.

2.3 Existing Resources

Staff:

Fiona Wynne – Grants Officer

Funding group:

- Hilary Makin – communications
- Jim Mitchell – RML
- Nigel Stone – finance and resources
- Paul Walton – ERE
- Fiona Wynne – grants officer

The funding group meets monthly to make decisions on where to focus time and effort and consider development of funding priorities / themes / projects / resources.

Specialist support:

Other NPA staff have inputted into developing projects and bids:

- Ian Barker – ecology
- Sarah Kelly – landscape
- Sally Knott – built environment
- Simon Ludlow – ICT
- Julie Melin-Stubbs – land advice
- Jim Mitchell – health and wellbeing
- Gareth Owen – archaeology
- Helen Robinson – youth and education
- Arvi Sandhu – HR
- Adam Vasey – access.

Members:

- RAPC – signs off grant bids over £50k
- Possible future involvement of the Partnership Plan board.

2.4 Process

Project initiation

This is a document for staff to complete to suggest project ideas and initiatives and think about the sort of information we need for a bid, or to approach a partner for sponsorship.

Project prioritisation framework

The framework has been developed to provide a structure for staff to bring forward project ideas and initiatives and provide a way to prioritise these according to several

key drivers. There are currently over 100 project ideas. Projects are prioritised according to nature recovery, net zero with nature, green jobs, volunteering, and health and wellbeing and delivery of the Partnership Plan. A number of these were included in the recent Green Recovery Challenge Fund bid.

Sifting process and criteria

Projects are scored against:

- Key and emerging priorities including the Glover Protected Landscapes Review, the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan and the work of the Partnership Plan
- Return on investment
- Likelihood of success
- Timescale.

We should give no priority to restricted or unrestricted income, but recognise the need and steps required to develop long-term, sustainable, unrestricted funds. Where possible we should prioritise multi-year funding over single year opportunities and always look to make a multi-year ask.

We will also ensure that whatever opportunities we work on, there is an added value from our involvement. The key tests are whether:

- The project will result in increased investment for the National Park
- The work is likely to happen without our input
- The involvement of NPA staff will enhance the nature of the project.

3. Next steps

In order to take our funding approach further, we need to identify the costs associated with different aspects of fundraising and the potential return on investment to guide where we focus our time and limited resources.

Our plan for the remainder of this financial year is to conduct a feasibility study into the best fundraising mix for the NPA:

- Assessing the current funding landscape and potential for fundraising
- Researching how comparable organisations are successfully raising income
- Identifying the most cost-effective and least risky opportunities for earned and voluntary income
- Proposing an implementation plan (having looked at the people, processes and skills needed).

The feasibility study will enable us to then update our funding strategy for 2022/23 as we will then also have a finalised Partnership Plan to guide us and know the outcome of Government's Comprehensive Spending Review and our Defra grant for 2022/23.

We propose that £10,000 is allocated from this year's budget into a feasibility study to guide our future funding strategy.