

AM 611/22

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 27 JANUARY 2022

UPDATE ON THE NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK PARTNERSHIP PLAN

Report by: Steve Avery, Executive Director

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to share with Members the latest draft of the emerging new Partnership Plan, in particular to highlight the revisions that have been made to the Plan in response to the public consultation last year. An important addition to the draft Plan is the set of proposed actions to deliver on the shared ambition for each of the five themes – this is now included as an annex to the draft Plan.
- 1.2 By bringing this report to the Authority meeting, it is also an opportunity to share the latest revisions to the draft Plan with stakeholders and all other interested parties, especially those who responded to the public consultation last summer. The report includes an update on the progress being made to establish a new Partnership Board/Group to oversee implementation of the new Plan.

2. Finalising the draft Partnership Plan

- 2.1 Members received an update on the Partnership Plan at the last full Authority meeting in October 2021. This included high level feedback on the response to the public consultation and the need to develop a more detailed work programme to deliver the Plan. A number of amendments have since been made to the draft Plan in response to the consultation, as well as further comments and input from partner organisations and Members.
- 2.2 The work programme lists the relevant actions for each of the five themes, how these link with the Plan's priorities, with relevant target dates and key measures of success identified. The various partner organisations involved for each action are also listed, as well as national legislation and policy that has a bearing on each of the actions.
- 2.3 The draft Plan and the associated work programme will be refined further before the final versions are presented for approval at the Authority meeting in March. We are currently appraising the Government's response to the Landscapes Review (2019) and the associated consultation is also likely to inform any final amendments. However, Members will know that many of the proposals and recommendations set out in the Landscapes Review have guided our work on the new Partnership Plan.
- 2.4 Once the final version of the Partnership Plan has been approved by Members, hopefully at the March Authority meeting, partner organisations will then be invited to formally approve the Plan. Many of the actions listed in the work programme are

already underway and we are encouraging all partner organisations to reflect the five Partnership Plan themes in their own business/corporate plans.

3. Partnership Board (working title)

- 3.1 Members will recall from previous reports and updates on the Partnership Plan that we have been looking into the feasibility of establishing a new partnership group to oversee the implementation of the new Partnership Plan and to lead the review of future updates of the Plan. Similar groups have been established in the Lake District and Peak District National Parks which are supported by the National Park Authority but are nonetheless independent bodies with their own appointed chairs.
- 3.2 Following work undertaken by the Members' Task and Finish Group (AM 578-20), we are now finalising the proposed terms of reference which we intend to share with partner organisations very shortly. It is hoped to establish the new partnership group once the Partnership Plan has been approved by all the partner organisations.
- 3.3 It is envisaged that the role of the new partnership group, comprising a small core membership of key partner organisations with an independently appointed chair, would be to:
 - oversee, activate and monitor implementation of new Partnership Plan;
 - be a credible group that can speak with a unified voice;
 - ensure resources are aligned and secured to deliver the agreed work programme;
 - agree and 'sign off' an annual progress report;
 - receive reports from key programmes/groups – Nature Recovery, RMS etc
 - lead, commission and contribute to future Partnership Plan work programmes and reviews;
 - be able to influence 'upwards and outwards' (beyond the National Park area); and
 - agree joint campaigns, advocacy opportunities (e.g. 'Care for the Forest Care for each other' and responses to national/regional issues.
- 3.4 It is proposed that membership of the new partnership group (drawn from the key partner organisations) would be made up of those who are in a position to act and make decisions (although the group itself would have no formal decision making powers). The secretariat would likely be provided by the Authority as convenors of 'Team New Forest' and publishers of the Partnership Plan.
- 3.5 The new partnership group would benefit from adopting an annual 'rhythm' of meetings and activities to guide its work, which might possibly include:
 - a) Annual Partnership Plan Tour to review projects 'on the ground' – June/July
 - b) Half Year Review – Sept/Oct
 - c) Agreeing priorities for joint working - December
 - d) Agreeing an annual action plan – March

- 3.6 Whilst the new partnership group would be the overarching steering and oversight group for the Partnership Plan, other 'advisory groups' would contribute and feed into the Group, such as the RMS Advisory Group, the Forest Farming Group and the Nature Recovery Advisory Group to name a few.

Recommendation:

1. **To note (i) the latest draft of the Partnership Plan and associated work programme (Annex 1), (ii) the next steps to finalise the Plan and (iii) the progress being made to establish a new Partnership Group to oversee the implementation of the new Partnership Plan.**

Papers: AM 609-21 and AM 578-20

Contact: Steve Avery

Equality Impact Assessment: There are no equality or diversity implications arising directly from this report.