

RAPC 560/25

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

RESOURCES, AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE MEETING – 3 MARCH 2025

GRANT FUNDING UPDATE

Report by: Paul Walton, Head of Environment and Rural Economy
Fiona Wynne, Grants officer

1 Summary:

- 1.1 The New Forest National Park Authority has a strong track record of securing grants to deliver our Partnership Plan work and leverage our own Business Plan / Defra National Park Grant. We regularly submit bids of more than £750,000 to appropriate funding sources and this has enabled us to secure an additional £15 million for the Forest since 2010.
- 1.2 This paper requests members' approval for applications to two upcoming grant funded opportunities. The Authority Scheme of Delegation requires formal bids over £50,000 to be approved by this Committee.

Recommendation:

That the submission of the two applications, as outlined in the report, be supported and that Authority be delegated to officers to take all action as necessary to submit these bids and, if successful, to complete the projects.

2 Introduction

- 2.1 The Authority has always had a strategic focus on securing external funding to support our work in delivering our core purposes and socio-economic duty and the objectives of the Partnership Plan.
- 2.2 Our annual target is to achieve 25%+ of income derived from sources other than the Defra National Park Grant – our half-year result for 2024/25 was 43%. Since 2010 we have secured more than £15 million in total. These funds support the work of the Authority and its partners to deliver landscape-scale improvements.
- 2.3 We wish to apply for a further two grants to boost nature recovery and support our education and youth work. Grants over the last few years have been focused on short-term delivery with very tight timescales whereas both new opportunities would provide investment in long-term projects.

3 Landscape Connections – The National Lottery Heritage Fund

- 3.1 'Landscape Connections' is a strategic initiative designed by The National Lottery Heritage Fund to address long-standing heritage issues at scale and accelerate new ideas and innovations. It will specifically support Protected Landscapes and other world-class landscapes across the UK to become better for nature and more able to welcome people from all backgrounds, including those who rarely visit them now. Grants of up to £10m are available over a 10-year timeframe. Protected Landscape management bodies must be a key partner in an application.

Projects should:

- enable everyone in the UK to have access to landscapes rich in nature, clean water and fresh air, places that are inspiring in their beauty and cultural heritage
 - help these landscapes to become better for nature and more able to welcome people from all backgrounds, including those who rarely visit them now
 - deliver longer-term projects that are bold in ambition and create measurable outcomes for Protected Landscapes
 - support those who live in and care for these places to strengthen them as working landscapes based on a clear diagnosis of why the landscape is currently failing to deliver for nature and people and how that will be addressed
 - accelerate systemic and lasting nature recovery across whole landscapes, creating and sharing exemplars for how landscape conservation and nature recovery can be delivered with, by and for people who live and work there
 - create innovative frameworks for ways in which communities, landowners, organisations, and those that manage the land can work equitably together to agree how to influence and drive change to ensure a lasting legacy.
- 3.2 We have had some initial exploratory discussions with The National Lottery Heritage Fund, and we believe the New Forest National Park is well placed to meet the objectives of the Landscape Connections programme. Our initial focus would be to seek a development phase grant of around £250,000 to take place during 2025-26. This would include feasibility work and production of an Area Action Plan setting out our project vision and blueprint for project delivery within the context of the Partnership Plan and local and national nature recovery strategies. We intend to hold several workshops during March and April with a range of partner organisations and staff contributions to help prepare for a full application submission in May-June.
- 3.3 The development phase would conclude towards the end of 2026 / early 2027 and form the basis of a delivery phase application in 2027 for up to £10m. Our existing Species Survival Fund and YouCAN partnership projects are also due to complete in 2026, so we will make the most of applying our learning and development from these projects to our delivery phase application, sited alongside work and evidence gathering carried out as part of the development phase. Assuming a successful application, delivery would begin in 2027 and coincide with the next iteration of the Partnership Plan. The delivery phase will need to include resources to measure the impact of our project for both nature recovery and engaging people to help The National Lottery Heritage Fund assess our contribution to meeting UK nature recovery targets. Where they exist, government outcomes frameworks should be used.

4 The National Lottery Community Fund – UK Fund

- 4.1 The UK Fund offers larger amounts of funding for existing projects that help bring diverse communities together and projects that help children and young people use their voice to influence change. The education and youth officers within national parks are considering an application that builds on the existing outputs and success of the Generation Green initiative. Funds of up to £5m are available for projects up to 10 years.

All projects must:

- benefit communities across the UK by working in different places or by sharing learning between countries
- scale up their impact by expanding their work by helping more people or doing more for people they already work with
- support people experiencing poverty, disadvantage and discrimination
- help make significant changes to services or systems that affect people's everyday lives.

And meet one of these aims:

- improve relationships between people with different life experiences
- help people and communities who find it difficult to meet face-to-face to make meaningful connections online
- help people from all backgrounds to influence the future of their communities
- help children and young people facing specific challenges change the systems that affect them
- help more organisations to involve and listen to children and young people.

- 4.2 Initial discussions amongst officers suggests national parks are keen on developing junior rangers, pathways into green careers, and developing youth voice. Discussions are in the initial stages, and should an application be successful, it would be delivered alongside The Prudence Trust application assuming this is also successful.

RECOMMENDATION

That the submission of the two applications, as outlined in the report, be supported and that Authority be delegated to officers to take all action as necessary to submit these bids and, if successful, to complete the projects.

Contact:

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Previous papers:

RAPC 529/24
Grant funding and Team New Forest approach