



Report to the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire Joint Committee

Date: **15 March 2016**

Report of: **Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership Project Board**

Subject: **Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership - 2016/17 work programme and budget**

Purpose: **For decision**

SUMMARY

In December 2014 the Joint Committee endorsed a strategy prepared by the Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership to mitigate the impact on the three Solent Special Protection Areas of the additional coastal recreational pressures resulting from new housing. Since then, the Partnership has made considerable progress with strategy implementation, notably the creation of a team of rangers. Its proposed 2016/17 work programme and budget envisages a larger ranger team next winter together with the implementation of initiatives to encourage responsible dog walking. The Partnership proposes a budget of £300k in 2016/17 including a sizeable contribution into an in-perpetuity fund in order to create a sufficiently large investment pot by 2028/9 which will thereafter fund the annual mitigation costs in perpetuity. Endorsement is sought for the 2016/17 membership of the Project Board which oversees the Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership's activities.

RECOMMENDATION

It is RECOMMENDED that the Joint Committee NOTES and ENDORSES the:-

1. Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership's proposed 2016-17 work programme and budget; and
2. The proposed 2016/17 membership of the Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership's Project Board.

INTRODUCTION

1. This PUSH Joint Committee provides the political governance for the Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership (SRMP). This report reviews recent progress, sets out the proposed 2016-17 work programme and budget, and presents the proposed 2016/17 membership of the SRMP's Project Board.
2. Preparation of the SRMP's Annual Report is underway with the aim of presenting it, and the SRMP's 2015/16 financial accounts, to the June PUSH Joint Committee for endorsement.

RECAP

3. The substantial amount of housebuilding which is planned around the Solent will lead to an increase in recreational activity at the coast which in turn will impact on the over-wintering waders and wildfowl within the three Special Protection Areas unless mitigation measures are put in place. The Interim Solent Recreation Mitigation Strategy, which was approved by this Committee in December 2014, explains the mitigation measures which are to be implemented, how they will be funded, and how their implementation will be monitored. The two-pronged mitigation approach is a team of rangers who will reduce bird disturbance by influencing the behaviour of visitors, and initiatives to encourage responsible dog walking. These mitigation measures are being funded by developer contributions associated with the new homes built around the Solent.
4. The Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership (SRMP) was established to oversee implementation of the Strategy. It comprises the fifteen Solent local authorities plus Natural England, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and Chichester Harbour Conservancy. The Partnership's work is overseen by a Steering Group of representatives from all 19 partners, which reports to a Project Board of senior officers. Political governance is provided by the PUSH Joint Committee with the involvement in SRMP-related discussions of the three local authorities who are members of the SRMP but not PUSH¹. This arrangement means that the PUSH Joint Committee Chairman is also effectively the political chairman for the SRMP.
5. More information about the Interim Mitigation Strategy and the Partnership can be seen at:
<https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/ext/community-and-environment/environment/solent-recreation-mitigation-strategy.aspx>

PROGRESS SINCE SEPTEMBER 2015

¹ Chichester District Council, New Forest National Park Authority and South Downs National Park Authority.

6. The key development since the report to the Committee in September last year is the appointment of three SRMP rangers: a full-time all-year lead ranger, and the two part-time winter-only rangers. All three have been out on the coast since early December helping people to better understand the over-wintering birds and their vulnerability to disturbance. The rangers are employed by Hampshire County Council (on the mainland coast) and the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (on the Isle of Wight coast) under two-year Service Level Agreements. To inform the public through the media, a press release about the inauguration of the ranger patrols was issued in early January; it included a quotation from the PUSH Chairman Councillor Woodward (as de-facto political chairman of the SRMP).
7. The SRMP has initiated research into potential initiatives to encourage responsible dog walking. A specialist consultant has completed a review of initiatives which have been successful used elsewhere in the UK and abroad. Market research (face-to-face interviews with dog walkers at the coast and an on-line survey) is now underway to ascertain dog walkers' opinions, their reasons for going to the coast, and what might motivate them to go to less environmentally sensitive alternatives. The Partnership will take this work further forward during the coming year - see paragraph 11 below.
8. Monitoring the effectiveness of the mitigation measures is vital. Last year, the SRMP commissioned specialist consultants to design a monitoring system which will provide statistically robust information but will also be economical to operate. The consultants' recommendations will be considered by the Partnership next month.
9. Ancillary activities since the last report to the Joint Committee include the posting on the website of a set of answers to commonly asked questions about the rationale, content and implementation of the Interim Solent Recreation Mitigation Strategy, and the holding of a half-day seminar for local authority officers to facilitate a wider sharing of experiences in implementing the various types of legal agreements for securing developer contributions. Preparatory work is underway for a substantial upgrade to the Partnership website.

PROPOSED WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2016/17

10. As described above, the key mitigation measure is the ranger team. Financial constraints limited the team to only three posts during 2015/16, but the SRMP's aspiration is to increase the ranger team to the four posts envisaged in the Interim Mitigation Strategy as soon as funding allows.
11. The research described in paragraph 7 above will help identify initiatives which are likely to secure the objective of encouraging responsible dog walking and will be broadly acceptable to the majority

of dog walkers. The Partnership's aspiration is to implement some of the initiatives in time for winter 2016/17, which will require budgetary provision for design and implementation/printing.

12. In parallel to those activities to implement the Interim Mitigation Strategy, the preparation of the definitive mitigation strategy needs to progress during the coming twelve months in order to achieve the publicly stated target of adoption during 2017. The intention is to present a draft document to the Joint Committee later in the year.

PROPOSED 2016/17 BUDGET

13. The SRMP has adopted a budgetary principle that planned expenditure for each year will be no greater than the income received during the previous calendar year. This is to ensure that expenditure does not exceed available money. On the basis, the Partnership proposes to budget for £300k in 2016/17.
14. The Interim Mitigation Strategy states that some of the developer contributions received will be invested to generate interest which will fund the mitigation measures in-perpetuity. The in-perpetuity element was set as 136.7% of the annual cost of the mitigation measures: calculations suggested that this level of contribution, plus the interest earned on it, would create a sufficiently large investment pot by 2028/9 which could thereafter fund the annual mitigation costs in perpetuity.
15. The June meeting of the PUSH Joint Committee accepted that in order to make tangible progress with implementing the mitigation measures, the SRMP should defer payments into the in-perpetuity fund during 2015/16 subject to that shortfall being redressed in future years when the amount of money available to the Partnership will be much greater. On the same basis, the SRMP proposes in 2016/17 to make half-payments into in-perpetuity fund - i.e. 68.35%. This would represent a logical transition from zero in-perpetuity funding in 2015/16 to full in-perpetuity funding in 2017/18.
16. The proposed SRMP budget for 2016/17 is set out below. It would provide funding to enable the full ranger team to be in place during the year and enable implementation of at least some of the initiatives to encourage responsible dog walking. It would also provide funding for monitoring, for a small operating budget (website expansion, a possible seminar, etc.) and for the continued employment of the Partnership officer.

Proposed SRMP budget for 2016/17

Item	£000s	Comment
Rangers	100	
Dog initiatives	20	Consultancy support and design/printing of media/materials
Partnership coordination officer	28	Part-time post: 3 days per week
Operating budget	15	Website, seminars/events, etc
Monitoring	15	
Sub-total	178	
In perpetuity funding	122	Set for this year only at 68.35% of annual mitigation costs
Total budget	300	

PROJECT BOARD MEMBERSHIP

17. The SRMP Project Board is responsible for overseeing the Partnership's activities, administering its funds, and preparing documentation for this Joint Committee. The current Board membership was approved by the PUSH Joint Committee at its December 2014 meeting. To maintain the legitimacy of the Board, its membership ought to be renewed annually, and the logical time to do that is in tandem with the coming year's work programme and budget.
18. The composition of the Project Board is prescribed in the Partnership's Terms of Reference. It comprises:-
- i. the PUSH lead officer on green infrastructure;
 - ii. four chief/senior officers from the local authorities of which one will be from an authority which is not a member of PUSH;
 - iii. a representative of Natural England;
 - iv. two representatives of the three wildlife/conservation organisations (i.e. Royal Society for the Protection of Birds; Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust; Chichester Harbour Conservancy);
 - v. an officer representative of any organisation which is employing staff on behalf of the Partnership.
19. In respect of (v), there are now three organisations which employ staff on behalf of the Partnership: Hampshire County Council (rangers), Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (ranger) and Portsmouth City Council (the Partnership officer).

20. Following an invitation to all partners to make nominations to the Project Board, the following nominations were received:-
 - i. awaiting confirmation from PUSH;
 - ii. David Hayward (Havant Borough Council), Louise Driscoll (Eastleigh Borough Council); Mike Allgrove (Chichester District Council), Simon Finch (Winchester City Council);
 - iii. Allison Potts (Natural England);
 - iv. Carrie Temple (RSPB), Dr Richard Austin (Chichester Harbour Conservancy);
 - v. Deborah Watkins (Hampshire County Council), Claire Upton-Brown Portsmouth City Council), Richard Grogan (Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust).

21. The Committee is asked to endorse this proposed 2016/17 Project Board membership.

RECOMMENDATION

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1. Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership's proposed 2016-17 work programme and budget; and
2. the proposed 2016/17 membership of the Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership's Project Board.

ENQUIRIES:

For further information on this report please contact:-

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