



Report to the Partnership for South Hampshire Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 30 November 2022
Report of: Paddy May, Bird Aware Project Board Chair
Anna Parry, Bird Aware Solent Partnership Manager
Subject: Bird Aware Solent Site-specific Projects

SUMMARY

The report to Joint Committee will seek endorsement for the Bird Aware Partnership's recommendations for how site-specific funding should be allocated.

RECOMMENDATION

It is RECOMMENDED that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:-

- a) NOTES the contents of this report;
- b) NOTES that Joint Committee will be asked to ENDORSE Bird Aware Solent's proposed allocation of funding for site specific projects
- c) NOTES that Joint Committee will be asked to ENDORSE Bird Aware Solent's request for delegated powers to make the final decision on the release of the second year of funding allocation once sufficient supplementary evidence has been submitted by the applicant and reviewed by the project board; and
- d) consider any comments to be passed to the Joint Committee for consideration.

Background

1. The Bird Aware Strategy includes support for site-specific projects to deliver mitigation measures. There is an annual allocation of £400k for this work and monitoring the effectiveness of it.
2. In January of this year, all partners were invited to submit project proposals for this funding and a 'site specific projects' sub-group has scored these proposals.
3. This project group comprises of the partnership manager together with a senior ranger, the monitoring officer, representatives from Natural England, the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and a local planning authority. Projects are scored under the following criteria:
 - Scale
 - Effectiveness
 - Value
 - Deliverability
 - Monitoring
4. The scores were presented to the project board which considered them in detail. The information below represents what the Project Board were prepared to offer support for.

Projects received

5. The Partnership received bids for 13 proposed projects, in total requesting £1,205,432 of funding. These bids contained a good spread of project type and size as well as representing a better geographical spread of bids than seen in the last round of funding.
6. As agreed at the project board in June 2022, the site specific project team were seeking to allocate £720,000 (the remaining sum retained for monitoring purposes) over a two year period covering 2023/24 and 2024/25. Members of the project team individually reviewed and scored the projects then met to compare results and seek a consensus for a final score for each project.
7. The Natural England representative on the site specific project group deemed two projects to be entirely unsuitable for supporting with mitigation funding. This has barred them from being recommended for funding in this round of allocation, but is not a comment on the overall strength or worthiness of the proposals. Likewise, the partnership is not able to support feasibility and pilot projects with funding received for mitigation purposes as it may leave us open to challenge from developers for not providing long term mitigation with their funding. This does not mean that we failed to recognise the quality and potential worth of the projects that fell into these categories.
8. The scores given have then been used to prioritise the funding recommendations which are outlined below in Table 1. More information related to the scoring can be found in the table which forms Appendix 1.

Bird Aware Site-specific Projects Scoring July 2022

Table 1: Projects

KEY

Year 1 (2023/24)

Year 2 (2024/25)

Supported

Not supported

Site Location and Proposer	Summary	Total score	Project cost £s	GROUP NOTES
SWLS - Lee on Solent - GBC	Alver Valley Country Park Improvements: Incorporation of additional land into the Country Park and the creation of a dog training park.	17	94,000	Good project with potential for good impact. Support for the dog area.
INLAND - Fishlakes Meadow - TVBC	The element of the project for which funding is being applied for will provide access infrastructure including bridges, boardwalks and a high quality hide and viewing platform at the Fishlakes Meadows Nature Reserve. The project will create a circular walk linking a number of public footpaths in the area and will facilitate access to the site and surrounding footpath network for people with mobility issues by creating a link which would bypass and existing bridge which is only accessible via a series of steps.	17	790,000 requested, 400,000 supported	No support for Bird Hide or lift, scoring only related to Boardwalk and bridges element. Scored for circular walk and bridges element only. Scores well if considered effectively to be a SANG.

Site Location and Proposer	Summary	Total score	Project cost £s	GROUP NOTES
CHEH - East Head - CHC	6 marker buoys at 4 sites to target watersports and stop them landing at hightide roost areas. Each site is approx 200m-300m long. Accompanied by email to 5000 promoting their presence.	17	13,692	There was general support for this project, especially given the pressures on high tide roosts in the area. The monitoring was also comprehensive.
NFHS - Hurst Spit - NFNPA	New Lane / Cut bridge)- Interpretation and physical measures (post and fence rail) Fencing and vehicle barrier	16	c10270	Good Project in recognised problem spot.
PHHI - Hilsea - PCC	To design and construct a dog activity area and 'off the lead' dog enclosure to draw dog walkers away from the sensitive bird areas - Coastal Partners Project	15	60,500	It was recognised that supporting the dog walking community is a key delivery strand, also that pressure on public spaces within Portsmouth is high so this may get high usage.
NFPD - Pitts Deep - NFNPA	Tanners Lane (Pitts Deep) Interpretation and vehicle barrier / gate	15	c13,770	This would seem a good way to stop vehicle access - but not people.

Site Location and Proposer	Summary	Total score	Project cost £s	GROUP NOTES
SWHH - Hill Head - FBC	Creation of a new 500m long Pathway suitable for wheelchairs, which will link with an existing path (also needing renovation) to form a 1km circular route around an area of established grassland and mixed scrub. Creation of 2 900m ² wildflower meadows proposed to improve the attractiveness of route and biodiversity.	13	46,000	Not certain how many visits this relatively small site would attract away from the coast. Accessibility issue considered to be a positive, but this user group do not tend to be high disturbance creators. However the year round path may be a draw for a wider demographic who are then well managed here. Need to expand monitoring to ask question to all users re would they otherwise have visited the coast. Some concern that this would actually attract more visitors to the coast, this risk was considered low.
SWHL - Hook Links - FBC	2.5km of wheelchair friendly path, establish safe entry points, resurface 1km of path, repair and resurface part of road and create 2 disabled parking spaces. 140m of stockfencing around ponds.	11	47,930 requested, 42,130 supported	Good overall scheme however the pond should not be fenced through this scheme, as there is no evidence that the SPA birds use it.
LHML - Milton Locks - PCC	Interpretation / engagement for the High Tide Wader Roost Island - Coastal Partners Project	11	46,000 requested, 23,000 supported	This would seem to be a public engagement initiative related to the wider coast, not directly related to this specific high tide roost. The promotion and support is a positive, but the route and outreach element here is not comprehensive enough. Scored on Interpretation and footprint elements only.

Site Location and Proposer	Summary	Total score	Project cost £s	GROUP NOTES
Eastern Solent - HBC	Pilot Project to trial techniques to deter informal access onto the foreshore - Coastal Partners project	17	35,000	Scored, but not able to support as a pilot project is not considered to be a robust use of mitigation funds.
CHNO - Northney - CHC	Feasibility Study for Shingle Banks near North Common, Hayling Island	9	10,000	Scored, but not able to support as a feasibility study is not considered to be a robust use of mitigation funds.
CHMA - Marina - CHC	Install 250 metres of offroad fencing and hedgerow along Dell Quay Road (leading to education centre) - increased pedestrian safety and provision to screen birds.	9	3,000	RED FLAG RAISED BY NE - There is already a planning application related to this, possibly increasing pressure next to a sensitive site, so it would need to provide it's own mitigation, it would be inappropriate for our mitigation money to pay for their mitigation need. THIS PROJECT IS NOT TO BE SUPPORTED
NFLK - Lymington Keyhaven - NFNPA	Oxey Marsh (Lymington–Keyhaven Nature Reserve) – Habitat creation, physical measures and interpretation	20	35,270	RED FLAG RAISED BY NE - "If off-site habitat creation (or enhancement) is being proposed to offset a likely impact of significant recreational disturbance, then this would be a compensatory measure. It is not the type of impact that determines whether a measure is mitigation or compensation – it's whether the measure (whatever and wherever it may be) is intended to avoid, prevent or acceptably reduce the likely risk/impact from occurring on the site in the first place, or to offset/compensate for that risk/impact where it cannot be avoided, prevented or reduced."

Site Location and Proposer	Summary	Total score	Project cost £s	GROUP NOTES
				<p>Measures to improve or increase habitat availability for the birds fall within the latter part of the mitigation hierarchy, of offsetting/compensating for risks or impacts where they cannot be avoided, prevented or reduced.</p> <p>THIS PROJECT IS NOT TO BE SUPPORTED</p>

KEY

- Year 1 (2023/24)
- Year 2 (2024/25)
- Supported
- Not supported

9. In the above table, the recommendation is to fund £303,362 of projects in year 1, and £400,000 of projects in year 2.

Additional comment related to year 2 funding

10. Under the current proposals, £400k would be given to support the Fishlakes Meadow site in year 2 (2024/25). The sub-group and project board were keen to support the boardwalks and bridges elements of the proposal as they would see the creation of all-weather walkways. With these in place it was felt it may prove to be an attractive location for people to spend their recreational time away from the coast.
11. However, the Project Board recognised that for this to be the case, the site would need to act as a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and has therefore requested from the applicant additional information about the catchment of their visitors in order to be able to better judge if this site is able to attract visitors away from the coast. The Project Board would ask for delegated powers to make the final decision on the release of funds to support this site once they have had an opportunity to consider the additional information requested from the applicant.

RECOMMENDATION

It is RECOMMENDED that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:-

- a) NOTES the contents of this report;
- b) NOTES that Joint Committee will be asked to ENDORSE Bird Aware Solent's proposed allocation of funding for site specific projects
- c) NOTES that Joint Committee will be asked to ENDORSE Bird Aware Solent's request for delegated powers to make the final decision on the release of the second year of funding allocation once sufficient supplementary evidence has been submitted by the applicant and reviewed by the project board; and
- d) consider any comments to be passed to the Joint Committee for consideration.

ENQUIRIES:

For further information on this report please contact:-

Anna Parry
Bird Aware Solent Partnership Manager
Tel: 02392 834140
Email: Anna.Parry@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

Appendix 1 - Bird Aware Site-specific projects scoring September 2022

Table 1: Projects

Site Location	Proposer	Type	Summary	Weighted scores					Total score	Project cost £s	GROUP NOTES
				Scale	E'ness	Value	Deliv.	Monit.			
SWLS - Lee on Solent	Gosport Borough Council	New or enhanced greenspace	Alver Valley Country Park Improvements: incorporation of additional land into the Country Park and the creation of a dog training park.	4	6	4	2	1	17	94,000	Good project with potential for good impact. Support for the dog area.
INLAND - Fishlakes Meadow	Test Valley Borough Council	Enhanced greenspace / site specific visitor management and access improvements	The element of the project for which funding is being applied for will provide access infrastructure including bridges, boardwalks and a high quality hide and viewing platform at the Fishlakes Meadows Nature Reserve. The project will create a circular walk linking a number of public footpaths in the area and will facilitate access to the site and surrounding footpath network for people with mobility issues by creating a link which would bypass an existing bridge which is only accessible via a series of steps.	4	4	4	2	3	17	790,000 requested, 400,000 supported	No support for Bird Hide or lift, scoring only related to Boardwalk and bridges element. Scored for circular walk and bridges element only. Scores well if considered effectively to be a SANG.
CHEH - East Head	Chichester Harbour Conservancy	Site Specific Visitor Management	6 marker buoys at 4 sites to target watersports and stop them landing at hightide roost areas. Each site is approx 200m-300m long. Accompanied by email to 5000 promoting their presence.	4	4	4	2	3	17	13,692	There was general support for this project, especially given the pressures on high tide roosts in the area. The monitoring was also comprehensive.
NFHS - Hurst Spit	New Forest National Parks Authority	Public engagement and education/ site specific visitor management	New Lane / Cut bridge)- Interpretation and physical measures (post and fence rail) Fencing and vehicle barrier	4	4	4	2	2	16	c10270	Good Project in recognised problem spot.
PHHI - Halsea	Portsmouth City Council	Site Specific Visitor Management	To design and construct a dog activity area and 'off the lead' dog enclosure to draw dog walkers away from the sensitive bird areas - Coastal Partners Project	4	4	4	2	1	15	60,500	It was recognised that supporting the dog walking community is a key delivery strand, also that pressure on public spaces within Portsmouth is high so this may get high usage.
NFPD - Pitts Deep	New Forest National Parks Authority	Public engagement and education/ site specific visitor management	Tanners Lane (Pitts Deep) Interpretation and vehicle barrier / gate	4	4	4	1	2	15	c13,770	This would seem a good way to stop vehicle access - but not people.
SWHH - Hill Head	Fareham Borough Council	Site Specific Visitor Management	Creation of a new 500m long Pathway suitable for wheelchairs, which will link with an existing path (also needing renovation) to form a 1km circular route around an area of established grassland and mixed scrub. Creation of 2 900m2 wildflower meadows proposed to improve the attractiveness of route and biodiversity.	2	4	2	2	3	13	46,000	Not certain how many visits this relatively small site would attract away from the coast. Accessibility issue considered to be a positive, but this user group do not tend to be high disturbance creators. However the year round path may be a draw for a wider demographic who are then well managed here. Need to expand monitoring to ask question to all users re would they otherwise have visited the coast. Some concern that this would actually attract more visitors to the coast, this risk was considered low.
SWHL - Hook Links	Fareham Borough Council	Enhanced greenspace / site specific visitor management and access improvements	2.5km of wheelchair friendly path, establish safe entry points, resurface 1km of path, repair and resurface part of road and create 2 disabled parking spaces. 140m of stockfencing around ponds.	2	2	2	3	2	11	47,930	Good overall scheme however the pond should not be fenced through this scheme, as there is no evidence that the SPA birds use it.
LHML - Milton Locks	Portsmouth City Council	Public engagement and education	Interpretation / engagement for the High Tide Wader Roost Island - Coastal Partners Project	2	4	2	2	1	11	46,000	This would seem to be a public engagement initiative related to the wider coast, not directly related to this specific high tide roost. Will the costs hold for funding in 23/24 when the bid mentions economies of scale in 22/23 as site construction works already taking place/on site. The promotion and support is a positive, but the route and outreach element here is not comprehensive enough. Scored on Interpretation and footprint elements only.
Eastern Solent	Havant Borough Council	Site Specific Visitor Management	Pilot Project to trial techniques to deter informal access onto the foreshore - Coastal Partners project	6	2	4	2	3	17	35,000	Scored, but not able to support as a pilot project is not considered to be a robust use of mitigation funds.
CHNO - Northney	Chichester Harbour Conservancy	Bird refuge and habitat provision/improvement	Feasibility Study for Shingle Banks near North Common, Hayling Island	2	2	2	2	1	9	10,000	Scored, but not able to support as a feasibility study is not considered to be a robust use of mitigation funds.
CHMA - Marina	Chichester Harbour Conservancy	Site Specific Visitor Management	Install 250 metres of offroad fencing and hedgerow along Dell Quay Road (leading to education centre) - increased pedestrian safety and provision to screen birds.	2	2	2	2	1	9	3,000	RED FLAG RAISED BY NE - There is already a planning application related to this, possibly increasing pressure next to a sensitive site, so it would need to provide it's own mitigation, it would be inappropriate for our mitigation money to pay for their mitigation need. THIS PROJECT IS NOT TO BE SUPPORTED
NFLK - Lymington Keyhaven	New Forest National Parks Authority	Public engagement and education/bird refuge and habitat provision/improvement	Oxey Marsh (Lymington-Keyhaven Nature Reserve) – Habitat creation, physical measures and interpretation	4	6	6	2	2	20	c35,270	RED FLAG RAISED BY NE - "If off-site habitat creation (or enhancement) is being proposed to offset a likely impact of significant recreational disturbance, then this would be a compensatory measure. It is not the type of impact that determines whether a measure is mitigation or compensation – it's whether the measure (whatever and wherever it may be) is intended to avoid, prevent or acceptably reduce the likely risk/impact from occurring on the site in the first place, or to offset/compensate for that risk/impact where it cannot be avoided, prevented or reduced." Measures to improve or increase habitat availability for the birds fall within the latter part of the mitigation hierarchy, of offsetting/compensating for risks or impacts where they cannot be avoided, prevented or reduced. THIS PROJECT IS NOT TO BE SUPPORTED

KEY	
Year 1	Total Project Cost
Year 2	Total Project Cost
Not supported	£303,362
Full Support	£400,000