Report to the Partnership for South Hampshire Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: **3 December 2025**

Report of: **Paddy May, Bird Aware Board Chair**
Anna Parry, Bird Aware Solent Partnership Manager

Subject: **Bird Aware Solent Partnership Site-specific Project Funding**

SUMMARY

The report will seek endorsement from the Joint Committee for the Bird Aware Partnership's recommendations for how Site Specific Project (SSP) funding should be allocated for 2026/7.

The paper also seeks endorsement from the Joint Committee for a series of changes to the SSP process which are intended to support the implementation of capital projects which bring about meaningful mitigation gains.

RECOMMENDATION

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

i) NOTE the contents of this report;

ii) NOTE that the PfSH Joint Committee will be asked to:

(a) NOTE and ENDORSE the Bird Aware Partnership's proposed allocation of funding for site specific projects;

(b) NOTE and ENDORSE the granting of delegated powers to the Chair of the Bird Aware Partnership's Project Board to consider recommendations from the SSP Group pertaining to any project proposal changes that come forward between the Project Board meeting and the PfSH Joint Committee meeting;

(c) NOTE and ENDORSE the creation of a contingency fund and the granting of delegated powers to the Chair of the Project Board regarding its operational management. Projects requiring higher levels of support through the contingency fund are to be referred to the Chair of the PfSH Chief Executives Committee and Chair of the PfSH Joint Committee for a final decision; and

iii) CONSIDER any comments that should be passed on to the Joint Committee for its consideration.

PLEASE NOTE this report is a draft version of the PfSH Joint Committee report and is subject to change before being considered by the PfSH Joint Committee. The final report will be published ahead of the PfSH Joint Committee.

Background

1. The Bird Aware Strategy includes support for Site-Specific projects to deliver mitigation measures. There is an annual allocation of £440k for this work and monitoring the effectiveness of it.

2. Earlier this year, all Partners were invited to prepare and submit project proposals for this funding and a 'site specific projects' subgroup has scored the proposals that came forward.

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 RSPB 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 who 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 eight proposed projects, in total requesting £636,816 of funding. These bids contained a good spread of project type and size.

6. Bids were scored as below. Please note that these scores relate to the proposals proximity to our aims and objectives, and their ability to deliver mitigation gains. They are not intended as a reflection of the worthiness of the project, just the focus of our work.

7. The scores given have then been used to prioritise the funding recommendations which are outlined below in Table 1 and presented in full in the agreed scoring sheet circulated with this report as **Appendix 1**.

8. Based on their experience over previous rounds of scoring, the Partnership consider that for a project to be suitably robust and impactful to warrant funding, it usually needs to achieve a score of around 14 or above. With this in mind, not all projects are recommended for approval.

9. The value of projects recommended for approval is £277,787.20 and the underspend from this year will be carried forward into the next, to ensure that suitable support is given to delivering this strand of mitigation provision over time.

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Table 1, Summary of projects and scores

Site Location	Proposer	Type	Summary	Total score	Project cost £s	Notes
Hook Links - SWHL	Hampshire County Council	Site Specific visitor Management	A fence across Hook Spit with interpretation panels, and a waymarker post.	19	£ 6,897.00	Straightforward and effective localised project with an important HT roost. Overseen by the Countryside service with no historic issues delivering project. Natural England consent needed. Agreed that consideration for monitoring could have been more in depth.
The Kench - LHSC	Hampshire County Council	Site Specific visitor Management	A fence across the spit with interpretation panels, and an interpretation board at the site entrance.	19	£ 5,718.90	Straightforward and effective localised project with an important HT roost. Overseen by the Countryside Service with no historic issues delivering projects. Agreed that consideration for monitoring could have been more in depth.
Alver Valley Country Park - SWLS, SWBR and SWSB	Gosport Borough Council	New or enhanced strategic greenspace	Alver Valley Country Park Improvements: incorporation of the Alver Marshes and the creation of a dog training park	18	£ 118,208.00	Project enhances an existing SANG, providing additional space for dog walkers, though the location is quite isolated. The project is strengthened by match funding and the donation of land. Application was successful in previous round but faced issues which have now been addressed.

Dell Quay/Chichester Marina - CHMA	Chichester Harbour Conservancy	Site Specific visitor Management	Dell Quay to Salterns Copse permissive path resurface, hedge infilling and targeted post and rail fencing	16	£ 146,963.30	Straightforward & localised project. Positive outcomes are expected but behavioural change may take time to come forward. Some concerns have been raised about the potential for increased site usage as a result of the work. The project would have been strengthened by including hedge-laying along the outer shore path and signage. Consideration is needed regarding the suitability of limestone chippings here. Recommended that the partner organisation be encouraged to apply for further funding for signage.
					£ 277,787.20	Total cost of successful projects.
Lepe Loop - NFLE	Hampshire County Council	Site improvements	Improve access and interpretation for the 'Lepe Loop'	9	£ 28,078.60	Localised project with a tried and tested approach however concerns were raised about its overall effectiveness. It was acknowledged that Lepe is primarily used for coastal recreation, and improvements to inland paths may not significantly influence user behaviour. Health and safety concerns remain due to the road being the primary route. Further engagement with Lepe is needed to look at alternative projects.
Sophies Pond - SWRV	Hampshire County Council	Site improvements	Path improvements and interpretation at Sophies Pond	9	£ 40,000.00	Localised project. HCC Countryside Service has a strong track record in project delivery but there are concerns about its overall effectiveness, particularly whether it will successfully divert users away from the shoreline. The projected costs are not considered proportionate to the likely mitigation it would deliver. Monitoring plans were not explored in depth. Signage is identified as a beneficial.

Ryde - IWRY	Isle of Wight Council	Site specific visitor Management/ Bird refuge	Sanderling Rescue and Recovery	0	£ 14,000.00	Application to fund strategic partnership working for the Sanderling at Ryde. Agreed that what they are asking for is necessary and valuable work, but not something that is in line with Bird Awares Strategy and is not direct mitigation. Partner will be encouraged to work with Bird Aware to look at alternative projects to fund.
Hill Head - SWHH	Hampshire County Council	Bird refuge	Fencing across the Spit at Hill Head Harbour	16	PROJECT WITHDRAWN £ 6,060.00	Straightforward and effective localised project with an important HT roost. Overpriced due to not having enough time to obtain accurate quotes (this can be monitored via invoices). Agreed that consideration for monitoring could have been more in depth. WIthdrawn owing to issues with the sailing club which require access to the area.
					£ 636,816.00	Total cost of all submitted projects.

Key

	Recommended for approval
	Not recommended for approval
	Withdrawn from process

Refining the Application Process

10. After the SSP group had scored the applications, the project officer asked that they provide feedback from the process and any recommendations they had for improving it. These are summarised below, together with recommendations put forward by current and previous applicants of the scheme.

Achieving Best Possible Outcomes

11. There have been occasions where either the SSP Officer, or a member of the SSP scoring panel has felt that a project proposal is adequate, or close to the approval threshold, but it could be enhanced by (usually) small additional works. An example of this might be the installation of signage to attract people to a new or enhanced path being created with SSP funding, designed to take users to a less sensitive area. Under the current process, there is no route to get this change incorporated into the project proposal and funding schedule.

12. Therefore, from the next round of funding we add in an additional step to the current process (see Table 2 below), allowing for the SSP Officer and the Monitoring Officer to conduct a site visit of the sites where proposals have a recommendation for approval (n.b. this will not replace the site visit the SSP Officer requests to have with the Project Manager prior to the submission of their application). This will be mandatory for those sites where the scoring panel has recommended additional changes to the scheme, and at the discretion of the SSP Officer at those sites where no additional proposals have been raised. During this visit, they will feedback any recommendations for enhancements which were made during the SSP scoring meeting and will also use their specialist knowledge of mitigation to techniques to add any more they consider appropriate.

13. Project Managers will then be invited to resubmit their proposals incorporating these further improvements and these can be rescored by the sub team who assess the under £5K projects (SSP Officer, Monitoring Officer and Partnership Manager) and then shared to the wider SSP Group for consideration.

14. This step is proposed as a way of ensuring site-by-site flexibility and achieving the most beneficial mitigation proposal out of each scheme, whilst not overburdening the SSP Group by asking the to evaluate everything in full twice over. This revised score will then be considered by the Project Board prior to being passed to the Joint Committee for endorsement.

15. Should a Project Manager wish to modify a proposal AFTER the Project Board has approved it, but prior to the PfSH Joint Committee meeting, then we would again look to the sorts of protocols/authorisation route established within the under £5k project scheme and seek for the SSP sub group to rescore it and make recommendations to the wider SSP Group and for these to then be put to the Chair of the Project Board for final consideration.

Timeline

16. The SSP Group had intended to allocate 2 years' worth of funding during this current round of applications. This has not been possible and given the underspend this year and in previous years (through projects being withdrawn due to delays with the legal agreements) we are now proposing to run it annually whilst we rebuild confidence in the scheme and allocate the previous underspend.

17. Below is set out the current timeline and a new proposed timeline. This intention with the new version is to allow Project Managers as long as possible to formulate project proposals and to give ample time for them to work with the SSP Officer to refine their proposals such that they offer strong mitigation gains.

Table 2: Timelines

Milestone	**Old Timing**[1]	**Proposed New Timing**
Open the Call for Projects	February	November
Close applications	June	June
Score projects	July	July
Site visit, refinement and potential re-score	N/A	July - Sept
Recommendations made to Project Board	Sept/Oct	Sept/Oct
Recommendations made to PfSH JC	Dec	Dec
Legal and Monitoring Agreements Finalised	Spring	Jan
Funds allocated	April	April

Contingency planning

18. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be aware of a previous decision from the Chief Executives Committee to not allow any flexibility to project proposals after they had PfSH approval.

19. Whilst their firm stance on this issue was appreciated at the time it was taken, as this delivery strand has matured, at times it's been viewed as a potential barrier to achieving maximum project outcomes. With this in mind, we would like to have the backing of the Chief Executives Committee and Joint Committee to operate with a little more flexibility.

20. The proposal is that we retain 10% of the workstream funding (£40k) to create a contingency fund. This would then allow Project Managers who experience unforeseen circumstances (e.g. a seawall breach or a change in availability of originally proposed building materials) to put forward a business case to make the necessary modification to their original proposals and access the fund to facilitate this.

[1] Not taking into account the previous longterm delays pertaining to the issuing of the Legal agreements

21. Similar to above, we anticipate that the SSP sub group would evaluate their request, particularly considering if the project would still have scored well and passed the funding threshold if the revised costs had been known at the beginning. They will then make a recommendation to the Chair of the Project Board for approval.

22. Should this contingency fund be created, we have foreseen 2 different scenarios related to how it could be allocated. The first relates to proportionality, in that the Project Manager would only be able to access up to an additional 10% of the value they were originally awarded. This is fair and allows all projects to access it if needed, yet it remains restrictive and, in some cases, might not allow for the required overspend to be met, or the best mitigation results be achieved.

23. The second would allow for a Project Manager to be able to access up to the entire year's allocation of the contingency funding. This might bring about better project and mitigation outcomes, but could see an unfair approach if one project took it all, then subsequently requests had to be declined due to lack of funds. Therefore it is considered that requests to access the contingency fund will be examined on a case-by-case basis and a variety of factors used to determine the outcome. This may include, but not be limited to factors such as the reason for accessing the fund, the overall score of the project (therefore its mitigation value) and the known likelihood of other projects seeking to draw on the same fund. When there is not a clear solution, the SSP Officer and Partnership Manager may call upon the views of the wider SSP Group prior to making a recommendation to the Chair of the Project Board.

24. Where a request to access contingency funds exceeds either £20k or 20% of the original project cost, if the Chair of the Project Board is minded to endorse it, then the rationale will be presented to the Chair of the PfSH Chief Executives Committee and the Chair of the Joint Committee, together with the revised scores and a recommendation on how to proceed.

25. For clarity, it is not intended to make the contingency fund available to the smaller scale under £5k projects. Those needing additional funds to implement such a scheme would be expected to withdraw their original proposal and reapply with the new costing information.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is RECOMMENDED that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

i) NOTE the contents of this report

ii) NOTE that the PfSH Joint Committee will be asked to:

(a) NOTE and ENDORSE the Bird Aware Partnership's proposed allocation of funding for site specific projects

(b) NOTE and ENDORSE the granting of delegated powers to the Chair of the Bird Aware Partnership's Project Board to consider recommendations from the SSP Group pertaining to any project proposal changes that come forward between the Project Board meeting and the PfSH Joint Committee meeting.

(c) NOTE and ENDORSE the creation of a contingency fund and the granting of delegated powers to the Chair of the Project Board regarding its operational management. Projects requiring higher levels of support through the contingency fund are to be referred to the Chair of the PfSH Chief Executives Committee and Chair of the PfSH Joint Committee for a final decision.

iii) CONSIDER any comments that should be passed on to the Joint Committee for its consideration.

ENQUIRIES:

For further information on this report please contact:-
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Bird Aware Site-Specific Projects Scoring 2025

Table 1: Projects

Site Location	Proposer	Type	Summary	Weighted scores					Total score	Project cost £s	Notes
				Scale	E'ness	Value	Deliv.	Monit.			
Hook Links - SWHL	Hampshire County Council	Site Specific visitor Management	A fence across Hook Spit with interpretation panels, and a waymarker post.	4	6	4	3	2	19	£ 6,897.00	Straightforward and effective localised project with an important HT roost. Overseen by the Countryside service with no historic issues delivering project. Natural England consent needed. Agreed that consideration for monitoring could have been more in depth.
The Kench - LHSC	Hampshire County Council	Site Specific visitor Management	A fence across the spit with interpretation panels, and an interpretation board at the site entrance.	4	6	4	3	2	19	£ 5,718.90	Straightforward and effective localised project with an important HT roost. Overseen by the Countryside Service with no historic issues delivering projects. Agreed that consideration for monitoring could have been more in depth.
Alver Valley Country Park - SWLS, SWBR and SWSB	Gosport Borough Council	New or enhanced strategic greenspace	Alver Valley Country Park Improvements: incorporation of the Alver Marshes and the creation of a dog training park	4	4	6	2	2	18	########## ####	Project enhances an existing SANG, providing additional space for dog walkers, though the location is quite isolated. The project is strengthened by match funding and the donation of land. Application was successful in previous round but faced issues which have now been addressed.
Dell Quay/Chichester Marina - CHMA	Chichester Harbour Conservancy	Site Specific visitor Management	Dell Quay to Salterns Copse permissive path resurface, hedge infilling and targeted post and rail fencing	4	4	4	2	2	16	########## ####	Straightforward & localised project. Positive outcomes are expected but behavioural change may take time to come forward. Some concerns have been raised about the potential for increased site usage as a result of the work. The project would have been strengthened by including hedge-laying along the outer shore path and signage. Consideration is needed regarding the suitability of limestone chippings here. Recommended that the partner organisation be encouraged to apply for further funding for signage.
Hill Head - SWHH	Hampshire County Council	Bird refuge	Fencing across the Spit at Hill Head Harbour	4	6	2	2	2	16	£ 6,060.00	Straightforward and effective localised project with an important HT roost. Overpriced due to not having enough time to obtain accurate quotes (this can be monitored via invoices). Agreed that consideration for monitoring could have been more in depth.
										£ 283,847.20	Total cost of successful projects (Including withdrawn applications)
										£ 277,787.20	Total cost of successful projects moving forward
Lepe Loop - NFLE	Hampshire County Council	Site improvements	Improve access and interpretation for the 'Lepe Loop'	2	2	2	2	1	9	£ 28,078.60	Localised project with a tried and tested approach however concerns were raised about its overall effectiveness. It was acknowledged that Lepe is primarily used for coastal recreation, and improvements to inland paths may not significantly influence user behaviour. Health and safety concerns remain due to the road being the primary route. Further engagement with Lepe is needed to look at alternative projects.
Sophies Pond - SWRV	Hampshire County Council	Site improvements	Path improvements and interpretation at Sophies Pond	2	1	1	2	1	7	£ 40,000.00	Localised project. HCC Countryside Service has a strong track record in project delivery but there are concerns about its overall effectiveness, particularly whether it will successfully divert users away from the shoreline. The projected costs are not considered proportionate to the likely mitigation it would deliver. Monitoring plans were not explored in depth. Signage is identified as a beneficial.
Ryde - IWRY	Isle of Wight Council	Site specific visitor Management/ Bird refuge/ Public engagement and	Sanderling Rescue and Recovery						0	########## #####	Application to fund strategic partnership working for the Sanderling at Ryde. Agreed that what they are asking for is necessary and valuable work, but not something that is in line with Bird Awares Strategy and is not direct mitigation. Partner will be encouraged to work with Bird Aware to look at alternative projects to fund.
										£ 365,925.80	Total cost of all submitted projects.

Funding score threshold: 15
Successful projects
Unsuccessful projects