

Report 4: National Park Partnerships Limited (NPPL): Subscription for 2023/24

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to update members on the operation of NNPL, outline the benefits received by the Authority and confirm the Authority's subscription for the current year 2023/24.

2. Recommendations

The Authority is recommended to:

- a. Note the operation of National Parks Partnership Ltd (NPPL) and the current benefits to the Authority.
- b. Approve a financial contribution of £10,000 to NPPL for the financial year from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

3. Implications

- a. Financial: Agreement to recommendation (b) would result in commitment of a further £10,000 to NPPL in the financial year from 1 April 2023 (current year). This is not in the baseline budget plan but can be funded in year from the existing fundraising budget.
- b. Equalities: One of the aims of NPPL is to raise funds to support the engagement of all people in society with national parks.
- c. Link to Business Plan: The Authority's engagement with NPPL has the potential to benefit all aims of the Business Plan and, in particular, helping the Authority to be Fit for the Future.

4. Background and operations to date

- a. National Parks Partnership Ltd (NPPL) was established in 2016 as a Limited Liability Partnership, to take forward the development of national level commercial sponsorship on behalf of the National Park Authorities (NPAs) in the UK. Whilst jointly owned by the 15 UK Park Authorities, NPPL has a management board comprising a mix of representatives from NPAs and the private sector, with a majority of management board members representing/drawn from NPAs.
- b. NPPL has now been operating for almost over six years. It has secured several significant sponsorship deals including with Columbia clothing and more recently with BMW. In addition, a number of lesser value, but nevertheless beneficial, sponsorship arrangements have been developed with a range of other companies with Sykes, Forest Holidays and Clif Bar, Harper Collins and others. The Authority has directly benefitted from the majority of these. In addition, NPPL has paid a small return of £3,500 to the Authority in 2019.
- c. Members received an update on the sponsorship activities and future plans from Cat Hawkins, Chair of NPPL in December 2022.

- d. Beyond its original commercial sponsorship role, over the past three years NPPL has been developing a relationship with a consultancy company Palladium, to seek to develop pathways for green finance to support nature recovery and net zero activities in national parks. In 2021 the Revere Initiative was launched as the name for this developing relationship with Palladium. A small number of projects have been trialled in a few national parks, including a significant peatland project in the Cairngorms National Park. Members received a presentation on this work from William Hawes in June 2023.

5. Defra Funding

- a. In the week commencing 27 November 2023, government published its response to the Landscapes (Glover) Review. This included proposals to establish an England Protected Landscapes Partnership.
- b. One of the first priorities of the still forming partnership is to build knowledge and capacity across national parks and national landscapes (the new name for AONBs). Defra are funding NPPL £1.4m over the next two years to support this work in national parks and broaden its work to build capacity in national landscapes. NPPL has been recruiting during this year to deliver this programme of work.
- c. This work is viewed as important to Defra in respect of broadening the funding base of national parks and national landscapes, and it is considered important that the Authority continue to engage with this work and the wider work of NPPL as working through National Parks England we continue to make the case for adequate core funding for national park authorities.

6. Benefits to NNPA

- a. In the first five years of operations the Authority contributed £58,500 to the establishment and operation of NPPL. In addition, approximately £25,000 of officer time was invested in NPPL related work. The Authority has received benefits of just over this value of these combined contributions.
- b. In the current financial year NNPA will receive £60,000 in funding from NPPL via the BMW partnership. This will employ two entry-level seasonal Rangers, to be part of Northumberland National Park Authority's wider on-site Ranger team.
- c. The new positions will focus on nature and climate action and will play a key role in delivering the National Park's core purposes. There will be three main areas of focus: Communication with public visitors to convey key messages regarding nature, wildlife protection and conservation. Practical work in the National Park, carrying out conservation tasks such as tree planting, renaturing verges, peatland restoration work, species conservation support, data and evidence gathering through surveys and general site maintenance and project support. The roles will also support activities which engage people including supporting the guided walks programme, assisting activities for organised groups and volunteers, supporting citizen science and supporting the NNPA learning programme.

- d. A project development meeting has also taken place between newly appointed members of the NNPL team (David Bourque) and NNPA, to discuss nature recovery and climate action projects and prioritise these for corporate approaches.
- e. Whilst recruitment has been undertaken by NNPL, prospects have been quiet, but we are now starting to see activity increase as the new team at NPPL establish their roles. We have however been informed we may be able apply for a £2,000 travel grant from Forest Holidays and a £5,000-£8,000 grant from Amex, although this funding cannot be guaranteed at this point.
- f. Overall, this is considered a good return on investment in the current year.

7. Conclusions

- a. NPPL is currently delivering a good return on investment for the Authority through the BMW sponsorship deal for electric charging points and to support our seasonal rangers (identified by Review Panel as an important role to maintain).
- b. Through its work on green finance through Revere and its development programme with the support of Defra NPPL has the potential to deliver more return in future years.
- c. Members are recommended to support the ongoing operation of NPPL through a contribution of £10,000 for the current financial year 2023/24.

Contact Officer: For further information contact: Tony Gates, Chief Executive (National Park Officer) on tony.gates@nnpa.org.uk

Background papers: None