

## **Thames Basin Heaths Access Management Partnership**

### **Draft Access Management Action Plan 2008 - 2009**

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. This paper sets out draft proposals for a co-ordinated approach to strategic access management in the affected sub-regional area. It may be helpful for it to be read in conjunction with the proposed Constitution for the SPA Access Management Partnership and the SPA Delivery Framework agreed by the Joint Strategic Board at its meeting of 27 March 2008.

#### **2. Background**

- 2.1. The Thames Basin Heaths Access Management Partnership (AMP) includes representatives from organisations that own or manage land within and around the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. It also includes representatives from national, regional and sub-regional bodies with a responsibility or other interest in countryside management in the area.
- 2.2. The Partnership first met in November 2007 and its role was formally recognised by the Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board (JSPB) at the latter's meeting on 27 March 2008. Its objectives, as set out in its Constitution, briefly include providing technical advice to the Board, sharing information and skills amongst its members, delivering public information and education initiatives and other associated activities.
- 2.3. The Action Plan sets out proposals to assist and support delivery of initiatives relating to access management. The generally agreed approach to be taken is to emphasise the use of 'soft' measures, involving least restriction on recreational activities by the public. Such measures will involve encouraging responsible visitor behaviour to minimise disturbance of sensitive areas and to promote the use of alternative, less sensitive but attractive sites in the area to divert or intercept visits that would otherwise add pressure on the SPA, its habitats and its protected wildlife species.
- 2.4. The introduction of harder, more restrictive measures, such as car park closures, fencing of SPA areas and a stricter policing role for countryside staff is generally viewed as unattractive to the public, likely to meet with considerable resistance and difficult to resource on a strategic wide basis. These may be applied at the SSSI level or other smaller land parcel as long as it does not result in impacts to other parts of the SPA or jeopardise other SPA initiatives.
- 2.5. In addition, with increasing visitors some of the alternative SANG sites may be sensitive to disturbance from visitor pressures and activities, so the importance of engaging support for and raising awareness of conservation issues with the public must be emphasised.

### **3. The Role of the Access Management Partnership**

- 3.1. Most of the representatives on the AMP are professional countryside management staff who are engaged regularly in site-based operations and activities. They therefore have particular expertise and experience in both conservation and recreational issues and direct awareness of the pressures on sensitive environments. The AMP provides a forum for skill, information and, potentially, resource sharing so that each of the individuals and their organisations can benefit from the combined resource of the whole. This opportunity has already been developed through joint training events.
- 3.2. Whilst the AMP represents a significant combined resource, the individual organisations involved are already working at their capacity. The SPA impact avoidance strategy requires additional measures to be implemented and these will require additional resources. Particularly in respect of public information, interpretation, education, communications and common administrative support, there will be a need for specialised skills which are not necessarily available at present. There should also be opportunities for economies of scale to be applied through common initiatives in these areas to the benefit of all member organisations.
- 3.3. The key role of the AMP is therefore primarily to make best use of its combined expertise in:
  - Deciding what initiatives will be most effective in developing a long-term access management strategy for the area.
  - Establishing a draft programme for action on access management.
  - Wherever possible, agreeing on collaborative approaches.
  - Implementing agreed initiatives directly where these can be delivered from existing resources.
  - Making recommendations to the JSPB on proposals for additional resources where needed and the funding and management implications of these.
- 3.4. Some of these issues will best be addressed through the focus of small working groups; some may require external assistance or inputs, particularly from Natural England and some will be most effectively progressed by dedicated staff, as proposed in the ISDP and echoed in this report. But the outcomes on SPA access management will benefit from participation and inputs from all members of the AMP.

### **4. The Action Plan**

- 4.1. The Action Plan sets out a number of proposals and initiatives, based upon the objectives set out in the AMP's draft Constitution (and numbered accordingly) and the outcomes of the first two meetings of the AMP in November 2007 and January 2008. It aims at early delivery, up to March 2009, of projects and tasks that will demonstrate tangible progress on access management in respect of the SPA. It also aims to establish a framework of resources, systems and procedures that can address access management measures in the longer term. Finally, it sets out a basis for financial contributions to be made, probably through Section 106 agreements, towards such measures being implemented.

#### Objective 4.1 (from Constitution)

To provide technical advice, information and assistance and, as appropriate, recommendations to the Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board on matters connected with access management measures relating to the Thames Basin Heaths SPA and Suitable Accessible Natural Green Spaces (SANGS) associated with the SPA.

Item ref	Proposal	Resource	Date	Cost
1	Establish Access Management Partnership as technical advisory body for JSPB	NE, Consultant	Mar 2008	NA
2	Establish Constitution with JSPB	NE, Consultant All	June 2008	NA
3	Prepare 2008 - 09 programme with costings of proposed additional access management projects relating to SPA impact avoidance for submission to JSPB for S106 funding	All	Jun - Sep 2008	NA
4	Recommend access management measures for funding to JSPB	All or Working Group	Jun - Sep 2008	
5	Prepare costed schedule of all long-term access management measures and resources relating to SPA impact avoidance for submission to JSPB for S106 funding	Working Group / All	Jun - Nov 2008	

#### Objective 4.2

To explore, promote and exploit opportunities for sharing information, training, guidance, skills and resources between member organisations and other relevant bodies to support access management measures relating to the SPA and SANG land associated with the SPA.

Item ref	Proposal	Resource	Date	Cost
6	Convene AMP meetings on quarterly basis	NE / All	May 2008 and <>3 others - July, Nov, Feb?	NA
7	Establish interim administrative arrangements for AMP ( to be taken over by Project Support Team when in post)	NE	May 2008	Not known suggested - £1000

<b>8</b>	<b>Information collection, review and circulation to members</b>			
8a	Regular reports to the JSPB and OSG on progress with Access Management measures/co-ordinated with Planning Permission reports	All/NE/LAs	Ongoing (as often as JSPB meet)	
8a	Resource review - resource questionnaires from NE, August 2007 to be reviewed / updated-quantify costs of resources applied to SPA Zone access management	NE	May - Jul 2008	
8b	SPA access - produce summary and review of access arrangements / rights for all SPA units	All/NE	July 2008	
8c	SANG availability / effectiveness/ discounting / capacity - review of data on operative SANG sites (use LUC report for potential new sites)-	NE / Working Group / All	July 2008	
8d	Branding - Information and publicity initiatives - review of existing publicity and information materials, images, schemes, etc	All/ Working Group	July - Sep 2008	
8e	Management - review and summary of existing site management plans to inform consistency of approach where appropriate	NE / Working Group / All	Nov 2008	
<b>9</b>	<b>Training events / seminars: minimum of 4 events per annum</b>			

9a	Training event: Dog awareness / management seminar	NE, Hart DC, Hants CC	Feb 2008	Venue - (£90?) Catering - HPS (provided) Speakers - RSPB (provided) - Kennel Club (provided) - Env Health- (Hart DC) - Dorset Heathland project
9b	Training event: Bird conservation seminar	NE, RSPB	April 2008	£90 - Venue and Catering £200 - speaker
9c	Training event: Signs of success With visitors -	All	TBC	
9d	Training event: Grazing and public access - issues and approaches	WTs, Hart DC, Hants CC, Crown Est	TBC	
9e	Training event: Waymarking and path design - good practice	All	TBC	
9f	Training event: Dealing with difficult customers	Police/Hazeley Heath Training College	TBC	
9g	Seminar: Measuring and assessing visitor capacity of sites	NE / All	TBC	
9h	Controlling Fires on Heathlands and Forestry	Fire Service/FC/Dorset	TBC	

### Objective 4.3

**To assist and support the delivery of a public awareness, education and information programme, aimed particularly at users or potential users of the SPA, to promote support for the conservation objectives of the SPA and responsible visitor behaviour and to encourage the use of alternative facilities for the enjoyment of the countryside.**

Item	Proposal	Resource	Date	Cost
10	Prepare proposals for TBH SPA project support team to promote public awareness of SPA through common publicity, education and information measures and provide support and contact point for SPA related work - recommendation to JSPB	See paper from AMP for Board meeting Jun 08	June - Sep 2008	
12	Propose branding/logo to identify TBH SPA ( <i>to be used as appropriate to raise awareness in conjunction with other organisation identities</i> )	Working Group/ NE / Project support team	Nov 2008	
14	Explore opportunities for TBH SPA voluntary work from within existing organisations	Project Support Team	Feb 2009	NA
15	Produce education pack / Contact local schools to promote educational visits	Project Support Team	Feb 2009	NA
16	Develop volunteer programme(s) and resources for SPA area	Project Support Team / All		
17	<b>Initiate / Coordinate / publicise public events</b>			
17a	Heath Week 24 May - 1 June 2008	All	May 2008	
18	Establish co-ordinated programme of public events and circulate details to press, local societies, etc. with constant regular delivery of key messages	Project Support Team / All	ongoing	
19	Design, draft and print leaflets on SPA and SANG land in partnership - co-ordinate with member organisations	All/ Project Support Team	Mar 2009	
20	Design and produce common interpretation and waymarking signs	All/Consultants / suppliers	Mar 2009	

21	Invite JSPB members, Councillors, MPs/Parish Councils/Local Access Forums/ to Thames Basin Heaths SPA events on a regular basis/as appropriate	All	Ongoing	
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#### Objective 4.4

**To explore, recommend and, where appropriate, exploit opportunities for additional funding or other additional resources to promote access management measures connected with the SPA and / or SANG land.**

Item	Proposal	Resource	Date	Cost
21	Explore availability of grants from international and national sources	Working Group / NE / Hants CC / WTs / All	Nov 2008 and ongoing	NA
22	Establish itemised costs for access management measures, including dedicated project team, as basis for S.106 contributions to be collected by all affected LPAs (see items 3, 4 5 and elsewhere)	Working Group / NE / All	Jun - Nov 2008	

#### Objective 4.5

**To prepare, publish and maintain an Access Management Action Plan, to be updated annually or as otherwise agreed as appropriate by the Access Management Partnership or as requested by The Joint Strategic Partnership Board.**

Item	Proposal	Resource	Date	Cost
23	Draft Action Plan 2008 - 09 and recommend agreement to JSPB	NE, Consultant	June 2008	NA
24	Review and prepare 3 year Action Plan 2009 - 2012	Project Support Team/ NE / All	Feb 2009	NA

#### Objective 4.6

**To liaise with the Thames Basin Heaths Officer Support Group, and such other groups or bodies as may be relevant, to exchange or provide information, advice, comment and guidance on countryside access management issues relating to the Thames Basin Heaths SPA and its environs.**

Item	Proposal	Resource	Date	Cost
25	Attend TBH Officer Support Group meetings and report back	Chair / vice-chair	OSG meeting dates	NA
26	Establish liaison with Local Access Forums	All	Jan 2009	NA
27	Establish liaison with police services on anti-social behaviour	Working Group / Project Support team / All	Nov 2008	NA
28	Establish liaison with fire services on arson, fire fighting measures and resources	Working Group / Project Support team / All	Nov 2008	NA but possible costs for new equipment
29	Establish liaison with waste services on removal of fly-tipping, litter, abandoned vehicles, etc.	Working Group / Project Support team / All	Nov 2008	
30	Establish links with Dog Wardens across the local authorities	Working Group/L.As - Env Health	Jan 2009	

#### Objective 4.7

**To provide support for monitoring and survey work and measures that may be carried out to inform the effectiveness of measures taken in the interests of securing the conservation objectives of the SPA and / or to divert visitors and their associated activities to alternative locations outside the SPA.**

Item	Proposal	Resource	Date	Cost
31	Liaise with NE and other monitoring bodies (e.g. RSPB, Wildlife Trusts, Local Authorities and local societies) on proposed objectives, timing and methodologies for visitor, habitat condition and conservation objective surveys and provide support as appropriate.	NE to co-ordinate  draft strategy/completed strategy	- Monitoring workshop in May  Jun 08/Sep 08	Speakers - David Tyldesley Associates & Footprint Ecology (-Venue provided through NE (Innovation Centre, Reading -Catering £?))