

**THAMES BASIN HEATHS
JOINT STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BOARD**

Date: 3 June 2008

Subject: **Progress on Access Management Measures**

Report of: The Access Management Partnership

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Board:

1. Notes the work of the Access Management Partnership in progressing the Access Management measures.
2. Welcomes the offer of the Access Management Partnership to work together to prepare a costed proposal for discussion at the October meeting of the JSPB.

Purpose of the Report:

To provide a broad outline of the proposed Access Management structure which will allow detailed proposals to be drawn up, costed and successfully implemented.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Access Management Partnership is made up of landowners and managers of both SPA and SANG land and other countryside sites in the TBH area. Originally set up to share best practice, the Partnership recognises that there is a need to facilitate the delivery of enhanced access management on the SPA, as mitigation for new development.
- 1.2 The Access Management Partnership has agreed a draft Constitution that is attached for information. The Constitution highlights the Partnership's desire to use their considerable experience of managing the SPA and other land to advise the Joint Strategic Board on the most appropriate measures and methods of delivery to ensure a strategic approach to Access Management on the SPA.
- 1.3 The Partnership recognises that in order to be truly strategic, an Access Management proposal should aim to cover 100% of the SPA. In order to attempt to achieve 100% coverage and accommodate the differing circumstances of the Access Management partners, the partnership has agreed to spend the summer working up a costed proposal for the October Board meeting.

- 1.4 The Partnership fully expects that an assortment of mechanisms, tailored to local needs, will be necessary to enable enhanced measures to be delivered on an SPA-wide basis. The Partnership also recognises the importance of strategic co-ordination. Natural England has produced a draft Access Management Action Plan (please see attached Appendix A for information) that sets out some of the key measures, responsibilities and timescales.

2. Outline of Proposal - Strategic Team

- 2.1 The Access Management Partnership proposes a structure to allow strategic access management measures to be implemented and funded across the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. The aim is to facilitate a co-ordinated approach which best utilises existing expertise, experience and organisations. The Partnership recognises that, although effective access management is challenging to instigate and measure, there are both statutory bodies and access authorities in the partnership that have a responsibility to support the delivery of access management measures.
- 2.2 This paper does not deal with the delivery of local or strategic SANGS, which will be funded direct from Local Authority to delivery body, to ensure that initial works can be in place prior to the occupation of development. The Access Management Partnership may advise on the provision of SANGS. The Partnership will discuss where it might be appropriate for SPA wardens to provide a service that includes wardening of SANGS sites.
- 2.3 It is generally believed that the most effective way to facilitate access management is through an approach that provides for a small strategic, co-ordinating team, who can guide and support enhanced wardening and other access management measures.
- 2.4 The major function of the strategic team must be to facilitate the Access Management Partnership; to include receiving and dispensing funds to deliver the priorities of any future access management work programme, providing a co-ordinated approach throughout.
- 2.5 The strategic team should be hosted by an organisation within the Access Management Partnership that is credible and accountable, and has duties of direct relevance to access management on the TBH SPA. Appropriate expertise and remit is important to secure the participation and support of the full range of Partners.
- 2.6 The most effective body to host the team will be one that has a direct remit across the SPA, such as Natural England. If for any reason, this is not achievable, the public authority members of the AMP would prefer that the team is hosted within an organisation that is an Access Authority (i.e. County or Unitary Authority - of which a County Authority may be better placed as they are not delivering development control functions for new residential development). If neither of these options can be secured, the JSPB can rely on the Access Management Partnership to recommend a member organisation to host the strategic team.

- 2.7 The focus of the strategic team will be to support, add value and co-ordinate access management work, rather than duplicating function or replacing existing mechanisms. The Access Management Partnership will be partly responsible for guiding the strategic team, both through the agreement of an Access Management work programme and, more directly, through its recommendations.
- 2.8 Whilst the exact number of staff has not yet been agreed, it is envisaged that the strategic team would include a project manager, education officer and administrator. Depending on the conclusions of the work on monitoring, it may also be necessary to employ a monitoring officer.
- 2.9 The responsibilities of the strategic team would include:
- Receiving and managing funds.
 - Liaison with partners and other essential representatives, such as the police, fire service and dog wardens.
 - Co-ordination and facilitation of the Access Management work programme.
 - Developing and promoting the SPA brand and message.
 - Hosting joint meetings and organising training events.
 - Providing regular reports to the JSPB.
 - Creation and maintenance of a website.
 - Preparation of educational materials.
 - Co-ordinating and publicising programme of events.
 - Marketing and promotion of SANGS.
- 2.10 The strategic team could also host a monitoring officer with responsibilities to oversee, co-ordinate and collate reports based on monitoring of planning figures, visitor numbers and behaviours and bird numbers.
- 2.11 It is anticipated that a contract to deliver these services could trigger implications under procurement legislation. The Access Management Partnership would urge SEERA to take advice on any potential issues prior to the autumn JSPB meeting.

3. Outline of Proposal - “On the Ground” Access Management

- 3.1 Many of the organisations that make up the Partnership are keen to deliver access management mitigation measures, given appropriate funding. Whilst specific measures have not yet been costed, it is likely that a strategic wardening service and an agreed work programme could deliver enhanced access management of the SPA and demonstrate a co-ordinated approach, thereby avoiding displacement of recreational pressure.
- 3.2 Natural England conducted a survey of land managers in August 2007. This represents a baseline measurement of wardening effort, and can be used to agree where gaps in wardening services exist and prioritise the provision of extra wardens. This survey did not include questions relating to current education effort on the SPA, and how much of this is delivered by current warden services. Establishing this baseline must be a priority to enable progression of an access management work programme.

- 3.3 There is a general preference for support for and/or provision of additional wardening within existing organisations. In addition to building on existing expertise, this will enable considerable cost savings and may facilitate the provision of wardens who are familiar with the local area.
- 3.4 There are a small number of organisations who would wish to take advantage of a third party wardening service. In these cases, it seems likely that the local Wildlife Trust would be well placed to offer this service.
- 3.5 Wardens would focus on soft measures (e.g. promoting common principles such as dogs on leads during bird breeding season, and aiming to win “hearts and minds”) as well as some education and awareness work (e.g. educating SPA users by guided walks, informal conversations and promotion of branded leaflets and alternative sites). The Partnership will explore the various powers of enforcement on the SPA and determine how they could best be used.
- 3.6 As well as identification of an enhanced wardening resource, an access management work programme will be developed. This will set out, prioritise and cost additional measures for improved access management. Funding for the work programme would be available to all members of the Access Management Partnership, in accordance with agreed priorities. Work on an initial draft Action Plan has been undertaken by Natural England on behalf of the partnership.

4. Recommendation

- 4.1 That the Board:
1. Notes the work of the Access Management Partnership in progressing the Access Management measures.
 2. Welcomes the offer of the Access Management Partnership to work together to prepare a costed proposal for discussion at the October meeting of the JSPB.

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Attachments:

- Appendix A - Draft Access Management Action Plan
- Appendix B - AMP Constitution