



NPA/20/025

## Dartmoor National Park Authority

2 October 2020

# Changing Lives, Nurturing Nature

### Report of Director of Conservation and Communities

**Recommendation:** That Members note the submission of an Expression of Interest (Eoi) to the Green Recovery Challenge Fund (GRCF) and support the development and submission of a full application to the National Heritage Lottery Fund (NHLF) if invited to apply

## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Green Recovery Challenge Fund was launched on 14 September. The £40million fund has been developed by Defra and its Arm's-Length Bodies, including Natural England, Forestry Commission, Environment Agency and others. The National Lottery Heritage Fund is distributing and monitoring this government money.
- 1.2 The Green Recovery Challenge Fund is a short-term competitive fund to kick-start environmental renewal whilst creating and retaining a range of jobs. It is open to environmental charities and their partners to deliver projects in England.
- 1.3 The aim of the fund is to support projects that are ready to deliver and focus on nature restoration, nature-based solutions and connecting people with nature, delivering against the goals of the Government's [25 Year Environment Plan](#) (25YEP), whilst helping to sustain and build capacity in the sector. Grants of £50,000 - £5million are available to deliver environmental projects in England. The fund is open to environmental charities and their partners; projects must be ready to deliver and funding must be spent by 31 March 2022. National Park Authorities are able to apply to the fund as long as they are working in partnership with at least one environmental charity partner who will benefit significantly from the bid
- 1.4 The Fund covers three themes:
  - Nature conservation and restoration, including ecosystem restoration and species recovery;
  - Nature-based solutions, particularly for climate change mitigation and adaptation; and
  - Connecting people with nature.

All projects will need to deliver against **at least one** of these themes but may contribute to more than one or all of the above. Funding of up to 100% is available.

## 2 Background

- 2.1 Officers have been working with the National Trust, Woodland Trust and SW Lakes Trust to develop a bid for Dartmoor. Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) has offered to lead the bid given that the focus is on Dartmoor and partners are likely to be submitting other bids at a national or regional level. DNPA is currently in the best position to appoint and host the new staff.
- 2.2 The project will deliver across the National Park with a focus on land managed by the partners (over 350km<sup>2</sup>). There will be clear benefits for all partners through the trainees and Rangers who can deliver practical conservation and access work and engage with more people to support a deep connection with the National Park and the wildlife that lives here. The survey work both to inform nature recovery and visitor motivations are both key priorities in the National Park Management Plan and will help all partners support nature recovery and engage with a range of new visitors.
- 2.3 At a national level the Authority is also a named partner on two other Expressions of Interest (Eoi): one being developed by the Youth Hostels Association and other partners - Access Unlimited - to increase access for young people to visit and stay in a national park, and the second with Cycling UK (National Parks 'n' Ride Connecting People and Landscapes) to develop, deliver and promote cycling to and around Protected Landscapes. Officers fully support these bids which will bring support national and local priorities to connect people with Nature and improve health and well-being

## 3 Changing Lives, Nurturing nature: Expression of Interest

- 3.1 The Dartmoor focussed project is called **Changing Lives, Nurturing Nature**. There is a focus on **new jobs** which **support nature conservation and restoration** and **connect more people** with nature – two of the GRCF themes. We have a particular emphasis on helping **young people** into employment, this is very relevant as we know that this group are disproportionately impacted by the COVID19. Our Project builds on innovation, good practice and partnerships developed through Moor than meets the eye and on increased partnership working developed through the NPMP review process and through visitor management this summer. One outcome of this project is to develop new ways of working that enable future collaboration, resilience and effectiveness.
- 3.2 The bid has four elements
  - **Conservation and Access Trainees:** 4 one-year contracts for graduates, providing formal training and practical skills to enable them to move into full time employment. Working alongside and receiving mentoring from staff across all partners the trainees will support delivery of all activities in this proposal. The Bid includes minor works to improve living accommodation at Higher Uppacott as a base for trainees which will make the scheme more accessible for people from all socio-economic backgrounds, giving greater future resilience of the programme especially if we revert to a volunteer placement scheme. This element of the bid builds on the very successful MTMTE Eco -Skills project which saw 17 volunteer trainees move into full time employment in the sector. The bid will include the cost of a co-ordinator to manage the trainees and ensure they get a good cross section of formal training, support and mentoring from all partners.

- **Engagement Rangers:** Building on work with partners this summer and our experience with the temporary Marshals, three new joint rangers will increase the partnership presence at key sites particularly evenings and weekends. They will provide a welcome to visitors and deliver a range of activities to help people better connect with nature, including an on-going Citizen Science project and volunteering. The rangers will also pilot a collaborative Night Under Stars scheme for young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds. All partners are keen to establish new ways of working to ensure best use of resources and the joint post can be reviewed and assessed as a future means of working together.
- **Nature Recovery:** Dartmoor National Park Management Plan review highlighted the need to identify Nature Recovery Areas (NRAs) for Dartmoor to realise our ambitious vision for nature enhancement. This strand of the project will enable us to move forward with the development of pilot NRAs through surveys and mapping to help inform the expansion, connectivity and enhancement of priority habitat.
- **Visitor Motivations Study:** this element of the Project picks up a key action in the NPMP and has become even more relevant since lockdown. Visitors to Dartmoor increased significantly this summer including many new visitors and from more diverse backgrounds. Although welcome this brings challenges. With encouragement many of these visitors could become future champions but we do not currently fully understand their needs, motivations and any barriers to effectively welcome them. This element of the project will ensure the partnership has information and evidence to help us provide for, better manage and communicate with the new range of visitors now and into future.

## 4 What will this project deliver?

### 4.1 Nature restoration:

- Mapping for NRA's completed to underpin active restoration on Dartmoor and develop our future strategy allowing lessons to be learned and shared.
- Monitoring and practical conservation activity delivered at heavily used, vulnerable and sensitive sites; delivered through volunteer work groups (100 people) and Trainees, including work on ancient woodland, rhôs pasture, peatland, moorland and for species such as dormouse and pied flycatcher .

### 4.2 Connecting People with Nature

- 6,000 people gain a deeper connection with nature. Specifically, those groups whose behaviour has been challenging over past six months
- 200 young people from disadvantaged communities have opportunity to connect with nature, including a night under the stars.
- More resilient and effective partnership to better welcome and engage visitors and support positive action for conservation in the future
- Better understanding of the motivations & needs of visitors, to inform future decision making, shared with all partners and the hospitality sector.
- New visitors become ambassadors visiting regularly and supporting local business

### 4.3 Employment

- Total 7.6fte new jobs including 4 trainees post for new graduates

## 5 Timeline

- 5.1 The Expression of Interest had to be submitted on 25 September. Officers have worked quickly and effectively with partners to work up these proposals and submit the bid.
- 5.2 NHLF aim to provide feedback within 10 working days which means that our partnership will have three weeks to submit a second-round application if invited to do so. This will be a significant piece of work and therefore officers have started this process.
- 5.3 Defra and NHLF have been clear that all projects need to be ready to start in December and be completed by 31 March 2022. The bid we have developed focuses on the employment of people to deliver practical conservation and access management and engage with a wider range of people.
- 5.4 We are confident that we can deliver this project. The main risk is whether COVID19 restricts the training and mentoring of trainees and face to face engagement with visitors. However, our experience this summer will help us overcome such barriers.

## 6 Financial Implications

- 6.1 The total value of the proposal, submitted to the NHLF as an EoI, is £552,200. Confirmed match funding is £30,000: £15,000 from DNPA and £15,000 from partners.
- 6.2 In the EoI we added an additional £10,000 unconfirmed match funding which can be met from Donate for Dartmoor balances and the Project Fund, which adds more substance to the bid.

## 7 Equality and Sustainability Impact

- 7.1 This project aims to reconnect people from all backgrounds with nature and promotes sustainable use of the National Park. The Authority is an Equal Opportunities employer.

## 8 Conclusion and Recommendation

- 8.1 This is an opportunity to develop further joint working with partners and support green delivery; it helps to fulfill key objectives in the draft NPMP and the draft Outreach and Engagement strategy. If successful, the bid will deliver outcomes for Nature and People including 7.6fte jobs. It is recommended that Members support the development of this bid.

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