

TITCHFIELD HAVEN NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE - FUTURE PROPOSALS

APPENDIX A: ORIGINAL OPTIONS STUDIES

Acknowledging the challenges at Titchfield Haven National Nature Reserve, previous work was undertaken by the service and external consultants to explore various options for a sustainable future for the reserve.

As part of the Country Parks Transformation Programme, Planning Solutions Consulting undertook a review in 2015 across all 8 sites within the Country Parks portfolio to establish future priorities and ideas for developing these sites as more sustainable visitor attractions. The report recognised the challenges and uniqueness of THNNR and concluded it did not have the same opportunities as the wider programme developed for country parks as it has a very different operating model, specifically this includes:

- Smaller capacity, fewer visits (15,000 compared to 150,000 at Staunton Farm)
- More sensitive and designated ecology and wildlife
- No parking area or parking income to reinvest into managing the site

As this report had a more commercially focused assessment, there were no recommendations within this report on the wider challenges for land management.

Subsequently, in 2017, WWT Consulting reviewed the activity at THNNR with a greater consideration of the land management and habitat protection requirements and obligations of the site as a National Nature Reserve, alongside visitor experience.

It also recognised that the current 'hold the line' approach to protect the freshwater setting will require significant ongoing investment. The approaches suggested by WWT Consulting took a much more considered look at the future land management requirements, however, they also required significant investment which was disproportionate to the potential financial return. In summary, following these two reports, the Council considered the following opportunities and potential impact of developing these opportunities to grow income generation.

	Opportunity	Impact	Outcome
1	Introduce family orientated offer within the visitor centre and also on eastern area of reserve e.g. natural play and more family orientated bird hides.	Resistance to introducing play on to the reserve as increasing visitors risks disturbance of sensitive and important habitats and wildlife protected within the reserve.	Not suitable due to the nature of the site.
2	Explore potential to extend entrance area to reconfigure retail/ admission space and introduce interpretation area.	In 21/22, the shop made a total income of £54k with cost of goods at £27k. Assuming an increase of 10% retail income with improvements, this could achieve an additional £2.7k direct surplus.	Need investment in building to increase retail space. Return on investment is relatively low.
3	Explore partnership opportunities to develop former ranger's cottage into an education centre which can also be used for other uses e.g. social functions.	Haven Cottage would require significant investment to bring back into serviceable use, estimated at £200k (2015 original estimate). Built as a family home, with several smaller rooms, not well laid out as accommodation for groups or for functions.	Likely to be suitable for small group activity only, limited financial return, not progressed.
4	Introduce kiosk to service casual users and relieve pressure on main café.	This would have involved significant alterations and investment to the building.	Decision to focus on opportunities to extend catering within the building / existing space.
5	Revisit existing catering offer in terms of design and layout and also introduce small extension.	Potential to increase income and extend indoor catering capacity for visitors to the reserve and visitors to the area.	Café extended to include Widgeon Room (previously kept as a function space) and increase the number of internal covers for catering.
6	Enable catering operator to have more flexibility over opening hours and menu choice.	Opportunities to more closely target offer to visitor demand, potential to increase sales. Extended opening hours would need careful consideration to ensure income was sufficient to cover costs (e.g. staffing).	The Countryside Service moved the catering in-house in December 2019 to enable greater flexibility in service delivery.

	Opportunity	Impact	Outcome
7	Upgrade existing Visitor Centre.	£256k condition liability for Haven House Visitor Centre identified in 2014 before any additional investment. Upgrading the existing building, previously residential, has limited opportunity for growing income due to the nature of the interior space. Larger investment/upgrade estimated at £500k - £1m.	Assuming catering covers and income doubled as a result, could generate additional annual £31k surplus, before overheads. Return on investment would not be proportionate to justify level of investment required.
8	Down-size visitor related functions / services in the Visitor Centre.	The main functions within the visitor centre are catering and retail. This would likely reduce income, but unlikely to significant change overhead and building costs. Reputational impact, potentially dissatisfied customers.	Anticipate this would increase overall net costs of running the Visitor Centre. Not progressed.
8	Construct a purpose-built Visitor Centre at a new location in an appropriate location closer to the reserve.	To enhance visitor experience, engagement and encourage visitors into the pay zone.	Cost estimate £800k-£1m based on similar facilities at other sites. Option to include parking, dependant on the site. Potential estimate for parking income £15,000 per annum before cost of parking system ¹ . Return on investment would not be proportionate to justify the level of investment needed.
9	Potential funding options for capital investment in a new Visitor Centre.	Bid to Bird Aware Solent submitted in 2019 to transform the Visitor Centre at Titchfield Haven Nature Reserve and create a coastal centre of excellence for the Solent.	Fundraising bid to Bird Aware Solent was unsuccessful.

¹ Based on Country parking income per visitor (average parking spend per head 80p - £1).