

# HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

## Decision Report

<b>Decision Maker:</b>	Executive Member for Policy and Resources
<b>Date:</b>	14 July 2020
<b>Title:</b>	Invest in Hampshire Bid
<b>Report From:</b>	Director of Culture, Communities and Business Services

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### Purpose of this Report

1. To present a proposal for consideration by the Executive Member for support from the Invest in Hampshire fund to secure the future of high amenity value public access land in the South Downs National Park (and more particularly at Corhampton Lane Farm, Corhampton, Hampshire).

### Recommendation

2. That the Executive Member approves a grant from the Invest in Hampshire Fund to the South Downs National Park Authority for £13,810 as detailed within the body of this report and at Appendix 2.

### Executive Summary

3. This report considers a request for funding under the Invest in Hampshire Fund. The South Downs National Park Permissive Access Project has been set up by the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA). The Invest in Hampshire award to the SDNPA would enhance project outcomes in Hampshire.
4. The funding would ensure that the full extent of public access currently enjoyed at Corhampton Lane Farm, Hampshire (9,800 metres of permissive bridleways known as 'Corhampton Gallops') remains available and safeguarded for public use for a period of 4 years, after which funding under the Environmental Land Management Scheme is anticipated to become available.

## Contextual information

5. Farmers and land managers have been encouraged, through agri-environment scheme funding, to provide permissive access to their land since the late 1980s. Agreements were for 10-year periods and were typically renewed upon expiry until access funding was discontinued after 2010. This has led to extensive loss of public access as agreements have reached expiry in the intervening years.
6. The County Council was not consulted by Natural England (NE) when arranging permissive access with farmers and land managers, but it is apparent that some of the access created under agri-environment schemes is of high value and worthy of retention for Hampshire residents, providing them with access to otherwise inaccessible areas, connections between existing routes and general enhancement of the rights of way network. It is widely expected that support of permissive access will again become available when the Environmental Land Management Scheme is launched in 2024.
7. The SDNPA has captured a record of available NE permissive access within its boundaries and an independent review has been carried out by the South Downs Local Access Forum to ascertain which access routes are of highest value. Forum members have rated access by its connectivity, evidence of use, scenic/heritage value, ease of use and maintenance requirements.
8. A decision has been taken by the SDNPA to pay farmers and land managers hosting the routes determined to be of highest value (9 no. in Hampshire) on a temporary basis to ensure that these stay open until 2024 (when ELMS funding is anticipated to be available). Selected 'top tier' farmers/land managers are being invited to enter into an agreement with the SDNPA for up to 4 years.
9. The SDNPA is prepared to fund at the Natural England rate, less the £350 base payment, and subject to a minimum payment of £500 and a maximum of £5,000. Out of the 19 top tier farmers/land managers selected across the National Park area, only one receives funding that exceeds the SDNPA's £5,000 cap. That funding relates to Corhampton Gallops in Hampshire which is funded by Natural England at £8,820.
10. The Corhampton Gallops are maintained to a good standard and are very heavily used. Typical users include horse riders, walkers and mountain bikers, with weekdays attracting 50+ users and Sundays attracting 100+ users. During the Covid-19 lockdown period use has reportedly tripled. Horseboxes and cars regularly park up to use the routes, and many users visit daily. The public amenity value of the Corhampton Gallops is accordingly extremely high.

11. It has been confirmed that the shortfall in funding over the SDNPA's maximum payment cap would need to be addressed in full if the current extent of the Corhampton Gallops is to be kept open for the benefit of Hampshire residents. A very high number of representations have been received by the County Council from residents requesting its financial assistance to keep the entirety of the Corhampton Gallops available for public use.
12. The SDNPA has confirmed that a financial contribution from the Invest in Hampshire Fund would enhance the outcomes of its Permissive Access Project. Funding of the shortfall as if there had been no cap would help safeguard the future of the Corhampton Gallops, and the Authority welcomes the opportunity to partner with Hampshire County Council in pursuit of this result.

### **Finance**

13. The proposed award to the South Downs National Park Authority is to be split across 4 financial years and would be payable upon evidence of a signed and approved access agreement for permissive access at Corhampton Gallops.
14. An award would be made on the understanding that there can be no further financial support from the County Council after the 4-year period.

### **Legal Implications**

15. Subject to certain restrictions, the County Council has the power under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to do anything that individuals generally may do including the power to give grants.

### **Grants Criteria**

16. A copy of the criteria used for considering grants from the Invest in Hampshire fund is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

**REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:**

**Links to the Strategic Plan**

<b>Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:</b>	Yes
<b>People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:</b>	Yes
<b>People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:</b>	Yes
<b>People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:</b>	Yes

**Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents**

**The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)**

Document

Location

## **EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:**

### **1. Equality Duty**

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

### **2. Equalities Impact Assessment:**

No negative impact has been identified.

## **FUNDING CRITERIA FOR INVESTING IN HAMPSHIRE**

The following criteria should be taken into account when considering a request for funding.

1. Assistance will be considered only in response to direct applications from properly constituted organisations seeking assistance for one-off funding only. The application must show that the organisation is properly and legally organised and has its own bank account. Funding would only be awarded if the proposal was to support activity within agreed County Council priorities.
2. Applications will be considered for the items listed below, where these are within agreed priorities and generally only where other substantial funding exists:
  - Specific capital projects for the improvement or maintenance of significant assets or facilities within Hampshire
  - Projects that will support economic development and business growth within Hampshire.
3. Other applications will be considered at the absolute discretion of the Leader where he considers that the award will make a contribution for the wider benefit of Hampshire and its residents.
4. The wider economic and other benefits to the residents of Hampshire should be considered together with any complementary benefits for Hampshire County Council.
5. Awards will not usually be made in respect of applications from the following:-
  - Government Institutions
  - Schools
  - Overseas and out of County organisations which have no direct Hampshire involvement
  - Bodies requesting funds for onward distribution to other charities e.g. mayoral appeals, carnivals, fetes, or for their own fundraising events.
6. Apart from exceptional circumstances, the requesting body would be expected to provide their own funding towards the project.
7. As a general rule, grants in excess of £250,000 will not be awarded unless significant benefits and funding are available. In exceptional cases, where the benefits are significant and directly relate to services and functions close to the County Council's key objectives, then an award greater than the level above would be considered.

- 8.** Given the longer term nature of capital projects, requests can be considered well in advance, but funding will only be released once evidence of capital expenditure has been provided to the County Council or other arrangements made, consistent with the agreement of the Director of Corporate Resources.

### South Downs National Park Permissive Access Project

Applicant	South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA)		
Name / Location of Project	South Downs National Park Permissive Access Project		
Summary of Project / Bid	<p>Permissive Access complements the Rights of Way network by providing access to otherwise inaccessible areas and by connecting existing routes to each other. Since the late 1980s the Government has encouraged farmers and rural land managers to provide permissive access to their land through the making of payments under agri-environment schemes (agreements renewed on a 10-yearly basis). This funding has now been discontinued, which has led to extensive loss of public access as existing 10-year agreements have expired. It is anticipated that the funding of permissive access will again become available within the future Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS), which is due to be rolled out in 2024.</p> <p>An independent review has recently been undertaken of access under expiring agreements within the National Park, using various criteria including connectivity, ease of use, maintenance, scenic value and evidence of use. The project aims to fill the funding gap to the start of ELMS for the highest value access routes currently available, to enable these to remain open. Selected top tier farmers and land managers are to be invited to enter a similar access agreement with the SDNPA. The expectation is that the agreements would be renewed annually until ELMS funding becomes available or for up to 4 years, whichever is sooner.</p> <p>The project should ensure that the most valuable permissive paths identified (9 of the top tier are in Hampshire) are kept open for use by the public.</p> <p>It has been determined that a funding contribution from the County Council would enhance the Project by safeguarding the full extent of the high value permissive access routes collectively known as 'Corhampton Gallops' (9,800 metres of permissive bridleways in Corhampton, Hampshire) for public use.</p>		
Funding Requested	£13,810 total contribution, split over 4 years:		

	£2,350 £3,820 £3,820 £3,820	2020/21 2021/22 2022/23 2023/24	
Funding Arrangements (including matched funding)	<p>The SDNPA has secured funding of £92,300 (split over 4 years with availability subject to annual review) to pay selected farmers and land managers the same agri-environment scheme rate (per metre of permissive access), but not the £350 base payment and subject to a minimum annual payment of £500 and a maximum payment of £5,000.</p> <p>The County Council's contribution will pay for the shortfall in funding for the one Hampshire-based route identified within the project that exceeds the SDNPA's maximum payment cap of £5,000 (Corhampton Gallops – total funding of £8,820 per annum required).</p>		
What are the benefits for Hampshire Residents?	<p>The project will enable the continued provision of valuable public access routes within and connecting to the South Downs National Park. Said access is of high value to Hampshire residents, providing them with access to otherwise inaccessible areas.</p> <p>The preservation of continuous payments reduces the likelihood of participants opting out of permitting public access across land before the introduction of ELMS.</p> <p>The Corhampton Gallops are enjoyed by a wide range of Hampshire residents and intensively used. This is supported by the very high number of representations that have been received by the County Council from residents.</p> <p>The provision of high quality access to land connects people in Hampshire with the county's rich and diverse environment and landscapes.</p>		
What are the complementary benefits for HCC?	<p>High quality access to the countryside encourages outdoor access which supports healthier lifestyles and increased engagement with rural life.</p>		
Any other relevant factors?			