

Report to	Policy & Resources Committee
Date	29 March 2018
By	Performance and Projects Manager
Title of Report Decision	Project Approval – South Downs National Park Authority projects that contribute to the Changing Chalk Heritage Lottery Fund bid by the National Trust

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to:

- 1) Approve the release of £90,000 from the Strategic Fund for the Grazier project**
- 2) Note the release of £25,000 from the Strategic Fund for the Dewponds project**

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Part of the remit of the Policy and Resources Committee is to: *“To have oversight of the Strategic Fund including approving project bids to the Fund in excess of £50k up to a maximum SDNPA contribution of £100k”*. Approval for project funding over £100k is part of the remit of the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA).
- 1.2 Following the approval process agreed for projects of this value; this report asks Members to approve the funding for the Grazier project. As both projects are part of the overall Changing Chalk Heritage Lottery Fund Bid by the National Trust the Committee is also asked to note the approval by Officers of the Dew Ponds Project.

2. Policy Context.

- 2.1 The projects relate directly to PMP outcomes as set out in the PIDs at the **Appendix 1** and **Appendix 3**.
- 2.2 The changing Chalk project is a Heritage Lottery Fund bid which is being led by the National Trust. It aims to increase the extent, quality and connectivity of semi-natural chalk grassland in the Eastern South Downs: protecting and enabling a better understanding of the cultural and historic significance of chalk grassland. This will be achieved in line with the National Park’s statutory purposes and management objectives by engaging, inspiring and finding relevant ways in which to involve local communities to deliver sustainable solutions for the management of the chalk grassland landscape, for the benefit of both people and nature. The project’s primary objectives are to:
 - Improve habitat and species richness and the connectivity of chalk grassland in the Eastern Downs;
 - Support and work with landowners and farmers to enable sustainable management of chalk grassland;
 - Protect significant cultural heritage sites on chalk grassland sites;

- Change behaviours of local communities from Eastbourne to Worthing to secure the long term future of the chalk grassland habitat;
 - Empower people to actively participate and become ambassadors for their landscape and heritage. The 'Changing Chalk' HLF Project Team is seeking to increase its understanding of communities living between Eastbourne and Worthing, who are underrepresented in their enjoyment of, and involvement with the South Downs and other local natural greenspaces. The insight gained from this work will assist the Team and its project partners in working with new audiences to develop and deliver programs of mutual benefit, and that achieve sustained change.
- 2.3 As one of over 20 partners to the bid, the SDNPA is asked to develop and deliver two projects, as part of a much larger programme of activity. Members need to make the decision now, as the National Trust need to be able to demonstrate commitment from partners in order to submit the bid. A map of the Changing Chalk project is at **Appendix 2**.
- 3. Issues for consideration**
- 3.1 The purpose of the Grazier project is to employ a grazier to carry out specific targeted grazing in the Changing Chalk project area. The purpose of which, is to bring target priority chalk grassland sites back into favourable condition. The project aims to test approaches to establishing a sustainable grazing regime for nutrient poor chalk grassland as part of an economically viable business model that could support conservation grazing in future.
- 3.2 The evidence for the need for the project is a baseline survey carried out by the Sussex Biodiversity Records Office in 2016 which showed that 37% of the chalk grassland sites in the South Downs National Park (SDNP) were in unfavourable condition. One of the main reasons for this was cited as under grazing or. 118 of the 479 sites surveyed would benefit from an alteration to the grazing regime such as a change in stock density or use of different livestock breeds. The majority of the chalk grassland in the SDNP is in the Central and Eastern part of the SDNP. Therefore the Changing Chalk project area, Broadly Worthing to Eastbourne area of open downs was seen as the best place to pilot an innovative approach. Details of the grazier project are in the PID in **Appendix 1**.
- 3.3 The purpose of the Dewpond project is to enhance the biodiversity of the chalk downland landscape, through the targeted restoration of dewponds. It aims to establish a line of dewponds along the South Downs Way supported by accessible interpretation; develop a network of dewponds with the primary purpose of supporting wildlife and improving habitat connectivity and finally; where 'gaps' in habitat connectivity have been identified, start to populate these areas with targeted restorations are the creation of new dewponds.
- 3.4 Evidence suggests that of the 280 dewponds thought to have existed in the region, almost 70% have either lost or are in poor condition. Following their use initially as sources of water for livestock grazing the slopes of the downs, their use has come to include support for networks of habitats for wildlife. Wildlife will benefit from a network of waterbodies no more than 1500m apart. Extensive work on the location and condition of dewponds carried out by a volunteer has enabled the project to define which dewponds to target in which areas. Details of the approved Dewpond project are in the PID in **Appendix 3**.
- 4. Options & cost implications**
- 4.1 The total project cost for the Grazier project is £360,000 of which the SDNPA is asked to contribute £90,000, in cash and £176,000 in-kind support. This is split into two phases the first is for two years and is for £48,000 in cash split between year 1 and year 2. The second is for three years and is for £42,000 in match, spread evenly across years 3-5. The in-kind support is split equally over the five years of the project and is £32,200 per annum.
- 4.2 The total cost for the Dewpond project is £144,500 of which the SDNPA will be contributing £25,000 in cash and £21,400 in in-kind support. The project is split into two phases, the first is for two years and is for £500 cash and £5,000 in in-kind support, both in

year 1. The second is three years and is for £24,500 in cash and £16,400 in in-kind support both in year three.

- 4.3 The table below sets out the impact of these projects on the Strategic Fund. The unallocated sum for each financial year until 2021-22 includes the current commitment of £220,000 per year to the Strategic Fund, minus any other projects currently allocated funding.
- 4.4 Members should note that for the 2022-23 financial year, an assumption has been made about how much funding will be allocated to the Strategic Fund by the Authority as part of its budget setting round. As part of the report on the Medium Term Financial Strategy which is due to go to the SDNPA meeting on 22nd March it will be recommended that the SDNPA continues to contribute £220,000 to the Strategic Fund per annum.

Strategic Fund	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23		
Annual budget	220,000	220,000	220,000	220,000	220,000		
B/F unallocated funds	402,777	443,394	593,772	743,557	942,702		
Total available for allocation	622,777	663,394	813,772	963,557	1,162,702		
Budget amounts that require funding	144,883	55,621	31,715	6,855			
Remaining unallocated	477,894	607,772	782,057	956,702			
SF cash contribution required	34,500	14,000	38,500	14,000	14,000		
SF balance of unallocated funds remaining	443,394	593,772	743,557	942,702	1,148,702		
SF Cash contribution							
Year	1	2	3	4	5	Total (£)	
	Q4 2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23		
Grazier Phase 1	34,000	14,000				48,000	90,000
Grazier Phase 2			14,000	14,000	14,000	42,000	
Dew Ponds Phase 1	500					500	25,000
Dew Ponds Phase 2			24,500			24,500	
Total	34,500	14,000	38,500	14,000	14,000	115,000	
In kind contribution							
Year	1	2	3	4	5	Total (£)	
Grazier	35,200	35,200	35,200	35,200	35,200	176,000	176,000
Dew Ponds Phase 1	5,000					5,000	21,400
Dew Ponds Phase 2			16,400			16,400	
Total	40,201	35,202	51,603	35,204	35,205	197,400	

- 4.5 Members should note that there is a healthy balance in the Strategic Fund. The ongoing commitments proposed in the table at paragraph 4.4 would leave sufficient funds to support a number of additional projects in future years.

5. Other Implications

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	No
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	The proposed projects will reduce the amount of money available in the strategic Fund. There is also significant in-kind support required from a range of SDNPA staff.
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	The proposed project will deliver an enhanced landscape and engagement with key local stakeholders.
Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal?	None

Have you taken regard of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	Yes, no implications identified at this stage. An equality impact assessment will be undertaken by the project lead at the appropriate stage of the projects development. Funding is provided on the basis that equalities compliant practices will be followed by the National Trust.
Are there any Human Rights implications arising from the proposal?	None
Are there any Crime & Disorder implications arising from the proposal?	By improving the local environment and through the engagement of stakeholders, it is anticipated that the project will help address the incidences of anti-social behaviour that occur in the area.
Are there any Health & Safety implications arising from the proposal?	Risk Assessments for any works that are required as part of the project will be developed when they are required.
Are there any Data Protection implications?	None
Are there any Sustainability implications based on the 5 principles set out in the SDNPA Sustainability Strategy	The proposed project meets all of the principles of the Sustainability strategy. Five principles are: Living within environmental limits, Ensuring a strong healthy and just society, Achieving a sustainable economy, Promoting good governance , Using sound science responsibly

6. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

6.1 The risks associated with the projects and their mitigations are at **Appendices 1 and 3**.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Funds allocated are not used appropriately to deliver the project	2	6	Project delivery will be overseen by the project team and monitored by the Water and Chalk Themed Board. Mid project evaluations will be reported to this Committee.

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Appendices

1. Project Initiation Document - Grazier project
2. Map of Changing Chalk Project Area
3. Project initiation Document – Dewpond Project

SDNPA Consultees

Chief Executive; Director of Countryside Policy and Management; Director of Planning; Chief Finance Officer; Monitoring Officer; Legal Services; Strategy Lead Landscape and Biodiversity (Chalk), Countryside and Policy Manager (East); Infrastructure Strategy Lead.

External Consultees

None

Background Documents

None