

National Parks UK: Corporate Sponsorship Project
Report by Chief Executive

Summary: This report updates members on the joint work across the fifteen national parks in the UK working with corporate sponsors and seeks approval for a contribution of £10,000 towards the next stage of the UK initiative.

Recommendation: To note the progress to date on engaging with corporate sponsors, including the £3,000 received from the agreement with AirWick and approve the contribution of £10,000 towards this joint activity as agreed by the Chairs/Vice Chairs of the National Park Authorities at their recent meeting.

1 Introduction

1.1 National Parks UK, the body acting on behalf of the fifteen national parks in the UK, has been making considerable progress in developing branding for the family and an offer for companies to potentially support our work. The latest development is the agreement by the Chairs/Vice Chairs to establish a single purpose vehicle for pursuing this initiative. It requires a cash injection to cover its start up costs.

2 National Parks: Britain's Breathing Spaces

2.1 Over a number of years the Communications Officers of the fifteen UK National Parks have been working to develop an agreed common approach to raising the profile of the Parks, with three objectives:

- 1) Promotion of the Parks as tourist destinations;
- 2) Raising public understanding of the Parks as a group of special places; and
- 3) Developing ownership and understanding of the Parks as a family amongst residents, stakeholders, opinion formers and others, regardless of whether or not these people actually visit the Parks.

The Chairs of the Parks have adopted *Britain's Breathing Spaces* (BBS) as the key strap line. This is derived from Ted Ellis' description of the Broads:

"A breathing space for the cure of souls"

2.2 The brand has been adopted as the common basis for creative work across a range of communications (advertising, online, direct mail, brochures, and other items) for representation of the UK's National Parks. It includes parameters for photographic content:

“(a) Photographs of landscapes within National Parks need to include a person/people or evidence of people’s presence.

“(b) Photographs should show the diversity of people and functions of National Parks, for example, sustainable development, events, working in a National Park.”

including technical parameters:

- Primarily panoramic shaped photographs (3.3:1 ratio best)
- Highest resolution (quality)
- “Rich” colours
- A strong visual image

These have guided the design of the National Park Portal, the Guide to UK’s National Parks, promotional material for National Park Week and the work on corporate sponsorship.

3. Corporate Sponsorship

- 3.1 The Parks’ first venture into corporate sponsorship has been with Merrell, the footwear manufacturer. The company through its website, promotional material in shops and local competitions has helped raise the profile of the Parks and there have been other benefits in kind – such as use of the Board Room in Merrell’s London HQ for National Park meetings.
- 3.2 More recently the Parks were approached by Reckitt Benckiser who have had a very positive relationship with the US Parks Foundation and wanted to explore building a similar link with the UK’s Parks. The result has been an agreement that the company can use the “BBS” brand to support the sales of fragrances in its AirWick products with royalties paid to National Parks UK at 1.5p per product sold.

Launch highlights:

- **TV Advert** – launched 1 March 2014. 96 page schedule of appearance for March only.
- **Come Dine with Me Sponsorship** – launched 1 March 2014. Daily appearances on prime time TV.
- **Radio promotion** broadcast by Neil Fox (“Foxy”) on Magic FM (24 Feb – 28 Feb) – featuring a listener competition to win a holiday in one of four NPs.
- **Covent Garden Launch event** - featuring a ‘pop up National Park’ - 1 March 2014.
- **PR Value of £1 Million** achieved in first 5 weeks.
- Lots of positive feedback on **Social Media** in regard to the fragrance range.

- 2000 visitors landing on AirWick Partnership **Webpage** – in the first 5 weeks. These are people who will have come from the AirWick site or have read the product packs or coupon in the Covent Garden goodie bags.

Brand Exposure - The marketing and publicity surrounding the range will give the Parks the opportunity to reach an audience that might otherwise not be aware of the UK National Parks and our work, encouraging those who have never considered visiting to do so. The target here is to reach more than **85% of the UK adult population** with the range. Television activity alone is anticipated to reach more than three quarters of UK adults, and this will be supported by social media, magazines and newspapers, mobile advertising as well as an exciting radio promotion with Magic FM. The weight of the marketing campaign also means that on average each individual will see between 12-13 messages about UK National Parks.

Royalties - We received the initial guaranteed minimum payment of £50,000 promptly on 21 January and following agreement by CEOs at the 29/30 January away day we distributed this equally amongst the NPAs – £3k each – the remaining £5k was allocated to offset **some** of National Park UK's costs.

4. Next Steps

4.1 Following a brief to examine the potential to create a fit for purpose structure to take forward the commercial sponsorship activities of the UK's National Parks, collaborative work by the 15 Chief Executives has considered:

- Core Functions of the Organisation
- Charity or Non-Charity
- Organisational Structure
- Ethics Policy
- Business Case
- Risk Analysis
- Critical Success Factors
- Packages and Prospectus

4.2 At a meeting on 11 June 2014 the Chairs/Vice Chairs of the 15 Parks (Broads Authority was represented by Vice Chair, Jacquie Burgess) agreed the following:

- that a new branding brief / brand evaluation exercise should take place
- endorsed the establishment of a non charitable company limited by guarantee to progress this work
- endorsed a sponsorship ethics policy;
- agreed to put £10,000 each in to cover start-up costs
- agreed to develop a prospectus with our offer

4.3 The target is to raise collectively substantial funds over the next three to five years from the private sector to support the work of the park authorities.

5 Summary and Conclusions

- 5.1 The national park brand is a powerful and well known identity around the world, particularly in the USA where it is identified as *America's best idea*. The UK parks have worked closely together to develop and agree a common brand identity, Britain's Breathing Spaces, and are now well positioned to market it to the corporate sector. Experience has shown that the collective proposition is a powerful one. To take forward the initiative and create a single purpose vehicle to drive the initiative has been agreed as the next stage and £10,000 has been offered by each Park to fund the start-up costs. The Authority is invited to confirm its support for this work and to authorise an amendment to the budget to make allowance for the additional expenditure. If approved, this change will be reflected in the Latest Available Budget in future financial monitoring reports to the Authority.

Background papers:	Nil
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Broads Plan Objectives:	None
Appendices:	None