

Hosting National Park Communications Service
Report by Head of Communications

Summary:	This report seeks approval for the Broads Authority to host the UK National Park's Communications Service and the associated two additional members of staff funded by the National Park Authorities.
Recommendation:	That the Authority approves the hosting of the UK National Park Communications Service on the basis set out in the report and Appendix 1.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Government's "National Parks: 8 Point Plan for England (2016-2020)" is one of a number of documents that has challenges and ambitions requiring greater public awareness of our National Parks including:
- A new package of teaching materials for schools based in National Parks
 - Promoting National Parks as world-class destinations to visitors from overseas and the UK
 - National Parks will be known for, and visited as, great food destinations.
 - Encouraging more diverse visitors to National Parks
 - Promoting volunteering in National Parks
 - Realise the immense potential for outdoor recreation in National Parks
- 1.2 The 15 Heads of Communication in the Parks have been working together over the last two years to see how they can raise the profile of the National Parks amongst the general public. In August 2017 the UK authorities employed a Marketing and Communications Manager for the UK funded from the subscription to NP-UK which also paid for a full-time co-ordinator, administrative support and an office based in Brecon. While the communications post proved to be very successful in coordinating the work of the authorities the scale of the task, particularly with the opportunities presented by the partnership with Columbia, meant that one person was insufficient.
- 1.3 The 15 Heads of Communication and Chief Executives have supported the proposal that a Communications Unit should be established for the UK's National Parks and that it should be based with one of the authorities. All 15 authorities were invited to host the Team, the Broads Authority and the Lake District National Park Authority competed for the role and the Broads Authority was successful.

- 1.4 The current proposition (please see details set out in Appendix 1) is that the Broads Authority would host a two person team, a Marketing and Communications Manager and a Digital Communications Officer who would sit within the Broads Authority's Communications Team with the Manager line managed by Rob Leigh, our Head of Communications.
- 1.5 Amongst other things the main work of the Team would be:
- (i) Taking forward the branding initiative for the National Parks;
 - (ii) Liaising with National Park Partnerships and commercial partners such as Columbia, Forest Holidays and Clif Bar over the promotion of national parks;
 - (iii) Coordinating Discover National Parks Fortnight
 - (iv) Coordinating press enquiries – e.g. BBC Countryfile programmes
 - (v) Redesigning and maintaining the UK website

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 The 15 Park Authorities are moving towards a different model in their collaborative arrangements with individual Authorities taking the lead on different topics. So the Peak District is leading on tourism and Brecon Beacons on member training and support. This means that the current annual subscription to NP-UK Ltd of £7,750 is no longer required and it is proposed that a large part of this annual commitment is replaced by annual contribution for corporate communications payable to the Broads Authority of:

£5,400 in 2019/20;
£5,920 in 2020/21; and,
£6,073 in 2021/22.

There will also be a small amount, payable to Brecon Beacons National Park Authority towards administration of UK collaboration and the organisation of member training events across the family. Overall the costs are expected to be within the current subscription level. The Broads Authority has offered to make an additional contribution in kind through the provision of space for the Team in the office and to cover basic office expenses such as telephone and photocopying.

- 2.2 To date National Park Partnerships has offered to contribute £15,000 in the first year and £30,000 in each of the following two years. Of the 14 National Park Authorities 12 have indicated support for the proposal, Exmoor NPA has committed to one year only and we are awaiting a further update from Northumberland NPA. An update on the Northumberland position will be given at the meeting.

3. Risk Analysis

- 3.1 There will be a number of benefits for the Authority in hosting the UK Team: strengthening our own communications function and putting the Authority in pole position in national communications. There are also some risks. The two members of the Unit will be Broads Authority employees with all the responsibilities that entails. If the arrangement ceases at the end of the three year period then the Authority would be responsible for terminating the contracts and paying redundancy which would be reclaimed from all the partners. If costs were incurred as a result of the Authority's negligence then they would be borne by the Authority. However, in general the principle underlying the arrangement is that the costs of the Unit will be funded by National Park Partnerships and the 15 authorities. A Service Level Agreement will place a legal obligation on the parties to cover all the costs, other than the office costs picked up by the Broads Authority.

4. Conclusions

- 4.1 Branding and raising the profile of the Broads at home and overseas is a high priority for the Authority. The opportunity to host the UK National Parks Communications Unit provides the Authority with the opportunity to strengthen its offer and to be at the heart of the Government's agenda to raise the profile of National Parks.

Background papers:	None
Author:	Rob Leigh, John Packman
Date of report:	12 March 2019
Broads Plan Objectives:	Multiple
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – National Parks Partnership Proposal

This revised paper seeks the financial commitment and support of all 15 UK National Park Authorities to a Communications Partnership whose purpose is the development and delivery of a National Park brand and engagement with the wider public, whether through conventional media or on-line across the UK. The aim is to position the UK Parks as one strong, impactful, collective voice at UK level, and part of the global family of National Parks.

The cost of the initiative has been reduced through a contribution from NPPL, in kind support from the Broads Authority who will host the service, and a reduction in the staffing resource to two: retaining the current post of Communications and Marketing Manager and adding one post, a Digital Communications Officer, to manage the transformation and maintenance of the website.

The costs of this proposal are:

£5,400 in 2019/20;
£5,920 in 2020/21; and,
£6,073 in 2021/22.

The cost per Park, including other UK expenditure, is below the current subscription level for NP-UK.

A three-year Communications Strategy will be developed with the 15 Heads of Communications and NPP Development Director as one of the early actions, setting out a programme of work. The National Park Partnerships Board and Chief Executives will be consulted on the Strategy before consideration and adoption by the UK Chairs. An annual report to Chairs and the NPP Board will monitor progress against the Strategy and the action plan.

In this reduced arrangement the focus will be on:

- (i) Taking forward the National Park branding;
- (ii) A complete overhaul of the National Park website;
- (iii) Supporting NPPL to deliver the new branding via relationships with corporate partners;
- (iv) Continuing support for the 15 Heads of Communications.

The Communications Partnership of the 15 UK Heads of Communications has not and will not adopt positions independent of the National Park Authorities nor will it engage in policy communications. Its focus is proactive positive media coverage for the 15 National Parks and National Park Authorities.

A 3-year Service Level Agreement between the 14 NPAs, NPPL and the Broads Authority will govern the arrangements, and details of the costs incurred will be provided on a regular basis. (See draft revised budget in Appendix 1). The agreement will be reviewed at the end of Year 2/beginning of Year 3.

Recommendation:

NPAs are asked to commit to supporting the National Park Communications Partnership as outlined above for three years at a cost of £5,400 in the first part year, £5,920 in 2020/21 and £6,073 in 2021/22.

Appendix 1. Amended Draft Budget for UK Communications Plan

Expenditure	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
<i>Salaries, recruitment and expenses</i>			
Communications & Marketing Manager	£37,799	£52,699	£53,909
Digital Communications Officer	£17,726	£32,062	£33,148
Supervision - Additional Costs	£1,875	£2,500	£2,500
Recruitment Costs	£1,150	£0	£0
Relocation package	£5,000	£0	£0
Travel expenses	£3,750	£5,000	£5,000
ICT Setup	£1,635	£0	£0
On-going ICT	£838	£313	£313
Software licences	£1,230	£1,230	£1,230
<i>Broads Authority contribution in kind</i>			
Rent, rates, insurances	£3,697	£4,929	£4,929
Landline calls	£72	£96	£96
Printing and photocopying	£90	£120	£120
Supervision, HR, Finance and ICT support	£2,952	£4,270	£4,270
Operating budget	£25,000	£25,000	£25,000
TOTAL Expenditure	£102,814	£128,219	£130,515
Contribution by Broads Authority	£6,811	£9,415	£9,415
Contribution by NPP	£15,000	£30,000	£30,000
TOTAL Cost	£81,003	£88,804	£91,100
Cost per park	£5,400	£5,920	£6,073