

Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board

Friday, 30 September 2016 at 10.45 am

Council Chamber, Wokingham Borough Council

AGENDA

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**Thames Basin Heaths
Joint Strategic Partnership
16 May 2016
Council Chamber, Surrey Heath Borough Council
10.00am – 11.15am
Notes of Meeting**

Present:

Board Members

Councillor Phillip Brooker	Guildford Borough Council
Councillor Graham Cundy	Woking Borough Council
Councillor Roland Dibbs	Rushmoor Borough Council
Councillor Moira Gibson	Surrey Heath Borough Council
Councillor David Hilton	Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Councillor Gail Kingerley	Runnymede Borough Council
Councillor Chris Turrell	Bracknell Forest Council

Advisory Board Members

Ken Ankcorn	Surrey Wildlife Trust
Matt Jackson	Berkshire, Buckingham and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust
Simon Thompson	Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) Project
Jennifer Wadham	Hampshire County Council (Finance)

Officers/Observers

Ernest Amoako	Woking Borough Council
Julie Gil	Bracknell Forest Council
Philip Gill	Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Jane Ireland	Surrey Heath Borough Council
Louise Piper	Rushmoor Borough Council

1.	Apologies
1.1	Apologies were received from Cllr Angus Ross, Wokingham Borough Council, Cllr Radley, Hart District Council (Cllr Parker substituting) and Mark Turner, Natural England.
2.	Minutes of the Previous Meeting and Matters Arising
2.1	Minute 7.15 - It was noted that Cllr Hilton was also a member of the Task and Finish Group.

3.	Task and Finish Group Report
3.1	Councillor Hilton presented a report setting out the findings of the Task and Finish Group initiated to consider the approach to Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) in its entirety.
3.2	It had been concluded that evidence base used to produce the Footprint Ecology Interim SANG Review Report 2015 had not been sufficiently robust. Consequently it was felt that this report should not be published in its present form.
3.3	The Task and Finish Group had concluded that whilst Natural England's requirements in relation to Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) were important they should not be considered in isolation and that work needed to be done to understand the public perceptions of the SPA and SANGs as well as the factors that made an area of SANG attractive to visitors.
3.4	<p>It was proposed that an online survey would be the most practical way to capture feedback from members of the public. The survey would be based on the latest SANG survey template in use at Chantry Wood with the inclusion of the following two addition questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Why do you visit this site more/less? ii. What would encourage you to visit this site more often? <p>It was agreed that the survey template would be circulated to the group for information.</p>
3.5	It was felt that, in order to obtain high quality feedback from users, any survey work should be carried out at a time when a significant proportion of SANG enhancement works had been completed for example when 75% of the enhancement work was complete. It was acknowledged that a completion rate of 75% was an appropriate figure when considering smaller sites however for larger sites it could take years before this level was reached. It was agreed that Natural England would identify SANG sites where enhancement works were either complete or nearing completion. This list would then be used as a starting point for any survey work.
3.6	It was stressed that, in addition to traditional paper surveys, full use should be made of online surveys and social media channels to gather as much information from the public as possible.
3.7	<p>RESOLVED that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The Footprint Ecology Interim SANG Review Report 2015 was not to be published. ii. SANG Feedback <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. A standing item be added to the agenda of the Access Management and Monitoring Partnership meetings to enable discussions around 'making SANGS more attractive to visitors' b. SANGS managers, local authority planners and Natural England to meet annually to discuss common issues c. Feedback to be sought via the new website from visitors to SANGs d. An online survey is developed to capture feedback from visitors and non-visitors to SANGs e. Local Authorities and partners to be asked whether SAMM wardens can engage with SANG site managers in order to be better able to

	<p style="text-align: center;">promote SANGs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> iii. The questions in the latest SANG Survey Template supplemented with the following two additional questions be used: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Why do you visit this site more/less? b. What would encourage you to visit this site more often? iv. SANG Surveys would be carried out at an appropriate time in the lifecycle of the sites: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Local authorities be requested to provide information regarding progress of enhancement works at each SANG b. Follow up SANG Surveys to be carried out when SANG enhancement works are completed and a significant proportion of the development allocated to the SANG is complete c. SAMM Wardens to undertake ongoing surveys on SANGS v. The SAMM Project manager to produce an Annual SPA Monitoring Report. vi. Household surveys, including online and social media channels, to be completed to establish a data set relating to SANG usage
4.	Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Project
4.1	<p>The Board considered a report setting out an update in respect of the activities and achievements of the Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) Project over the period November 2015 to May 2016. The report included updates on project staffing and recruitment, project accommodation, access to SPA land, communications and promotional work, partnership working, visitor numbers, a budget update, a forward look and a summary of the outcomes of the 2015 Bird Survey.</p> <p><u>Staffing</u></p> <p>4.2 It was reported that the project currently employed 4.4 Full time equivalent (FTE) wardens, 11 seasonal workers (8 FTE), an Education and Communications Officer and a Project Manager. Following a change in Defra's grant funding rules all the seasonal posts were, for the time being, being hosted by Natural England.</p> <p>4.3 A number of areas for improvement had been identified as a result of the recruitment and training process for the seasonal wardens. Consequently, it was proposed that two additional year round warden positions be recruited to in September 2016. This would tie the recruitment process in to the end date of the current fixed term seasonal posts and it was hoped that this would give the project a strong pool of candidates to select from.</p> <p>4.4 It was reported that so far during the 2016 bird breeding season wardens had each month completed on average 371 on-site warden hours, engaged with 892 people and issued 554 leaflets. These numbers were lower than in previous years due to the need to train the seasonal wardens however it was expected that this would increase as the training came to an end and the trainee wardens were able to carry out more tasks unsupervised.</p> <p>4.5 It was acknowledged that using volunteers to assist wardens with their work would increase the amount of promotional and surveying work that could be done. An approach would be made to the Wildlife Trust to explore their experiences with volunteers and an update would be given to the Board at their next meeting.</p>

	<p><u>Accommodation</u></p> <p>4.6 The SAMM Project was currently based in accommodation at Alice Holt near Farnham. The accommodation was considered to be too small to accommodate the full team and its location meant that project staff spent a significant proportion of their time travelling to and from SPA sites. Work had taken place to identify suitable alternative accommodation and it was envisaged that a move would increase office costs by approximately £6,500 per annum.</p> <p><u>Land Access</u></p> <p>4.7 Access Licenses had been agreed with a range of landowners and land managers. Work was taking place to finalise access agreements with the Ministry of Defence and wardens were making accompanied visits to MOD land until this was signed off.</p> <p>4.8 Due to a disagreement between the Crown Estate and DEFRA, work to agree access to land on the Crown Estate was proving more problematic. The Board was informed that whilst the Crown Estate had an obligation to ensure SPA sites were managed appropriately because they were not a signatory to the agreement there was no obligation for them to assist with the delivery of the SAMM project. It was agreed that representatives of the Crown Estate would be invited to a future Board meeting to discuss their plans for the SPA sites on their land and to try and develop a workable way forward.</p> <p><u>Promotional Work</u></p> <p>4.9 Work was underway to produce a directory detailing information about each of the SANG sites across the area. This would be published on the website and made available as an A5 document.</p> <p>4.10 To date, wardens had held five 'pit-stops' across the area to raise awareness amongst SANG users of the SPA. These events had been well received and wardens would be holding these on a weekly basis. The pit stops were currently advertised on an ad-hoc basis via social media.</p> <p>4.11 It was agreed that QR codes would be added to all leaflets and promotional material to encourage people to engage with the project's online presence.</p> <p>4.12 A pilot project focusing on the licensing of commercial dog walkers would be launched in the summer and an update on progress would be given at the Board's next meeting.</p> <p><u>Bird Survey</u></p> <p>4.13 It was reported that the 2015 Bird Survey had found that the Dartford Warbler had continued its recovery from its low point in 2010 (451 territories in 2015 compared to 292 in 2010). The species had now recolonised all but one of the sites (Hazeley Heath) from which it had been lost during the harsh winters of 2008/09 and 2019/10.</p> <p>4.14 The number of Nightjar territories had fallen when compared against 2014 figures (306 territories in 2014 compared to 355 in 2014) however numbers were considered to be within the normal range for the species. The destruction of habitat by fire between Ash and Brookwood was considered to be a significant contributory factor in this fall in numbers.</p>
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4.15	The number of Woodlark territories had fallen from 155 in 2014 to 137 in 2015. Whilst the fall in Woodlark numbers was attributed to the recent fire between Ash and Brookwood it was acknowledged that the decrease was a concern that would need to be looked at.
4.16	It was suggested that a representative from the Horshall Common Preservation Society be invited to give a presentation on their work to help increase bird numbers at a future meeting.
4.17	RESOLVED that; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The contents of the report be noted ii. The 2016/17 SAMP project budget and work programme set out in the report be approved iii. The SAMP project staffing structure is amended to 6 year round wardens and 6 seasonal wardens in September/October 2016 at an additional net cost of £25,000 on 2016/17.
5.	Thames Basin Heaths Financial Statement
5.1	The Board considered a report setting out the financial position of the Thames Basin Heaths Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMP) project as at 31 March 2016.
5.2	It was reported that at the end of the reporting period, Endowment Fund balances stood at £2.693million and £525,205, for project expenditure, was held in the Maintenance Fund. Projections indicated that a further £1.026million was expected to be added to the Endowment Fund in 2016/17, giving an anticipated total of £3.719million that ought to be invested.
5.3	Under the terms of the SAMP agreement, the Board held responsibility for regularly reviewing the value and performance of the Endowment Fund and for procuring the service of an Independent Financial Advisor to help maximise the returns achieved within the Boards' investment guidelines. It had been agreed at the Board's last meeting that a Task and Finish Group would be established to take this piece of work forward and Councillors Gibson, Goodman and Hilton agreed to participate. Expressions of interest would also be sought from members unable to attend the meeting.
5.4	The Board noted the report.
6.	Any Other Business
6.1	It was noted that this would be Councillor Dibbs' last meeting and the Board thanked him for all he had done to support the Partnership.
7.	Date of Next Meeting
7.2	It was agreed that dates of future meeting dates would be circulated by email.

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THAMES BASIN HEATHS
JOINT STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BOARD

Date: 30th September 2016

Subject: SAMM Project update

Report of: Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) Project

Recommendations:

- To AGREE Natural England's intention to continue hosting the SAMM project until 2020.
- To NOTE the contents of the report on SAMM project activity

Purpose of the Report:

To provide the JSPB with an update on SAMM project activity since the last meeting in May 2016.

Summary

This paper sets out for Members the SAMM project's activities and achievements since May 2016, in addition it confirms Natural England's commitment to continue hosting the project for another three years until 2020.

1. Natural England to continue hosting SAMM project

1.1 Following a presentation by the SAMM project manager to Natural England's Senior Management Team in August 2016, Natural England have confirmed that they wish to continue to host the SAMM project for an additional three year period after the current agreement comes to an end in July 2017.

1.2 There are no changes proposed as part of the agreement by Natural England to continue hosting the project, and therefore no changes will be required to the legal agreement.

1.3 The JSPB Board is asked to AGREE to the continued hosting of the SAMM Project by Natural England until July 2020.

2. SAMM project staffing and recruitment

2.1 Following the Board's agreement in May to amend the SAMM project staffing structure to 6 year round Wardens and 6 seasonal wardens from September/October 2016 at an additional cost of £25,200 in 2016/17. Recruitment commenced in August 2016 with interviews held on the 25th August. The additional Wardens (2 FTE) have now been recruited, and will commence employment during September 2016.

2.2 The new Wardens due to take up post are staff who previously worked with the project as Seasonal Wardens and will therefore not require any training when they take up their posts. The new Wardens are:

- Victoria Huth – Full-time
- Ruth Papworth – 0.5 FTE
- Joanne Wilsher – 0.5 FTE

2.3 The project's Senior Warden will be retiring on the 30th September, and the post of Senior Warden is also currently being recruited, with interviews held on 8th September. It is anticipated that the new Senior Warden will be in post prior to David Haskell (the existing Senior Warden) leaving the project.

2.4 At the time of writing this paper the successful applicant has not been confirmed, but a verbal update will be provided at the meeting.

3. SAMM project base

3.1 Further to the update provided to the May meeting, the SAMM project is continuing to negotiate the office move. Defra estates have requested additional information from the landlord prior to formally agreeing to sign a lease or license, but all indications are that agreement will be reached. The project still hopes to have relocated to the new office before the end of the year.

4. Wardening and Delivery

4.1 The project currently provides a warden service on the SPA seven days a week from 07.30 to 19:00 (daylight hours permitting).

4.2 The warden output for the project for the 2016 bird breeding season will be provided as a verbal update at the meeting, as due to the early call for papers the data had not been fully compiled and analysed in time to be included.

4.3 The SAMM project is now empowered to be actively engaging the public on SANGs sites (primarily outside of the bird breeding season) in order to fulfil the monitoring role detailed in the paper from the SANGs Task and Finish Group presented to the Board in May. The project commenced a trial of a SANGs users questionnaire in September, and the outputs of this will be reviewed and a revised questionnaire produced. It is anticipated that the SAMM team will commence visitor data collection on SANGs in October.

Access to SPA land

4.4 The project is still accessing Ministry of Defence land on an accompanied basis. However a meeting was held with Colonel Ludlow in July at which he confirmed the Ministry of Defence's continued commitment to the project. Reassurances were made that all necessary agreements would have been put in place to enable the Wardens to access Ministry of Defence land unaccompanied before the next breeding period.

4.5 A meeting has been held with local representatives of the Crown Estate, and the local team have agreed to produce a paper to present to their senior management making the case for allowing the SAMM Wardens to be granted access to their land. They were also informed

of the JSPB Board's intention (as agreed at the May meeting) to invite Crown Estate to attend a future meeting, this proposal was fully supported by the local team.

5 Communications, promotion and Events

- 5.1 As updated to the May Board meeting an agreement has been reached with Horsell Common Preservation Society to host the project's website. This has been designed and the information regarding SANGs sites gathered, and the content is in the final stages of being uploaded onto the site. It is anticipated that the site will be ready to launch imminently.
- 5.2 The project has a fully branded gazebo and display boards and uses this equipment to attend events around the Thames Basin Heaths area, as well as for holding 'pit-stops' – an opportunity to speak to SPA users over a cup of tea and a biscuit for dogs - in SPA car parks. The pit-stops have proved to be a very successful mechanism in engaging the public, and the project has been undertaking an average of 1.5 pit-stops per week during the 2016 bird breeding season.
- 5.3 Branded dog-waste bags have been printed, which in addition to the Thames Basin Heaths logo, have the messages:
- Keep these heathlands special. Please always pick up after your dog. Thank you.
 - Protect ground nesting birds. Please keep dogs in close control on paths from March-September.
- The bags are handed out at dog based events we attend, and pit-stops with dog treats and informative literature in them, and are carried by all wardens so that they can offer them to dog walkers on the heaths. The project has become more proactive in handing out dog waste bags particularly on sites which have a particular issue with site users not picking up after their dogs.
- 5.4 The project's Facebook page and Twitter feed are regularly updated (usually daily), with informative content about the project, heathland management, fire-risk and updates on wildlife observations.
- Facebook 237 likes
 - Twitter 222 followers
- 5.5 The project will be attending relevant events in the Thames Basin Heaths area during the year to promote responsible behavior on heathland sites and to promote the use of SANGs. We are currently due to be attending 20 events during 2016, with 13 attended by the end of August.
- 5.6 At the May Board meeting a request was made for some examples of our communications work, and for information to provide a feel for the work of the Warden team. With this in mind an article which was published on Natural England's website is provided for information in Annex 2, and some examples of the project's facebook posts from the last couple of days are included in Annex 3.

6. SPA Monitoring

Automatic people counter installation

- 6.1 The automatic people counter sensors were installed on all land, except Ministry of Defence, between January and March 2015. Sensors will be installed on the Ministry of Defence land this autumn.
- 6.2 Throughout 2015 the project calibrated and undertook trouble-shooting of various issues with the sensors, as there have been various unexpected issues including water ingress, physical faults, software problems, and physical damage and theft. We are confident that we have a complete data set for 2016 (except MoD).
- 6.3 A tender will be let for the analysis and interpretation of the people counter data for 2015 and 2016 during October and the results will be presented to the next JSPB Board meeting.

Car Park Counts

- 6.4 The SAMM project has now reached a staffing level which enables us to undertake the car park counts ourselves. This has enabled us to move to a more robust methodology of undertaking one set of transects on a monthly basis, rather than the previous methodology of six transects once a year. Monthly transects commenced in January 2016.
- 6.5 It is intended that the analysis of the car park transect data is undertaken once 12 months of car park transect data has been collected. Therefore it is anticipated that this analysis will be commissioned in January 2017.

7. SAMM Project Budget

- 7.1 The budget for 2016/17 agreed at the last meeting was £441,971.78 (plus an additional £5,000 should the office move occur during this financial year).
- 7.2 The project expenditure through to 31 August is set out in the table below.

Salaries	£163,618.91
Travel and Subsistence and Non-pay Running Costs	£25,314.84
Programme Expenditure	£1,145.52
TOTAL	£190,079.27

8. SAMM project activity for next 6 months

- 8.1 Indicative SAMM project activity for the next six months is shown in Annex 1. This sets out the main delivery elements of the project over this period.

Annex 1. Gantt chart for SAMM project activity September 2016 – February 2017

Task	September 2016	October 2016	November 2016	December 2016	January 2017	February 2017
Additional 2 Wardens recruited						
Recruitment of 2017 seasonal Wardens						
SANGs visitor questionnaire trialled						
SAMM Wardens to undertake public engagement on SANGs						
SAMM wardening on the SPA						
Access Management & Monitoring Partnership meetings						
Installation of sensors on MoD land						
SPA Sensor data analysis						
TBH SPA car park counts						
SPA Car park transect data analysis						
SAMM Project office lease agreement						
SAMM Project pit-stops in SPA car parks						

Managing increasing access to sensitive sites



It's all in a day's work for Sarah Bunce, a warden on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA...

My office is 8,200 hectares of lowland heath habitat - fragments of an ancient landscape dispersed across Hampshire, Surrey and Berkshire. The area is collectively known as the Thames Basin Heaths and recognised as a Special Protection Area (SPA) for internationally important populations of Annex 1 ground-nesting birds.

Managing access

Like many places, the SPA is under pressure from increasing visitor numbers – over 5 million a year. In the south east this is magnified by housing demand. With over 290,000 homes built within 5km of the SPA's boundary and another 50,000 new homes planned by 2026, a strategy was needed! That's where the Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) Project comes in.

Hosted by Natural England and funded by contributions from new housing developments, the project monitors visitor trends and provides coordinated visitor engagement. It also promotes Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG), a catchy title for another aspect of the mitigation strategy, greenspaces designed to mop-up the recreational pressure on the SPA generated by all those new houses! Some are new spaces open to the public for the first time, others have been enhanced to cope with more visitors. Either way, the idea is that they're convenient, provide free parking, poo bins and a pleasant natural environment for a stroll with the dog.

About my role

I joined the project's wardening team in July 2015. Armed with informative leaflets, friendly advice and free poo bags, we're engaging with visitors across the SPA to raise awareness of the sensitivity of these special places and to encourage responsible behaviour, particularly by dog walkers. And in our striking claret uniforms, perhaps our very presence is enough to improve



behaviour! We're also extra eyes and ears on the sites, reporting issues and visitor comments back to our site management partners.

For me, becoming a warden is a wonderful opportunity to spend time in beautiful places. To appreciate the heathland in bloom, the vibrant pink of bell heather, the purple flush of the ling that gives way to an autumnal tinge. To get to know the silver-studded blue and grayling butterflies. To learn the haunts of the ground-nesting birds. So vulnerable to disturbance, the Dartford warblers, nightjars and woodlarks that call the heath their home, are, of course, why I'm here.

The challenges



But joining the SAMM Project presented a few initial challenges. First there's all the terminology, was I joining the SAMM Project or the Thames Basin Heaths Partnership Project? Same thing when it comes down to it. And all the acronyms! Like SANG, places I have been getting to know very well over the last few months; and AMMP, the Access Management and Monitoring Partnership, a quarterly discussion group; and the JSPB, the Joint Strategic Partnership Board, comprising the 11 local authorities with

land within 5km.

Then there are the sites. 13 Sites of Special Scientific Interest and over 40 SANGs to get to know, covering 3 counties, under the management of around 20 organisations! It's no mean feat to find your way around and remember everyone's names. I'm getting there though and very much enjoying building new partnerships.

Fly-tipping and fungi

I'm on a rota to visit part of the SPA each day and each visit has its highs and lows. Take last week, arriving to warden at Chobham Common NNR, the car park I pulled into was full of asbestos, fly-tipped overnight, reported immediately to site management. And in fungi season of course, the first people I engaged with were keen to know who to report illegal pickers to. The next pair were looking for their missing friend (thankfully found safe and well). And then a lovely smile from a well-known local as he jogged by!

I'm getting to know some of the people who walk here and it's a joy to find that many care about our heathlands. There are those who don't of course, letting their dogs run riot in the heather and not picking up after them. But that's why I'm here, to spread the word about this amazing habitat and try to change people's behaviour for the better.

More information

Sarah Bunce is a Warden for the Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) Project.

For more information, find the project [on Facebook](#), or follow them [on Twitter](#), or [contact Sarah](#).

[Sympathetic access to sensitive sites](#)

For further information about facilitating sympathetic access to sensitive sites in the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, see  [the attached article](#) by Simon Thompson, Project Manager for the Thames Basin Heath's Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) project. It was originally published in the December 2015 issue of In Practice and reproduced with the kind permission of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management.

Annex 3 – Examples of some recent facebook posts



Thames Basin Heaths Partnership Project added 6 new photos.

31 August at 10:15 ·

For followers in the Sandhurst area, here's our pictorial guide to Horseshoe Lake! If it inspires you to explore, start from the free car park on Mill Lane, at the entrance to the activity centre. [#TBHSANG](#)



[Like](#)[Comment](#)

[Top comments](#)

Matthew Jackson, Janet Hulbert Byers, Charlotte Edwards and 11 others like this.

[Comments](#)



Remove

Nicki Paton Great place to visit

1 · 31 August at 11:14



Thames Basin Heaths Partnership Project shared [Surrey Wildlife Trust's](#) post.

1 hr ·

The bird nesting season may be officially over, and we've sadly said goodbye to this year's seasonal wardens, but the birds don't always read the manual! There may still be a few active nests, as this post from last year shows. These tiny nightjar chicks were ringed as late as the end of August! Please help any stragglers make the most of the continued good weather, by sticking to paths and keeping dogs close. Thank you .



Surrey Wildlife Trust added 3 new photos.

18 August 2015 ·

These wonderful nightjar chicks were rung on Chobham Common today by a licensed ringer to help monitor population, distribution & migration.

Rare summer visitor...

[See more](#)

THAMES BASIN HEATHS - JOINT STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BOARD

Date: 30th September 2016

Subject: Eutrophication of Soils Trial Project – Funding Proposal

Report of: Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM)
Project

Recommendations:

- To APPROVE funding for the trial project

Purpose of the Report:

To provide the JSPB with the background to the trial project and its likely outputs along with the cost of funding the trial on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA.

1. Proposal

1.1 Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) have approached the SAMM project with a proposal to develop and trial a monitoring project to determine the impact of soil eutrophication as a result of dog fouling. The proposal is to run a limited trial on selected Thames Basin Heaths SPA sites using the SAMM Wardens to collect the necessary data.

2. Background

2.1 Soil eutrophication (nutrient enrichment) in semi-natural habitats can lead to composition and structural changes and therefore a decline in value of that habitat. There are many sources of eutrophication in the countryside, but one source that has the greatest potential for reduction through behavioural change is that of dog fouling. The majority of dog fouling occurs around car parks and at site or footpath entrances (NE 2003) and it is these areas that are likely to experience the greatest eutrophication and habitat changes.

2.2 There is considerable unease among the general public with regards to dog fouling and local authorities and other land managers spend a lot of time and effort trying to encourage dog owners and walkers to clear up after their pets.

However, there is little coordinated monitoring of the effects of various methods to reduce dog fouling or on its consequences. This project aims to harness public support for dog fouling action to monitor the impact of dog fouling on the environment and the effectiveness of programmes to tackle dog fouling.

3. Aims

3.1 The aim of the project is to set up a programme to record and monitor:

- The effect of eutrophication from dog fouling on habitat structure and composition
- The effect of measures to reduce dog fouling

4. Approach

4.1 The project will take a citizen science approach to collect the relevant data. TVERC will recruit and train volunteers to carry out surveys of plants, collect soil samples and count dogs and their faeces from points at set distances from footpath entrances.

4.2 To provide a pilot for this project, TVERC will initially focus the work on the Thames Basin heaths Special Protection Area to test the methods, before potentially rolling the work out more widely across Berkshire and Oxfordshire.

4.3 TVERC will ask volunteers to record information about (1) vegetation structure; (2) indicator species; (3) botanical species composition; (4) amount of dog faeces at fixed points along a 100 m transect from the entrance along the path; and (5) count the number of dogs using the entrance.

4.4 TVERC will create a bespoke online recording form to collect this information. Using the data collected they will be able to identify hotspots of eutrophication, heavy use areas and areas that are vulnerable to or experiencing significant habitat changes as a result of eutrophication. These data can help land managers target work in the most affected areas.

4.5 Volunteers will be asked to repeat their surveys annually and TVERC can use these data to monitor changes in the habitat, as well as identify any improvements that could be the result of any campaigns to address dog fouling.

5. Benefits

5.1 The issue of dog fouling is one which is regularly raised to the wardens by the public on the SPA, and the project actively encourage site users to pick-up after their dogs. The collection of site specific data on the impact of dog fouling on

soil and species composition would provide an additional source of data for the wardens to utilise to support their requests to dog owners to pick-up on the SPA sites.

5.2 The data would also be useful for site managers in terms of highlighting the level of impact soil eutrophication is having to the composition of their sites.

6. Costs

6.1 TVERC have made a request for **£3200** for the trial, this cost is based on 10 days of staff time at £320 per day, to provide the following:

- Writing the methodology for the trial
- Training for the wardens
- Analysis of the data
- Production of a report of the trial's findings

7. Discussion

7.1 The proposed trial project would provide site specific data on the contribution of dog fouling on the eutrophication of parts of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA.

The trial would enable the comparison of areas near car parks where the issue is likely to be most acute with more remote areas to ascertain the level of impact of dog fouling on habitat composition. This would appear to fit within the monitoring remit of the SAMM Project.

7.2 In terms of monitoring the effectiveness of measures to control the issue of dog fouling, data would need to be gathered over a number of years and this would not be achieved by the trial. There is a risk that future funding will not be available and therefore this aim of the project may not be achieved. However, a successful trial would be likely to significantly increase the likelihood of future funding being secured.

7.3 The requested funds are likely to be available from with the existing SAMM budget for 2016/17, but this will involve a slight scaling back on other expenditure.

7.4 The JSPB Board is requested to consider whether funding the soil eutrophication trial is an appropriate use of the SAMM Project's resources.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1 Given the relatively modest overall cost of the trial it is recommended that the JSPB Board agree to funding the trial, but with no commitment to providing any further funding for the project until after the findings of the trial have been analysed and the report presented to the JSPB.

Committee/Panel:	Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board
Date:	30 September 2016
Title:	Thames Basin Heaths Financial Statement
Report From:	Administrative Body

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report presents an update to the Joint Strategic Partnership Board (JSPB), on the financial position of the Thames Basin Heaths Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM), to enable the Board to make a decision on whether independent financial advisors should now be appointed to invest some or all of the funds held within the Endowment Account.
- 1.2 As at 31 March 2016, the balance in the Endowment Fund was £2.693m, and a further £525,205 was held in the Maintenance Fund, to pay for project expenditure. It is projected that a further £1.053m will be added to Endowment Account in the 2016/17 financial year, giving an anticipated total of £3.747m available to be invested.
- 1.3 Based on current projections of income and expenditure, the balance on the Endowment Fund would increase to £6.450m by 31 March 2019, whilst the balance on the Maintenance Fund is expected to increase to £719,354 in the same period.

2. Financial Position

- 2.1. The financial position as at 31 March 2016 is summarised in the table in Appendix 1, with the projections for the current financial year to 31 March 2017 in Appendix 2. A more detailed summary of the projected income for the year to 31 March 2017 is shown in Appendix 3.
- 2.2. The balance in the Endowment Fund at the end of March 2016 was £2.693m, and it is projected that a further £1.053m will be added to the Endowment Fund in the 2016/17 financial year, giving a balance of £3.747m at the end of March 2017.
- 2.3. This is based upon projected income receivable in 2016/17 of approximately £1.5m, to add to the £4.155m total income received by the Administrative Body to 31 March 2016. This income has been set against costs of £937,288 to March 2016, with costs of £472,000 projected for the 2016/17 financial year.

- 2.4. The projected income for the 2016/17 financial year of £1.5m is a slight increase on the £1.466m reported at the previous JSPB meeting of £3.719m, due to increased expected income from Hart and Elmbridge Borough Councils, and also a provision for interest receivable. The projected costs have also been increased slightly to reflect the additional staffing costs agreed at the previous board meeting, relating to a higher ratio of year round to seasonal wardens.
- 2.5. The balance in the Maintenance Account at 31 March 2016, net of expenditure incurred and paid to date, was £525,205. A small draw from the Maintenance Account of £20,490 is projected in 2016/17, leaving an expected balance of £504,715 at the end of March 2017. Any balance remaining on the Maintenance Fund after all costs have been paid may be transferred to the Endowment Fund.

3. Projected Financial Position for the 2017/18 and 2018/19 Financial Years

- 3.1. The projected financial position for the 2017/18 and 2018/19 financial years is shown in Appendix 4.
- 3.2. In the SAMM business plan it was envisaged that approximately £1.6m annual tariff income would be required to meet the ongoing expenditure costs, whilst allowing for 70% of total income to be transferred to the Endowment Fund to ensure the financial sustainability of the SAMM in perpetuity. The projected tariff income for the 2017/18 and 2018/19 financial years is £1.8m and £2.1m respectively, based on information provided by each of the partners.
- 3.3. The annual expenditure projections on an ongoing basis are approximately £472,000, an increase in the previously reported figure, due mainly to the recruitment of six full time and six seasonal wardens, as agreed by the JSPB at the previous meeting on 16th May 2016, instead of four full time and ten seasonal wardens. However, the ongoing annual expenditure projections remain lower than the level originally anticipated in the SAMM business plan of approximately £500,000 per annum.
- 3.4. In prior years, actual annual expenditure has not reached these levels, primarily because fewer wardens have been recruited than initially planned. However, the SAMM project is now recruiting to the full number of full-time wardens and has recruited seasonal wardens for the first time in 2016.
- 3.5. Based on the current projections of income and expenditure, the Endowment Fund balance is expected to increase over the next three financial years to £6.450m by March 2019, as shown in Appendix 5. The balance within the Maintenance Fund is expected to increase to £719,354, and as stated above, this could be transferred to the Endowment Fund, but does provide some assurance that should actual income fall below projected levels, full staffing levels and therefore delivery can be maintained.

4. Investment of funds in the Endowment Account

- 4.1. Tariff income is collected by LPAs and passed to the Administrative Body. This tariff income is used to fund current project expenditure (the Maintenance Account) and to accumulate sufficient balances to fund future project expenditure and the cost of long term maintenance and protection of the SPA (the Endowment Account).
- 4.2. Under the terms of the SAMM agreement (section 5.3) the JSPB is given responsibility to review the value and performance of the Endowment Fund on a regular basis and provide direction as to when, how and from whom the services of an Independent Financial Adviser are to be procured.
- 4.3. The SAMM agreement envisaged the management of the balance in the Endowment Fund to be undertaken by an Independent Financial Adviser, to maximise the return achieved within the investment guidelines set by the JSPB.
- 4.4. Fund balances are currently held by the Administrative Body, receiving interest at a rate of 0.5%, which, following the recent rate reduction, is now above the current Bank of England base rate of 0.25%.

5. Recommendations

5.1. It is recommended that:

- The current financial position and projected financial position for the three financial years to 31 March 2019 is noted,
- The transfer of any unused Maintenance Fund balance to the Endowment Fund is considered,
- The investment strategy for the Endowment Fund is considered.

5.2. If deemed appropriate, the Board is asked to provide direction as to how and from whom the services of an independent financial advisor are to be procured.

Appendix 1 - Financial Summary to 31 March 2016

Income	Cumulative to 2013/14 £	2014/15 £	2015/16 £	Total £
Bracknell Forest BC	81,924	205,306	201,542	488,772
Elmbridge BC	36,436	9,121	50,483	96,040
Guildford BC	278,646	190,679	177,310	646,635
Hart BC	175,333	247,226	208,010	630,569
Runnymede BC	45,360	18,900	132,930	197,190
Rushmoor BC	126,064	71,146	144,881	342,091
Surrey Heath BC	274,967	126,993	135,781	537,741
Waverley BC	49,817	58,509	31,261	139,587
Windsor & Maidenhead RB	66,091	35,201	28,372	129,664
Woking BC	113,489	275,427	62,691	451,607
Wokingham BC	253,609	157,488	57,799	468,896
Interest	6,897	6,469	13,059	26,425
Total Income	1,508,633	1,402,465	1,244,118	4,155,215
Expenditure				
Project Co-ordinator Natural England	26,058	0	0	26,058
Project costs Natural England	377,278	144,342	246,790	768,410
Administration fee Natural England	27,500	10,160	10,160	47,820
Financial Administration HCC	55,000	20,000	20,000	95,000
Total Expenditure	485,836	174,502	276,950	937,288
Net Income/(expenditure)	1,022,797	1,227,963	967,168	3,217,927

Appendix 2 - Projected Financial Summary for the year to 31 March 2017

2016/17 Income	Budget £	Actuals to end of August £	Outturn Forecast £	Variance £
Bracknell Forest BC	177,030	3,990	177,030	0
Elmbridge BC	55,000	22,553	55,000	0
Guildford BC	185,082	42,156	185,082	0
Hart BC	0	16,941	16,941	16,941
Runnymede BC	80,010	0	80,010	0
Rushmoor BC	338,578	175,543	338,578	0
Surrey Heath BC	110,000	11,691	110,000	0
Waverley BC	24,495	(17,323)	24,495	0
Windsor & Maidenhead RB	13,230	1,289	13,230	0
Woking BC	193,158	(2,170)	193,158	0
Wokingham BC	298,950	133,388	298,950	0
Interest	13,000	0	13,000	0
Total Income	1,488,533	388,059	1,505,474	16,941
Expenditure				
Natural England Staff Costs	370,121	8,503	370,121	0
Natural England Project Costs	71,851	1,715	71,851	0
Natural England Admin Fee	10,160	0	10,160	0
HCC Admin Fee	20,000	20,000	20,000	0
Total Expenditure	472,132	30,218	472,132	0
Total Net (Income) / Expenditure	(1,016,402)	(357,841)	(1,033,342)	(16,941)

Appendix 3 - Detailed Income Summary

	Previous years	2016/17					Variance
		Budget	Actuals to date	Notified contributions	Forecast qtrs 2 to 4	Projected total	
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
INCOME							
Bracknell Forest BC	488,772	177,030	3,990	0	173,040	177,030	0
Elmbridge BC	96,040	55,000	22,553	0	32,447	55,000	0
Guildford BC	646,635	185,082	42,156	0	142,926	185,082	0
Hart BC	630,569	0	16,941	0	0	16,941	16,941
Runnymede BC	197,190	80,010	0	1,890	78,120	80,010	0
Rushmoor BC	342,091	338,578	175,543	0	163,035	338,578	0
Surrey Heath BC	537,741	110,000	11,691	0	98,309	110,000	0
Waverley BC	139,587	24,495	(17,323)	17,323	24,495	24,495	0
Windsor & Maidenhead RB	129,664	13,230	1,289	0	11,941	13,230	0
Woking BC	451,607	193,158	(2,170)	2,170	193,158	193,158	0
Wokingham BC	468,896	298,950	133,388	0	165,562	298,950	0
Interest	26,425	13,000	0	0	13,000	13,000	0
Total Income	4,155,215	1,488,533	388,059	21,383	1,096,032	1,505,474	16,941
Maintenance Fund	1,462,493	446,560				451,642	
Endowment fund	2,692,722	1,041,973				1,053,832	

Appendix 4 - Projected Income and Expenditure 2016/17 - 2018/19

Income	Actuals 2015/16 £	Projected 2016/17 £	Projected 2017/18 £	Projected 2018/19 £
Bracknell Forest BC	201,542	177,030	349,020	715,680
Elmbridge BC	50,483	55,000	19,360	19,360
Guildford BC	177,310	185,082	185,082	185,082
Hart BC	208,010	16,941	0	0
Runnymede BC	132,930	80,010	49,140	68,670
Rushmoor BC	144,881	338,578	281,788	395,369
Surrey Heath BC	135,781	110,000	142,676	0
Waverley BC	31,261	24,495	0	0
Windsor & Maidenhead RB	28,372	13,230	27,720	56,595
Woking BC	62,691	193,158	193,158	0
Wokingham BC	57,799	298,950	554,640	618,790
Interest	13,059	13,000	0	0
Total Income	1,244,118	1,505,474	1,802,584	2,059,546
Total Expenditure	276,950	472,132	472,000	472,000
Net Income/(expenditure)	967,168	1,033,342	1,330,584	1,587,546

Appendix 5 -Projected Endowment and Maintenance Fund Balance

	Actuals 2015/16 £	Projected 2016/17 £	Projected 2017/18 £	Projected 2018/19 £
Income	1,244,118	1,505,474	1,802,584	2,059,546
70% to Endowment Fund	872,304	1,053,832	1,261,809	1,441,682
30% to Maintenance Fund	371,814	451,642	540,775	617,864
Expenditure	276,950	472,132	472,000	472,000
Maintenance Fund:				
Balance brought forward	430,341	525,205	504,715	573,490
Transfer (to) / from income	94,864	(20,490)	68,775	145,864
balance carried forward	<u>525,205</u>	<u>504,715</u>	<u>573,490</u>	<u>719,354</u>
Endowment Fund:				
Balance brought forward	1,820,418	2,692,722	3,746,554	5,008,363
Transfer (to) / from income	872,304	1,053,832	1,261,809	1,441,682
balance carried forward	<u>2,692,722</u>	<u>3,746,554</u>	<u>5,008,363</u>	<u>6,450,045</u>