



**Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board
Friday, 3 March 2017 at 10.00 am
Council Chamber, Surrey Heath House, Knoll Road, Camberley, GU15 3HD**

To: Councillors Moira Gibson (Chairman)

AGENDA

		Pages
1	Minutes of Previous Meeting	1 - 4
2	SAMM Update	5 - 16
3	Bird Survey Results	17 - 20
4	Financial Report	21 - 28
5	SAMM Project Manager	29 - 30
6	Any Other Business	
7	Date of Next Meeting	

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**Thames Basin Heaths
Joint Strategic Partnership
30th September 2016
Council Chamber, Woking Borough Council
Notes of Meeting**

Present:Board Members

Councillor Phillip Brooker	Guildford Borough Council
Councillor Graham Cundy	Woking Borough Council
Councillor Martin Tennant	Rushmoor Borough Council
Councillor K Randolph	Elmbridge Borough Council
Councillor David Hilton	Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Councillor Mike Goodman	Surrey County Council
Councillor Chris Turrell	Bracknell Forest Council
Councillor James Radley	Hart Borough Council
Councillor Brian Adams	Waverley Borough Council

Advisory Board Members

Heather Lewis	Surrey Wildlife Trust
Matt Jackson	Berkshire, Buckingham and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust
Sam Cartwright	Berkshire, Buckingham and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust
Heather Richards	RSPB
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
Paul Druce	Surrey County Council
Jane Ireland	Surrey Heath Borough Council
Louise Piper	Rushmoor Borough Council

1.	Apologies
1.1	Apologies were received from Cllr Moira Gibson Surrey Heath Borough Council, Cllr Gail Kingerley Runnymede Borough Council, and Cllr David Parr Runnymede Borough Council. Cllr Bath Wokingham Borough Council attended the end of the meeting.
2.	Minutes of the Previous Meeting and Matters Arising
2.1	Minutes 3.5,4.5 and 4.12 were addressed by updates from Simon Thompson Natural England Minute 4.8 This needs to be taken forward as an ACTION to invite Crown Estate to a

	<p>future Board meeting in respect of access to SPA sites on Crown Estate land.</p> <p>Minute 4.16 this needs to be taken forward as an ACTION and Horshall Common Preservation Society be invited to a future Board meeting</p> <p>Minute 5.3 Finance Task group has not yet been set up and this needs to be an ACTION for the Chair of the Board</p>
3.	Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Report
3.1	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 since May 2016. The report confirmed Natural England's commitment to continue hosting the project for another three years until 2020. The report included updates on project staffing and recruitment, project accommodation, wardening and delivery access to SPA land, communications and promotional work, SPA monitoring and car park counts, a budget update, and SAMM project activity for the next 6 months.
3.2	<p><u>Natural England to continue hosting the SAMM project</u></p> <p>The report sought JSPB agreement to the continued hosting of the SAMM project by Natural England until July 2020.</p>
3.3	Staffing
3.4	In line with the Board's agreement in May the staffing structure will be 6 year round wardens and 6 seasonal wardens. Sarah Bunce has been promoted to Senior Wardens. The full time wardens have all previously worked as seasonal wardens and therefore will not require training.
3.5	With regard to the use of volunteers to assist wardens Natural England raised some concern re ensuring a consistent message was given but will continue to look at this proposal for the 2017 bird nesting season. It was reported that between March and August there have been 2,694 wardening hours on the SPA sites and engagement with over 4,000 people using the SPA. In addition to the formal questionnaire to get people's views on SANGS there will also be an informal questionnaire to seek what features of SANGS are liked and what could be improved. This can then be feed back to the Local Planning Authorities and help determine how future monies are used on the sites.
3.6	<p><u>Land Access</u></p> <p>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. Sign off should be by the start of the 2017 breeding season</p> <p>A meeting has been held with local representatives of the Crown Estate and a paper is to be produced to present to their senior management to make the case for allowing SAMM wardens onto Crown Estate Land. The Board in May agreed that representatives of the Crown Estate would be invited to a future Board meeting to</p>

3.7	<p>discuss their plans for the SPA sites on their land and to try and develop a workable way forward. This remains an ACTION to be taken forward</p> <p><u>Promotional Work</u></p> <p>The website, which is hosted by Horshall Common Preservation Society, but populated by Natural England and Local Authorities is now fully uploaded and will be tested over the next few weeks.</p> <p>A report will be presented at a future meeting on car park counts and people counts.</p> <p>RESOLVED that;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The contents of the report be noted ii. That Natural England should host the SAMM project for a further three years until July 2020 iii. The website should be shared with Local Authority Officers before it goes live to ensure accuracy of data and that an Officer group set up to monitor the website iv. Members to access the website before it goes live for Member approval.
4.	Eutrophication of Soils Trial Project- Funding Proposal
4.1	<p>Thames Valley Records Centre (TVERC) to the SAMM project for funding to develop and trial a monitoring project to determine the impact of soil eutrophication as a result of dog fouling. TVERC would initially focus on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA to test the method</p>
4.2	<p>Following discussion Members considered that this trial was outside of scope of the SANG and SAMM projects.</p> <p>RESOLVED that;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The report be noted ii. The SAMM project would not fund the eutrophication of soils project

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 (SAMM) project as at 30 September 2016.
5.2	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.
5.3	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.
5.4	Under the terms of the SAMM 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. The Board noted the report and that the Financial Task group still needs to meet.
6.	Any Other Business
6.1	A question in respect of Brexit was raised. It was noted that there would still be a need to protect Annex1 birds and that the current legislation was enshrined in UK law A question was raised in respect of seeking LEP funding for SANGs. It was noted that some Hart and Surrey Heath have been successful in getting LEP funding for SANGs. A question was raised regarding change of air routes from Farnborough. It was noted that there would be no change in aircraft movements. It was noted that future monitoring may consider if there is any impact on air quality
7.	Date of Next Meeting
7.2	It was agreed that dates of future meeting dates would be circulated by email.

THAMES BASIN HEATHS
JOINT STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BOARD

Date: 3rd March 2017

Subject: SAMP Project update

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

Recommendations:

- To NOTE the contents of the report on SAMP project activity

Purpose of the Report:

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

Summary

This paper sets out for Members the SAMP project's activities and achievements since September 2016, in addition it sets out plans for the 2017 season, and arrangements for the replacement of the Project Manager who will shortly be leaving the project.

1. SAMP project staffing and recruitment

Seasonal Wardens

- 1.1 Following the Board's agreement in May to amend the SAMP project staffing structure to 6 year round Wardens and 6 seasonal wardens from September/October 2016, the project completed the recruitment of the 6 seasonal wardens in February, with 4 positions already filled and a further 2 commencing in the coming weeks.
- 1.2 The new Seasonal Wardens are Bryony Davidson, Michael Jones, Daniel Creech, Fiona Hayes, Martin D'Arcy, and Ilona Livarski. All the new staff have a background in conservation and/or heathland management and are well qualified for the roles.
- 1.3 A comprehensive induction programme has been put in place for the new Seasonal Wardens, which is being delivered by Sarah Bunce our Senior Warden this week.

Project Manager

- 1.4 Simon Thompson will be leaving the position of Project Manager in the next two months to take on a new role project managing Natural England's input into the Heathrow Airport expansion. The role is due to be advertised shortly, and the role profile, specification and pay grade is intended to be the same as that of the current project manager. An outline timetable for the recruitment of the new project manager is set out below:

Role profile and specification agreed	w/c 6 March
Post advertised	w/c 20 March
Interviews	w/c 10 April
Commencement	Early May (depending on notice period)

- 1.5 The existing Project Manager will remain in post until a new Manager has been recruited, and a full hand over can take place. The current Project Manager will also remain available to assist the replacement Project Manager following the hand over period. There will therefore be no impact on the delivery of the project as a result of the change in personnel.

2. Wardening and Delivery

- 2.1 The project currently provides a warden service on the SPA seven days a week from 07.30 to 19:00 (daylight hours permitting). In addition, as agreed at the May 2016 Board Meeting, the warden team have also been undertaking visitor surveys on SANGs sites during the autumn and winter of 2016/17.

SPA Wardening

- 2.2 The warden output for the project since the last meeting in September 2016 is set out below. The following table sets out the number of hours of warden activity delivered on the SPA during the period September – January. The total number of hours delivered on the SPA has been reduced due to time being diverted into SANGs survey work.

September to January	Total hours wardened	1012.2
	Number of interactions	1358
	Number already spoken to	469
	Leaflets handed out	418
	Number of Dogs	1449
	Number of Dog Walkers (5+)	79
	Average spoken to	34.54%

- 2.3 The table above shows the total of hours wardened, and the number of interactions undertaken during those hours. The level of interactions is expected to be lower during the autumn and winter than in the spring and summer due to the sites being quieter, and there being fewer sensitivities on the SPA during this period. The number of leaflets handed out is also lower than in the spring and summer, as the majority of our literature relates to the ground nesting bird sensitivities on the SPA, which is less relevant outside the bird breeding season.
- 2.4 The number of people already spoken to, and the average number spoken to percentage figure provide an indication of how many site users have been made aware of site sensitivities through interactions with the Warden team. The data shows that the project has reached – on average – around a third of site users.

2.5 The table also shows the number of dogs which people interacted with were walking, it can be seen that this is over 1 dog per interaction (although an interaction may be a group rather than an individual). The number of dog walkers with five or more dogs provides a suggested level of commercial dog walkers interacted with, although some will be individuals who just own a large number of dogs.

SANGs Visitor Surveys

2.6 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 were reviewed and a revised questionnaire produced. The SAMM team then commenced visitor data collection on SANGs in October.

2.7 The methodology for the SANGs surveys is contained in Annex 1, but to summarise each site received 18 hours of survey time between the hours of 08:00 – 16:00, with 6 hours being at the weekend and 12 hours during the week. The following 16 sites have been surveyed during the autumn and winter of 2016/17:

Farnham Park	Chantry Wood
Southwood Woodland	Riverside Country Park
Rowhill Nature Reserve	Crookham Park
Heather Farm	Englemere Pond
Lilly Hill Park	Brooklands Community Park
Rooks Nest Wood	St Anne's Hill
Homewood Park	Brookwood Country Park
Allen's Field	White Rose Lane

2.8 The SANGs visitor surveys were only completed in mid-February so there has not been an opportunity to analyse the data yet, but from an unscientific scan through a small number of the surveys convenience, close to home, and well surfaced paths are among the top attractors, whilst more dog waste bins appears near the top of the list of suggestions for improvement.

2.9 The following table shows the amount of warden time spent undertaking visitor surveys on the SANGs alongside the amount of time spent on the SPA for each month from September to January. It should be noted that the time on SANGs only relates to time actually on site, and does not include the significant amount of time the wardens spent undertaking data entry for all the paper questionnaires completed during the surveys.

	September	October	November	December	January
Total number of hours on SPA	174.75	292.8	221.75	152.9	170
TOTAL NUMBER OF HOURS ON SANGS	0	66	194.75	91.25	121
Total hours out	174.75	358.8	416.5	244.15	291
Proportion of time on SANGs	0%	18%	47%	37%	42%

2.10 It can be seen that the total hours (combination of SPA and SANGs) varies considerably from month to month. The lower level in September is due to this being the period when the additional year-round Wardens were being recruited, as well as the previous Senior

Warden retiring, therefore the team was at a lower staffing level during September. The October and November hours represent a 'normal' level of delivery, whilst December and January reflect the Christmas and New Year break combined with this being the period when the wardens started spending more time in the office undertaking the data inputting from the SANGs surveys they had already undertaken.

3. Access to SPA land

3.1 The project is still accessing Ministry of Defence land on an accompanied basis. However at the time of writing this paper the Project Manager is in dialogue with Colonel Ludlow in an effort to get a firm timescale for full access to the publically accessible parts of the Ministry of Defence estate.

3.2 There is no progress to report with regard to accessing the Crown Estate owned SPA, and it is recommended that the JSPB Board invite a representative of Crown Estate to future JSPB meetings to discuss their lack of co-operation.

4 Communications, Promotion and Events

4.1 The Thames Basin Heaths Partnership website is now live and can be accessed at www.tbhpartnership.org.uk Thank you to all the JSPB Officers and Board members who commented on the development version of the site. The website provides an on-line SANGs directory and provides information on the project and on the sensitivities of the heathland habitat. It is intended that the website will continue to evolve over time with new content added regularly. Some of the website content is set out in Annex 2 for information.

4.2 Using the SANGs related content compiled for the website a SANGs directory booklet has also been produced, this booklet entitled: 'Greenspace on your doorstep' with the sub-title 'Discover great places for circular walks in the Thames Basin' will be handed out by the wardens on-site and at the pit-stop events in SPA car parks. The A5 booklet contains details of all the SANGs listed on the website along with a pull-out map, and is intended to provide a useful guide to SPA users to promote the use of SANGs for their regular dog walks.

4.3 During March 2017 the project will be launching 'Heathland Hounds' which is a dog owner focused initiative which is intended to provide another mechanism for promoting positive behavior specifically on the SPA but also more generally in the area. Heathland Hounds will have a social media presence through facebook, with people invited to join the Heathland Hounds group via promotion by the Wardens and through temporary signs placed on SPA site notice boards.

4.4 The Heathland Hounds brand will be used by the project when attending external events, as well as for dedicated Heathland Hounds events which the project will be running ourselves, primarily guided dog walks on SANGs to promote the sites to new users.

4.5 During the 2017 bird breeding season the project will build on the experience gained in 2016 when we trialed a small number of guided walks on the SPA. The project is planning an enhanced programme of guided walks on the SPA for this year focusing primarily on ecology, but also covering the history of the sites.

- 4.6 The Access Management and Monitoring Partnership (AMMP) group have highlighted the increasing issue of dog fouling on many of the SPA sites, something which the wardens have also highlighted as an increasing issue. In response to this the project is planning to undertake a campaign to raise public awareness of this issue. The project is exploring various options but currently favours the use of spray paint to draw attention to uncollected dog waste supported by signage to explain why this has been done, and what the potential impacts are to human health, animal health and site ecology.
- 4.7 Through the AMMP group it has been agreed to standardise the ground nesting birds sensitive period publicised across the various SPA sites by the land managers. All sites should now have signage stating the sensitive period as being 1st February – 15th September. To further assist in promoting the sensitivity of the sites during this period, the project has now agreed to put up our own signs on many sites which haven't previously benefitted from signage relating to ground nesting birds.
- 4.8 In addition to the new activities and initiatives listed above the project will be replicating the programme of event attendance and SPA car park pit-stops as undertaken in 2016.

5 School Based Education

- 5.1 The project has agreed to take on the schools education project previously delivered by BBOWT with funding from Bracknell Forest Borough Council. The project has agreed to deliver this on a one-off basis commencing in September 2017 in order to inform our future schools education plans. Having considered our available resources it has already been determined that it would not be possible to expand this project across the Thames Basin Heaths area, however our experience of delivering the project in 2017 will enable an informed decision to be made about future schools based education work.
- 5.2 The project is considering various options for future work with schools which are set out below for information only at this stage. These options will be further developed and put to the Board formally following the experience of delivering the education work in the autumn of 2017:
- (a) Roll out the BBOWT education project across the area – Would require very significant additional resources which are not available without an increase in the SAMM tariff due to the need to recruit a new education team.
 - (b) A 'touring' education programme based on the BBOWT project visiting a small number (potentially 3) of schools each year – would require a minor increase in resources to employ an additional education officer to support the existing Communication and Education Co-ordinator.
 - (c) Short presentations at school assemblies – limited delivery possible within existing resources.

6. SPA Monitoring

Automatic people counter installation

- 6.1 The installation of people counters on Ministry of Defence land has been delayed due to difficulties obtaining a Statement of Known Hazards (ensuring there are no dangers in the proposed locations due to the need to undertake minor excavations in order to install the posts). However the Statement of Known Hazards was received on 14 February 2017, and

an installation period of 14 days from the 13 March 2017 has been agreed with the Ministry of Defence.

- 6.3 It was intended to let a tender for the analysis of the 2016 people counter data during Autumn 2016, with the intention of presenting the results to this Board meeting. However the project decided that the data would be best analysed over the period March to March to coincide with the bird breeding season. The commissioning of the data analysis will therefore take place in April or May of 2017.

Car Park Counts

- 6.4 The Project continues to undertake monthly car park transects across the SPA area, and have now moved into our second year of undertaking this work.
- 6.5 The first 12 months of car park transect data collection was completed in December 2016, and quotes were obtained in early February for the analysis of the data. Footprint Ecology has now been commissioned to undertake the analysis of the data, and to undertake a comparison to the data they previously collected in previous years. We are expecting the report in late March and it will be presented to the next Board meeting.

7. SAMP Project Budget

- 7.1 The financial information is set out in the Hampshire County Council paper, but set out below is a brief summary of any variation from the projected spend for the 2016/17 financial year.

Staff Costs

- 7.2 The Project staff costs are below the forecast amount due primarily to staff turnover. A number of the 2016 Seasonal Wardens left their posts early due to securing permanent employment elsewhere, however in all cases this occurred relatively late in the season and it was therefore not possible to replace these staff before the end of the Seasonal Warden contracts.
- 7.3 The Senior Warden retired in September 2016 and was replaced by one of the Warden team who secured a promotion to take on the role. However this required the back-fill of a Warden post, which led to the team being under staffed for a brief period. Also, the staff costs budget was calculated using the previous Senior Warden's salary, which was at the top of the scale due to length of service, whilst the replacement is at the bottom of the salary scale leading to a reduction in monthly salary cost to the project.
- 7.4 One of the full-time Wardens also left their post in October, and whilst most of the recruitment exercise was undertaken during the notice period, there was another brief period of being under staffed before the replacement Warden was in post.

Programme Costs

- 7.5 The programme budget is likely to be slightly under committed due to deferring the people counter data analysis until 2017/18. However, a number of people counters have suffered physical damage due to either vandalism or water ingress and this has led to a slight over-spend on replacement people counter sensors which has absorbed some of this under-

spend. The replacement people counters are of a more robust design than those which had been damaged so should prove more durable.

Annex 1. SANGs Survey Methodology

The following methodology has been developed for the Thames Basin Heaths Partnership team in order to enable them to survey strategic SANGs sites on behalf of the Thames Basin Heaths Local Planning Authorities. Bespoke or development specific sites will therefore not be surveyed as part of this exercise.

The survey methodology broadly follows that used on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA visitor survey undertaken by Footprint Ecology on behalf of Natural England, however the timings for the surveys have been changed slightly in recognition that these surveys will need to be undertaken during autumn and winter when daylight hours are shorter.

Weekday To be undertaken twice	Morning survey	08:00 – 10:00 = 2 hours
	Morning survey	11:00 – 13:00 = 2 hours
	Afternoon survey	14:00 – 16:00 = 2 hours
	Afternoon survey (summer only)	(17:00 – 19:00 = 2 hours)
Weekend To be undertaken once	Morning survey	08:00 – 10:00 = 2 hours
	Morning survey	11:00 – 13:00 = 2 hours
	Afternoon survey	14:00 – 16:00 = 2 hours
	Afternoon survey (summer only)	(17:00 – 19:00 = 2 hours)
		18 hours total (excluding summer survey)

The weekday surveys should be undertaken twice for each time slot, and the weekend surveys will be undertaken once for each time slot. Hence a total of 18 hours survey for each SANGs site (excluding the 17:00 – 19:00 time slot).

Visitors will be interviewed and counted as they leave the site, interviews will be undertaken at the site's main access point – usually located at the main car park. Paper survey forms will be used and the data inputted into a spreadsheet once each survey has been completed. The number of people leaving the site (passing the surveyor) will be counted on a hand held tally counter and the total for each 2 hour survey period will be recorded.

Only one person shall be interviewed from each group. Children likely to be under the age of 16 will not be surveyed or approached, but will be included in the tally count of the total number of people exiting the site from the surveyed access point. All survey work should be undertaken using the standard set of questions (appendix 1). Maps may be used to aid interviews and ensure the surveyor is clear about which sites the interviewee is referring to.

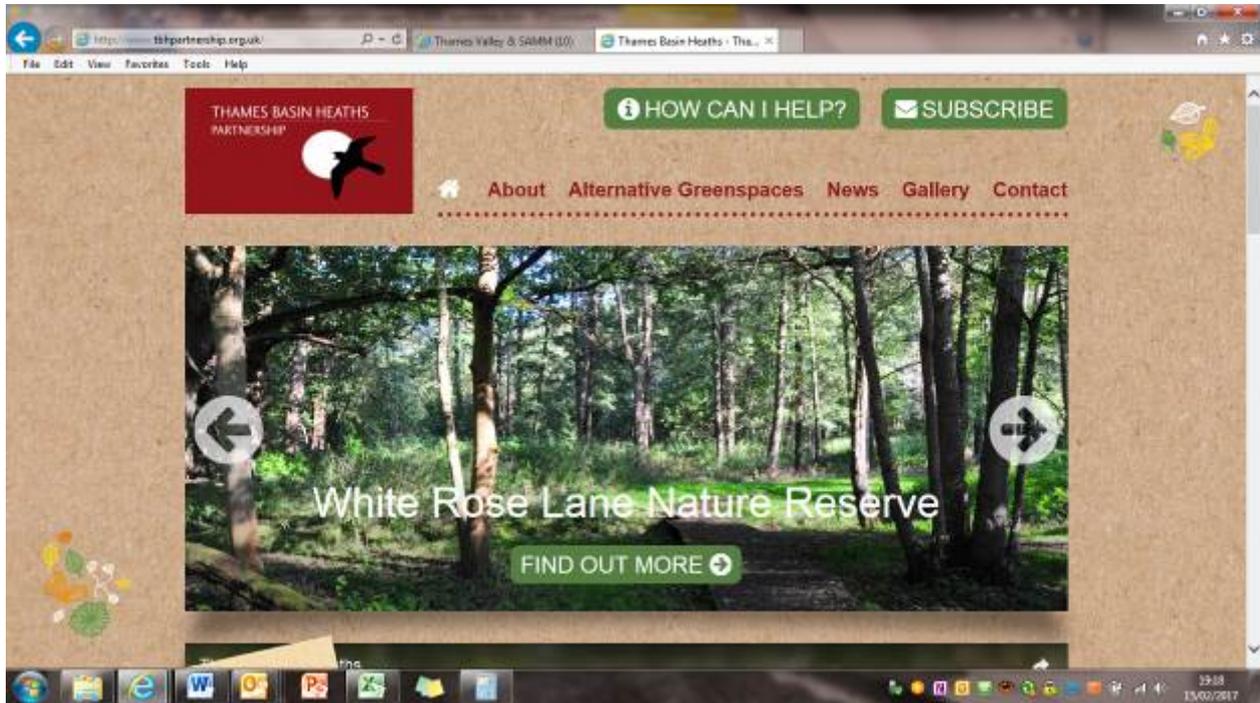
As part of the questionnaire, visitors will be asked to provide their home postcode. Subsequent GIS analysis can be carried out to determine visitor origins and distances travelled to each SANGs site, and the distance they live in relation to the SPA.

All reporting will be made available to the JSPB and Natural England.

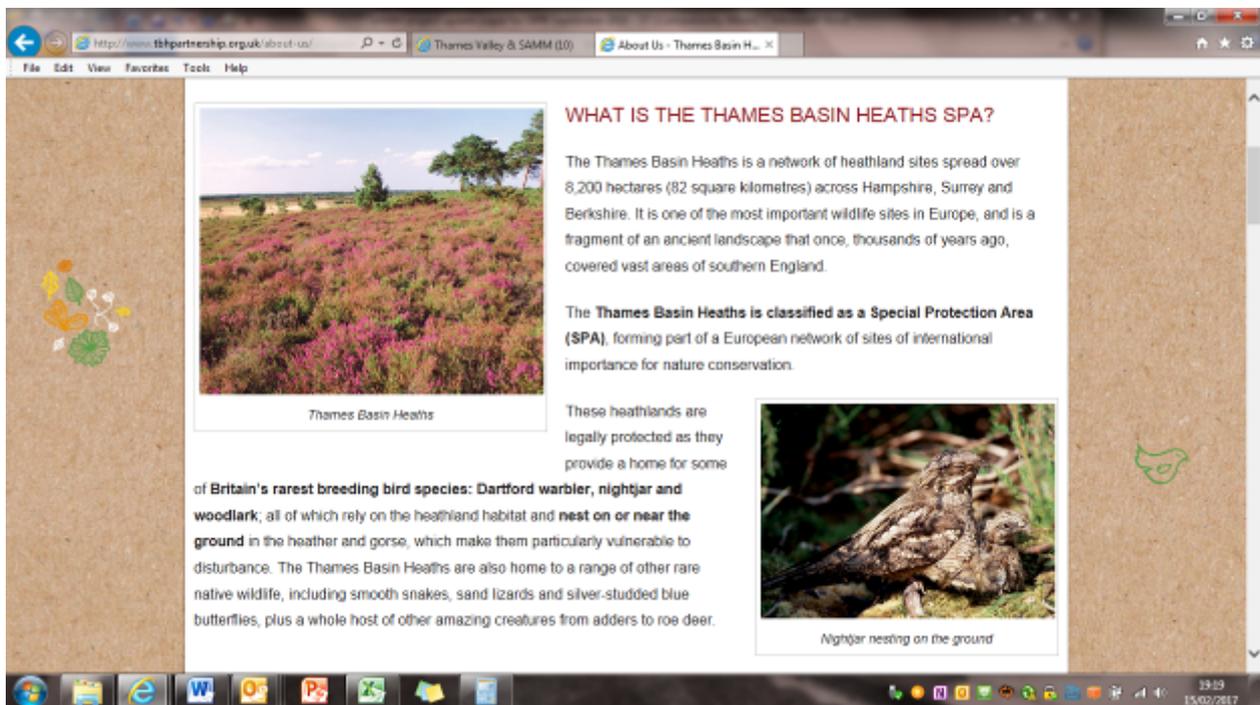
Annex 2 - Website

Screen shots of the various website sections.

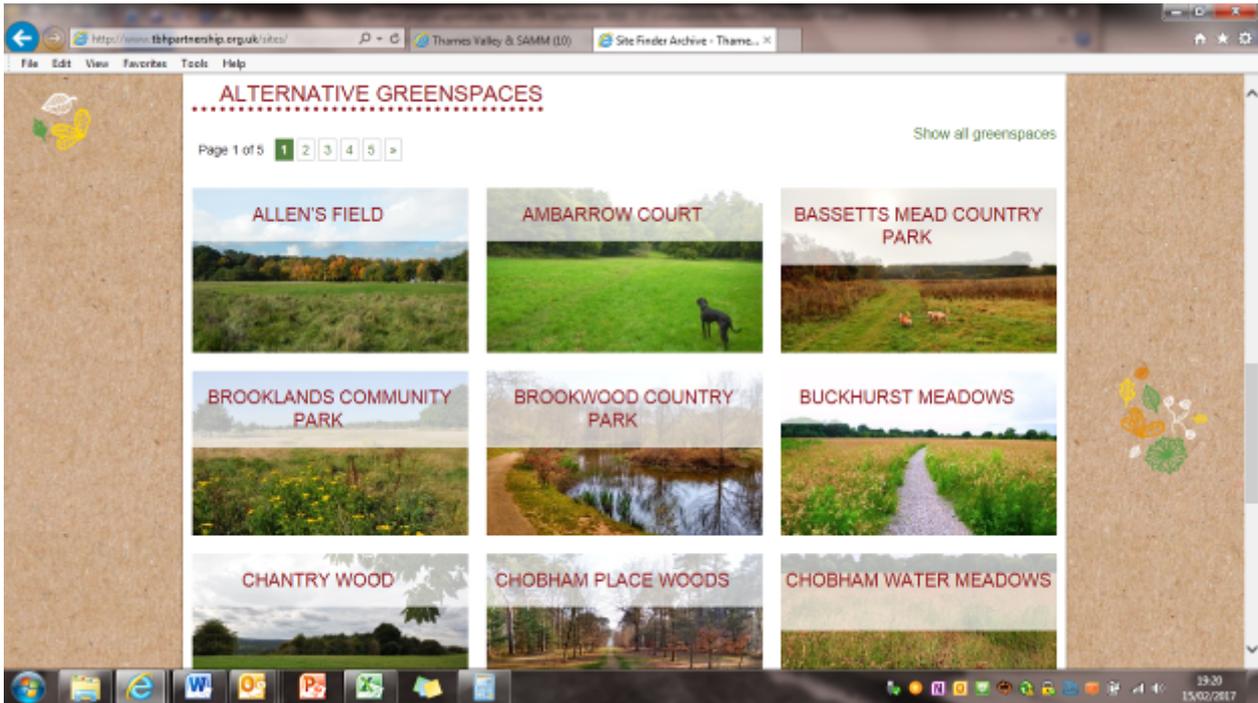
Home page



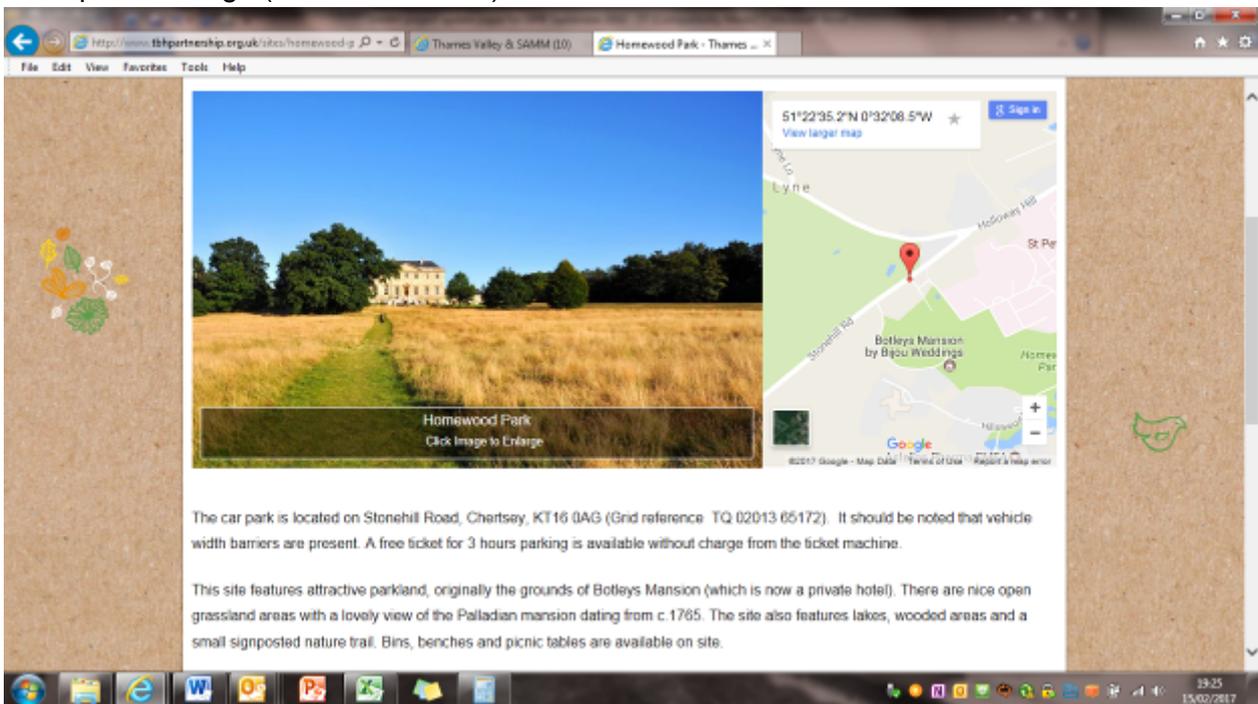
About



Alternative Greenspaces



Example Site Page (Homewood Park)



News

The screenshot shows a news article on the Thames Basin Heaths Partnership website. The main headline is "WOODLARKS RETURN TO THE HEATH" with a date badge for "FEB 09 2017". Below the headline are social media sharing buttons for "SHARE", "TWEET", "SHARE", "PIN IT", "EMAIL", and "1 SHARES". The article features a photograph of a woodlark perched on a rock. Below the photo, the text reads: "It may feel like the depth of winter, but the woodlarks are already looking to spring! Male woodlarks are now returning to the Thames Basin Heaths to setup their breeding". To the right of the main article, there are two sidebar sections: "Woodlarks return to the heath" dated 9th February 2017, and "Introducing our new Wardens and Senior Warden!" dated 4th October 2016. Below these is a "POPULAR POSTS" section listing the same two articles.

How can I help?

The screenshot shows the "How can I help?" page on the Thames Basin Heaths Partnership website. The page has a navigation bar with "HOW CAN I HELP?" and "SUBSCRIBE" buttons, and a menu with "About", "Alternative Greenspaces", "News", "Gallery", and "Contact". The main content area starts with "You are here: Home » How can I help?" followed by the heading "HOW CAN I HELP?". The text explains that the Thames Basin Heaths is an important wildlife site under pressure and needs help for preservation. It then lists ways to help:

- Sticking to paths:** Keeping to paths reduces the risk of disturbing the rare birds that nest on the ground amongst the vegetation.
- Keeping dogs on paths and under your control:** Keeping dogs on the track, and either close to you and in sight or on a lead from late February to early September helps avoid disturbing the rare ground nesting birds, and helps avoid adder and tick bites. Throwing a stick or ball down the track rather than out onto the heath can help.
- Always bagging and binning:** Dog waste fertilises the ground, and kills off the heathland plants that make the Thames Basin Heaths special. It can also spread disease.
- Reducing the risk of fire:** Please never discard cigarettes, bring BBQ's or light camp fires.
- Consider visiting alternative greenspaces** that have been set aside for you to explore and enjoy, and where dogs can roam off.

2016 Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Annex 1 bird survey results

Please find below a table showing the 2016 bird survey results for the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, coordinated and compiled by 2Js Ecology. The table shows that in 2016, of the three Annex 1 species, only Nightjar maintained its population in the normal range. Woodlark continued to decline and Dartford Warbler numbers, although still high, were lower than in 2015. More detailed discussion of all three species is given below.

Survey year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Nightjar	326	337	320	325	355	306	332
Woodlark	159	161	202	135	155	137	117
Dartford W.	38	47	87	118	292	456 ¹	427

¹ Total incorrectly given as 451 in 2015 report.

Nightjar

The Nightjar survey produced a count of 332 for the SPA (including peripheral areas). This is 8.5% higher than the 2015 estimate, but still 6.5% lower than in 2014. The total of 355 in 2014 was the highest since monitoring began in 2003.

Despite annual fluctuations, the population has stayed fairly constant with the 2016 total comfortably within the 295-355 range observed since 2004. This stability may be due to the fact that Nightjars spend their winters in sub-Saharan Africa and are therefore not subject to pressures caused by harsh winter conditions in this country. Furthermore, Nightjar are rather more catholic in their choice of breeding habitat than the other Annex 1 species. However, without management, habitat does deteriorate over time. The species is also vulnerable to disturbance, particularly by dogs off their leads and livestock, predation and to poor weather conditions during the breeding season. These factors probably represent the greatest threats to their continuing success on the SPA although external factors such as problems on their wintering grounds or during migration cannot be ruled out. It is noteworthy that other trans-Saharan migrants, including Cuckoo and Turtle Dove, have suffered major population declines in southern England.

Woodlark

The 2016 Woodlark count of 117 territories was the lowest since the current survey programme began in 2003. This is a disappointing result, continuing the decline that has occurred over the past decade and representing a 49% fall from the peak of 229 in 2007. It is also 21% below the 1997 total of 149 on which the SPA was established. The reductions in 2016 occurred across most of the SPA sites with notable exceptions on Ash to Brookwood, where the territory count increased from 22 in 2015 to 29 in 2016, and Hazeley Heath with an increase from four to six. At

Ash to Brookwood, the increase is likely to have been due to open habitat created by the major fire that occurred in spring 2015. At Hazeley Heath, clearance work by the RSPB most probably facilitated the increase.

It is likely that habitat availability and quality are the prime factors affecting Woodlark numbers on the SPA. It is noteworthy that the high numbers in 2007 occurred following extensive ground clearance carried out by the Ministry of Defence on several of the largest sites. Unfortunately, cleared ground does not remain in prime condition for Woodlark without on-going management. The grazing regimes employed widely across the SPA, are successful in slowing down the rate of regrowth, but require additional measures to maintain the sparsely vegetated landscape required for this species to prosper. Numbers are always highest in areas that have been manually cleared or have suffered from accidental heathland fires.

Dartford Warbler

The Dartford Warbler count of 427 territories was lower than the 2015 count of 456. This is the first down-turn since 2010, reversing the recovery that occurred following the harsh winters of 2008/09 and 2009/10. Not all sites suffered a decline, for example, the long anticipated recolonization of Hazeley Heath occurred in 2016 with the occupation of four territories. Elsewhere, the largest increases were at Chobham Common, where numbers climbed from 79 territories in 2015 to 84 in 2016 and at Bourley & Long Valley, from 43 to 46.

Historically, the site holding the highest numbers has been Ash to Brookwood but the count of 88 in 2016 was 17 down on 2015 and 30 below 2014. Interestingly, declines were particularly noticeable at a number of small sites adjacent to the Ash and Pirbright Range Danger Areas, and also at Horsell Common. 2Js highlight in the narrative of the 2016 report that it should be recognised that when numbers get high, accurate counts become increasingly difficult. It is therefore possible that there is an element of under-counting in the results but, despite this, it is clear that the rapid growth in numbers stalled in 2016. It is difficult to explain the declines recorded, but possibly 2015 was a poor breeding season on some sites or, more likely, there was increased mortality in early spring due to a series of severe frosts which occurred at the time of year when food supplies are at their lowest.

Continuing mild winters should permit further population growth on those sites where the optimum breeding habitat of mature heather interspersed with low to medium height gorse is not fully occupied. However, scrub invasion remains an issue which requires regular mechanical intervention to supplement the current grazing regimes.

Comparison with citation population levels

The populations of the three Annex 1 birds that were originally quoted in support of the establishment of the SPA together with the years in which the survey data were obtained are given in the table below.

Populations of Annex 1 Species Cited in Support of Establishing the Thames Basin Heaths SPA

Annex 1 species	Population (survey date)	% GB population
Nightjar	264 pairs (1998-99)	8%
Woodlark	149 pairs (1997)	10%
Dartford Warbler	445 pairs (1999)	28%

Comparison of the data in the table above with the 2016 survey data indicates that in 2016 the Nightjar population remained well above that on which the SPA was established, Woodlarks continued to decline, falling well below that level while Dartford Warblers, having recovered to just above designation levels in 2015, sank slightly below it in 2016.

The changes are: Nightjar +25.8%, Woodlark -21.5% and Dartford Warbler -4.0%. With the 2016 Nightjar numbers continuing in their normal range and Dartford Warblers, while down on 2015, maintaining a healthy population, Woodlark is clearly the species requiring priority attention.

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Committee/Panel:	Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board
Date:	3 March 2017
Title:	Thames Basin Heaths Financial Statement
Report From:	Administrative Body

Contact name: Jenny Wadham, Principal Accountant, Hampshire County Council

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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 £1.857m will be added to Endowment Account in the 2016/17 financial year, giving an anticipated total of £4.550m available to be invested.
- 1.3 Based on current projections of income and expenditure, the balance on the Endowment Fund would increase to £7.058m by 31 March 2019, whilst the balance on the Maintenance Fund is expected to increase to £992,311 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 £1.857m will be added to the Endowment Fund in the 2016/17 financial year, giving a balance of £4.550m at the end of March 2017.
- 2.3. This is based upon projected income receivable in 2016/17 of approximately £2.653m, 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 £441,852 projected for the 2016/17 financial year.

- 2.4. The projected income for the 2016/17 financial year of £2.653m is a significant increase on the £1.5m reported at the previous JSPB meeting. This is primarily due to increased projections for Bracknell Forest and Wokingham Borough Councils, with the forecast income for these two authorities now £501,000 and £522,000 respectively higher than the original budgeted levels. It is currently assumed that this change is to the timing of income receipts, rather than an overall increase in income, and therefore the income projections for later years have been proportionately reduced, however, this assumption is pending confirmation from the Councils concerned.
- 2.5. The projected costs have reduced by £30,000 to £442,000 since the previous outturn, which is largely due to a number of staffing changes including one of the permanent warden posts becoming vacant, seasonal wardens leaving before their contract end date to start permanent roles elsewhere, and a change in the senior warden.
- 2.6. The balance in the Maintenance Account at 31 March 2016, net of expenditure incurred and paid to date, was £525,205. A contribution to the Maintenance Account of £354,117 is projected in 2016/17, increasing the expected balance to £879,322 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 £1.6m and £2.0m respectively, based on information provided by each of the partners.
- 3.3. The SAMM business plan also allowed for expenditure of approximately £500,000 per annum on an ongoing basis. With regards to the actual ongoing expenditure, Natural England has provided two possible projections. The first scenario is based on current approved staffing and activity levels, with six full time and six seasonal workers, at an ongoing annual cost of £470,000. The second scenario is an enhanced programme, with an additional dedicated schools officer and enhanced events budget. The enhanced scenario predicts costs of £470,000 for 2018/19 and £492,000 from 2019/20 onwards.
- 3.4. Although, it has not been yet been approved by the JSPB, for prudence, the higher projected costs have been used for the overall anticipated financial position. However, in both scenarios the annual expenditure projections remain lower than the £500,000 level originally anticipated in the SAMM business plan.

- 3.5. 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 recruited seasonal wardens for the first time in 2016.
- 3.6. Based on the current projections of income and expenditure, the Endowment Fund balance is expected to increase over the next three financial years to £7.058m by March 2019, as shown in Appendix 5. The balance within the Maintenance Fund is expected to increase to £992,311, 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%. Under the terms of the SAMM agreement, the Administrative Body is required to pay interest at not less than 0.25% below the Bank of England base rate.

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	Budget	Actuals to end of January	Outturn Forecast	Variance to budget
Income	£	£	£	£
Bracknell Forest BC	177,030	677,610	677,610	500,580
Elmbridge BC	55,000	56,578	100,000	45,000
Guildford BC	185,082	132,139	170,000	(15,082)
Hart BC	0	99,197	101,675	101,675
Runnymede BC	80,010	86,940	86,940	6,930
Rushmoor BC	338,578	87,347	338,578	0
Surrey Heath BC	110,000	69,135	110,000	0
Waverley BC	24,495	28,349	28,349	3,854
Windsor & Maidenhead RB	13,230	13,249	13,249	19
Woking BC	193,158	(2,170)	193,158	0
Wokingham BC	298,950	820,670	820,670	521,720
Interest	13,000	0	13,000	0
Total Income	1,488,533	2,069,045	2,653,230	1,164,697
Expenditure				
Natural England Staff Costs	370,121	258,903	341,392	(28,729)
Natural England Project Costs	71,851	61,982	70,300	(1,551)
Natural England Admin Fee	10,160	10,160	10,160	0
HCC Admin Fee	20,000	20,000	20,000	0
Total Expenditure	472,132	351,045	441,852	(30,280)
Total Net Income / (expenditure)	1,016,401	1,718,000	2,211,378	1,194,977

Appendix 3 - Detailed Income Summary

	Previous years	2016/17					Variance
		Budget	Actuals to date	Notified contributions	Forecast qtr 4	Projected total	
INCOME	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Bracknell Forest BC	488,772	177,030	677,610	0	0	677,610	500,580
Elmbridge BC	96,040	55,000	56,578	14,286	29,136	100,000	45,000
Guildford BC	646,635	185,082	132,139	0	37,861	170,000	-15,082
Hart BC	630,569	0	99,197	0	2,478	101,675	101,675
Runnymede BC	197,190	80,010	86,940	0	0	86,940	6,930
Rushmoor BC	342,091	338,578	87,347	0	251,231	338,578	0
Surrey Heath BC	537,741	110,000	69,135	0	40,865	110,000	0
Waverley BC	139,587	24,495	28,349	0	0	28,349	3,854
Windsor & Maidenhead RB	129,664	13,230	13,249	0	0	13,249	19
Woking BC	451,607	193,158	-2,170	2,170	193,158	193,158	0
Wokingham BC	468,896	298,950	820,670	0	0	820,670	521,720
Interest	26,425	13,000	0	0	13,000	13,000	0
Total Income	4,155,215	1,488,533	2,069,045	16,456	567,729	2,653,230	1,164,697
Maintenance Fund	1,462,493	446,560				795,969	
Endowment fund	2,692,722	1,041,973				1,857,261	

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

	Actuals 2015/16	Projected 2016/17	Projected 2017/18	Projected 2018/19
Income	£	£	£	£
Bracknell Forest BC	201,542	677,610	248,904	615,564
Elmbridge BC	50,483	100,000	19,360	19,360
Guildford BC	177,310	170,000	170,000	170,000
Hart BC	208,010	101,675	32,100	130,427
Runnymede BC	132,930	86,940	47,754	67,284
Rushmoor BC	144,881	338,578	281,788	395,369
Surrey Heath BC	135,781	110,000	142,676	0
Waverley BC	31,261	28,349	0	0
Windsor & Maidenhead RB	28,372	13,249	27,720	56,595
Woking BC	62,691	193,158	193,158	0
Wokingham BC	57,799	820,670	450,296	514,446
Interest	13,059	13,000	0	0
Total Income	1,244,118	2,653,230	1,613,756	1,969,045
Total Expenditure	276,950	441,852	469,617	492,234
Net Income/(expenditure)	967,168	2,211,378	1,144,139	1,476,811

Appendix 5 -Projected Endowment and Maintenance Fund Balance

	Actuals 2015/16 £	Projected 2016/17 £	Projected 2017/18 £	Projected 2018/19 £
Income	1,244,118	2,653,230	1,613,756	1,969,045
70% to Endowment Fund	872,304	1,857,261	1,129,629	1,378,332
30% to Maintenance Fund	371,814	795,969	484,127	590,714
Expenditure	276,950	441,852	469,617	492,234
Maintenance Fund:				
Balance brought forward	430,341	525,205	879,322	893,832
Transfer (to) / from income	94,864	354,117	14,510	98,480
balance carried forward	<u>525,205</u>	<u>879,322</u>	<u>893,832</u>	<u>992,311</u>
Endowment Fund:				
Balance brought forward	1,820,418	2,692,722	4,549,983	5,679,612
Transfer (to) / from income	872,304	1,857,261	1,129,629	1,378,332
balance carried forward	<u>2,692,722</u>	<u>4,549,983</u>	<u>5,679,612</u>	<u>7,057,944</u>

Dear Jane,

Please could you forward the email below to JSPB Members and Officers. It sets out that I will be leaving the position of Project Manager once a replacement has been recruited and is in post.

Many thanks
Simon

Dear JSPB Members and Officers,

I am writing to let you know that I will be leaving my position as Project Manager of the SAMM Project in April/May. I have been offered the opportunity to project manage Natural England's input into the expansion of Heathrow airport, and such a challenging and significant role was simply too great an opportunity to pass up.

I have really enjoyed leading the project since 2014 and will miss the role immensely, but I am confident that I am leaving SAMM in a strong position with a great team of people, and all elements of the project in place. Recruitment of my replacement will commence shortly and transitional arrangements are in place to ensure a smooth handover with no impact on project delivery. I will remain in my current position until a new Project Manager is in post to ensure the project is being delivered in-line with Natural England's agreement with the JSPB. I will also remain available to the team after my departure to ensure no knowledge is lost from the project as a result of the change in management. I will present a detailed timetable for the recruitment and handover arrangements at the next Board Meeting, but in the meantime if you have any questions about the transition, or wish to be involved in the process please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for all your support and commitment, and I look forward to seeing you all at the upcoming JSPB Board meeting.

Best regards
Simon

Simon Thompson | Senior Adviser
Project managing the Thames Basin Heaths Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) project
Natural England
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We are here to secure a healthy natural environment for people to enjoy, where wildlife is protected and England's traditional landscapes are safeguarded for future generations.

In an effort to reduce Natural England's carbon footprint, I will, wherever possible, avoid travelling to meetings and attend via audio, video or web conferencing.

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