

THAMES BASIN HEATHS JOINT STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BOARD

Date: 19th November 2019

Subject: Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Tariff Uplift

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Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Board:

- i. Notes the contents of this report
- ii. Agrees the tariff uplift detailed in this report; and that
- iii. Local Authorities implement appropriate mechanisms to collect the tariff by January 2021.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) Legal Agreement was signed in July 2011 by the eleven Local Authorities which make up the Joint Strategic Partnership Board (JSPB). The project was implemented from 14 July 2011.
- 1.2 Schedule 1 of this agreement is the Natural England Guideline Methodology (NEGM) <https://www.surreyheath.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/residents/planning/planningpolicy/CIL/sammtariffguidance.pdf>. It sets out the amount that should be collected per dwelling to fund the SAMM element of the strategy.
- 1.3 The tariff was set at £630 per dwelling (section 4.1 of the guidance) and it was agreed that Local Authorities should seek to endorse this tariff and implement mechanisms to collect it by October 2009.
- 1.4 The tariff is to be collected by the relevant LPA and passed to an Administrative Body (Hampshire County Council) and the delivery managed by Natural England. The sum provides for £190 towards annual expenditure and £440 to the long-term investment fund. Later in the guidance it states that the tariff will be reviewed as a priority to ensure that housing and cost assumptions are as accurate as possible: (Table 8 - capital fund - Income) this would entail a 10% increase in tariff in 2011/12 and that the tariff subsequently increases every 5th year by 15%.
- 1.5 At the last Joint Strategic Partnership Board (JSPB) meeting it was stated that based on the above, according to the guidelines in the SAMM agreement, the tariff should currently stand at £796.95. If we compare the actual Bank of England inflation rate of 2.6% over the period since 2011, this gives a figure of £773.61 up to December 2019 – a difference of just £23.34 per dwelling, indicating that the original calculations have tracked inflation well over the last 10 years. Unfortunately, this additional inflationary increase has not been included in Local Authorities planning documents and the sum still being collected remains at £630 per dwelling.

2. Tariff Review

- 2.1 Since the last JSPB meeting most Local Authorities have sent over some housing projections to the SAMM project. Figures sent have included all housing projections in some cases, not just houses that fall within the 5km zone where SAMM tariff will apply and some Local Authorities have not sent any data, or data that only relates to certain SANGs. Therefore, we do not currently have the complete suite of data required to recalculate what the increased SAMM tariff would mean with regard to total annual income for the project.
- 2.2 The project budget and the costs going forward will be mainly staffing costs and these will increase year on year. Salary rises greater than inflation are expected in the next few years due to NE staff receiving below inflation pay increases for many years and consequently current salaries being well below those at equivalent grades in Defra and Defra group organisations.
- 2.2 Current total projected costs for the project are around £527,000 for 2020-21 and around £541,000 for 2022-23. In this figure, staff costs make up a significant proportion – around 80% of the spend and these figures have been calculated based on 6 seasonal wardens each year – one less than we have current approval for.
- 2.3 If income does not rise to match expenditure then based on a current seasonal wardens annual cost of around £13,500 (which will also rise with inflation) the warden resource will need to be reduced to match budget, leading to a reduction of 1 more seasonal warden by 2023 and a further seasonal warden approx. every 2 years thereafter. This projection means that unless income is increased in line with inflation then the project will be unable to afford agreed staffing levels from 2021 onwards and this could potentially undermine the whole strategic approach.
- 2.4 A decrease in our level of funding will impact on the project and leave us unable to deliver what was agreed by all the Local Authorities which make up the JSPB as it has only been recently and at current staffing levels that we have been able to deliver all of the agreed outcomes fully.
- 2.5 Therefore, Natural England recommends that the Board approve the collection by Local Authorities of the tariff as originally agreed in 2010 to enable to SAMM project to protect the income of the project against inflation and allow it to continue at current staffing levels in the future. Natural England recommends that the JSPB endorses this uplift and Local Authorities implement mechanisms to collect it by January 2021.