

North York Moors National Park Authority

25 March 2019

DEFRA Environmental Land Management System Pilot

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To update Members on the Authority's engagement with DEFRA in relation to the test and trials process for developing a new Environmental Land Management System (ELMS).
- 1.2 To seek Member's approval for Officers to continue working with DEFRA to assist in the development of a new land management system that delivers positive outcomes appropriate to the North York Moors National Park and those whose livelihoods depend on the sustainable management of the land.

2. Background

- 2.1 It is widely recognised that leaving the EU provides the UK Government with an opportunity to more independently reform agricultural policy that for the past 40 years has been developed within the Common Agricultural Policy.
- 2.2 English National Park Authorities were asked in October 2016 by Lord Gardiner, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, to give thought to the future of farming and the opportunities that would arise through the EU exit. A task and finish group comprising a small group of Members and Officers from the Authorities was established, from which a discussion paper was produced, agreed by all NPE chairs and submitted to Lord Gardiner in April 2017. The paper outlined initial plans for a new system of environmental management and rural development and led to a useful discussion with DEFRA officials that acknowledged the valuable contribution National Park Authorities could make to the development of a new scheme.
- 2.3 The Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is quoted as saying "It is this Government's ambition to leave our environment in a better state than we found it." He has made it clear that it is the intention that the BPS (Basic Payment Scheme) will be replaced with a system of public money for public goods and is also quoted as saying that "he believes the most important public good we should pay for is environmental protection and enhancement."
- 2.4 The English National Park Authorities, as well as other organisations and agencies were invited to attend DEFRA led stakeholder events during the Health and Harmony consultation period which resulted in an invitation by DEFRA to submit proposals for pilot schemes to be considered as part of the process of developing a new Environmental Land Management System (ELMS). All but one of the English National Park Authorities submitted a proposal to DEFRA.

3. North York Moors NPA Proposal

- 3.1 This Authority has a wealth of experience of developing and delivering environmental schemes over the past 30 years, including developing templates, calculating payment rates, monitoring schemes, evaluating outcomes and ensuring compliance with agricultural state aid regulations.

In order for this experience to count towards the development of a new land management system the proposal submitted by the Authority was to pilot a contemporary Park-wide version of the North York Moors Farm Scheme to include clear and visible links to the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan objectives. The rationale for this approach is that by building on the successes of previous experience we can achieve better collective outcomes.

- 3.2 In December 2018 DEFRA announced which of the 100+ proposals that they had received they wanted to take forward to the next stage of their test and trials process. This Authority's proposal was one of the 49 successful applications.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1 DEFRA has assigned a Project Officer to the National Park Authority who will offer advice and guidance during the process of developing the test and trials work.
- 4.2 A proposal development form is to be completed which will set out the details of what will be tested and/or trialled and the rationale for this. It will also demonstrate how the work will contribute to the design of the new ELM system, who will be involved and what timescales we'll be working to.
- 4.3 A DEFRA panel will assess the completed form on 2 April 2019 before confirmation is given to proceed with the work as proposed.

5. Financial and Staffing Implications

- 5.1 The Future Farming Policy Officer currently works 3 days a week and is leading on this work with DEFRA with input from the Director of Conservation and the Chief Executive Officer.
- 5.2 There is an opportunity to identify what funding will be needed from DEFRA to be able to conduct the test and trials. Staff costs are included as eligible expenditure. It is intended that any additional staff resources and other costs required to deliver the work will be met by DEFRA.

6. Contribution to National Park Management Plan

- 6.1 A well designed environmental land management system that delivers sustainable land management and secures the provision of public goods will contribute to a wide range of the aims and policies identified in the National Park Management Plan.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report

8. Recommendation

- 8.1 That: Members note the level of engagement that Officers have had with DEFRA on the test and trials stage of the development process for the new Environmental Land Management System.
- 8.2 Members give their approval to Officers continuing to work with DEFRA to assist in the development of a new land management system that delivers positive outcomes appropriate to the North York Moors National Park and those whose livelihoods depend on the sustainable management of the land.

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Background papers to this Report

File ref

1. None