**Item 7**

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**Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Board**

7 December 2022

**Defra Access for All Fund**

**Purpose of the report:**

To agree the criteria and priorities for the Defra Access for All Fund.

**Recommendations:**

1. Agree the criteria and assessment process
2. Note the priorities for 2022/23 and proposal for 2024/25
3. **Introduction**

1.1 Defra has awarded each of England’s National Landscapes, including National Park Authorities, an uplift in its core grant to make our National Landscapes more accessible to people of all ages and abilities and from all backgrounds. The additional funding has been awarded as part of Defra’s three-year Spending Review settlement, commencing this financial year 2022/23 on capital spend and is £7.66m across all 44 National Landscapes over the three-year period.

1.2 Allocations have been calculated by applying a funding formula based on total area, total population within the landscape, total population within a 25km radius of the landscape and the Multiple Deprivation Index. National Landscapes will receive a weighting of 1.5 and all landscapes will receive a minimum of £50,000 over the three years. All National Landscapes will receive 46% in year 1 and 54% in year 3. Unfortunately, funds are not available in year 2.

1.3 Based on the calculation described above, Surrey Hills National Landscape has been allocated a total of £426k, £195k in 22/23 and £232k in 24/25, which is around 6% of the national total.

**2. Project criteria**

2.1 To deliver the above funding package in 2022/23 and in 2024/25, and in line with the Surrey Hills AONB Management Plan and the Farming in Protected Landscape programme, we will adopt the same four themes of **People, Nature, Climate, and Place**. Annex 1 outlines some initial suggestions of the kinds of projects the Surrey Hills team would like to see but is not an exclusive list.

2.2 Projects must deliver on the People criteria and ideally two or more of the other criteria below:

**People:** Projects will demonstrate who will benefit from access to the Surrey Hills and will have the maximum impact for those groups with greater needs

**Place:** Projects will raise awareness and understanding of the Surrey Hills National Landscape as a designated Area of Outstanding of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

**Nature:** Projects will provide opportunities to increase understanding of and access to nature; inspiring and immersing people in nature; creating/improving access to woodlands, inspiring views etc

**Climate:** Projects will promote active travel and public transport to reduce the carbon footprint

2.3 In 2022/23 projects must be complete (work finished and paid for) by end March 2023. Projects which may require consents, planning permission, complex partnership agreements or which have long lead-in times are unlikely to be able to fulfil this requirement. These longer-term projects may be considered for the 2024/25 funding

2.4 Projects need to demonstrate value for money. Partnership contributions and projects developed by partnerships will be welcome. Funding can be up to 100%, where no other funding is available, and can include ‘in-kind’ contributions which should be agreed in advance with the Surrey Hills Programme Manager. Projects which offer contributions or match funding may score more highly than those which do not. We will not fund existing staffing costs but these can be considered as ‘in kind’ contributions.

**3.Assessment process**

3.1 The Surrey Hills National Landscape team will be responsible for assessing and scoring project proposals. This will be through a process of engaging with partners on co-designing and co-producing projects to secure the best outcomes against the four criteria of **People, Nature, Climate** and **Place**. The team will work with partners to undertake an assessment as set out in Annex 1.

3.2 In 2022/23, we will be working with the Surrey Coalition of Disabled People to audit, advise and provide appropriate training opportunities for the Surrey Hills team and our project partners. This will focus on gateway sites like Hindhead, Box Hill, Farnham Heath and Newlands Corner as these already have facilities for visitors with the opportunity to enhance access and experiences through all-weather surfacing, benches, interpretation and sensory trails.

3.3 The programme will be managed in accordance with Surrey County Council Procurement Standing Orders with decisions in 2022/23 being made by the Surrey Hills Director, as budget holder, in consultation with the Independent Chair. The Surrey Hills Programme Manager will report progress to the Surrey Hills Board and to Defra as the sponsor. The process has now been approved by the Surrey CC Infrastructure Board.

3.4 In order to develop the projects for 2024/25, the Surrey Hills team is proposing to develop a bid to the National Heritage Lottery Fund for an outreach programme to help co-design projects with target communities. The Surrey Hills Symposium was also an opportunity to identify project ideas.

**4.Eligible costs**

4.1The funding is for capital works. One-off itemised cost where funding is provided to purchase or invest in a physical item or asset (capital item) to achieve a stated outcome, in this case to improve accessibility for all. Some examples of what would be classed as capital expenditure, include access infrastructure, buildings, machinery and equipment, for example:

• Disabled toilet facilities

• Replacement of gates

• Additional seating areas

• Improved access to waterways for the mobility-impaired

• Widening and resurfacing of paths for multi-user use

• Purchase of trampers, mobility scooters, electric bikes and storage/charging

facilities

• Purchase of specially adapted tools and personal protective equipment for

volunteers

• Provision of accessible signage and visitor information, physical and digital

• Creation of a new or improvement of an existing piece of access infrastructure,

such as building a toilet or fitting a new accessible gate or adapting a minibus or

visitor centre.

• Research and development, defined in budgeting guidance as: “Creative work undertaken on a systematic basis to increase the stock of knowledge, and use of this stock of knowledge for the purpose of discovering or developing new products, including improved versions or qualities of existing products, or discovering new or more efficient processes of production”.

4.2 Some examples that are not classifiable as capital:

• Removal of a stile, unless it’s being replaced by an accessible gate

• Hire of a minibus

• Staff time that is not directly attributable to creation of an asse

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**Annex 1 – Application Form**

**SURREY HILLS ACCESS FUND**

**APPLICATION FORM**

**Date:**

This simple form should be completed for project ideas that are seeking funding from the Surrey Hills Access Fund. The completed form should be returned to sarah.thiele@surreycc.gov.uk

**Name of organisation:**

**Contact name:**

**Address:**

**Tel no: Email:**

**Project overview (brief description of the project relating to the themes of People, Nature, Climate and Place, who it will benefit and how):**

**Project location:**

**What are the expected project timings? (NB Projects for 2022/23 must be completed and paid for by mid-March 2023)**

**Which organisations are involved in the project, both in delivery and advisory roles?**

|  |
| --- |
| **Have you gained all permissions you require to carry out the project (planning permission, landowners’ consent, Forestry Commission, Natural England, Environment Agency approval, etc)? Please detail what these are:** |

**How much will your project cost?**

Overall project costs:

Potential Surrey Hills Access Fund contribution:

Other sources of funding, including in-kind contributions:

**Any other information:**

**Please read and sign**

I certify that I have been authorised by the above organisation to complete this application form. I certify that all information provided is true to the best of my knowledge. I understand that any materially misleading statements (deliberate or accidental) given at any stage during the application process could render the application invalid and the applicant liable to return any money paid. I understand this application is not confidential and may be available for inspection by the public.

**Signature Name Date**