

#### **4. NATIONAL PARK PORTAL: PARTNERING AGREEMENT (IEG/RMM)**

##### **Proposal**

1. This report proposes that the current National Park Portal Partnering Agreement is amended and extended for a further three year period with the Peak District National Park Authority accountable body responsibilities for the Portal being handed over to UK ANPA (UK Association of National Park Authorities).

#### **2. RECOMMENDATION:**

##### **That**

1. **The proposal to extend the National Park Portal Partnering Agreement for a further three year period from 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2011 be agreed with the Peak District National Park Authority accountable body responsibilities being handed over to UK ANPA from 1 April 2008**
2. **The Director of Corporate Resources be authorised to seal the final revised and extended Partnering Agreement in consultation with the Head of Law**
3. **Any balance of funds remaining in the National Park Portal specific reserve as at the 2007/08 year end, after payment of all outstanding invoices, be passed to UK ANPA by 30 June 2008**

##### **Policy/Legal Background**

3. The Authority previously agreed to enter into a three year Partnering Agreement with other National Park Authorities (NPA) as a member receiving benefits from the National Park Portal. It also agreed to take on the responsibilities of accountable body taking the lead on governance and finance as well as supporting the National Parks Portal Team and the Portal Manager (Min Ref: 11/05). This was one of a number of Implementing Electronic Government (IEG) NPA Partnership projects at the time but is now the only project which has retained the support of all original NPA members and has been successful in attracting new NPA members to the partnership.
4. Portal membership helps contribute to Peak District National Park Authority (PDNPA) Key Corporate Actions K1 and K2 by enabling us to communicate and deliver services effectively to residents and visitors in an affordable and sustainable way. It also provides a national and international interactive access channel to services e.g. news, job vacancies, ranger walks, planning information and an on-line e-Shop.

##### **Key Issues**

5. The original Partnering Agreement was for a three year period running from 1 April 2005 to 31 March 2008. On the request of the Director of Corporate Resources current partners have agreed that it is now timely to both revise and extend the Partnership Agreement and to pass the accountable body responsibilities to UK ANPA.
6. The original Partnering Agreement has been amended to reflect:
  - An extension of the formal agreement for a further three year period from 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2011
  - The transfer of the lead on governance and finance from the PDNPA to UK ANPA

- 
- Amendments requested previously by the Lake District NPA as employer of the Portal Manager which were received too late to be incorporated into the original agreement
  - A change in governance arrangements replacing the previous IEG Group to the new National Park E-Government Group (the PDNPA's Member Representative on this Group is Patricia Coleman)
  - A new membership category of Associate
  - New members joining the partnership - specifically recently Snowdonia and Brecon Beacons
7. We are currently consulting partners on the amended Agreement asking for responses by 6 February so that a final version can be issued to partners for signing and/or sealing by 14 March 2008. Members are asked to delegate responsibility for finalising the Agreement for the PDNPA as a Full member of the partnership to the Director of Corporate Resources in consultation with the Head of Law.

## **APPENDIX**

### **Background**

1. The objectives of the portal ([www.nationalparks.gov.uk](http://www.nationalparks.gov.uk)) are:
  - To be the public face on the web for the National Park family, where joint aims and work are communicated for National Park Authorities, ANPA and partnerships
  - To act as one partnership, with joint working and collective buying power in order to purchase products and services that will be used by a majority of the member parks, to offer efficiency savings to all, and sharing knowledge and expertise across the national parks
  - To offer the best value choice as a platform for any National Park Authority website in terms of cost, technology and support
2. PDNPA is a Full member of the Portal partnership with benefits accruing as detailed in Annex 1. A full list of partners is given at Annex 2 with membership contributions for 2008/09 detailed. Up until recently there have been two membership categories (Full and Umbrella). In order to attract all National Parks a further membership category of Associate has been introduced.
3. PDNPA agreed previously to take on the accountable body responsibilities for finance and contracts (but not the employer of the Portal Manager) and for supporting the portal team and manager as we had led on the IEG project establishing the portal. At the time there was no support for the formal partnership coming under the auspices of ANPA although this would have been the logical place for it.
4. An external solicitor is being employed on behalf of the partnership to advise the Director of Corporate Resources in drafting the amended Agreement for all NPA partners. The Head of Law will provide a scrutiny role of that work for the PDNPA only.

### **Resources**

5. As a Full member the PDNPA contribution to the portal costs is £12,000pa and is funded from the existing Information Management Service baseline budget. The partnership has managed to maintain contributions at this level so far by encouraging other partners to join. Future contributions to the Portal partnership will be agreed in the December before the new financial year so that any implications for budgets can be discussed as part of the local budget planning process. It is unlikely that the partnership will propose any significant increases to current budget contributions over the next three year period unless there is a convincing business case for partners.
6. The Director of Corporate Resources, the Head of Information Management and the IT Officer (Web support) will continue to provide support to the Portal partnership through the E-Government Group and through the work of the National Park Portal Team.

### **Risk Management**

7. The Partnering Agreement is carefully drawn up to share any risk across all partners. The main risk at present is caused by the lack of time that the Director of Corporate Resources and the Head of Information Management have to monitor the current governance arrangements and to give leadership with the Portal Manager to the

development of the portal. The proposal to transfer the accountable body responsibilities to UK ANPA significantly reduces this level of risk both for the PDNPA and partners.

**Human Rights, Equalities, Health & Safety**

8. The National Park Portal continues to improve its accessibility in order to ensure its compliance with appropriate external standards.

**Consultees**

9. The Head of Information Management, Head of Finance and Management Team have been consulted on this report as well as the UK ANPA Coordinator and Portal Manager.

**Enclosures**

10. Annex 1: Functionality received for different membership levels of the National Park Portal  
Annex 2: Membership and financial contributions of partners as at 1 April 2008

**List of Background Papers** (not previously published)

11. None

**Report Author**

12. Ruth Marchington, Director of Corporate resources

**Publication date**

31 January 2008