

Report to Director of Highways, Transport and Planning

February 2022

Maintenance of Pagham Harbour Local Nature Reserve

Report by Head of Local Highway Operations

Electoral divisions: Chichester South, Nyetimber, Selsey

Summary

Management of Pagham Harbour Local Nature Reserve (PHLNR) was transferred from the County Council to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) in 2012.

The management of the Reserve has been governed by a ten-year Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the County Council and the RSPB. A five-year Management Plan outlines the work which is completed on the Reserve by the RSPB and its partners.

The SLA ends on 31 March 2022 and approval is sought to continue the management partnership through a new Service Contract with the RSPB.

Recommendation:

That the Director of Highways, Transport and Planning approves a new Service Contract with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds to manage Pagham Harbour Local Nature Reserve for the Service Contract period of five years with an option to extend for a further five years. The total value of the contract in the first five years is £0.734 million.

Proposal

1 Background and context

- 1.1 PHLNR covers more than 600 hectares and attracts more than 200,000 visitors per year. The Reserve was previously managed by the County Council and is both a national and internationally important site for its wildlife and geological importance.
- 1.2 In 2012 a 99-year lease was signed with the RSPB transferring the management of PHLNR to the RSPB. This decision was the preferred option following work to establish a way of safeguarding the future management of PHLNR at a time of financial constraint. To ensure key management issues were met by the RSPB a ten-year SLA was agreed.

- 1.3 Although the day-to-day management of PHLNR has been passed to the RSPB, the County Council has had a role to ensure the SLA is being delivered. The County Council is also the enforcing authority regarding the bye laws on the Reserve and still holds legal agreements with landowners within the Reserve.
- 1.4 PHLNR is managed in accordance with a five-year management plan developed by the RSPB and approved by the County Council and specialist organisations including Natural England. It describes the objectives for PHLNR and the detailed work being delivered.
- 1.5 A Contract Management Committee of the County Council and RSPB officers will monitor the delivery of the management plan and Service Contract. The RSPB will also produce an annual report to share with stakeholders and organise an annual engagement event to promote the report.
- 1.6 Management of internationally important sites such as PHLNR is not a commercial proposition and therefore will need to be subsidised either from the public or private sector. Costs can be offset to some extent by raising income and from grants. There is the potential to increase the amount of income generated by the site and reinvest it in the services delivered.

2 Proposal details

- 2.1 To enter into a new Service Contract with the RSPB, to replace the previous SLA, for the next five years with an option to extend for a further five years

3 Other options considered (and reasons for not proposing)

- 3.1 The terms of the 99-year lease preclude the County Council from replacing the RSPB with an alternative service provider.
- 3.2 Market analysis prior to the signing of the lease in 2012 determined that the RSPB is the only conservation organisation with sufficient presence / capacity in the area to manage such a large / high profile site.

If the County Council was contractually able to source an alternative provider, it is unlikely it would find one that was interested or capable of fulfilling this requirement.

4 Consultation, engagement and advice

- 4.1 The Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change has been consulted.

5 Finance

- 5.1 The annual Service Contract cost of £0.147m is in line with current expenditure and will be managed within the existing revenue budget.

	Year 1 2022/23 £m	Year 2 2023/24 £m	Year 3 2024/25 £m	Year 4 2025/26 £m	Year 5 2026/27 £m

Revenue budget	0.147	0.147	0.147	0.147	0.147
Change from Proposal	0	0	0	0	0
Revised Budget	0.147	0.147	0.147	0.147	0.147

5.2 The effect of the proposal:

(a) **How the cost represents good value**

The proposal fixes costs at existing levels for the duration of the Service Contract. The arrangement also benefits from additional RSPB resources including regional and national officer time.

(b) **Future savings/efficiencies being delivered**

The RSPB is a national organisation with expertise in all aspects of operating internationally important sites such as PHLNR, including accessing funding. The RSPB also manages the neighbouring Medmerry Reserve, allowing scope for operational efficiencies.

(c) **Human Resources, IT and Assets Impact**

Not Applicable

6 Risk implications and mitigations

Risk	Mitigating Action (in place or planned)
Financial Risk – failure to reach income targets or secure funding, unexpected costs	The County Council pays a fixed annual price under the Service Contract. The risks associated with income generation and securing investment are reduced by the national experience of the RSPB, including fundraising.

7 Policy alignment and compliance

7.1 The following Key Performance Indicators are included in the Service Contract to reflect the County Councils Corporate Plan priorities on PHLNR:

- Number of volunteering hours
- Number of student hours
- Number of hours dedicated to work experience
- Total amount spent in Local supply chain
- How many hectares reduce climate change eg. saltmarsh

- Percentage of procurement that is sustainable
- Number of visits
- Number of events

7.2 The Service Contract will contribute to the County Council's Climate Strategy through helping to adapt and be resilient to a changing climate. PHLNR sequesters carbon through the management of saltmarsh and other habitats that remove and store carbon. The Service Contract also ensures that PHLNR is free at the point of entry for visitors to increase access to nature. The targets in the agreed current management plan ensure that biodiversity is protected and increased.

7.3 The Service Contract will provide public health benefits by protecting and promoting a well-used, high profile public green space. There are recognised health and well-being benefits that open spaces and nature bring particularly for physical activity and mental wellbeing. It will also provide opportunities for volunteering to keep fit and learn about the natural environment.

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Appendices

None

Background papers

None