



To: The Members of the **Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board**

A meeting of the **Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board** will be held virtually by Zoom on **Thursday, 18 November 2021 at 10.00 am**. The agenda will be set out as below.

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## AGENDA

		Pages	Time
<b>1</b>	<b>Apologies for Absence</b>		
<b>2</b>	<b>Minutes of Previous Meeting</b>	<b>1 - 6</b>	
	To receive the minutes of the meeting of the Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board held on 17 <sup>th</sup> June 2021.		
<b>3</b>	<b>Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Project Update</b>	<b>7 - 36</b>	<b>10.05am</b>
	To receive an update on the activities of the Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Project Team since the Board's last meeting.		
<b>4</b>	<b>Financial Update</b>	<b>37 - 46</b>	<b>11.05am</b>
	To receive an update on the financial position of the Thames Basin Heaths Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Project.		
<b>5</b>	<b>Investment Working Group Update</b>	<b>47 - 66</b>	<b>11.20am</b>
	To receive an update from the Investment Working Group.		
<b>6</b>	<b>Exclusion of Public and Press</b>		
	That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of Item 7 Financial Advisor's Presentation as it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information relating to the financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the authority hold that information) as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.		

If you require further information, please contact: Katharine Simpson  
Telephone: 01276 707157  
Email: [democratic.services@surreyheath.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@surreyheath.gov.uk)  
Published: Thursday, 11 November 2021

**7 Financial Advisor's Presentation 11.35am**

To receive an update on the performance of investments made on behalf of the Joint Strategic Partnership since the Boards' last meeting.

**8 Dates of Future Meetings 11.55am**

It is proposed that meetings of the Thames Basin Heath Joint Strategic Partnership Board are held on the following dates in 2022:

- Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2022 at 10am
- Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> November 2022 at 10am

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**Minutes of a Meeting of the Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board  
17 June 2021**

**Present:** Councillor Jan Harwood, Guildford Borough Council (Chairman)  
Councillor Martin D'Arcy, Waverley Borough Council  
Councillor Jonathan Glen, Hampshire County Council  
Councillor Marisa Heath, Surrey County Council  
Councillor David Hilton, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead  
Councillor Marina Munro, Rushmoor Borough Council  
Councillor James Radley, Hart Borough Council  
Councillor Angus Ross, Wokingham Borough Council

**In Attendance:** Sarah Bunce, Natural England  
Ann Conquest Natural England  
Simon Cridland, Bracknell Forest Borough Council  
Daria Dadum, Natural England  
Paul Druce, Surrey County Council  
Matthew Ellis, Waverley Borough Council  
Duncan Fisher  
Julie Gil, Bracknell Forest Borough Council  
Daniel Hawes, Hart Borough Council  
Tom Haywood, BBOWT  
Dan Knowles, Guildford Borough Council  
Heather Lewis, Surrey Wildlife Trust  
Anna Lucas, Hart, Rushmoor and Surrey Heath SPA Mitigation Project  
Jane Reeves, Surrey Heath Borough Council  
Stephen Rudd,  
Ruth Shelton, Natural England  
Jack Thompson  
Jennifer Wadham, Hampshire County Council

**Apologies:** Councillor Gary Elson, Woking Borough Council  
Councillor Karen Randolph, Elmbridge Borough Council  
Councillor Chris Turrell, Bracknell Forest Borough Council

**Observers:** Councillor Jerry Hyman, Waverley Borough Council

**1 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Thames Basin Heaths (TBH) Joint Strategic Partnership Board (JSPB) held on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2020 be approved as a correct record.

**2 Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Project Update**

Ruth Shelton, Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) Project Manager, Natural England, gave a presentation in respect of the work taking place as part of the SAMM project. The presentation summarised the project team's activities since the Board's last meeting and included updates on staffing, warden activity, educational work and monitoring activity.

It was reported that of the six new seasonal wardens who had started with the SAMM project on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2021 all had successfully completed their induction period and were making an excellent contribution to the SAMM team's work. Two year round wardens had been promoted, one had internally within Natural England and a second having moved to Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust. In order to fill the gaps in the year round team left by these promotions and provide both an element of functional support to the management team as well as opportunities for career progression to the wider team, it was proposed that one of the vacant year round warden posts be transformed into a Senior Warden.

Although the creation of this new team structure would result in an increase in salary costs these would be mitigated by reducing the number of seasonal wardens recruited each year from seven to six. A situation which would reflect the situation on the ground in 2020 and 2021 when it had been possible to recruit only six seasonal wardens.

It was reported that Covid continued to impact on the work of the wardening team and current season of wardening would be delayed and run from 15<sup>th</sup> March until 14<sup>th</sup> September 2021. Whilst the overall number of wardening hours completed since the last JSPB's last meeting had been less than the same period in 2019; in April 2021, the first full month when wardens could resume activities, 615 hours of wardening activity had been completed compared to 592 hours in April 2019.

Scannable QR codes had been introduced on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2021 and wardens were able to use these to provide visitors to the SANGs with additional information about the area they were in without the need to hand out leaflets. It was hoped that as restrictions eased further wardens would be able to reintroduce guided walks and sessions for schools and community groups.

Work to enhance the Partnership's website and improve the digital content and printed materials had taken place over the winter and the SANG directory booklet had been refreshed and updated with new art work which would become the 'branding' for the TBH Special Protection Area.

The SAMM project's educational offer had moved online with the delivery of fully interactive online sessions on a range of subjects including an introduction to the heathland and its wildlife and the threats faced by these habitats and what children might do to help protect the landscapes. These online sessions are then supplemented with follow up work for children to complete in class. A dedicated education page had been added to the TBH website which provides guidance, downloadable resources and activities which can be used to enhance learning and links had been made to encourage participation in a Citizen Science Project to capture sightings of the Silver Studded Blue Butterflies. As restrictions eased, face to face outdoor sessions will be resumed in late June and bookings were now being taken.

In December 2020, the SAMM team launched the annual SANGs visitor survey. In order to meet government restrictions the survey was conducted through the use of QR codes. Up to the end of May 2021, a total of 575 replies had been received with Chantry Wood being the most visited SANG (38 responses), this was followed by Riverside NR (34 responses) and Timber Hill and Ottersaw Chase (31 responses). The main activity being recorded on the SANG was dog walking (271 responses), walking (188 responses) and family outings (66 answers) with the majority of visits lasting between 30 minutes to an hour (317 responses).

The use of QR codes had enabled the visitor survey to take in a larger number of SANGS than in previous years (44 in 2020 compared to 7 in 2013) and gather a larger number of

responses than had been possible with face to face surveys (575 responses compared to 216 in 2013).

It was questioned whether the pandemic was impacting on the distances that people were willing to travel to reach an area of green space and whether any changes were a temporary anomaly or part of a growing long term trend. It was agreed that this would be explored as part of future surveys.

**RESOLVED** that the staff structure changes proposed in paragraph 1.7 of the report be approved.

### **3 Hart, Rushmoor and Surrey Heath Special Protection Area Mitigation Project Update**

The Board received a report setting out the findings of a joint project between Hart, Rushmoor and Surrey Heath Borough Councils to explore alternative and complementary avoidance and mitigation measures which could be used to reduce the impact of developments on Special Protection Areas.

As a single Housing Market Area (HMA), Hart, Rushmoor and Surrey Heath Borough Councils had over the years worked together to deliver access to cross boundary SANG solutions. However the opportunities for delivering SANG were reducing and it was felt that the current approach to avoidance and mitigation would result in significant difficulties in delivering net new residential development in parts of the HMA in coming years.

The joint project aimed to provide a robust evidence base that could be used to demonstrate whether an alternative strategy could be put in place in the scenario where no further SANG could be identified in a particular local authority area. The project had identified four potential options and within these a range of actions that might be taken:

- Option 1 Alternative Green Spaces
  - SANG networks
  - Linear SANG
  - Enhancement or Creation of Recreational Routes
  - Smaller SANG/facilities with Smaller Catchments
  - Larger SANG with Larger Catchments
- Option 2 – Habitat Management and Restoration
  - Habitat Management/Restoration
- Option 3 – Access Management
  - Expansion of SAMM Project - Wardening service
  - Expansion of SAMM Project – Education and Communication service
- Option 4 – Access Restriction and Control
  - Car Parking Availability/Access
  - Dog Control
  - Access Restriction

Each option was then assessed for its effectiveness of mitigating the impacts of any development and the deliverability of the mitigation measures proposed. From this exercise it was considered that SANG networks, linear SANGs and small SANGs if part of

a SANG network had the potential to mitigate against developments if they were considered as part of a package with the SAMM project.

It was stressed that the assessment was a technical piece of work which should not be considered in isolation and planning authorities would need to consider the findings alongside its statutory planning obligations. Furthermore weight should continue to be given to SANG which meets the existing criteria in the first instance and it would still be necessary to demonstrate that the mitigating options were as effective as the existing SANG criteria.

It was stressed that any proposals for small areas of SANG would need to demonstrate physical connections to other areas of SANG for example through a SANG network or an addition to an existing SANG.

The Hawley area was known to attract mountain bikers, many of whom would travel; long distances to reach a suitable area to ride in. The references to car parking at SANGs was noted. It was agreed that consideration would be given to any opportunities to expand facilities for cyclists.

The Group commended the report and the positive evidence baseline that it provided to support the benefits of the principles behind SANGS.

#### **4 Financial Update**

The Board received a report setting out the current financial position of the Thames Basin Heaths Strategic Access and Monitoring Project.

It was noted that as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 the balance in the Endowment Fund was £14.869million of which £10.101million was held in investments, £730,000 held as dividend income to be reinvested and the remaining £4.038million arising from tariff income and bank interest held as a cash balance by Hampshire County Council in their position as the Administrative Body. Of the £4.768million held as cash, £3.2million had been approved for investment by the Board and £1.5million was held as a cash balance in the Maintenance Fund to pay for project expenditure.

By the end of the 2021/22 financial year it was projected that £3.2million would be received from partner authorities in the form of tariff income with further tariff income of £1.9million and £1.5million being received in 2022/23 and 2023/24 respectively.

The Board noted the contents of the report.

#### **5 Investment Working Group Update**

The Board received a report providing an update from the Investment Working Group.

Following the Board's meeting in November 2020, the Working Group had reviewed paragraph seven of the Investment Strategy to better reflect the Board's view that investments should as far as possible be made in areas which did not have an undue negative impact on the environment. To further clarify the Board's intentions a Responsible Investing Policy had been drafted which would be appended to the Investment Strategy.

The Board was informed that the Responsible Investing Policy had been developed using the Berkshire Pension Fund's Responsible Investment Policy and Hampshire County

Council's Investment Policy as templates combined with input from Arlingclose, the Board's financial advisors, to ensure that the policy was workable.

It was agreed that the priority relating to climate change would be reviewed and the wording strengthened.

Concern about use of the wording 'Where possible', in Section 3: Priorities of the Responsible Investing Policy, in reference to reducing investments in products which did not align with the primary purpose of the Thames Basin Heaths JSPB's aims and objectives was noted. It was stressed that the phrase 'Where possible' was common terminology in investment strategies and was used to ensure that they did not become restrictive and so that investments did not have to be sold immediately at a potential loss should a fund decide to invest in an area that did not align with stated priorities. The Board was reminded that the TBH JSPB was a small scale investor and as such had limited leverage when dealing with Fund Managers.

It was requested that any further comments be forwarded to Jenny Wadham.

## **6 Exclusion of Public and Press**

**RESOLVED** that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of Item 8, Financial Advisor's presentation, as it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information relating to the financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 the Schedule 12A the Local Government Act 1972.

## **7 Financial Advisor's Presentation**

Greg Readings, Arlingclose, gave a presentation in respect of the performance of the investments made by the Board to ensure the long term financial security of the SAMM project.

The Board was informed that 2020 had been a particularly challenging year for all investors as interest rates were cut and companies either paused, cut or cancelled dividend payments. Notwithstanding this most asset values had improved since the pandemic's onset and income levels had held up reasonably well, although at a lower rate than would have been likely otherwise.

The Board was reminded that to date, a total of £10.2million had been invested on their behalf and a further £3.2million was scheduled for investment in the current financial year. In line, with the Board's agreed Investment Strategy the primary aim of any investments made was to generate income as opposed to capital growth and any investments made should have the lowest risk possible with any investments being made for the long term. To date, the Board's investments had resulted in a total dividend of £818,968 a figure that represented a 4.99% annualised return on the original investment, with £344,797 of these dividends being realised in the 2020/21 financial year.

The Board noted the update.

## **8 Any Other Business**

The Group was informed that Ann Conquest would be leaving the SAMM project to take up a new position within Natural England at the end of June. The Partnership thanked

Ann for all her work to support the SAMM project over the years and wished her well for the future.



THAMES BASIN HEATHS  
JOINT STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BOARD

Date: 18<sup>th</sup> November 2021

Subject: SAMM Project Update

Report of: Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) Project

Recommendations:

- To NOTE the contents of the report on SAMM project activity
- To APPROVE requests for data regarding SANG use from all Local Authority Partners

Purpose of the Report:

To provide the JSPB with an update on SAMM activity since the last meeting in June 2021, including the impact of *COVID-19* restrictions.

## Summary

This paper sets out for Members the SAMM project's activities and achievements since the last meeting in June 2021, recent monitoring work and plans for the next 6 months.

### 1. SAMM project staffing and recruitment

#### Seasonal wardens

- 1.1. This year's seasonal wardens made an excellent contribution to the team's work despite the *COVID-19* restrictions we faced at the beginning of the season. This is shown by the fact that the majority of the seasonal wardens now have new posts within NE or with a TBH partner organisation, a promotion within NE or have been made year-round wardens within the SAMM project.
- 1.2. Andi Roy, one of our full-time seasonal wardens, gained a promotion in October 2021 to move into a new role in NE. Andi was successful in using the skills and experience he had gained in the 6 months he had been with the SAMM team to take up a Lead Adviser role working in Sustainable Development in the Thames Solent team. We would like to thank Andi for his valued contribution to the team's work during his time with us.
- 1.3. Rupert Millican, one of our full-time seasonal wardens, gained a new role as a Ranger with Horsell Common Preservation Society. Again, we would like to thank Rupert for his valued contribution to the team's work.

- 1.4. Val Woods, one of our part-time seasonal wardens, gained a new role within NE in September 2021 working in our National Nature Reserves. Again, we would like to thank Val for her valued contribution to the team's work.
- 1.5. The process for recruiting next year's seasonal wardens is now underway. We are planning to recruit the equivalent of 6 full-time seasonal wardens from 1<sup>st</sup> March 2022 – 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022.

### **Year-round wardens**

- 1.6. Zoe Shorter, one of our full-time seasonal wardens, gained a promotion to Senior Warden in September 2021 to assist with the functional management of the team. We would like to congratulate Zoe in her new position. She is a valuable asset to the project.
- 1.7. Tim Britt-Searle, one of our full-time seasonal wardens, gained a permanent role within the SAMM team as a new year-round warden. We would also like to congratulate Tim in his new position. He is a valuable asset to the project.
- 1.8. Victoria Huth joined the SAMM project as Team Leader in June 2021 in replacement of Ann Conquest who changed roles within NE on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2021.

## **2. Wardening**

- 2.1. The project provides a warden service on the SPA. During the September to April season we cover 5 days a week, and from March to mid-September we work 7 days per week from 07.00 to 19:00 (daylight permitting).
- 2.2. We are pleased to say that Heathweek in July this year went very well despite not handing out resources to the public to limit the risk of *COVID-19* transmission. The team worked together and with partners to create exciting and engaging events for Heathweek, completing risk assessments, hiring vehicles and getting the resources together at short notice. Some events e.g Zoe's Sensory Scavenger Hunt were repeated after Heathweek as they proved very popular. We have started planning for next years' Heathweek, which will be in the last week of July 2022. We will learn from our successes and required improvements from this years' Heathweek.
- 2.3. We have resumed our 'mini popups' following Heathweek. These are similar to our pitstops that we held previously with a table and bags containing leaflets but without a gazebo due to *COVID-19* restrictions. Since then, we have been able to create robust risk assessments which mean we can have pitstops again with a gazebo. The first one of these was on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021 where 45 people were spoken to by our wardens in 2 hours.
- 2.4. Although wardens have been able to engage with SPA users from June this year, they weren't able to hand out leaflets or do pitstops due to risk of *COVID-19* transmission. Since

October, wardens have been able to give out leaflets to the public as it is now deemed safe as we have ensured the transmission risk is low. For example, using hand sanitiser before and after handing out leaflets. We have ensured the wardens are supported with robust risk assessments, minimising risk to them and the public. The team are really pleased to be able to resume handing out leaflets. However, QR codes have also been kept as an option in case people prefer this.

- 2.5. We plan to resume carrying out SANG surveys over the winter season and will report on this next year. We are currently reviewing the methodology to ensure we are as efficient and as effective as possible when collecting this data.
- 2.6. This winter, the SAMM team will be helping/volunteering at events and with our partners. For example, the Winter Pimms event.
- 2.7. The following tables set out the number of hours of warden activity delivered on the SPA between May 2021 and October 2021, inclusive:

**Table 1.** *Wardening activity delivered on the SPA between May 2021 and October 2021. \* Typical interactions estimate the number of interactions that would have taken place if wardening activities had been unrestricted by the pandemic.*

<b>May 2021</b>	Total hours wardened	611.78	<b>June 2021</b>	Total hours wardened	603.33
	Number of interactions	621		Number of interactions	808
	Interactions per hour	1.02		Interactions per hour	1.34
	Number already spoken to	117		Number already spoken to	189
	Leaflets handed out	105		Leaflets handed out	118
	Number of dogs	554		Number of dogs	638
	Number of dog walkers (5+ dogs)	11		Number of dog walkers (5+ dogs)	9
	Average already spoken to	18.8%		Average already spoken to	23.4%
	Total people count (inc. typical interactions*)	621		Total people count (inc. typical interactions*)	817
	Typical interactions* per hour	1.02		Typical interactions* per hour	1.35
	Total dog count (inc. typical interactions*)	565		Total dog count (inc. typical interactions*)	638

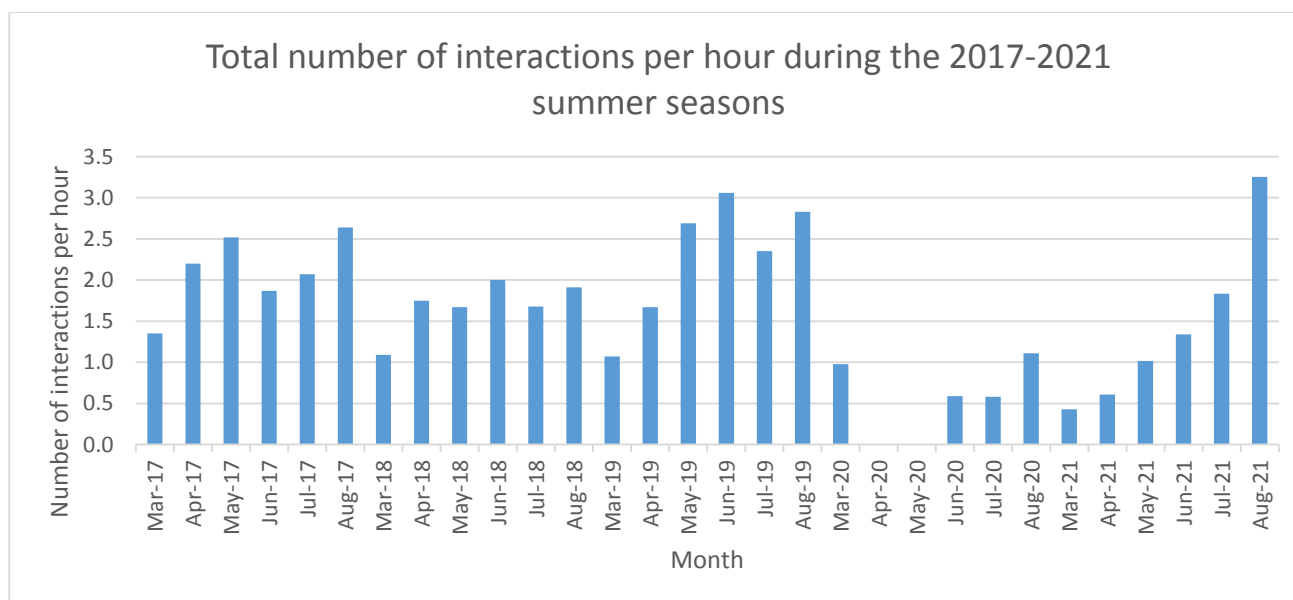
<b>July 2021</b>	Total hours wardened	472.9 6
	Number of interactions	867
	Interactions per hour	1.83
	Number already spoken to	156
	Leaflets handed out	428
	Number of dogs	613
	Number of dog walkers (5+ dogs)	11
	Average already spoken to	18%
	Total people count (inc. typical interactions*)	867
	Typical interactions* per hour	1.83
	Total dog count (inc. typical interactions*)	613

<b>August 2021</b>	Total hours wardened	508.6 5
	Number of interactions	1655
	Interactions per hour	3.25
	Number already spoken to	295
	Leaflets handed out	1241
	Number of dogs	1009
	Number of dog walkers (5+ dogs)	30
	Average already spoken to	17.8
	Total people count (Inc. typical interactions*)	1690
	Typical interactions* per hour	3.32
	Total dog count (inc. typical interactions*)	1033

<b>September 2021</b>	Total hours wardened	263.6 3
	Number of interactions	652
	Interactions per hour	2.47
	Number already spoken to	120
	Leaflets handed out	555
	Number of dogs	437
	Number of dog walkers (5+ dogs)	8
	Average already spoken to	18.4 %
	Total people count (inc. typical interactions*)	652
	Typical interactions* per hour	2.47
	Total dog count (inc. typical interactions*)	437

<b>October 2021</b>	Total hours wardened	155.8 6
	Number of interactions	451
	Interactions per hour	2.89
	Number already spoken to	69
	Leaflets handed out	660
	Number of dogs	219
	Number of dog walkers (5+ dogs)	2
	Average already spoken to	15.3 %
	Total people count (inc. typical interactions*)	451
	Typical interactions* per hour	2.89
	Total dog count (inc. typical interactions*)	219

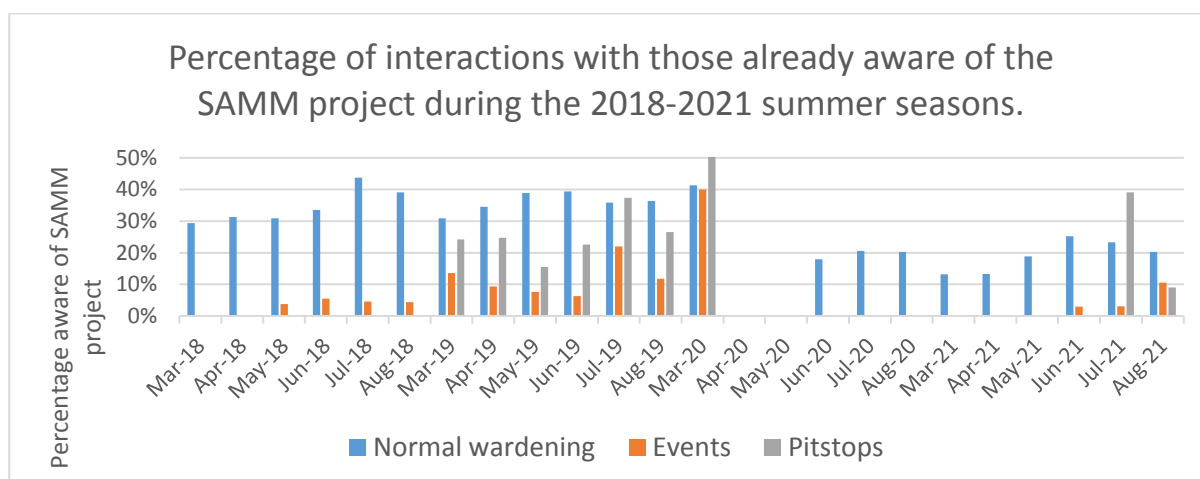
- 2.6 The number of wardening hours between May and October 2021 were comparable to those of 2019. This shows hard work and commitment of the team to get out on the SPA to engage with the public despite *COVID-19* restrictions during this time.
- 2.7 Twenty-two pitstops and 47 events were possible between June and October 2021 (no pitstops or events took place in May), this included Heath Week events in late July/August.
- 2.8 The total number of interactions per hour has remained relatively stable between 2017 and 2019, with a marked decrease in 2020 and 2021 due to the *COVID-19-19* pandemic restrictions, followed by an increase in the summer of 2021 (Fig. 2).
- 2.9 August 2021 registered the highest number of interactions per hour ever recorded, despite not having a Senior Warden in post at the time.



**Figure 2.** Total number of interactions per hour during the sensitive period (March to August) between 2017 and 2021.

- 2.10 Figure 3 shows the percentage of monthly interactions on the SPA with members of the public that were already aware of the SAMM project since March 2018. On average, 21.3% of individuals encountered whilst ‘normal wardening’ said that they were already aware of the project. This figure was down from the 27.5% to April 2021, but it was to be expected given the restrictions on wardening and interactions with members of the public between March 2020 and August 2020, and then again in March and April 2021. Pitstops and events were not possible during the spring and summer 2020 or the first part of 2021, due to restrictions considering the *COVID-19-19* epidemic, and they were allowed to resume in

June 2021 due to Natural England Health & Safety restrictions. The number of pitstops in July 2021 was the second highest ever recorded.



**Figure 3.** Average percentage of monthly interactions with members of the public that were already aware of the SAMM project from March 2018 to August 2021.

### 3. Access to Special Protection Area land

- 3.1. There have been no issues or changes. Feedback from landowners remains very positive and we thank all partners for their ongoing support.
- 3.2. Extensions to our existing access agreements have been agreed by all Partners. The agreements have been renewed through to 30th June 2023.

### 4. Communications

- 4.1. The period June to October is a busy one for communications. The planning, organising and delivery of Heath Week, in the last week of July, being the focus.

#### Leaflets and branding

- 4.2. The new leaflet designed over the winter of 2020/2021 has been printed and handed out for the first-time during Heath Week 2021. The artwork for the leaflet now appears on our social media ‘headers’, posters, newsletters, display boards, and will soon provide the branding for the website too.



4.3. We are delighted with the new artwork. It tells the story of the ground-nesting birds and other wildlife, recreational pressure and fire risk.

4.4. We regularly hand out three key leaflets:

1. A5 booklet listing SANGs called **Greenspace on your doorstep** was redesigned in 2019 and downloadable from:

<https://www.tbhpartnership.org.uk/content/uploads/2020/03/Greenspace-on-your-doorstep.pdf>

2. A5 foldout map leaflet about the heaths redesigned in the winter 2020/2021:

<https://www.tbhpartnership.org.uk/content/uploads/2021/05/TBH-Leaflet-2021.pdf>.

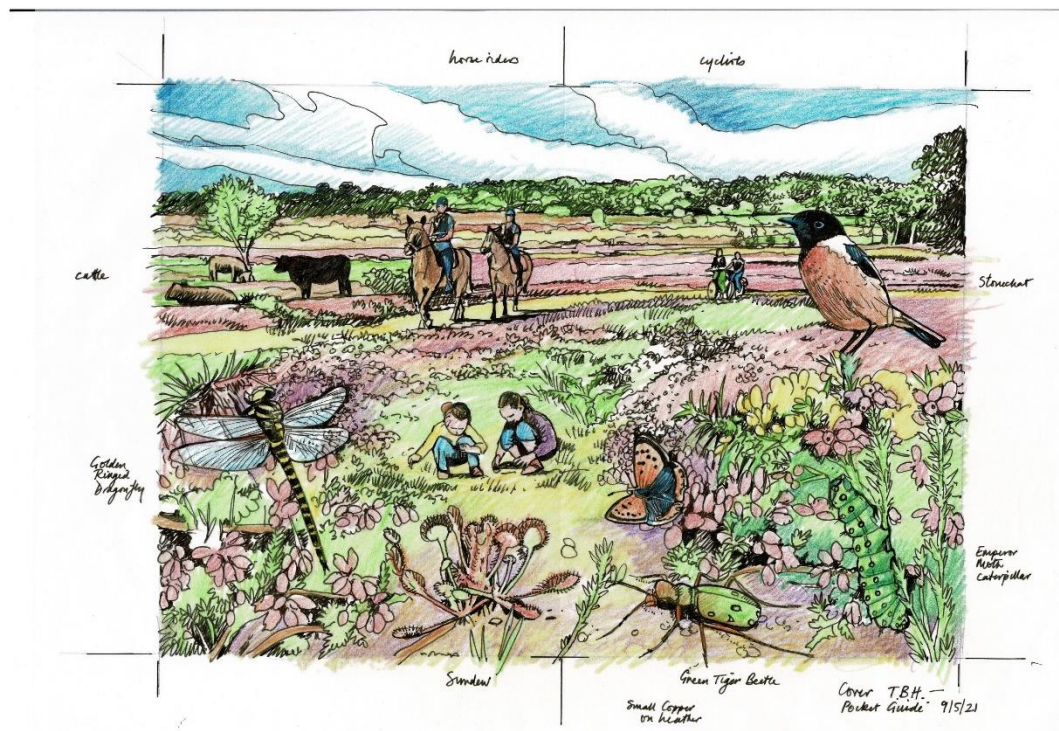
3. A6 booklet aimed at children and families called **My pocket guide to heathland**. The current version can be downloaded from:

<https://www.tbhpartnership.org.uk/content/uploads/2020/03/TBH-Pocket-Guide-to-Heathland.pdf>

4.5. The third leaflet, **My pocket guide to heathland**, is currently being refreshed, to tie in with the branding of the other two leaflets. This leaflet content is complete and artist Tim Bernhard, who has provided the artwork for the other two leaflets, is currently working on a painting, part of which will be used for the cover.

The new painting will also be used as a display board, to partner to the heathland scene shown above in section 4.2. The new painting will depict other aspects of life on the

Thames Basin Heaths including horse riding, cycling and grazing animals, as well as more wildlife. Here is the preliminary sketch:



## Website

- 4.6. Our website can be found at [www.tbhpartnership.org.uk](http://www.tbhpartnership.org.uk) and continues to be used to promote our key messages. The website content is designed to inform and inspire visitors and to promote usage of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs).
- 4.7. Looking at the season as a whole, in the period 1st March 2021 to 31st October 2021 there have been **77,697** page views across the whole website. Compared to **77,251** in the same period in 2020. A very slight increase of 0.6%.
- 4.8. Top 10 most visited areas of the website since 1st March 2021 have been:
- Greenspace on your doorstep 39,270
  - News & blogs 12,776
  - Home page 6,035
  - Event listings 5,213
  - Heath Week 2,762
  - About us 1,519
  - Heathland Hounds 1,289
  - Visitor survey 1,232



- Wildlife Gallery 1,010
- QR scan menu page 968

- 4.9. It is pleasing to see an increase in visits to our events and Heath Week pages, and new content doing well, including the new Heathland Hounds pages and the new Wildlife Gallery.
- 4.10. The news and blogs page features regular entries from the team, including a wide range of articles about our work and the wildlife and history of the heaths. Recent articles have included news about butterfly recording, Heath Week, destressing in nature, caterpillars to spot in early autumn, commercial dog walking on the MOD estate and recruitment news.
- 4.11. The online directory of SANGs, **Greenspace on your doorstep**, has long been an important part of the website and continues to be the most visited section. Since we updated you in June 2021, two more entries have been added, bringing the published total to **seventy-four**. Each entry has a section on how to find it, a description, a link to a route on ViewRanger and a photograph gallery.

In the period 1st March 2021 to 31st October 2021 there have been **39,270** SANG page views and the five most visited pages were:

- Buckler's Forest (Bracknell Forest Council) – 3,197 views
- Hartland Country Park (Hart District Council) – 2,736 views
- Naishes Wood (Hart District Council) – 1,690 views
- Brookwood Country Park (Woking Borough Council) – 1,504 views
- Brooklands Community Park (Elmbridge Borough Council) – 1,454 views

## **Social media**

- 4.12. Our social media platforms continue to spread our key messages. We are on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.
- 4.13. Social media statistics as of 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021. Our Facebook page has **1,315** followers (up by 127 since the last meeting) and **1,131** page likes (up by 83 since the last meeting), with post engagement regularly far exceeding these numbers. Our Twitter account now has **793** followers (up by 42 since the last meeting). Our Instagram account now has **399** followers (up by 59 since the last meeting). Our following is gradually increasing as we become better known:

	September 19	October 20	May 21	October 21
Facebook	814	1031	1188	1315
Twitter	536	644	751	793
Instagram	-	260	340	399

## Events

### Mitigation Meet-up 2021

4.14. The annual **Mitigation Meet-up** is a meet-up of mitigation projects from around the country, a great networking opportunity that has spawned great ideas, including the SAMM team's involvement in Heath Week. It's been an annual event since 2016.

2020 was the SAMM team's turn to host, but for obvious reasons it didn't go ahead, and there was no appetite for a virtual meet-up. Communications Office Sarah Bunce kept the networking going by hosting a meet-up page on our website. She followed this up this year by organising an outdoor get-together at Heather Farm. The idea was to have a sociable, informal day, with opportunities for like-minded people to network in small groups.

The event was a great success, welcoming 23 delegates, from 11 organisations, plus members of the SAMM team. On 17th September 2021 we offered a choice of walks at Heather Farm, Horsell Common, Chobham Common and Lightwater Country Park; plus a data collection discussion with Data Analyst Daria Dadam at Heather Farm.



**Figure 4 - Mitigation projects from around the country met at Heather Farm in September**

## Heath Week 2021

- 4.15. Our annual week of enhanced public engagement ran for a fourth year, from Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> to Friday 30<sup>th</sup> July 2021. It was a great success, with lots of local people coming out to see us, and some families even coming to more than one event. The programme can still be viewed at <https://www.tbhpartnership.org.uk/heath-week/>.

The SAMM team planned and organised 14 of our own local events, and partner organisations listed another 13.

Data Analyst Daria Dadam created a feedback survey for Heath Week and it is gratifying to read through the positive feedback. For example:

“What an interesting evening! It was fascinating to learn about the secret life of Nightjars from such a knowledgeable Nightjar expert and they appeared on cue too! Will definitely look at other events. Well done! Three churrs for Michael & Ben!”

“Michael and Andi were absolutely fantastic and a credit to SWT. Knowledgeable, funny, welcoming and very understanding with my kids too. They brought the nightjar walk to life with their humour, insight and insight into heathland wildlife. I would have happily paid for this experience and will recommend it to everyone. My kids will probably never forget it. Thanks to Michael and Andi.”

“We thoroughly enjoyed both of the events we attended.”

“The Wildfire Roadshow was a brilliant opportunity for the children to get up close and inside a real fire engine and ask plenty of questions about the various roles undertaken by the firefighters.”

“This was so much more than we anticipated.”

“Mike’s enthusiasm and knowledge truly invigorated my son’s passion for being outdoors and he was ever so sweet in answering all the questions that comes with being in the company of a 6 year old.”

“George (6) says 3000 stars out of 2000”

“Michael Jones proved to be an excellent leader imparting a lot of new knowledge and subsequent appreciation of Horsell common.”

“This event was pure magic!”

- 4.16. Heath Week is a great opportunity to celebrate heathland and bring its magic to the attention of local people. It gives us the chance to reinforce our key messages about respecting habitats for ground-nesting birds and preventing fires. For example, inviting local fire stations to join us with fire engines creates fun events with a serious underlying message.



**Figure 5** - Queue to view a Surrey Fire & Rescue unimog

Highlights of the week included an opportunity for dog walkers to meet respected dog behaviourist Natalie Light for free advice, Warden Zoe’s popular scavenger hunts for kids, Education Officer Michael Jones’s nightjar walks at Horsell Common, Warden Mike’s butterfly walks at Chobham Common and Amphibian & Reptile Conservation’s (ARC) Reptile Roadshow at Ockham Common. The Reptile Roadshow was busy all day with people popping in to see the wild animals that ARC had brought along, with many interested visitors getting the chance to handle the animals.



**Figure 6 - Handling a smooth snake with ARC**

- 4.17. By having a whole week of intensive public engagement, we aim to raise our profile and bring our message to a wider audience.
- 4.18. Planning for Heath week 2022 has started and we plan to start the event on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> July 2022 and run it through to Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> July 2022.

### **Wildfire messaging**

- 4.19. We have displayed wildfire awareness notices across the SPA this season for the first time. It is too early to say if they have had a positive impact, but spreading the word about wildfire risk, with instructions on what actions to take, is something we will repeat next season.
- 4.20. Communications Officer Sarah Bunce had the idea for a wildfire awareness activity sheet during Heath Week, when she realised a fun means of getting key messages across would enhance the effectiveness of our wildfire events. Education Officer Michael Jones has put together an excellent activity sheet for us to give away.



The activity sheets will be available free of charge at all our wildfire events and have already been handed out at:

Guildford Fire Station open day, Saturday 28th August 2021

Hale Community Fun Day, Tuesday 31st August 2021

Woking Fire Station open day, Sunday 5th September 2021

## **Partnership Newsletter**

- 4.21. Started in May 2019, the Thames Basin Heaths Partnership Newsletter goes out quarterly to organisations across the partnership. It shares a variety of news stories, including our own news, news from land managers and news about SANGs. Please contact [sarah.bunce@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:sarah.bunce@naturalengland.org.uk) if you would like to be added to the circulation list. The next issue will be published on 1st December 2021.

[Click here to view the latest newsletter in your browser.](#)

## **5. Education**

- 5.1. During the period of this update, the ongoing pandemic has continued to interfere with delivery of sessions and development of relationships with local schools and youth groups. It has been difficult to forge new relationships with schools and teachers - That said, things are continually opening-up and by the end of the year, I will have engaged almost 1000 children and adults with their local heaths, through school sessions, sessions for uniformed groups and guided walks. This is a solid base from which to build upon in 2022.

## Schools – Our Amazing Heathlands

- 5.2. The aim of all our schools sessions is to connect school children and their teachers to their local heathlands. These curriculum-linked sessions can be delivered remotely, in school or out on the heath and are designed to introduce fantastic plants and animals (including rare ground-nesting birds) and cover threats to the landscape – including wildfire and disturbance. They tap into the National Curriculum for science, English, geography and history.



'Our Amazing Heathlands' sessions are **FREE** curriculum-linked educational activities for local schools.

'Our Amazing Heathlands' sessions explore the curriculum through a fascinating world of butterflies, ground-nesting birds and carnivorous plants in a habitat rarer than rainforest.

'Our Amazing Heathlands' sessions are brilliant opportunities to take your curriculum learning out of the classroom, exposing your pupils to the undoubted benefits of being out in nature. It's also a whole lot of fun!

## Educational offering to schools

- 5.3. We look to engage children with heathland (and wildlife more generally) and make them care enough about it to want to help take action to protect it. They can do this in a number of ways, including: -
- Tell everyone (friends, family etc.) they know about how amazing heathlands is and how we can all behave responsibly on a visit.
  - Join in with 'Help the Heath' and design posters encouraging visitors to do the right thing when visiting. (#BeWildfireAware, avoid disturbance, pick up dog waste and not littering)
- 5.4. The initial focus has been on forging links with and delivering sessions and resources for a primary school audience (KS1 & KS2) but I am looking to expand into secondary (KS3 & KS4) and are working towards tying-in with the proposed GCSE in Natural History.
- 5.5. Face-to-face school activities commenced in September 2021 and we have delivered sessions (on heath and in classroom) focusing on seasonal change, food chains, classification and habitats across KS1 and KS2.

5.6. Here's a blog post about one of the local schools whose Eco-Committee has got the whole school taking action to protect their local heathland's ground-nesting birds.

5.7. Feedback from sessions has been great: -

*"This [the resources and session plan] looks fantastic, thank you so much. What an educational walk this will be for the children! Thank you so much again. We are all very excited!" – Year 2 Teacher*

*"Your activities were excellent and well-planned – perfect for Year 4. The children loved the discovery activity and it covered many of our Science objectives, as well as some Writing and Reading ones too! The spotter sheets are a great resource and perfect for focussing the children! I'm glad it covered both plants and animals as part of our theme is habitats." – Year 4 teacher*

*"I loved everything that we did!"*

*"I liked it when we heard the birds"*

*"I loved looking at all the amazing fungi"*

*"My favourite thing was finding things. It was fun!" – Year 4 children*

*"Thank you so much for the session that you ran last Friday, we thoroughly enjoyed it and felt that the activities were just right. It has fitted in really well with our Topic on the local area." – KS 2 Teacher*

### Uniformed Groups – Our Amazing Heathlands

5.8. There is good demand from uniformed groups and we have sessions designed to introduce children to their local heathlands and enable them to work towards badges. In order to meet further badge requirements, the on-heath activities can be supplemented with the 'Help the Heath' poster challenge.

5.9. We even ran a night walk to investigate the heathland species that come out at night.



**Help the Heath - poster challenge**

5.10. Feedback from sessions has been positive: -



*“Michael, your session with our Beaver scouts was inspirational. It was adapted to their age (6 to 8) in such a fun and informative way. Well done!”*

*“The children were so engaged and learnt so much from the sessions. I think you have 15 conservationists in the making!”*

*“Thank you so much for your interesting field visit to Horsell Common. We all thoroughly enjoyed it. The Cubs were buzzing. With feedback from parents the Cubs were remembering and talking about the facts they had learnt.”*

### **Spreading the word and expanding delivery**

- 5.11. *Education and Engagement* officer Michael Jones has been taking steps to promote these educational opportunities to all schools within 5km of the SPA and have contacted more than 200 primary schools to offer free educational opportunities and created a short video to explain why teachers should introduce their students to heathland. This video can be found [here](#)
- 5.12. Michael also continues to talk with partners to roll-out our heathland sessions across all three counties – either via working towards being able to independently deliver sessions or co-deliver sessions with partner education staff or Rangers.
- 5.13. If anyone has close links with schools or teachers across the Thames Basin Heaths area, please do get in touch. With Michael . Whenever he can, he promotes education sessions in local media and write blog posts – [like this one](#) – to encourage teachers and their children to engage with their local wildlife.
- 5.14. The education programme now has a dedicated panel on the new [TBH Partnership leaflet](#).

### **Our Amazing Heathlands - Education Webpage** – [www.tbhpartnership.org.uk/schools](http://www.tbhpartnership.org.uk/schools)

- 5.15. The [education webpage](#) continues to develop – now branded to fit in with the new leaflet. It provides information for local teachers about free educational offerings and how they can get involved.



Some of the heathland resources available to teachers

**Heathland Wildlife Gallery** – [www.tbhpartnership.org.uk/wildlife-gallery](http://www.tbhpartnership.org.uk/wildlife-gallery)

5.16. The [wildlife gallery webpage](http://www.tbhpartnership.org.uk/wildlife-gallery) continues to be added to, with new species added on a regular basis. Plants will be added this winter. Each species profile is designed to fit in with the KS1 & KS2 curriculum and consists of a **short introduction, ID pointers, interesting facts, where/when to find them, adaptations, diet and rarity**. This will be a great resource to teachers looking to further study their local heathland and will be increasingly used as our education programme develops.

**Heathland at Home** – [www.tbhpartnership.org.uk/activities](http://www.tbhpartnership.org.uk/activities)

5.17. This webpage continues to provide visitors with a range of fun heathland-themed arts, crafts and games. This page is now detailed in the new TBH leaflet to help further spread the word.

**Wildfire Education**

- 5.18. Wildfire education is an important strand of our schools' programme. It is referred to in all sessions (as a significant threat to heathland), but we are continuing to develop a standalone offer.
- 5.19. These sessions are designed to raise awareness of destructive fires and aim to avoid fires being started in the first place and equip people with the knowledge of what to do if they encounter a fire (i.e. Ring 999 immediately!)
- 5.20. Over the summer we have been working with Surrey Fire and Rescue Service education team and Wildfire & Rural Affairs Partnership to try to formalise an educational partnership. It has been agreed that they will look to promote TBH sessions at the end of their fire safety visits (All schools in Surrey at Year 2, Year 5 & Year 8 annually) and let the teachers know that we offer a specific wildfire session and more general heathland education sessions.

This will be an excellent way to spread the word about our offering and get our name directly into schools.

- 5.21. If this is successful, we will look to roll this out across all three counties. We also agreed to trial targeted school assembly visits in areas where heathland wildfires occur – With SFRS talking to the children about fire and us talking about the consequences for plants, animals and the habitat. It is likely that these will be trialled in the summer of 2022. We have a wildfire webpage - [www.tbhpartnership.org.uk/wildfire](http://www.tbhpartnership.org.uk/wildfire) and have also developed a wildfire activity sheet that we give out at events over the summer.

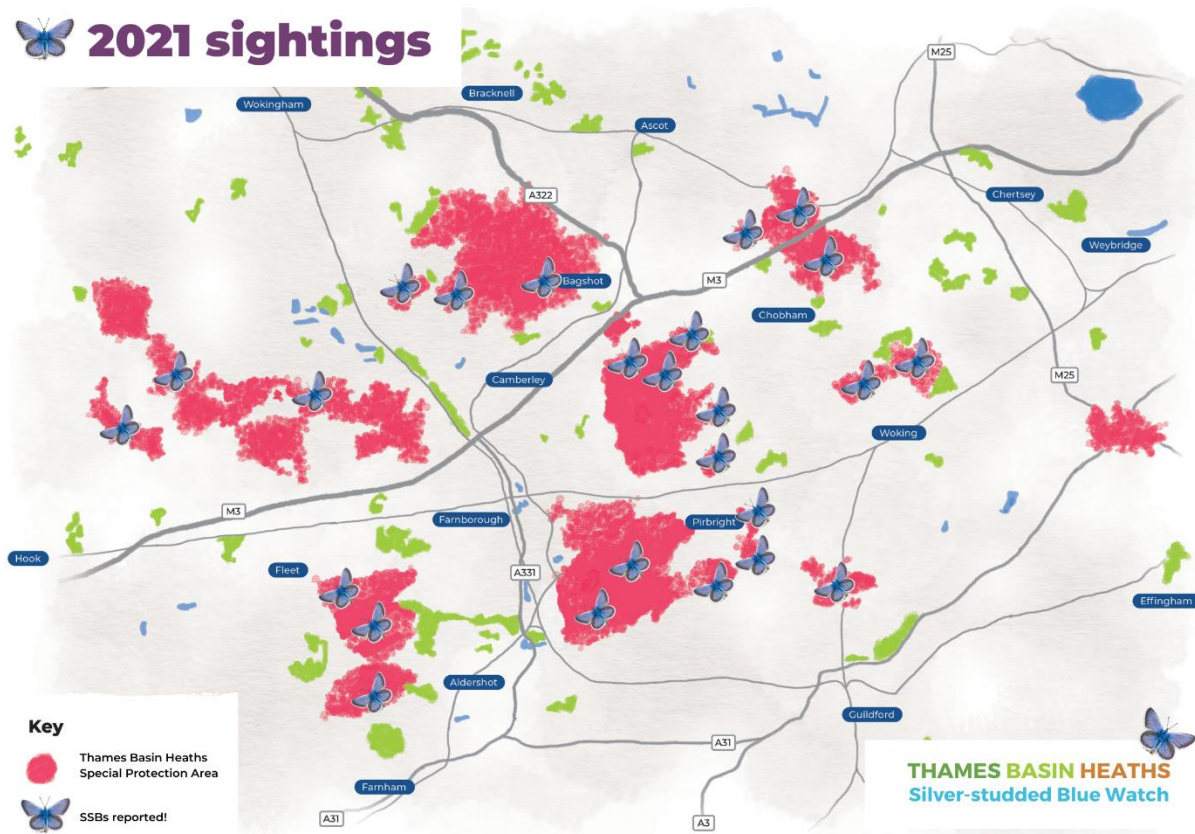
### **Citizen Science**

- 5.22. We are always looking to engage visitors with their local heathlands and encourage them to further value what they have on their doorsteps. A great way to do this is to look to encourage them to get involved with Citizen Science. Over the summer, we launched a brand-new citizen science webpage – [www.tbhpartnership.org.uk/citizen-science](http://www.tbhpartnership.org.uk/citizen-science) that details how people can help land managers and local wildlife by reporting some of what they see. It introduces biological recording and how people can get involved and a big part of this was to encourage people to keep an eye out for rare butterflies on their walks.

### **Silver-Studded blue Watch 2021**

- 5.23. We launched SSB Watch in mid-June with a call-to-action [blog](#) that encouraged heathland visitors to look out for silver-studded blues, providing them with all the information they would need to participate. This included an [ID guide](#) and, for those that were more interested, an [in-depth look at various aspects of their lives](#).
- 5.24. As the flight season progressed, we supported the event with regular social media posts, encouraging people to record their sightings to Butterfly Conservation via the iRecord Butterflies app, tag us in their posts and use #silverstuddedblue. We received lots of sightings and photographs of the butterflies across the SPA and people were genuinely engaged. Word spread nicely and Butterfly Conservation transect walkers got involved too.
- 5.25. By the end of the season, we had received reports of sightings at twenty sites across the Thames Basin Heaths. It will be interesting to see if our efforts have resulted in the submission of more records when the data is analysed by the country recorders in due course.

## 2021 sightings



**1 Illustrative map of SSB sightings across the SPA sent to us**

5.26. To further engage heathland visitors and encourage more people to become citizen scientist, we ran some guided walks to introduce people to using their phone to help them ID and record wildlife. We used iRecord for Butterflies, Seek and BirdNet and feedback was positive: -

*“Tx for a lovely and informative workshop this morning. Can’t wait to try all the apps out in the garden.”*

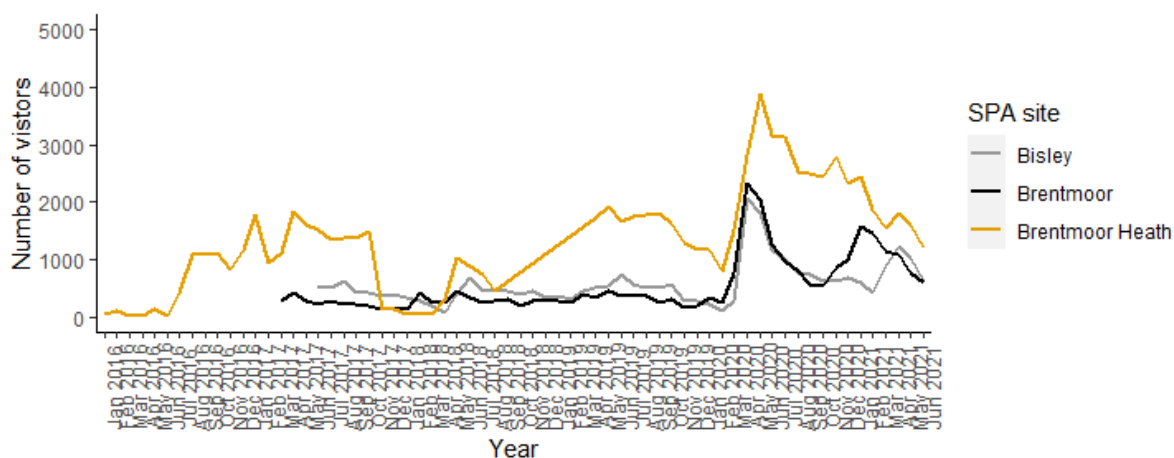
*“Informative session for all ages and experience. Helpful and approachable people taking the session. I would recommend to others and look forward to attending similar.”*

*“A very enjoyable experience and also fun whilst learning. The staff were very nice, approachable and easy to interact with.”*

6.1. People counter data were modelled to produce trends for 17 sites (Table 2); any site with fewer than three years of data were excluded (Hazeley Heath, Sheet’s Heath and Wisley all had data for only two years, from Mar 2019 to June 2021). In the case of multiple readers for a single site, the reader with the highest number of passes was considered. Generalised linear models were used, modelling visitor passes as a function of time, with a Poisson error family and log-link function, and controlling for over-dispersion. Analyses were conducted with R. 4.0.21

6.1 Results indicated an increase in visitor passes for the majority of sites from the beginning of monitoring to June 202, when considering either year-round (15 sites out of 17 increased) or peak-season only (March to August) (16 out of 17 sites showed an upwards trend) data (Table 1). However, these results were likely driven, at least in part, by the increase in visitors in 2020 and, to some extent, 2021, related to the COVID-19 lockdowns (see

examples in Fig 7, in particular the peaks during the two main lockdowns in the summer 2020 and the late 2020 to early 2021 one). Similar influx in visitor numbers have been reported in numerous parks around the country including, locally, the New Forest<sup>2</sup>, Richmond Park<sup>3</sup>, and Frensham Great Pond<sup>4</sup>.



**Fig. 7.** Monthly total number of passes in front of people counters per site.

- 6.2 Trends improved for most sites when the “COVID-19-19 years” (2020 and 2021) were excluded from the analysis: a third of sites showed either a decreasing or stable trend (six out of 17) when year-round data were considered. The peak season data suggested that most sites (10 sites out of 17) showed a decreasing or stable number of visitors pre-COVID-19-19, whilst the same was true for a third (six out of 17) of sites during the off-peak (September to February) period. This suggests that the number of visitors had been declining since 2016, a result in accordance with a previous report<sup>5</sup>, even if the latter had been based on a different methodology and time-frame to the current study.
- 6.3 Sites that showed an improvement in trend both year-round and during the peak seasons when 2020 and 2021 were excluded were: Ash ranges, Bisley, Brentmoor, Broadmoor Bottom, Chobham Common, and Yately Common. When only the pre-COVID-19-19 years were considered (2016-2019), the trend had been stable during the peak season for a further three sites: Bullswater Common, Heath Warren Wood, and Whitmoor Common.
- 6.5. Chobham Common showed the most encouraging trends overall: when year-round data were considered, including 2020 and 2021, the number of visitors were stable, improving to a decreasing trend when 2020 and 2021 were excluded. The results remained true when either the peak or off-peak seasons (September to February) data, excluding 2020 and 2021, were considered. Crowthorne was the only site with a reverse trend, where excluding the “COVID-19-19 years” (2020 and 2021) showed a worse trend than with those two years included.

**Table 2.** Summary of the trends of people counter passes for 17 sites part of the TBH SPA. Data for the whole year, peak-season only (March to August), and off-peak seasons only (September to February) are presented. Also included are trends calculated without the two “COVID-19-19 year” (2020 and 2021). The range of years that the results are based on are also reported per each site. The symbol ↑ indicates a significant upward trend, ↓ identifies a significant downward trend, and = indicates a stable trend over time. Significance is calculated at  $p < 0.05$ .

Site name	Year-round All years	Year-round no 2020/2021	Peak seasons All years	Peak seasons no 2020/2021	Off-peak seasons All years	Off-peak seasons no 2020/2021	Year range
Ash Ranges	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑	=	Mar 2017- Jun 2021
Barossa	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	Feb 2017 – Jun 2021
Bisley	↑	=	↑	=	↑	=	Mar 2017- Jun 2021
Brentmoor	↑	=	↑	=	↑	=	Feb 2017 – Jun 2021
Brentmoor Heath	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	Jan 2016 – Jun 2021
Broadmoor Bottom	↑	=	↑	↓	↑	=	Feb 2016 – Jun 2021
Bullswater Common	↑	↑	↑	=	↑	↑	Jan 2016 – Jun 2021
Chobham Common	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑	↓	Jan 2016 – Jun 2021
Crowthorne	=	↑	↓	=	=	↑	Jan 2016 – Mar 2021
Forest of Eversley	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	Mar 2017- Jun 2021
Heath Warren Wood	↑	↑	↑	=	↑	↑	Jan 2016 – Jun 2021
Horsell Common	=	↑	↑	↑	=	↑	Jan 2016 – Jun 2021
Lightwater Country Park	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	Jan 2016 – Jun 2021

Ockham Common	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	Jan 2016 – Jun 2021
Whitmoor Common	↑	↑	↑	=	↑	↑	Jan 2016 – Jun 2021
Wildmoor Heath	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	Jan 2016 – Jun 2021
Yateley Common	↑	=	↑	=	↑	=	May 2017- Jun 2021
<b>Total ↑</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>	
<b>Total ↓</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>Total =</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	

6.4 Data provided by Local Authorities on the number of passes at SANGS were modelled to produce trends for eight sites (Table 2).

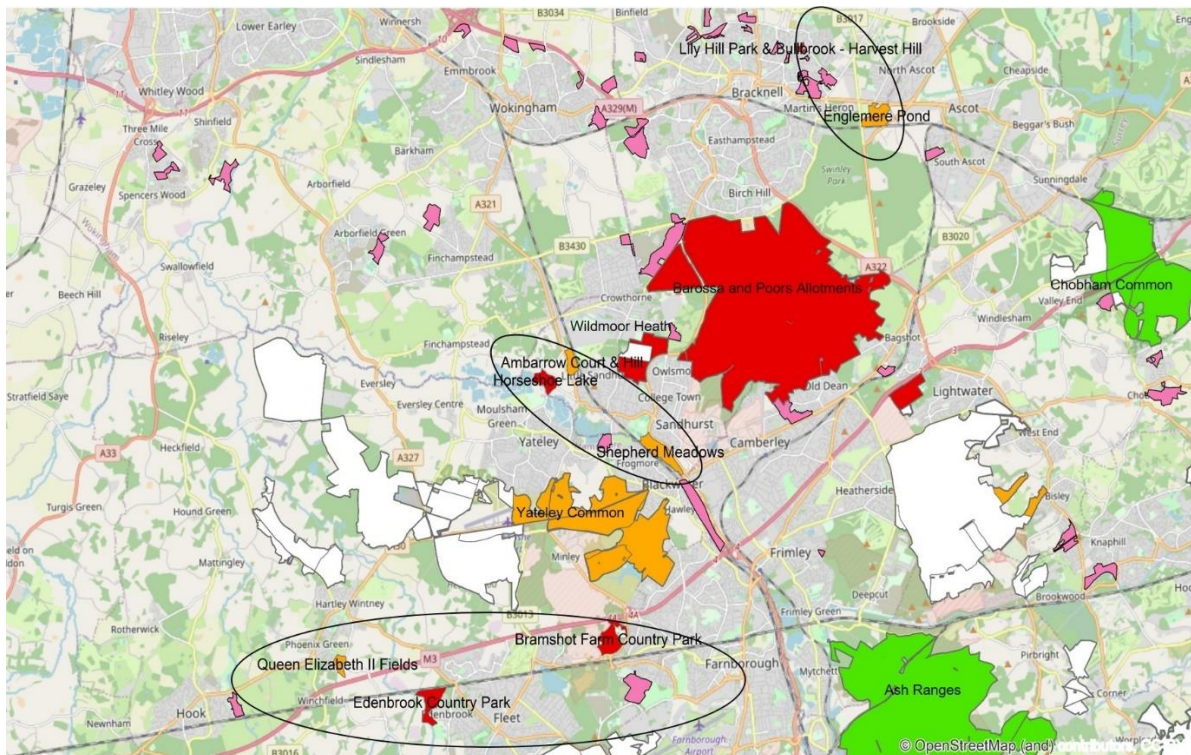
6.5 Most SANGS sites had a stable or increasing number of visitors (Table 2), with only minor differences when the peak season was considered. There were not enough data in most cases to calculate a trend excluding the COVID-19 years (2020 and 2021).

6.6 From the spatial distribution of SPA and SANGS sites in relation to one another, and to their visitor trend (Figure 8), two key points emerged: 1) the limited geographic spread of the SANGS we have currently data for, and the patchiness of their distribution in relation to SPA make drawing conclusions about the relationship between SPA and SANGS trends not possible; and 2) the number of both SPA and SANGS sites for which data are not available or are insufficient should be addressed to draw meaningful conclusions.

**Table 3.** Summary of the trends of people counter passes for eight. Data for the whole year, peak-season only (March to August), and off-peak seasons only (September to February, excluding 2021 even when data were available due to incompleteness of the year at the time of the analyses) are presented. The year range for each site considered in the analyses is also reported. The symbol ↑ indicates a significant upward trend, and = indicates a stable trend over time; NA indicated that not enough data were available. Significance is calculated at  $p < 0.05$ .

Site name	Year-round	Peak seasons	Off-peak seasons	Year range considered
Ambarrow_court	=	=	=	2017-2020
Bramshot	↑	↑	=	2018-2021
Edenbrook	↑	=	NA	2019-2021
Englemere_pond	=	=	=	2017-2020
Horseshoe lake	↑	↑	↑	2014-2020
Lily hill	↑	↑	↑	2014-2020

QEII fields	=	=	=	2017-2021
Shepherd meadows	=	=	=	2016-2020
<b>Total ↑</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	
<b>Total ↓=</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	
<b>Total =</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	



**Fig 8.** SPA sites around SANGS areas (circled) for which visitor trends have been produced (see Table 2). The trend in number of visitors is colour-coded green (decreasing), orange (stable), or red (increasing). White and pink areas indicate SPA and SANGS sites, respectively, for which no trend could be computed.

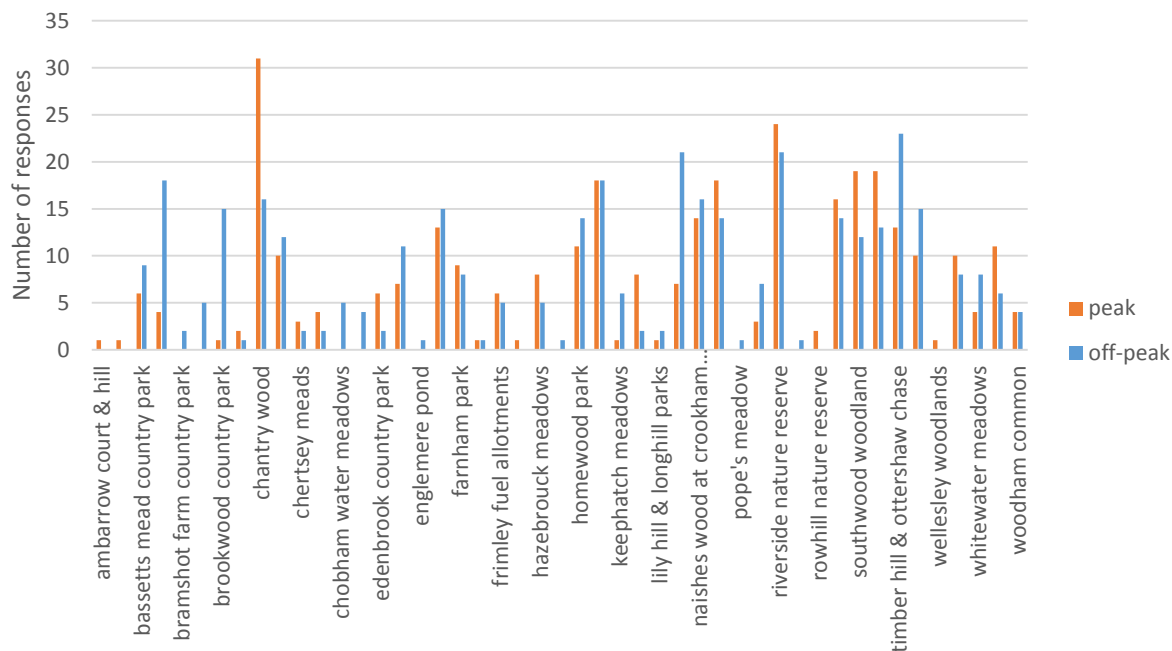
6.7 In summary, the number of visitor passes in most SPA sites were stable or decreasing pre-*COVID-19* pandemic, especially during the peak season when disturbance to nesting birds had the potential to be high. The influx of people to the SPA in 2020 and 2021 was likely behind the overall increase in trend reported here. There is evidence that use of SANGS is increasing or at least stable, although data from more sites would strengthen this conclusion.

**Winter 2020/2021 to Autumn 2021 Remote Visitor Surveys on SANGS**

6.8 In December 2020 we started a remote SANGS survey using QR codes to meet Government *COVID-19* restrictions, and up to the beginning of November we had received 694 replies to the survey. A visitor could take part in the survey more than once.

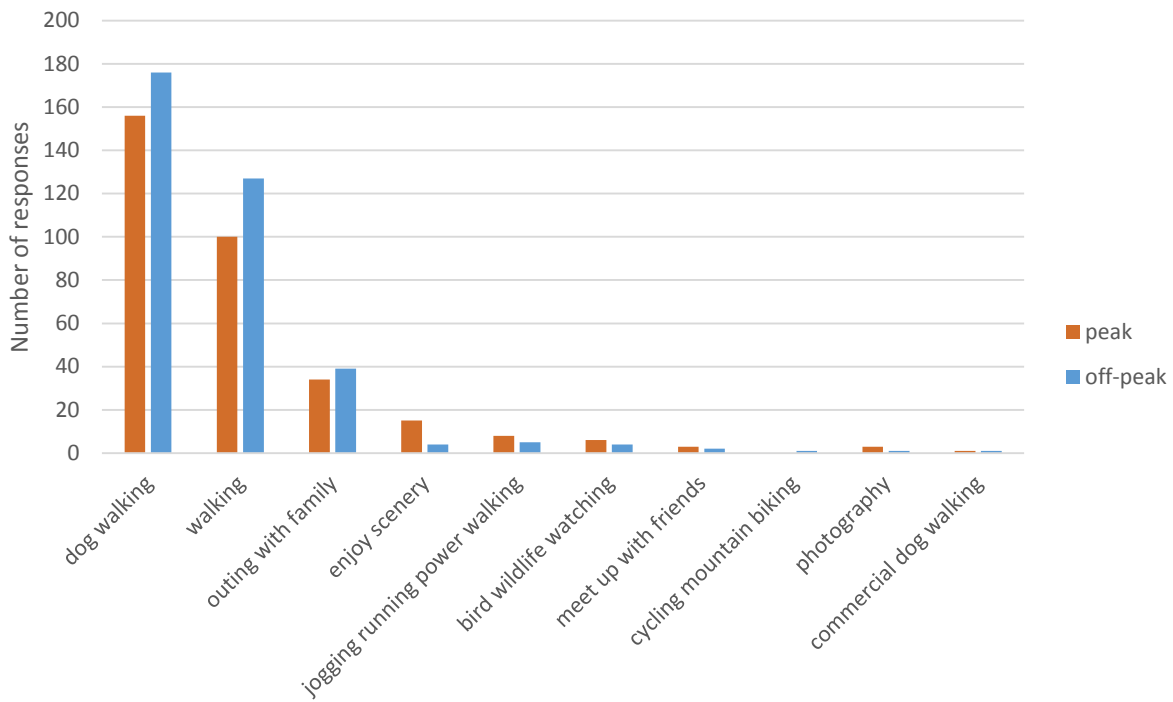


- 6.9 In the peak season (March to August 2021) we received 328 replies. The most visited SANGS was Chantry Wood (31 entries), followed by Riverside NR (24), closely followed by Southwood Woodland (19), St Ann's Hill (19), Horseshoe Lake (18), and Southwood CP (16). A summary of the coverage of each site is illustrated in Figure 3.
- 6.10 In the off-peak season (December 2020 to February 2021 and September-October 2021) we received 366 replies. The most visited site was Timber Hill & Ottershaw Chase (23), followed by Riverside NR (21), May's Farm Meadows (21), Bisley Common (18), Horseshoe Lake (18), Chantry Wood (16), and Naishes Wood (16). It appears that usage of SANGS in the off-peak season was more constant across sites compared to the peak season, where a few SANGS had been favoured over others. The summary of the coverage of each site is illustrated in Figure 9.



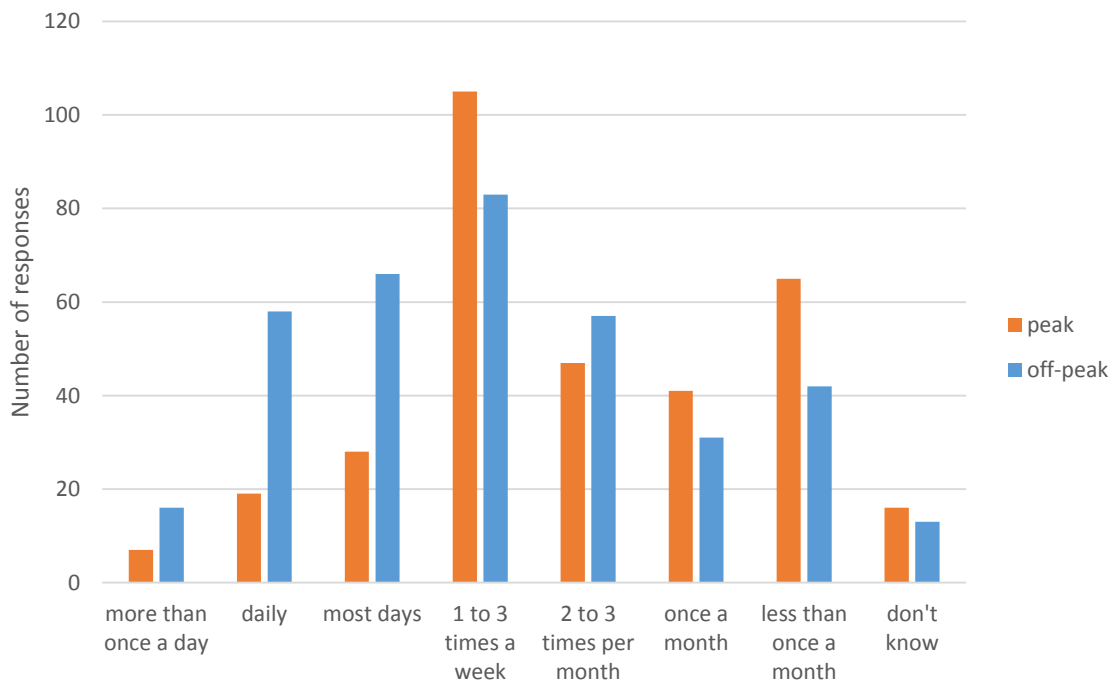
**Fig. 9.** Summary of the frequency per site of the responses to the QR-based SANGS survey during the peak season (March to August 2021) (red) and the off-peak season (December 2020 to February 2021 and September-October 2021) (blue).

- 6.11 Results from the survey showed no difference in the main reason for visiting SANGS between the peak and off-peak seasons (Figure 10), with dog-walking (156 peak and 176 off-peak), walking (100 peak and 127 off-peak) and outing with the family (34 peak and 39 off-peak) being the top three reasons for visiting a SANGS.



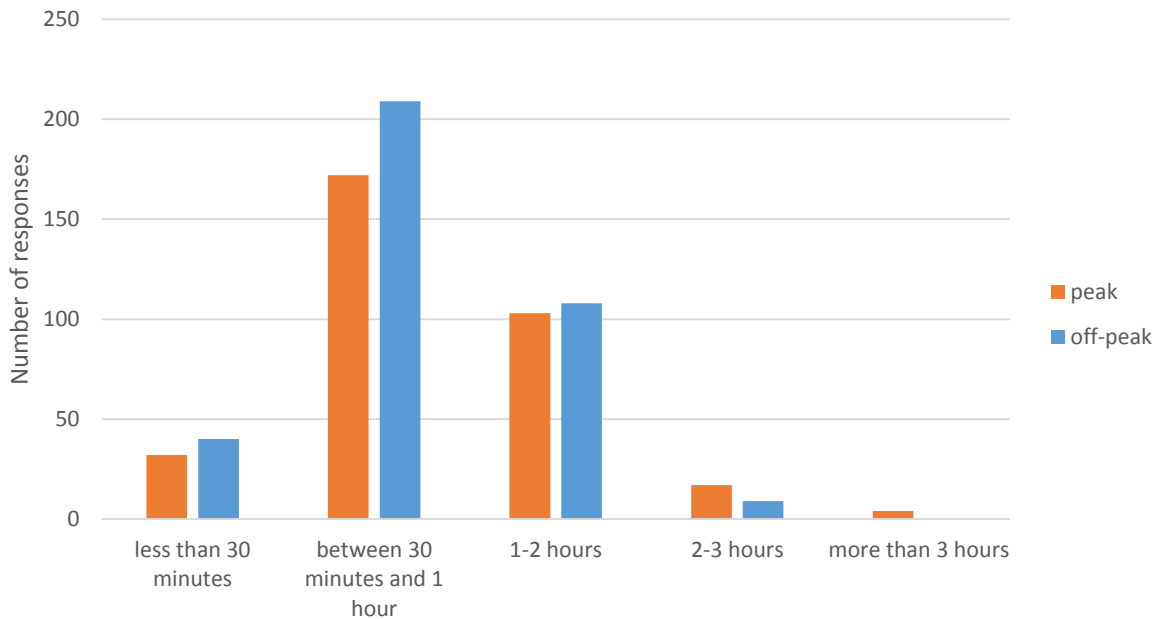
**Fig. 10.** Summary of the frequency of the main activities undertaken by visitors to the TBH SANGS during the peak season (March to August 2021) (red) and the off-peak season (December 2020 to February 2021 and September-October 2021) (blue).

6.13. During both the peak and off-peak season the majority of responses indicated that a SANGS was visited 1-3 times a week. However, during the off-peak season people frequented SANGS more regularly than in the peak season (Figure 11).



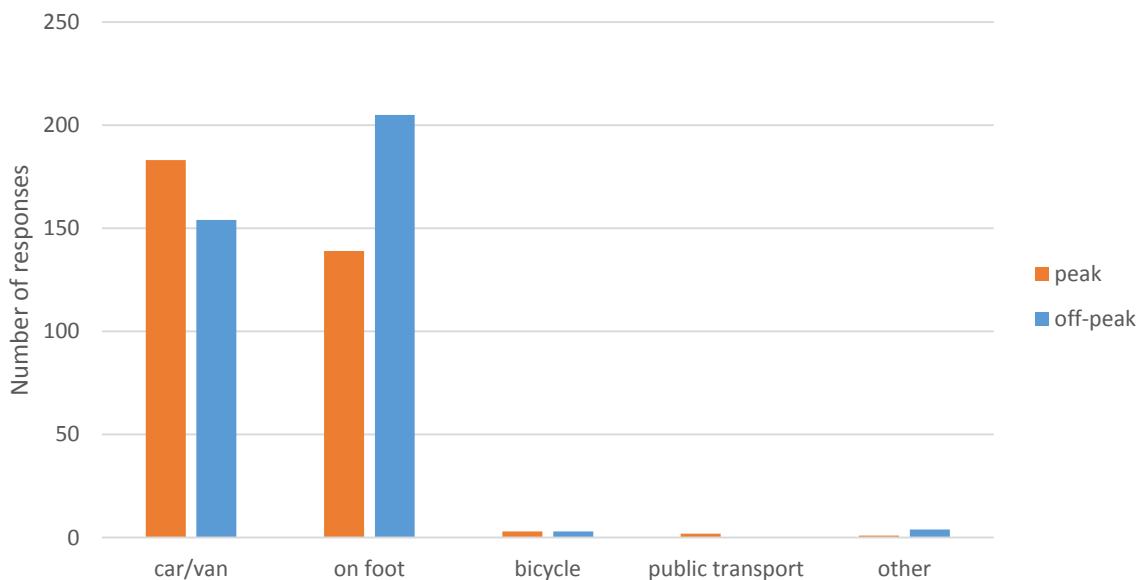
**Fig.11.** Summary of the frequency of visits to the TBH SANGS during the peak season (March to August 2021) (red) and the off-peak season (December 2020 to February 2021 and September-October 2021) (blue).

6.14. Data also showed that most visits lasted from 30 mins to an hour during both the peak and off-peak seasons, followed by 1-2 hours, less than 30 mins, and finally over two hours. No apparent differences were present between the peak and off-peak season (Figure 12).



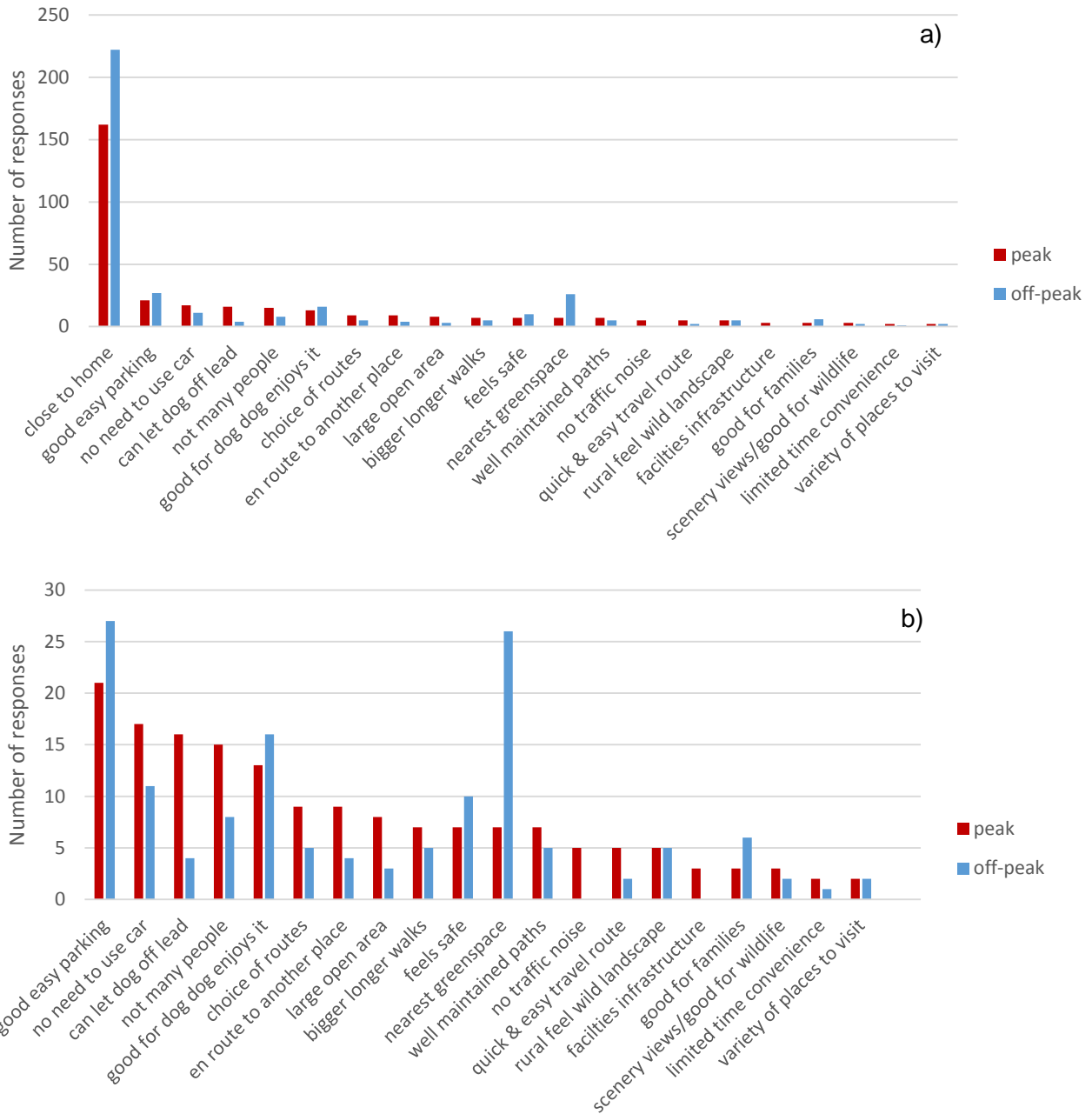
**Fig. 12.** Summary of the length of visits to the TBH SANGS during the peak season (March to August 2021) (red) and the off-peak season (December 2020 to February 2021 and September-October 2021) (blue).

6.15. The main mode of transport to a SANGS was on foot during the off-peak season, and by vehicle during the peak season (Figure 13).



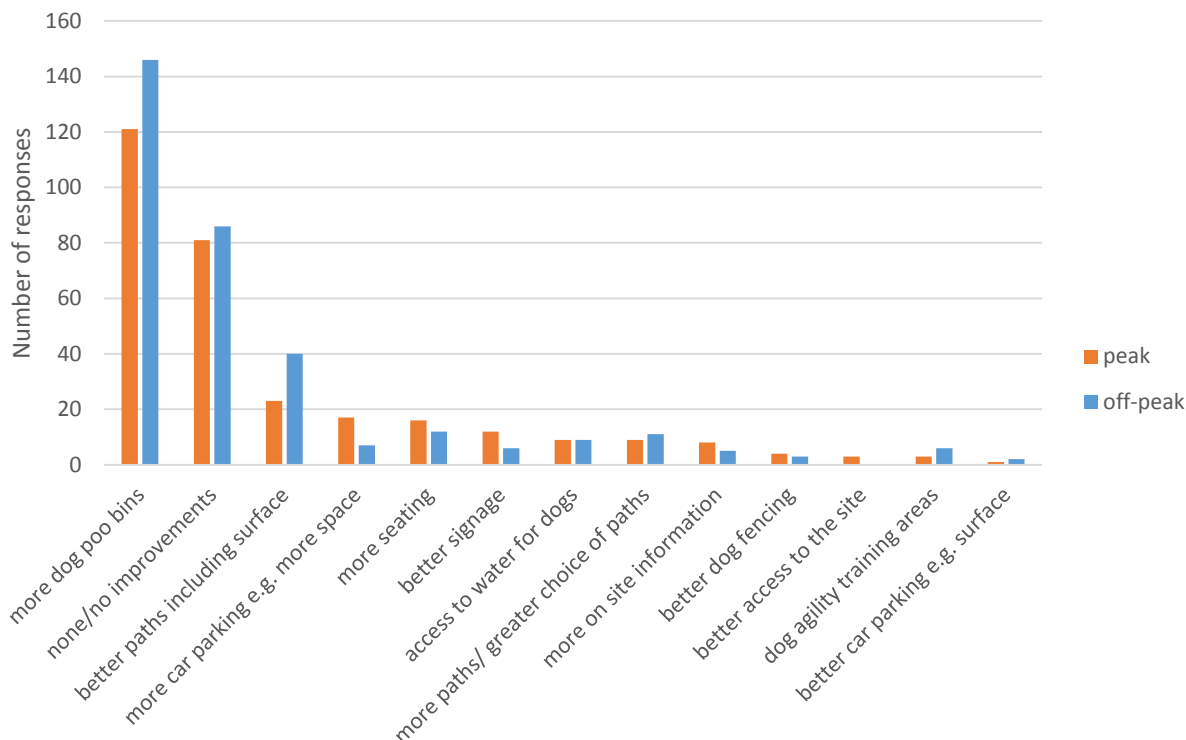
**Fig. 13.** Main mode of transport to visit a SANGS during the peak season (March to August 2021) (red) and the off-peak season (December 2020 to February 2021 and September-October 2021) (blue).

6.16. When asked to list the main aspects of the SANGS which particularly attracted the visitor to the site, most responses mentioned proximity to home as a key reason for visiting (Figure 14a). During the peak season, the other main reasons were related to transportation, in particular the lack of need to use a car to access a site and good car-parking when vehicles were used, but also ease to excise the dog, especially off lead (Figure 14b). During the off-peak season, the second most-important characteristic related to car-parking facilities, but also to convenience of access, followed by the value of the site as a dog-walking space (Figure 14b).



**Fig.14.** Summary of the frequency with which characteristics of a SANGS were listed as important aspects by visitors during the peak season (March to August 2021) (red) and the off-peak season (December 2020 to February 2021 and September-October 2021) (blue). (a) the full range of characteristics; (b) focus on the characteristics other than proximity to home.

6.17. Visitors were also given the chance to tell us what aspects of a SANGS needed improving: the most frequent suggestion was more bins for poo bags, but also actions related to paths. Positively, approximately 25% of respondents in either season suggested no improvements were needed (Figure 15).



**Fig. 15.** Summary of the frequency each improvement was suggested by visitors to the TBH SANGS during the peak season (March to August 2021) (red) and the off-peak season (December 2020 to February 2021 and September-October 2021) (blue). (a) the full range of characteristics; (b) focus on the characteristics other than proximity to home.

6.18. In summary, usage of specific SANGS varied between the peak and off-peak season, but the main two reasons for visiting (dog-walking and walking) remained the same all year round. During the off-peak season visits to SANGS occurred more often than in the peak season, but most people stayed on site for 30 minutes to one hour regardless of the time of the year. Interestingly, between September and February people walked to a SANGS more than they travelled by vehicle, perhaps linked to the fact that proximity to home and being the closest greenspace were the top two reasons for choosing the site in the off-peak season. Between March and August, the attraction to a SANGS was closely linked to its attractiveness for dog-walking, as well as proximity and car-parking facilities.

6.19. The survey will continue in parallel with the traditional in-person surveys carried out by wardens, with the view to compare the two.

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## **7. Other news**

7.1. The team continue to work incredibly hard and very effectively despite the challenges we all face as a result of the global pandemic.

7.2. The challenges of recruiting, inducting and team building were met well by all involved and have set a template for our future recruitment.

7.3. It has not been possible to separate out the impact of *COVID-19* and its variants from the body of this report, rather it forms an integral part.

7.4. The office at Heathland House is open again and available for the teams use. We continue to work remotely and meet outdoors where possible.

## **8. Looking ahead**

8.1. With your support we will recruit to fill the up coming year-round warden vacancies and will report on this for the next meeting.

8.2. We will continue with our core message of asking heathland visitors to stick to main paths and keep dogs out of vegetation.

8.3. We will continue to build on our 'Be Wildfire Aware' messaging and build our relationship with Surrey Fire & Rescue Service's Wildfire and Rural Partnership.

8.4. We will continue to update 'Greenspace on your doorstep' with new SANGs opening and continue to promote these through wardening, social media and the Heathland Hounds website.

8.5. We will be continuing to build a range of educational activities that can be used by a teacher to introduce heathland into further subject areas with the aim of encouraging them to embed heathland into their curriculum, rather than heathland making a one-off appearance in the students' lives and then disappearing.

8.6. We will be looking at how best to supplement the data sets we have with additional data and will consider benefits of installing additional people counters on the SPA and report on this for the next meeting.

8.7. We consider new residents within the buffer zone to a key audience. We continue to plan a program to deliver our message to people as they move in.

<b>Committee/Panel:</b>	Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board
<b>Date:</b>	18 <sup>th</sup> November 2021
<b>Title:</b>	Thames Basin Heaths Financial Statement
<b>Report From:</b>	Administrative Body

**Contact name:** Jenny Wadham, Principal Accountant, Hampshire County Council

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### Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to present an update to the Joint Strategic Partnership Board (JSPB) on the financial position of the Thames Basin Heaths Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM).
2. The report includes the projected financial position for the three years to 31st March 2024.

### Recommendations

3. That the actual financial position for the year ended 31 March 2021, as shown in Appendix 1 and previously approved by the Board, is noted.
4. That the projected financial position for the three financial years to 31st March 2024 is noted.
5. That the actual cash balance held within the Endowment Fund as at 31st March 2021 of £4.768m, with a £3.2m investment pending, and the projected balance of £8.722m before any further investment by 31st March 2024 is noted.

### Executive Summary

6. As at 31st March 2021 the balance in the Endowment Fund was £14.869m, of which £10.101m was held in investments, £730,000 was dividend income to be reinvested, with the remaining £4.038m arising from tariff income and bank interest held as a cash balance by the Administrative Body. Of the total £4.768m held as cash, £3.2m had previously been approved for investment by the Board, with that investment pending completion.

7. As at 29<sup>th</sup> October, £537,071 has actually been received in tariff income for the 2021/22 financial year, and it is projected that a further £2.566m will be received. Dividend income of £505,000 is also projected. After expenditure, this would allow a total of £3.126m to be added to the Endowment Fund in 2021/22 from tariff and dividend income, giving an anticipated total of £4.693m held as a cash balance and available to be invested.
8. Expenditure for the 2021/22 financial year is projected at £482,000, an underspend of £83,000, due to Natural England staffing vacancies.
9. Based on current projections of income and expenditure, the balance on the Endowment Fund would increase to £22.023m by 31st March 2024, of which £8.722m is projected to be held as a cash balance by the Administrative Body.
10. As per the current investment strategy, in addition to any balance held within the Endowment Fund, the balance on the Maintenance Fund will be maintained at £1.5m, with any balances above or below that level transferred to or from the Endowment Fund.
11. Based on the tariff income projections provided by the partners, the income from the investments will need to be used to start supplementing the 30% of the tariff income receipts used to fund the annual expenditure from 2022/23 onwards.

### **Projected Financial Position for the Year Ended 31 March 2022**

12. The financial position as at 31st March 2021 as previously approved by the Board is summarised in the table in Appendix 1, and shows net income for the 2020/21 financial year of £1.326m, plus accrued investment income of £310,800. The balances in the Endowment Fund and Maintenance Fund as at 31st March 2021 were £14.869m and £1.5m respectively, as shown in Appendix 5.
13. The Endowment Fund balance included £10.101m held in investments, with the remaining £4.768m held as a cash balance by the Administrative Body (including £3.2m pending investment agreed by the Board at the November 2020 meeting).
14. A further £1.5m was held in the Maintenance Fund at 31st March 2021, to pay for project expenditure.
15. The projected financial position for the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 is shown in Appendix 2, with a more detailed analysis of the projected income for the year shown in Appendix 3.



16. Projected tariff income and bank interest receivable by the Administrative Body for the 2021/22 totals £3.103m. This income is split between the Endowment and Maintenance Funds on a 70%:30% basis, in accordance with the SAMM agreement (section 3.2).
17. In addition, a total of £505,000 is projected as dividend income for the current financial year on the investment held.
18. Costs of £482,000 are projected for the 2021/22 financial year, an £83,000 underspend against the budgeted £565,000 due to Natural England staff vacancies.
19. The projected income and expenditure for the financial year would allow for a net contribution to the Endowment Fund of £3.126m, including £448,892 from the 30% allocation of tariff income to the Maintenance Fund to preserve the balance in that fund at £1.5m.

### **Projected Financial Position for the 2022/23 to 2023/24 Financial Years**

20. A summary of the projected financial position for the two years to 31st March 2024 is shown in Appendix 4.
21. These projections of income and expenditure are used to inform the financial modelling on future cash flows and provide an indication of the rate of return that would be required to fund the SAMM activity on an in-perpetuity basis, to assist the Board in making decisions on the potential investments. A summary of this financial modelling is included within the Investment Working Group update considered later on the agenda.
22. The original SAMM business plan and tariff income calculations considered that a total of approximately £30m in tariff income would be needed (over an assumed period of 17 years in which developments would be built) in order to generate a capital sum that would be sufficient to generate an income that would fund the anticipated annual expenditure in perpetuity.
23. To date, since the commencement in April 2011 £19.502m has been received. Based on information provided by each of the partners, it is projected that a further £2.566m tariff income will be received in the remainder of the 2021/22 financial year, with further projected tariff income for the 2022/23 and 2023/24 financial years of £1.822m and £2.031m respectively, taking the projected total income to March 2024 to £25.921m.
24. Current projections for future years would potentially increase the total income receivable by a further £6.540m to £32.461m by the end of 2028/29, with no further tariff income

receipts expected after that date. However, it should be noted that as the timescale of the projections increases, the certainty decreases.

25. The SAMM business plan also allowed for expenditure of approximately £500,000 per annum on an ongoing basis, increasing with inflation each year. Actual ongoing expenditure (with inflation) is expected to be £482,000 for 2021/22, rising to £583,000 by 2023/24, based on current approved staffing and activity levels.
26. In previous years, actual annual expenditure has not reached these levels, primarily because fewer wardens have been recruited than initially planned. The project is forecast in the future at full approved staffing levels of five full time and seven seasonal wardens, a communication officer, a data analyst, an education officer, a project manager and a team leader. It is not expected to reach this level in 2021/22.
27. Based on the current projections of income and expenditure, it is expected that a further £3.126m will be added to the Endowment Fund in the 2021/22 financial year. This will give a total of £4.693m held as a cash balance available to be invested.
28. Over the next three financial years the Endowment Fund held as a cash balance including estimated dividends for reinvestment is expected to increase to £8.722m by March 2024, as shown in Appendix 5. This is on the assumption that the balance within the Maintenance Fund will be maintained at £1.5m.

## **Investment of the cash balance held in the Endowment Fund**

29. Tariff income is collected by LPAs and passed to the Administrative Body. This tariff income is used to fund current project expenditure (the Maintenance Fund) and to accumulate sufficient balances to fund future project expenditure and the cost of long term maintenance and protection of the SPA (the Endowment Fund).
30. Under the terms of the SAMM agreement (section 5.3) the JSPB is given responsibility to review the value and performance of the Endowment Fund on a regular basis and provide direction as to when, how and from whom the services of an Independent Financial Advisor are to be procured, with the agreement envisaging that the management of the balance in the Endowment Fund would be undertaken by an Independent Financial Advisor, to maximise the return achieved within the investment guidelines set by the JSPB.
31. Under the direction of the JSPB, Arlingclose were appointed as the Independent Financial Advisors from 1st December 2018 on a rolling annual contract, and initial investments

totalling £6.0m were made. In November 2020, the Board approved further investments of £7.4m. The performance of these investments is considered in the presentation by Arlingclose, elsewhere on the agenda.

32. Cash fund balances are currently held by the Administrative Body, receiving interest at an assumed rate of 0.1%. Under the terms of the SAMM agreement, the Administrative Body is required to pay interest at not less than 0.25% below the Bank of England base rate, with that base rate currently standing at 0.1% since 19<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

## **Conclusions**

33. The net tariff income, bank interest and dividend income receivable by the Administrative Body on behalf of the JSPB for the year ending 31 March 2022 is projected to total £3.608m, and this remains broadly in line with the original SAMM business plan.
34. The cash balance held within the Endowment Fund (including dividends received) was £1.568m (after factoring in the pending £3.2m investment) at 31 March 2021, and is projected to increase to £4.693m by 31 March 2022.
35. The value of the investments held and consideration of the investments to ensure the financial sustainability of the partnership in perpetuity are considered elsewhere on the agenda.

## Appendix 1 - Financial Summary to 31 March 2021

<b>Income</b>	<b>Cumulative to 2018/19 £</b>	<b>2019/20 £</b>	<b>2020/21 £</b>	<b>Total £</b>
Bracknell Forest BC	2,573,700	328,844	335,981	3,238,525
Elmbridge BC	397,133	85,612	138,133	620,878
Guildford BC	1,259,626	841,694	194,857	2,296,177
Hart BC	2,677,055	0	192,285	2,869,340
Runnymede BC	443,255	191,597	11,340	646,192
Rushmoor BC	1,010,716	490,386	259,076	1,760,178
Surrey Heath BC	1,271,529	43,632	250,973	1,566,134
Waverley BC	372,025	204,231	33,243	609,499
Windsor & Maidenhead RB	166,568	0	0	166,568
Woking BC	1,213,747	352,303	152,182	1,718,232
Wokingham BC	2,457,574	649,310	197,975	3,304,859
Interest	118,036	42,419	7,807	168,262
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>13,960,964</b>	<b>3,230,028</b>	<b>1,773,852</b>	<b>18,964,844</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>				
Project costs Natural England	2,073,486	415,206	404,598	2,893,290
Administration fee Natural England	83,888	18,093	12,363	114,344
Financial Administration HCC	155,000	20,400	20,502	195,902
Investment advice	3,333	10,050	10,180	23,563
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>2,315,707</b>	<b>463,749</b>	<b>447,643</b>	<b>3,227,099</b>
<b>Net Income/(Expenditure)</b>	<b>11,645,257</b>	<b>2,766,279</b>	<b>1,326,209</b>	<b>15,737,745</b>
<b>Investment income**</b>	<b>84,744</b>	<b>334,438</b>	<b>310,800</b>	<b>729,982</b>

\*\* Investment income is the projected dividend income receivable on the investments with Arlingclose, which it has been agreed will be reinvested and is therefore shown separately.

## Appendix 2 – Projected Financial Summary for the year to 31 March 2022

2021/22	Budget	Actuals to date	Outturn Forecast	Variance to Budget
Income	£	£	£	£
Bracknell Forest BC	250,000	104,059	250,000	0
Elmbridge BC	86,000	1,803	86,000	0
Guildford BC	174,644	69,996	174,644	0
Hart DC	311,400	92,786	311,400	0
Runnymede BC	163,120	0	163,120	0
Rushmoor BC	402,935	8,768	402,935	0
Surrey Heath BC	120,000	1,576	120,000	0
Waverley BC	176,238	10,287	176,238	0
Windsor & Maidenhead RB	218,095	180,878	218,095	0
Woking BC	248,492	0	248,492	0
Wokingham BC	946,674	66,918	946,674	0
Interest*	5,000	0	5,000	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>3,102,598</b>	<b>537,071</b>	<b>3,102,598</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>				
Natural England Staff Costs	488,681	252,980	405,556	(83,125)
Natural England Project Costs	24,658	0	24,658	0
Natural England Admin Fee	20,775	5,067	20,775	0
HCC Admin Fee	20,605	0	20,605	0
Investment Advice Cost	10,293	6,828	10,293	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>565,012</b>	<b>264,875</b>	<b>481,887</b>	<b>(83,125)</b>
<b>Net Income/(Expenditure)</b>	<b>2,537,586</b>	<b>272,196</b>	<b>2,620,711</b>	<b>83,125</b>
<b>Investment income**</b>	<b>505,056</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>505,056</b>	<b>0</b>

\* Interest on cash balances is the projected interest receivable on balances held by the Administrative Body.

\*\* Investment income is the projected dividend income receivable on the investments with Arlingclose, which it has been agreed will be reinvested and is therefore shown separately.

**Appendix 3 – Detailed Income Summary**

	Previous years	2021/22					Variance
		Budget	Actuals to date	Notified contributions	Forecast for remaining months	Projected total	
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
<b>INCOME</b>							
Bracknell Forest BC	3,238,525	250,000	104,059	0	145,941	250,000	0
Elmbridge BC	620,878	86,000	1,803	(1,803)	86,000	86,000	0
Guildford BC	2,296,177	174,644	69,996	104,648	0	174,644	0
Hart DC	2,869,340	311,400	92,786	0	218,614	311,400	0
Runnymede BC	646,192	163,120	0	0	163,120	163,120	0
Rushmoor BC	1,760,178	402,935	8,768	64,486	329,681	402,935	0
Surrey Heath BC	1,566,134	120,000	1,576	71,678	46,746	120,000	0
Waverley BC	609,499	176,238	10,287	84,335	81,616	176,238	0
Windsor & Maidenhead RB	166,568	218,095	180,878	0	37,217	218,095	0
Woking BC	1,718,232	248,492	0	0	248,492	248,492	0
Wokingham BC	3,304,860	946,674	66,918	31,767	847,989	946,674	0
Interest	168,263	5,000	0	0	5,000	5,000	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>18,964,846</b>	<b>3,102,598</b>	<b>537,071</b>	<b>355,111</b>	<b>2,210,416</b>	<b>3,102,598</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Maintenance Fund</b>	<b>5,860,267</b>	930,779	161,121	106,533	663,125	<b>930,779</b>	
<b>Endowment Fund</b>	<b>13,104,578</b>	2,171,819	375,950	248,578	1,547,291	<b>2,171,819</b>	

**NB** the above income relates to tariff income and interest received on balances held by the Administrative Body only, and excludes dividend income.

## Appendix 4 – Projected Income and Expenditure 2021/22 to 2023/24

	Previous years	Projected 2021/22	Projected 2022/23	Projected 2023/24
Income	£	£	£	£
Bracknell Forest BC	3,238,525	250,000	250,000	250,000
Elmbridge BC	620,878	86,000	86,000	86,000
Guildford BC	2,296,177	174,644	-	-
Hart BC	2,869,340	311,400	-	-
Runnymede BC	646,192	163,120	224,640	657,063
Rushmoor BC	1,760,178	402,935	583,640	451,454
Surrey Heath BC	1,566,134	120,000	120,000	120,000
Waverley BC	609,499	176,238	166,263	73,821
Windsor & Maidenhead RB	166,568	218,095	56,595	56,595
Woking BC	1,718,232	248,492	248,492	248,492
Wokingham BC	3,304,859	946,674	80,005	80,005
Interest on cash balances	168,262	5,000	6,000	8,000
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>18,964,844</b>	<b>3,102,598</b>	<b>1,821,635</b>	<b>2,031,430</b>
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>3,227,099</b>	<b>481,887</b>	<b>572,004</b>	<b>583,029</b>
<b>Net Income/(Expenditure)</b>	<b>15,737,745</b>	<b>2,620,711</b>	<b>1,249,631</b>	<b>1,448,401</b>
<b>Investment Income *</b>				

\* Investment income is the projected dividend income receivable on the investments with Arlingclose, which it has been agreed will be reinvested and is therefore shown separately.

## Appendix 5 – Projected Endowment Fund Balance

	2020/21 Actuals £	2021/22 Projected £	2022/23 Projected £	2023/24 Projected £
Income	1,773,852	3,102,598	1,821,635	2,031,430
70% to Endowment Fund	1,242,993	2,171,819	1,275,145	1,422,001
30% to Maintenance Fund	530,859	930,779	546,491	609,429
Expenditure	447,643	481,887	572,004	583,029
<b>Maintenance Fund:</b>				
Balance brought forward	1,000,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000
Transfer (from)/to income	83,216	448,892	(25,513)	26,400
Transfer (to)/from endowment fund	416,784	(448,892)	25,513	(26,400)
<b>Balance carried forward</b>	<b>1,500,000</b>	<b>1,500,000</b>	<b>1,500,000</b>	<b>1,500,000</b>
<b>Endowment Fund:</b>				
<i>Held as cash balances by Administrative Body</i>				
Balance brought forward	7,411,537	4,767,728	4,693,495	6,608,183
Transfer (from)/to income	1,242,993	2,171,819	1,275,145	1,422,001
Investment	(4,200,000)	(3,200,000)	0	0
Transfer (to)/from maintenance fund	(416,784)	448,892	(25,513)	26,400
<b>Balance carried forward</b>	<b>4,037,746</b>	<b>4,188,439</b>	<b>5,943,127</b>	<b>8,056,584</b>
Dividend income to be reinvested*	310,800	505,056	665,056	665,056
Previous years' dividend income*	419,182	0	0	0
<b>Total balance carried forward</b>	<b>4,767,728</b>	<b>4,693,495</b>	<b>6,608,183</b>	<b>8,721,640</b>
<i>Held in investments</i>				
Balance brought forward	5,694,356	10,101,130	13,301,130	13,301,130
Investment made	4,200,000	3,200,000	0	0
Previous years' dividend income	(419,182)	0	0	0
Profit/(Loss) on investment **	625,955	0	0	0
<b>Balance carried forward</b>	<b>10,101,130</b>	<b>13,301,130</b>	<b>13,301,130</b>	<b>13,301,130</b>
<b>TOTAL ENDOWMENT FUND</b>	<b>14,868,858</b>	<b>17,994,625</b>	<b>19,909,313</b>	<b>22,022,770</b>

\* The investment income to be reinvested has been estimated at 5%

\*\* Based on market value at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 and excluding any exit costs



<b>Decision Maker:</b>	Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board
<b>Date:</b>	18 November 2021
<b>Title:</b>	Update on behalf of the Investment Working Group
<b>Report From:</b>	Administrative Body

**Contact name:** Jenny Wadham

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**Email:** Jennifer.Wadham@hants.gov.uk

### **Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to present an update to the Joint Strategic Partnership Board (JSPB) on the investments made and the investment strategy.

### **Recommendations**

2. That the Investment Strategy as presented by the Investment Working Group in Appendix 1 be noted.
3. That the Responsible Investing policy as presented by the Investment Working Group in Appendix 2 be noted.
4. That the annual timescales for terminating the contract with Arlingclose be noted.
5. That the amounts available for investment as set out in Table 1 and the projected cashflow scenarios set out in Appendix 3 be noted.
6. That the JSPB notes the requirements and practical implications and limitations specifically outlined in paragraphs 41-47, surrounding any investment decisions made by the JSPB before any investments can be made by the Administrative Body on behalf of the JSPB.

### **Executive Summary**

7. The Investment Working Group was set up to review and recommend appropriate policies / actions to the JSPB in respect of matters relevant to managing the investments of the JSPB, with final decisions being taken by the JSPB as set out in the SAMM agreement.

8. Membership of the Investment Working Group is reviewed biannually, with the next review due in November 2022.
9. The current Investment Strategy is presented in Appendix 1, and the current Responsible Investing policy is presented in Appendix 2.
10. Arlingclose were appointed as independent financial advisors to the Board from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2018, on an annual rolling contract basis, at a cost of £10,000 plus VAT per annum subject to an annual RPI inflationary uplift. Should the JSPB wish to terminate the contract, notice must be given to Arlingclose by 1<sup>st</sup> September for the year ahead.
11. A total of £10.2m has been invested to date, with a further £3.2m investment pending. The performance of those investments is considered separately to this report in the presentation by Arlingclose.
12. There is currently a total of £1.568m held as a cash balance in the Endowment Fund and therefore available to be invested. It is projected that this amount will rise to £4.693m by March 2022. Tariff income projections are based upon the predictions made by the planning authority partners.
13. Any investment decisions made by the Board are solely at the risk of the JSPB and the Administrative Body accepts no responsibility for the decisions made. There are a number of requirements that must be met before any investments will actually be made, including that the Board's instructions are clearly documented and in accordance with the independent financial advice, and the Board must ensure that these requirements are fully complied with.
14. There are also practical implications and limitations that must be taken into consideration, arising from the arrangement used to make the investments, as the JSPB is not a separate legal entity. These are set out in more detail later in this report.

### **Investment Working Group**

15. The Investment Working Group was set up to review and recommend appropriate policies / actions to the JSPB in respect of matters relevant to managing the investments of the JSPB, with final decisions being taken by the JSPB as set out in the SAMM agreement.
16. The terms of reference for the Investment Working Group are included within the Investment Strategy (Appendix 1), and provide for a minimum of three Board members plus a representative of the independent financial advisors. Membership is to be reviewed bi-annually, with the next review due by November 2022.

17. The Investment Working Group currently consists of three Board Members as follows:

- Councillor Jonathan Glen, Hampshire County Council
- Councillor David Hilton, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
- Councillor Jan Harwood, Guildford Borough Council

### **Investment Strategy Statement**

18. The current Investment Strategy of the JSPB is shown in Appendix 1.

19. The Investment Strategy is based on the following broad principles:

- Annual expenditure needing to be funded is expected to be in the region of £500,000, rising with inflation.
- A balance of £1.5m (increased from £1m at the November 2020 JSPB) should be kept within the Maintenance fund, equating to approximately three years of expected running costs.
- Keeping risk as low as possible whilst ensuring it is sufficient to meet the expected expenditure – a “sensible risk”.
- A target return of 2-3% above inflation was considered to be appropriate.
- The interest paid on cash balances held by the Administrative Body (currently 0.1%) is unlikely to be sufficient to meet the target return.

20. The Investment Strategy also includes a Responsible Investment Policy, which is included as Appendix 2 to this report.

### **Independent financial advisors – contract management**

21. At the JSPB meeting on 21 September 2018, the JSPB voted to appoint Arlingclose as independent financial advisors to the board. As the JSPB is not a separate legal entity, this appointment was made through the Administrative Body to the JSPB, Hampshire County Council, on the JSPB's behalf through a modification to the existing Treasury Management Advisory Service contract Hampshire County Council holds with Arlingclose.

22. The contract with Arlingclose to provide independent financial advice to the Board began on 1 December 2018, and is renewed annually on a rolling basis until the JSPB gives written notice to the contrary at least 3 months prior to the contract renewal date (i.e. by 1<sup>st</sup> September each year). The charge for the contract was £10,000 plus VAT for the first year, increasing by RPI inflation each year thereafter, using the RPI figure prevailing at the time of the contract anniversary, with all fees billed annually in advance.

23. The JSPB has requested that Arlingclose attend the six monthly JSPB meetings to give an overview of the performance of the investments made and to give advice on future potential investments.

### **Update on investments made**

24. At the meeting of 6 December 2018, the JSPB agreed to the investment of £6m from the Endowment Fund to be made on 17 December 2018 (or practically as soon thereafter as possible), to be split equally between the three funds recommended by Arlingclose:
- CCLA Property Fund - £2m
  - Aegon (was Kames) Diversified Monthly Income Fund - £2m
  - Schroder Income Maximiser Fund - £2m
25. These investments were made on behalf of the JSPB by Hampshire County Council (as the Administrative Body) in December 2018 and February 2019.
26. At the meeting of 19 November 2020, the JSPB agreed that a further investment of £7.4m from the Endowment Fund should be made as soon as practicably possible, to be split between three funds recommended by Arlingclose as follows:
- Ninety One (Previously Investec) Diversified Income - £3.2m
  - CCLA Diversified Income - £3.2m
  - Aegon (was Kames) Diversified Monthly Income Fund - £1m (giving a total of £3m invested in this fund)
27. The Ninety One and Aegon investments were made on behalf of the JSPB by Hampshire County Council (as the Administrative Body) in January 2021. There have been unexpected delays in opening the account for the CCLA Diversified Income fund, and this is still in the process of being set up, with the investment expected to be completed shortly.
28. The current performance of those investments is considered separately on the agenda, in the presentation by Arlingclose.

### **Updated Cash Flow Forecast**

29. The current projected tariff income and Fund balances for the financial years to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 are shown in Table 1 below. Potential financial modelling scenarios to 2090/91 (being 80 years after the commencement of the SAMM agreement) using the current income projections and an inflation rate of 2%, with a 4%, 3% and 2% return on investments are shown in Appendix 3.

30. As has been highlighted previously, there are significant difficulties in making accurate long-term projections, and variations in tariff income, project costs, inflation and investment returns could have a significant impact on the long-term financial viability of the partnership.

<b>Table 1</b>	<b>2020/21 Actuals £'000</b>	<b>2021/22 Projected £'000</b>	<b>2022/23 Projected £'000</b>	<b>2023/24 Projected £'000</b>
Total tariff income	1,766	3,098	1,816	2,023
Interest	8	5	6	8
Dividend income	311	505	665	665
End of year balances held as cash funds by the Administrative Body				
Maintenance Fund	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500
Endowment Fund	1,568*	4,693	6,608	8,722

\*Adjusted by £3.2m to reflect the pending investment, and including dividend income for reinvestment.

31. Tariff income forecasts have been consolidated by the Administrative Body using projections from the respective planning authority partners. It is important that partners ensure their forecasts are as accurate as possible and that the Administrative Body is informed of changes in a timely manner, so that figures can be updated to assist the JSPB in making sound investment decisions.
32. The three scenarios modelled in Appendix 3 show a range of the funds being fully depleted by 2060/61, to continuing in perpetuity, as shown in table 2 below. However, this modelling contains a number of assumptions with a very high level of uncertainty, and is therefore for illustrative purposes only.

<b>Table 2 Scenario</b>	<b>Inflation</b>	<b>Investment return</b>	<b>Funds fully depleted</b>
1 - Further investments made	2%	4%	N/A
2 - Further investments made	2%	3%	2086/87
3 - Further investments made	2%	2%	2072/73

## Investment Decisions

33. Investment decisions are to be made by the JSPB and all risks associated with these investments rest solely with the JSPB. The Administrative Body cannot provide financial advice and therefore accepts no responsibility for the decisions made.
34. The JSPB is not a separate legal entity, and therefore any investments made by the JSPB are made by Hampshire County Council as the administrative body, however all risks associated with these investments rest with the JSPB and not Hampshire County Council. All income from these investments is attributable to the JSPB, as are any gains or losses in the value of the investments.
35. It is important to note that this arrangement for making the investments does have some practical implications and limitations that the Board has previously been made aware of, but are set out again below.
36. Under accounting standard IFRS 9 introduced in 2019, changes in the fair value of investments during any given financial year must be presented as a revenue gain or loss in that financial year. There is currently a statutory override in place for local authorities that means these gains or losses must then be reversed and charged to reserves. For as long as the statutory override is in place, there is therefore a net nil impact of these gains or losses on the revenue budget unless an investment is sold. The statutory override as currently agreed expires at the end of March 2023 and the JSPB needs to acknowledge that if it is not extended or replaced with a similar alternative, any fair value gains or losses will be an in year revenue charge to the JSPB.
37. Despite this, any gains or losses will only ever be realised should the JSPB sell any of its investments, which it will only do after taking advice from Arlingclose, and which it does not plan to do at present as a long term investor.
38. Furthermore, the investments will be subject to Hampshire County Council's Treasury Management Statement limits (the HCC TMSS), which limits both the total amount and types of investment that can be made.
39. The HCC TMSS is approved in February each year for the year ahead and any planned investments made on behalf of the JSPB will need to be included within this. It is therefore recommended that the JSPB determines the expected investment amount for the year ahead at the autumn JSPB meeting each year.

40. Assuming any proposed investments are within the HCC TMSS limits, before any investments will be made by Hampshire County Council on behalf of the JSPB, there are a number of requirements that must be met:
- Any instructions from the JSPB must clearly document the amount to be invested or sold, the investment to be bought or sold, and the date on which the investment to be made (subject to the practical considerations as set out above)
  - The investment instructions must have fully taken account of, and be in accordance with, written financial advice provided to the JSPB, as required by the SAMM agreement.
41. If these requirements are not met, Hampshire County Council will not make the investments on behalf of the JSPB.
42. The JSPB should also be aware that potential investments would be subject to any relevant minimum/maximum limits and timing restrictions of particular funds.

### **Conclusions**

43. The above report sets out the investment update from the Investment Working Group.

## **Appendix 1 – The JSPB Investment Strategy Statement**

### **Thames Basin Heath Joint Strategic Partnership Board Investment Strategy Statement**

In 2009 the Thames Basin Heath Joint Strategic Partnership Board (JSPB) was formed as part of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA – Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Project Memorandum of agreement.

#### **1. Introduction.**

- 1.1. The South East Plan (2009) contained proposals for over 55,000 new residential dwellings around the SPA and includes a specific policy identifying a series of mitigation measures which new developments must provide in order to avoid having an adverse effect on the SPA.
- 1.2. The mitigation to be provided by all new residential dwelling includes the provision of a Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Project. Each Local Authority is required to collect a fixed tariff from developers for each new dwelling and to transfer these as a contribution towards a joint fund for the Project. The contributions will be collected and administered by the Administrative Body.
- 1.3. It was agreed that the first Administrative Body would be Hampshire County Council.
- 1.4. The JSPB was established to provide the vehicle for joint working between local authorities and other organisations responsible for protection of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. The Contribution Fund provides for:
  - 1.4.1. The provision of a Project Coordinator including any recruitment costs, redundancy costs and other related employment costs.
  - 1.4.2. Wardening of the SPA sites
  - 1.4.3. Survey and monitoring of visitor numbers and patterns, planning applications and the three-bird species on the SPA
  - 1.4.4. Interpretation and education services including the provision of an Education and Communications Officer including any recruitment costs, redundancy costs and other related employment costs associated with this role.
  - 1.4.5. Treasury functions and other management fees
  - 1.4.6. A long-term fund to enable the Project to be funded in perpetuity

This document defines the governance arrangements for the long-term fund.

#### **2. Investment Working group**

- 2.1. The Investment Working Group (IWG) will be a Working Group of the JSPB.
- 2.2. The Investment Group will consist of a minimum of three members who are nominated by the JSPB together with the current Independent Financial Advisor (IFA), Arlingclose.



- 2.3. Where a member of the IWG is a Councillor from Hampshire County Council, the member will not be involved in deciding which investments to make.
- 2.4. Any involvement of officers of the Administrative Body will not be in a decision making or advisory capacity and will be purely to support financial administration, as set out in the SAMM Agreement. The Administrative Body cannot provide financial advice.
- 2.5. Membership of the IWG will be reviewed bi-annually.
- 2.6. The Investment Group will meet at least six monthly and, on an ad-hoc basis as required. With a plan of meetings at the beginning of each financial year, taking into account commitments of partners. At least 10 days' notice of any ad-hoc meeting will be given for each meeting. The Working Group may meet "electronically" if required. In such a circumstance it will be made clear by what date members are required to respond.
- 2.7. The JSPB will delegate authority to the IWG, in consultation with the Chairman, to take immediate action to sell an investment should it become apparent that the investment is likely to fail.
- 2.8. The Investment Group will report all recommendations to the JSPB, these will be made by the councillor members having considered the advice of the IFA.
- 2.9. It is proposed that representatives of the IFA should attend the relevant JSPB meetings.
- 2.10. The role of the Group is to review and recommend appropriate policies/actions to the JSPB in respect of the following:
  - 2.10.1. The Strategic Asset Allocation of the Fund.
  - 2.10.2. The investment performance of the Fund.
  - 2.10.3. New investment products/mandates and their suitability for investment by the Fund.
  - 2.10.4. To recommend the appointment or termination of investment mandates.
  - 2.10.5. Such other matters as may be relevant to managing the investments of the Fund.
- 2.11. The final decisions on any proposed investment will be made by the JSPB.

### **3. Investment Objectives**

- 3.1. Investment objective were agreed at the JSPB meeting of the 21<sup>st</sup> September 2018.
- 3.2. Approximately £1 million should be kept in cash in the Maintenance Account, to fund projected expenditure for a period of two years. This sum will be reviewed annually.
- 3.3. The primary aim would be to generate income, rather than capital growth.
- 3.4. The investment should have the lowest risk possible.
- 3.5. A target rate of return on investment should be calculated using the current balance held within the Endowment Account, plus a reasonable

assumption of the future income (as provided by the Partners) to give a target percentage rate of return required to meet projected costs in perpetuity.

3.6. The IFA would be asked to advise on a recommended mix of investment types anticipated to meet that target rate of return at the lowest risk, and specific funds that would meet these requirements.

3.7. The JSPB should acknowledge that the target rate of return will vary, depending on actual income and expenditure, and that the target percentage rate of return may not be achieved. In either of those circumstances it would be necessary to review and revise the investment strategy, and/or to review and revise both the planned expenditure and the SAMM charges accordingly.

#### **4. Investment strategy statement.**

4.1. This is the first such statement published by the JSPB and it will be reviewed regularly by the IWG and at no more than 2 -year intervals. Recommendations will be made to the JSPB who will consider any proposed changes.

##### **A requirement to invest fund money in a wide range of instruments.**

4.1.1. The JSPB policy is that the fund should have a highly diversified investment portfolio spread across different asset classes and different asset managers using differing approaches as appropriate. This ensures that the fund money is invested in a wide range of instruments.

4.1.2. JSPB has established an Investment Working Group which meets bi-annually to review the fund's performance, asset allocation and ability to meet its target return. In addition, the Investment Working Group reviews potential new investment ideas and products and opines whether such ideas are consistent with the investment strategy of the fund and a suitable investment.

4.1.3. The Investment Working Group receives advice from suitably qualified Independent Financial Adviser, Arlingclose.

4.1.4. To achieve sufficient diversification the fund divides assets across 4 broad buckets: equities, bonds, real assets and absolute return strategies. The size of each bucket will vary depending on investment conditions.

4.1.5. Any investment strategy will have associated risks, including primarily that of not meeting the returns required to ensure the long-term ability of the fund to pay for the work of Natural England who are currently the project delivery team. To mitigate these risks the Investment Working Group regularly reviews both the performance and the expected returns from the portfolio to measure whether it has met and is likely to continue to meet its return objective,

#### **5. The JSPB's assessment of the suitability of particular investments and types of investments.**

- 5.1. In assessing the suitability of investments JSPB takes into account a number of factors including prospective return, risks, concentration or diversification of risk as well as geographic and currency exposures.
- 5.2. Performance benchmarks are set for the fund as a whole (target return UK CPI+3%) as well as for individual allocations.
- 5.3. In ensuring the suitability of investments the JSPB pays regard to both the potential returns and risk (including possible interactions with other investments in the portfolio). JSPB will also consider the reputational risk of being connected with or investing in any investment proposal. JSPB expects its managers to consider Environmental, Social and Governance issues when making an investment.
- 5.4. The IFA will advise the IWG on returns and the volatility of those returns from investments on a quarterly basis.

## **6. The JSPB's approach to risk, including the ways in which risks are to be measured and managed**

- 6.1. The JSPB will seek the lowest risk consistent with meeting the investment objectives.
- 6.2. Looking specifically at investment risk JSPB is of the view that diversification of the fund investment portfolio will help to minimise investment risk (volatility of returns). The fund targets a long-term return of UK CPI+3%; this would be sufficient for it to meet its long-term liabilities. In setting the investment strategy, the JSPB decided that this return should be achieved with a low degree of volatility –the fund targets volatility below 10% per annum over the medium term.
- 6.3. As a patient long-term investor, the fund is prepared to ride-out short-term volatility in investment markets and may, if suitable opportunities arise, adapt its investment strategy accordingly.

## **7. The JSPBs policy on how social, environmental or corporate governance considerations are taken into account in the selection, non-selection, retention and realisation of investments.**

The JSPB accepts that there are differing views on how social, environmental and corporate governance considerations should be taken into account and believes that no “one size fits all” policy can possibly be implemented across a diverse portfolio. Nevertheless, JSPB seeks to protect its reputation as an institutional investor and ensures that its investment managers take into account these issues when selecting investments for purchase, retention or sale. JSPB will not place social, environmental or corporate governance restrictions on its managers but relies on them to adhere to best practices in the jurisdictions in which they are based, operate and invest. For clarification a separate Responsible Investing policy has been drafted and forms part of this Investment Strategy Statement.

## Appendix 2 – Responsible Investment Policy

### Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board Responsible Investment Policy

#### 1. Introduction

This policy defines the commitment of the Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board (TBHJSPB) to Responsible Investment (RI). Its purpose is to detail the approach that TBHJSPB aims to follow in integrating Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) issues into its investments.

The policy will be reflected in the Investment Strategy Statement.

#### 2. Responsible Investment Values and Principles

The TBHJSPB values and principles reflect the need to deliver long term investment returns in order to secure long term funding for the Boards Access management and Monitoring programme. The values and principles recognise the importance of assessing sources of risk and opportunity over an extended time horizon and emphasise the importance of diligent stewardship as part of engaged asset ownership.

#### Responsible Investment Values:

<b>Consultative</b>	The RI priorities are a reflection of the views of the members of the Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board, and of evolving best practice within the management of Local Government investments.
<b>Being Proactive</b>	A proactive approach to evaluating ESG risks and opportunities is more likely to result in long term benefits for the TBHJSPB and is aligned with fulfilling our fiduciary duty.
<b>Engagement</b>	<p>The TBHJSPB considers engagement to be a route for exerting a positive influence over investee companies and encouraging responsible corporate behaviour.</p> <p>We will be supportive of targeted dialogue by investment managers in situations where positive changes can be brought about to align governance, environmental and social standards with our investment needs.</p>
<b>Collaborative</b>	The TBHJSPB recognises that working collaboratively can achieve greater influence than acting unilaterally. The TBHJSPB seeks to align itself with likeminded investors through collective vehicles in which it is invested.
<b>Flexible</b>	The TBHJSPB considers that its RI policy and approach should be reviewed regularly in order to continue recognising and reflecting best practice where appropriate and addressing emerging priorities.

## **Responsible Investment Principles**

The RI principles translate our values and commitments into responsible investment practices which can help to deliver a sustainable and sufficient return on our investments. Our RI principles inform the stewardship arrangements we have agreed with advisors Arlingclose as our provider of investment management advice.

A summary of the key Responsible Investment principles:

- Effectively manage financially material ESG risks to support the requirement to protect returns over the long term;
- Apply a robust approach to effective stewardship;
- Seek long term returns from well governed assets;
- Responsible investment is core to our skills, knowledge and advice;
- Seek to innovate, demonstrate and promote RI leadership and ESG best practice;
- Achieve improvements in ESG through effective partnerships that have robust oversight by the investment managers.
- Share ideas and best practice to achieve wider and more valuable RI and ESG outcomes.

The implementation of the RI policy is through the advice of Arlingclose who are responsible for provision of investment advice to TBHJSPB.

### **3. Priorities**

Identifying core priorities for RI is an important part of focussing the attention of Arlingclose on the issues of greatest importance to the TBHJSPB. The issues we have identified as being of primary concern to us as asset owners are:

- Climate change – choosing investments where the managers recognise and manage the risks and opportunities investments face from climate change;
- Corporate Governance – promoting the case for well managed companies which implement fair and just employment practices;

The above mentioned are our main priorities. However, there are a number of other RI issues which are of interest to the TBHJSPB and which will be kept under review, including:

- Where possible, reducing investments in products such as fossil fuels, controversial weapons that have an indiscriminate and disproportional impact on civilian populations, tobacco and alcohol.

### **Climate Change**

The TBHJSPB recognises the imperative to address climate change as a systemic and long-term investment concern, as it poses material risks across all asset classes with the potential for loss of shareholder value including via stranded assets.

The TBHJSPB will endeavour to carry out the following:

- Where Investment managers in which the TBHSPB are invested as recommended by Arlingclose have existing investments in fossil fuel companies, we expect the Investment Manager to ensure that those companies are able to demonstrate planning for the global transition to a low-carbon economy and to meet future emissions reduction targets under the Paris Agreement or other appropriate initiatives. Where they are not, and opportunities for engagement by the Investment Manager and reform of the company or project are not possible or do not exist, then the TBHJSPB will make all reasonable efforts to divest provided that this will result in no material financial detriment, either through increased costs or increased investment risk.
- Where our fiduciary duty allows, we will not consider new active investments in fossil fuel companies directly engaged in the extraction of coal, oil and natural gas as sources of energy which are ignoring the risks of climate change. The TBHJSPB expects Arlingclose to take steps to ensure that the level of exposure to climate change investment risks are evaluated and monitored by Investment Managers. This will be through Arlingclose promoting the use of appropriate investigative and analytical tools by Investment Managers to increase information and regular reporting on performance.

### Corporate Governance

The TBHJSPB will, principally through Arlingclose, promote high standards of employment practices. This will be done through asking Investment Managers to actively seek companies who demonstrate such practices and engaging effectively to encourage these standards within existing investee companies.

### 5. Definitions

<b>Responsible Investment</b>	The integration of environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG) considerations into investment management processes and active ownership practices in the belief that these factors can have an impact on financial performance.
<b>ESG</b>	Environmental, social and governance factors which may impact on company performance and therefore investment returns. Examples include resource management and pollution prevention, climate change impacts, labour management, product integrity, executive compensation, board independence, and audit functions.

<b>Governance</b>	The process and principles by which a company or organisation undertakes its business.
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### Appendix 3 – Projected cash flows

In the following scenarios, inflation has been set at 2% pa, interest on cash balances at 0.5% pa, and capital growth on the investments as 0% with varying rates of dividend returns pa on the investments.

It is assumed that anything over £1m in the Endowment account is invested, and that all dividend income will be reinvested unless needed to fund annual expenditure.

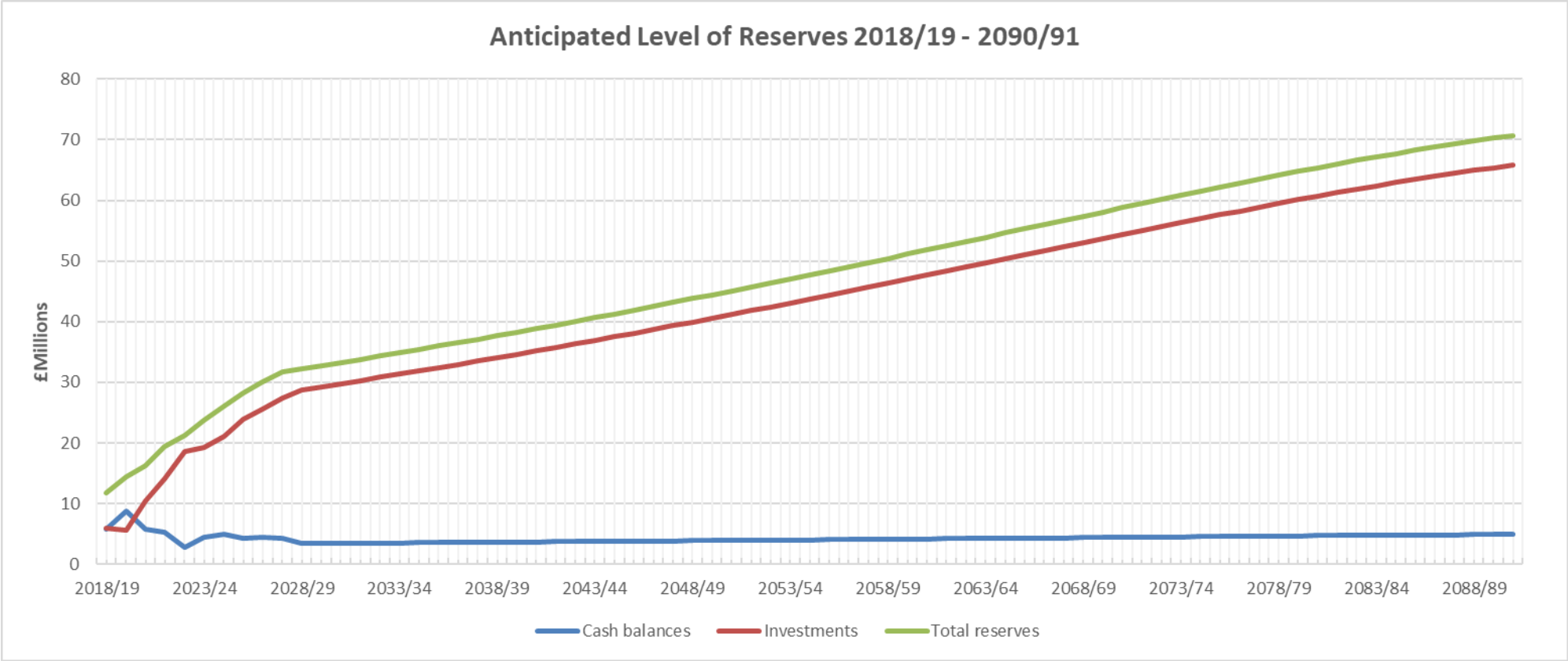
It is also assumed that for as long as possible a £1.5m cash balance is kept in the Maintenance Fund and £1m in the Endowment Fund.

Projected tariff income has been included as per partner planning authority predictions. Expenditure has been included as per 2021/22 forecasts plus inflation for future years.

Return on investments	Year in which:				
	Start drawing from dividend income	Start drawing from the Endowment Fund to maintain the £1.5m balance on the Maintenance Fund	Cash balances drop below £1.5m	Start drawing the capital from the investments to cover expenditure	Money runs out
2%	2022/23	2039/40	2035/36	2039/40	2072/73
3%	2022/23	2040/41	2057/58	2059/60	2086/87
4%	2022/23	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A



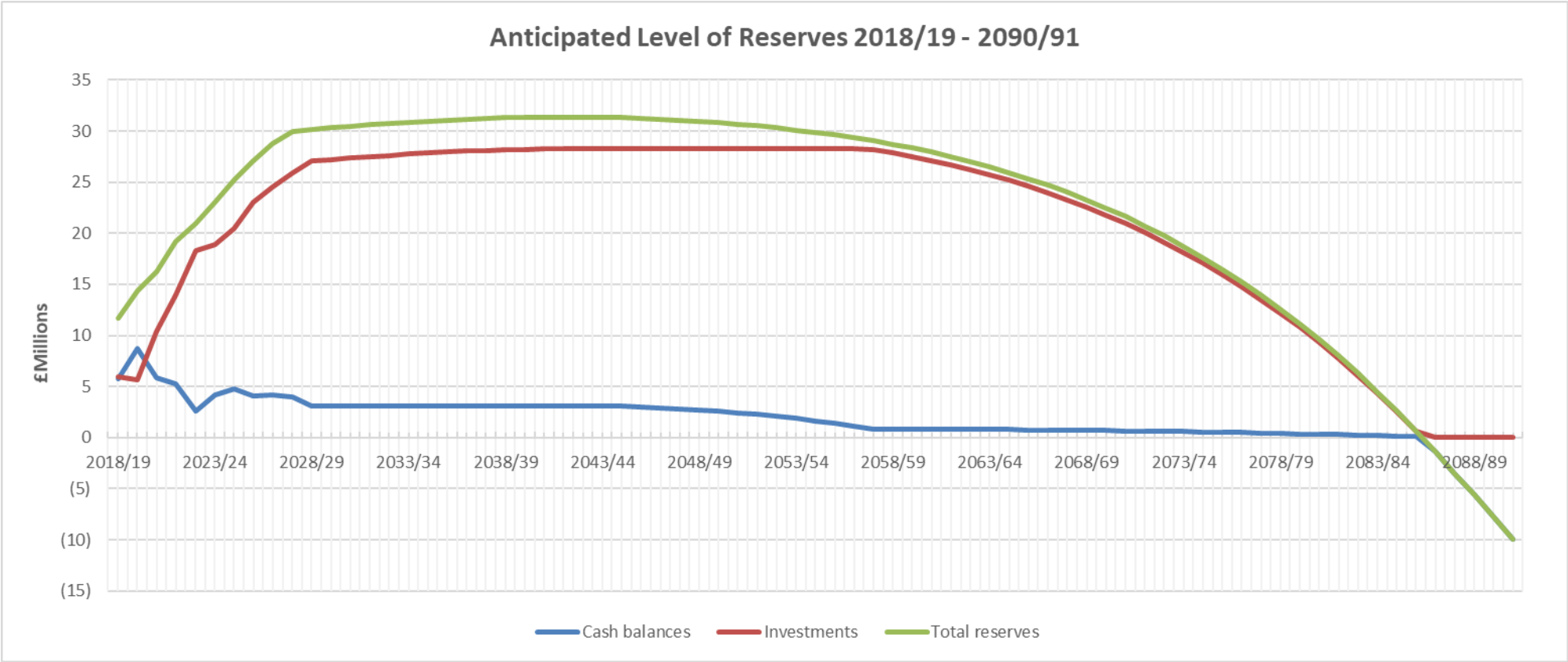
Appendix 3a – Projected cash flow using 4% dividend return, 2% inflation



If inflation were at 3% the money would run out in 2085/86.

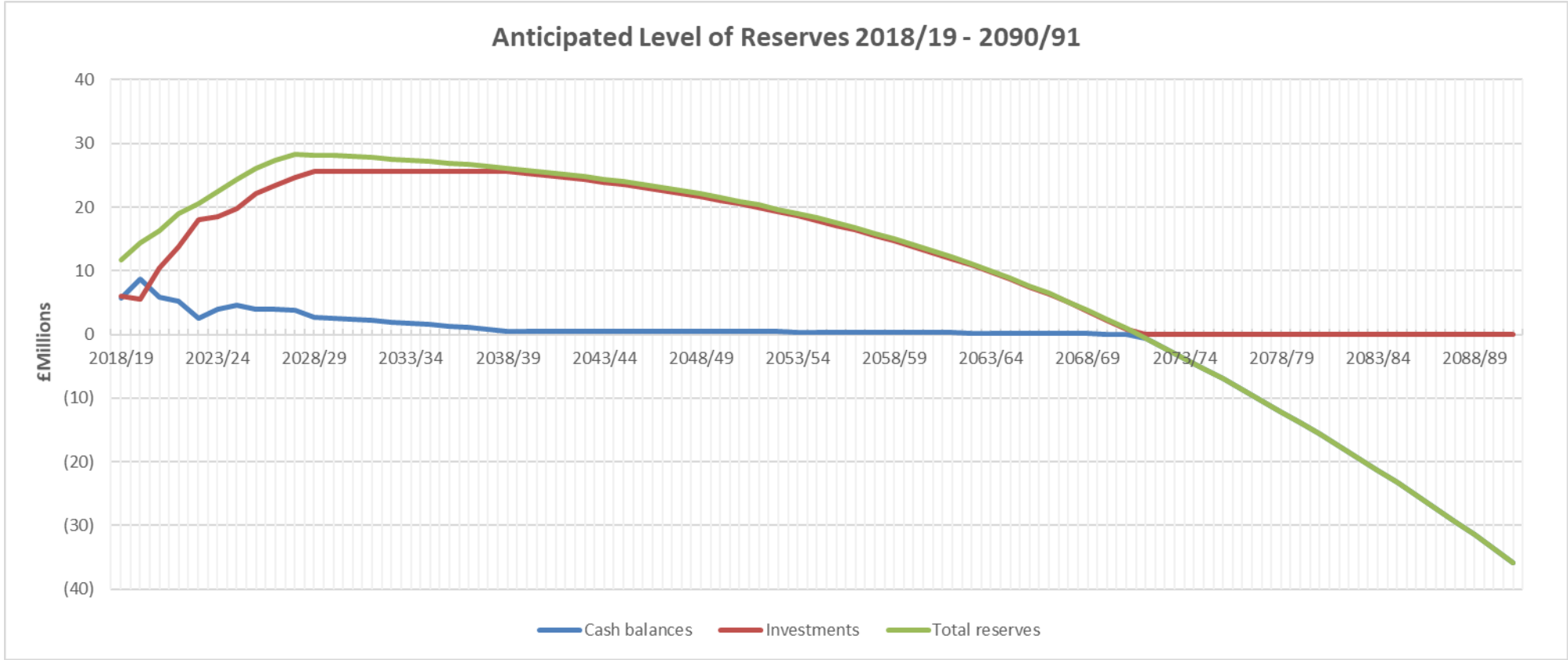
**Appendix 3b – Projected cash flow using 3% dividend return, 2% inflation**

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Money runs out in **2086/87**. If inflation were at **3%** the money would run out in **2071/72**.

**Appendix 3c – Projected cash flow using 2% dividend return, 2% inflation**



Money runs out in **2072/73**. If inflation were at **3%** the money would run out in **2063/64**.

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