

This Report will be made public on 12 January 2020

Report Number **C/20/60**

**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 20 January 2021  
**Status:** Key Decision  
**Responsible Officer:** Katharine Harvey, Chief Economic Development Officer  
**Cabinet Member:** Councillor David Wimble, Cabinet Member for the District Economy

**SUBJECT: Romney Marsh Partnership coordinator post funding**

**SUMMARY:** This report seeks Cabinet agreement to jointly fund the Romney Marsh Partnership coordinator post for three years from 1 April 2021 and to seek the remainder of the funding from the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA)/Magnox Socio-economic Fund.

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Cabinet is asked to agree to this funding contribution as the RMP coordinators post is crucial to the success of the Romney Marsh Partnership, including applications to the NDA/Magnox Socio-economic Fund and to the delivery of projects in this part of the district.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 1. Agree to contribute 50% of the costs for the Romney Marsh Partnership coordinator post for three years from April 2021 which is £30,000 per annum and £90,000 over the three year period.**
- 2. Agree to the submission of an application to the NDA/Magnox Socio-economic Fund for 50% of the cost of the RMP Coordinator post for three years.**
- 3. Agree to the Council continuing to host the RMP coordinator post on behalf of the Romney Marsh Partnership.**

## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The NDA/Magnox Socio-economic Fund is available to the communities in the Romney Marsh area to mitigate the impact of the decommissioning of the Dungeness A Nuclear power station, which commenced in 2006.
- 1.2 Advice on funding applications is provided by Magnox locally and they have been involved in all steps of the process to develop the application associated with this report.
- 1.3 The nature of these funding applications requires FHDC Cabinet approval for submission.

## 2. ROMNEY MARSH PARTNERSHIP (RMP) COORDINATOR

- 2.1 The RMP is an economic development partnership formed in 2012 to mitigate the impacts of decommissioning the Magnox Dungeness nuclear power station. RMP is chaired by Cllr. Patricia Rolfe and current partners include the local authorities of Folkestone & Hythe, Ashford, Rother, Kent and East Sussex, along with representatives from the NDA, Magnox, EDF and the Dungeness Site Stakeholders' Group, the Marsh Academy and Romney Resource Centre, London Ashford Airport, Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, Action with Communities in Rural Kent and the Rye Partnership.
- 2.2 The Council hosts the Romney Marsh Partnership (RMP) coordinator post on the RMP's behalf and the post is based in the Economic Development team, line managed by the Chief Economic Development Officer. In addition to servicing the RMP's meetings, the post holder has had a project coordination and an implementation role, liaising with partners that are project leads for projects set out in the RMP Economic Delivery Plan.
- 2.3 The Romney Marsh Partnership (including the coordinator post) was initially funded for three years from 30<sup>th</sup> November 2013 through contributions from:-
  - Magnox £120,000 (£40,000 per annum over 3 years)
  - Folkestone & Hythe District Council £15,000 (single payment in 2013/14)
  - Ashford Borough Council £5,000 (single payment in 2013/14)
- 2.4 A second successful application was made in 2016 for the post to continue for another three years from January 2017 with agreed funding contributions from:
  - Magnox £60,000 (£20,000 per annum over 3 years)
  - Folkestone & Hythe District Council £30,000 (£10,000 per annum over 3 years)
  - Ashford Borough Council £15,000 (single payment in 2017/18)
  - Rother District Council £7,500 (single payment in 2017/18)
  - East Sussex County Council £7,500 (single payment in 2017/18)
- 2.5 The most recent contract for the RMP coordinator post ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019. However, due to some budget underspend because the post was unfilled for a period of time, CLT agreed to the contract firstly being extended to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 (CLT 19/143) and subsequently to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 (CLT 20/022).
- 2.6 The question of the continuation of the coordinators post for another three year period from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 has been considered by the RMP Board and all partners have indicated a desire for the post to continue and for further funding to be sought. This was underpinned by the NDA's formal support of the role in the recently updated NDA Socio-Economic Impact Strategy 2020 which states "*The main ongoing commitment from Magnox and the NDA is to continue support of the Romney Marsh Partnership, including the funding of a coordinator post.*" It goes on to say:

*“Supporting the Romney Marsh Partnership is the NDA’s main priority at Dungeness A”.*

- 2.7 There are a number of opportunities for the Romney Marsh over the next three years, which increases the importance of the coordinator’s role. This will enable the area to maximise funding opportunities from the Magnox socio-economic fund. Some additional benefits are also set out below.
- 1) **Accelerated/Continuous decommissioning** - Earlier this year the NDA completed its review of its Magnox reactor decommissioning strategy (SO42) which is the way in which nuclear power stations are to be decommissioned. Rather than decommissioning plants entering into a long period of ‘care and maintenance’ with few workers on site, the NDA it is now adopting a site specific approach which will result in some sites having decommissioning being brought forward. Although it had been hoped that Dungeness A would be the first stations for this new process, it was announced during the summer that Trawsfyndd is to be the lead site for this continuous decommissioning. Nevertheless, indications are that a similar approach will be adopted at Dungeness A and this could present opportunities for some of the existing workforce to be retained on site and for new job opportunities for the local workforce, if they have the necessary skills. The RMP, supported by the Coordinator, will be key to bringing partners together to identify projects that will realise such opportunities.
  - 2) **New nuclear opportunities.** Increasing the pace of the decommissioning of Dungeness A could bring forward alternative uses for the site at an earlier stage. This could include the potential for a new nuclear power station (such as for a Small Modular Reactor). The Coordinator could lead on this for the district to bring forward this opportunity.
- 2.8 The most significant reason why the Council should fund this role is that communications with the NDA suggests that there continues to be significant opportunities for Magnox socio-economic funding for the area, in view of the priority of the area for funding. As previously highlighted, the NDA’s local social and economic impact strategy identifies the main ongoing commitment from Magnox and the NDA at Dungeness as being to continue support of the Romney Marsh Partnership, including the funding of a coordinator post.
- 2.9 In addition following a recent review of the funding by the government audit committee, they are looking to fund forward larger projects that will have a more significant positive impact on the local economy. As an identified priority area, this presents a real opportunity for the Romney Marsh to potentially benefit from significant funding. Having a resource through the coordinator to lead on this will be crucial for success.
- 2.10 Although all the existing partners support the continuation of the RMP coordinator’s role in principle, Rother and Ashford districts and East Sussex County Council who previously contributed funding, have indicated that due to financial constraints they can no longer provide this for the next three year period. However, there is a potential opportunity to seek funding towards this post from Kent County Council and this is currently being explored.
- 2.11 To reflect the fact that funding from the local area partners towards the post (if the request to KCC is not successful) will only be provided by Folkestone & Hythe district, it is proposed that the coordinator focused more on the delivery of projects in the Folkestone & Hythe area, than elsewhere in the area. While the coordinator

would continue to liaise and monitor projects delivered by other partners elsewhere in the Marsh, the role in the Folkestone & Hythe area would be to:

- Work with partners to develop projects, including identifying and securing partner contributions
- Lead on writing and submitting project applications to the NDA/Magnox socio-economic fund
- Lead on the implementation and delivery of approved projects

2.12 In view of the more skilled requirements of the new role, it is envisaged that this will be on a par with the senior economic development officer posts currently within the Economic Development team. However, this will be subject to the job description being reviewed by the council's job evaluation panel.

2.13 The implications of a higher grade role envisaged for the RMP coordinator post are that this will increase the required contribution towards the post from both FHDC and the Magnox Socio-economic Fund. However, the benefits are that the higher level skills associated with this role will help to ensure that delivery happens and that opportunities for funding from the Magnox Socio-economic Fund are fully exploited. It will also help to ensure continuity of the post, which has previously had much staff turnover.

2.14 It is therefore recommended that the Council agrees to this additional contribution as:

- (1) There is opportunity for considerable funding from the NDA/Magnox through their Socio-economic fund. However, to be successful it is important to be able to demonstrate partnership working so it is therefore in the council's interest to support the continuance of the RMP and encourage the participation of all the local authorities.
- (2) The coordinator postholder will support the RMP Chair and under the Terms of Reference for the Partnership the Chair is an FHDC Councillor. The current Chair is Cllr Patricia Rolfe.
- (3) The coordinator postholder will focus solely on bringing forward and delivering projects in the Folkestone & Hythe District area of the Romney Marsh, although will report on and monitor other projects that come forward and are led by other partners elsewhere in the Romney Marsh area.

2.15 Consequently, there is a requirement for F&H District Council's contribution towards this post to be £30,000 per annum for three years to 31 March 2024. This is currently unbudgeted but there is scope to fund this resource from ED reserves.

### 3. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

3.1 Risk management issues are as follows:-

Perceived risk	Seriousness	Likelihood	Preventative action
Magnox funding approval is not secured for the continuation of the RMP coordinator post.	High – the ability of the RMP to continue its work would be severely hampered.	Low	The application for funding has been developed with Magnox and has received their verbal support at RMP meetings and NDA/Magnox support is

			explicit in their socio-economic strategies.
FHDC does not agree an increased financial contribution towards the RMP coordinator post	High – the ability to lever funding from the NDA/Magnox Socio-economic fund to deliver projects in the FHDC area of the Romney Marsh will be severely impacted and opportunities potentially lost.	Low	Cabinet agrees to the recommendations in this report

#### 4. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS

##### Legal Officer's Comments (NM)

4.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from the report

##### Finance Officer's Comments (DH)

4.2 The proposed continuation of the Romney Marsh Partnership project for a further 3 years would total approximately £180k. This would be made up from a council contribution of £90k (£30K per year for 3 years) plus the expected £90k income from Magnox which has not been applied for as yet, reassurance needed that this will be agreed by Magnox so the total is not funded wholly by FHDC.

4.3 This post is currently unbudgeted but there are monies available in the ED reserve if required.

##### Communications Officer's Comments (KA)

4.4 There are no direct communications implications arising from this report.

##### HR Officer's Comments (AS)

4.5 If FHDC is increasing the contribution towards the role this will need to be included within the salary budgeting process. In addition, a full new job description will need to be written and evaluated in order to assess the grading and salary of the role.

#### 5. CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Councillors with any questions arising out of this report should contact the following officer prior to the meeting:

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