

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 28 JUNE 2007

ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND

Report by: Claire Gingell, Sustainable Development Fund Officer

Summary:

- 1 This report summarises the progress of the Sustainable Development Fund following its first year of operation, from 1 April 2006 to 31 March 2007.
- 2 During this period the Sustainable Development Fund has supported twenty two projects located across the New Forest National Park addressing a wide range of sustainability issues.
- 3 The Sustainable Development Fund allocated £258,106 to projects, representing 65% of the total budget available between 1 April 2006 and 31 March 2008.
- 4 During this period the Fund has levered in a total of £506,178 match funding.

Recommendation:

To note the progress made by the Fund and the projects it supports in delivering sustainable development within the New Forest National Park.

Resources and Corporate Plan:

£200,000 per annum grant and plus staff resource of one and a third officers.

Corporate Plan Objective SE1 – Promote sustainable development within the National Park as the basis for the social and economic well-being of local communities.

Papers:

NFNPA 188/07	Cover paper
NFNPA 188/07	Annex 1 - Projects Allocated Funding From the Sustainable Development Fund between 1 April 2006 and 31 March 2007
NFNPA 188/07	Annex 2 - Sustainable Development Fund Projects' Delivery Towards Objectives
NFNPA 188/07	Annex 3 – Details of Sustainable Development Fund Publicity
NFNPA 129/06	Sustainable Development Fund – Six Month Report

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Sustainable Development Fund (the Fund) has been in operation since April 2006 and will continue until March 2008, with a budget of £200,000 per annum.
- 1.2 To be eligible for the Fund, projects must demonstrate that they will encourage sustainable ways of enjoying and living in the New Forest National Park and further at least one of the National Park purposes.
- 1.3 Defra has set out a number of national priorities for the Fund including involving young people, combating social exclusion and encouraging links between urban groups and those resident in the National Park. In addition, the Fund should give priority to eligible projects that: demonstrate innovation or best practice; are able to lever in contributions from other sources or have little access to alternative public funding; bring organisations together to co-operate in tackling problems or promoting new ideas.
- 1.4 Applications to the Fund are appraised by members of the Fund Panel, which makes decisions on which projects to support.
- 1.5 A paper was submitted to the National Park Authority meeting on 21 September 2006 (NFNPA 129/06) detailing the progress of the Fund in its first six months of operation.

2 Applications

- 2.1 Since the launch of the Fund in November 2005 until March 2007 the Authority has received 112 enquiries from individuals or organisations interested in submitting an application.
- 2.2 Emphasis continues to be placed on providing strong project development to applicants prior to the submission of their application and, in particular to supporting successful applicants in effectively implementing their projects.

- 2.3 In the first year the Panel appraised 28 applications to the Fund. Twenty three projects were approved and five rejected. One project approved by the Panel was later withdrawn by the applicant due to issues with securing match funding.
- 2.4 The projects that the Panel chose not to support were rejected for various reasons including not fully satisfying the Fund criteria, not sufficiently benefiting the National Park and concerns over the viability of business proposals.
- 2.5 The projects supported by the Fund address a wide range of sustainability issues and can be broadly divided into four headings: sustainable energy; children and young people; conserving and understanding the New Forest; and community. Details of the 22 projects allocated funding during this period can be found at **Annex 1**.
- 2.6 The projects supported address many of the Authority's Corporate Plan objectives as well as those set by Defra for the Fund. See **Annex 2** for further details of these objectives and how projects are delivering towards them.
- 2.7 The amount of funding allocated by the Fund to projects is £258,106, representing 65% of the total budget available over the two years.

3 Match funding

- 3.1 The total amount of match funding levered in by the Fund through projects is £506,178 represented by £302,367 as cash, and £203,811 provided by in-kind contributions such as volunteer time or donated materials (£ equivalent). This equates to almost £2 of match funding for every £1 allocated from the Fund.

4 Monitoring and evaluation of projects

- 4.1 Monitoring and evaluation of projects is carried out through a system of regular progress reports with each project monitoring against project specific outcomes.
- 4.2 In addition, each project is required to submit an end of project report which includes monitoring against the following five standard indicators:
 - The number of community groups and local voluntary organisations directly involved in the project.
 - The number of young people (aged 13-24) involved in the project.
 - The number of local businesses involved in the project.
 - The number of project participants, visitors or users.
 - The number of volunteers involved in the project.

- 4.3 Four projects have so far been completed and have submitted end of project reports. These have shown that over 240 people and 11 local businesses have benefited from projects.

5 Publicity

- 5.1 The Fund and the projects supported by it have received a considerable amount of positive publicity, particularly in the local media but also further afield. See **Annex 3** for details.
- 5.2 Two leaflets have been produced by the Authority to publicise the Fund and its progress and the Fund has a number of specific pages on the Authority's website.
- 5.3 All projects are required to recognise the support of the Authority and the Fund in their project publicity.

6 Small Grants Scheme

- 6.1 Following a decision by the Fund Panel a small grants scheme was established in April 2007 as part of the overall Fund to encourage applications for lower levels of funding.
- 6.2 £5,000 has been ring fenced from the overall Fund budget to be allocated in grants of up to £500. A simpler application and monitoring procedure have been set up to reflect the smaller amounts of grant awarded.
- 6.3 If the scheme proves successful it is likely that a further portion of the Fund budget will be made available for this purpose.

7 Progress since 1 April 2007

- 7.1 Since 1 April 2007 a further four projects have been allocated funding from the main Fund and two projects have been supported by the small grants scheme.
- 7.3 The amount allocated is £64,904. This has levered in a further £120,309 match funding (£69,006 as cash and £51,303 as in-kind support).

Recommendation:

To note the progress made by the Fund and the projects it supports in delivering sustainable development within the New Forest National Park.

**Projects Allocated Funding From the Sustainable Development Fund
between 1 April 2006 and 31 March 2007**

1 Sustainable Energy

1.1 Eco-Dormitory at Minstead Study Centre

Total project cost:	£23,885
% project costs from the Fund:	75%
Amount of funding allocated by the Fund:	£17,910

The Fund has supported a number of sustainability and education features as part of the construction of an Eco-Dormitory which is used by school children participating in residential environmental education programmes in the New Forest. Features include solar panels, 'eco-friendly' insulation materials and a specially designed display enabling children to measure their energy use during their stay and the amount generated by the solar panels.

1.2 New Forest Study Centre Rebuild

Total project cost:	£30,200
% project costs from the Fund:	73%
Amount of funding allocated by the Fund:	£22,000

This project will install a biofuel heating system, the wood for which will be obtained by the sustainable management of on-site woodlands, and a rainwater harvesting system as part of the re-build of this environmental education facility.

1.3 Sustainable Energy Study

Total project cost:	£4,511
% project costs from the Fund:	75%
Amount of funding allocated by the Fund:	£3,894

A sustainable energy study is underway at Lyndhurst Community Centre to assess current energy use and investigate the most appropriate sustainable energy technologies for the centre. The study will potentially benefit many other community centres within New Forest villages as a template will be produced enabling centres to address their energy use.

1.4 BioMap New Forest

Total project cost:	£14,530
% project costs from the Fund:	75%
Amount of funding allocated by the Fund:	£10,880

This project will help to develop both demand and supply in the local woodfuel market by holding a range of workshops targeted at land owners focusing on the supply and use of biomass. Advice visits are available for both potential suppliers and potential user of woodfuel.

1.5 Ipley Manor District Heating System

Total project cost:	£70,725
% project costs from the Fund:	30%
Amount of funding allocated by the Fund:	£21,218

This project is to provide heat to five dwellings for space heating and hot water through a district heating system fuelled by a woodchip boiler. The woodchip will be produced on site from timber obtained through the sustainable management of the estate woodlands.

1.6 The Mill at Gordleton Waterwheel Renewal

Total project cost:	£74,578
% project costs from the Fund:	30%
Amount of funding allocated by the Fund:	£22,374

This hydroelectric scheme will re-instate a waterwheel in an old flour mill that is now a small hotel and restaurant, generating electricity for the hotel. The contemporary waterwheel is being developed in partnership with Southampton University.

1.7 New Forest Electric Vehicle Hire

Total project cost:	£181,402
% project costs from the Fund:	11%
Amount of funding allocated by the Fund:	£20,000

An electric car hire scheme will be established in the New Forest, based in Burley with additional hire centres in Lyndhurst and Brockenhurst. The scheme will initially use ten cars which are pollution free and have a speed limit of 45mph, making them ideal for Forest roads.

2 Children and Young People

2.1 Forest Schools Training

Total project cost:	£1,304.26
% project costs from the Fund:	50%
Amount of funding allocated by the Fund:	£652

The Fund has supported two local individuals in training and qualifying as Forest School Providers (Forest Schools is a unique form of outdoor/environmental education focusing on woodland or forest settings). They are now running sessions at a range of location in the New Forest.

2.2 Breaking Down the Barriers

Total project cost:	£54,169
% project costs from the Fund:	37%
Amount of funding allocated by the Fund:	£20,000

Young people and vulnerable adults will be encouraged to access, protect and learn more about the New Forest by being involved in a range of practical conservation tasks on Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust nature reserves within or adjacent to the National Park.

2.3 Countryside Education Project

Total project cost: £7,755

% project costs from the Fund: 64%

Amount of funding allocated by the Fund: £4,934

School children from in an around the National Park will learn about farming and where their food comes from. The project involves supporting and training New Forest farmers and commoners in hosting educational visits; running school visits to farms; holding sessions in schools focusing on local food and farming; and running teacher training sessions on the value of farm visits.

2.4 Honeypot Forest Schools Programme

Total project cost: £5,897

% project costs from the Fund: 75%

Amount of funding allocated by the Fund: £4,430

Honeypot House provides respite breaks to severely disadvantaged local children aged 5-12. This project will provide opportunities for these children to discover and learn about the New Forest by taking part in outdoor environmental education activities intended to raise awareness of and respect for the natural environment.

2.5 Waterside to Forest Community Connection Project

Total project cost: £91,267

% project costs from the Fund: 40%

Amount of funding allocated by the Fund: £36,674

A two year Forestry Commission project encouraging the Waterside community to access and use the New Forest in a positive way. A Waterside Community Ranger has been in post since July 2006 and is making excellent links with a range of community members and groups, especially young people, to tackle issues of anti-social behaviour on the Forest.

3 Conserving and Understanding the New Forest

3.1 Friends of Lepe Country Park

Total project cost: £6,308

% project costs from the Fund: 18%

Amount of funding allocated by the Fund: £1,123

A voluntary group – 'Friends of Lepe Country Park' has been established following the considerable level of interest shown by local people. The group carries out a variety of practical conservation work to improve the site, such as gorse clearance and hedgelaying.

3.2 Aren't Birds Brilliant! In The New Forest

Total project cost:	£63,323
% project costs from the Fund:	30%
Amount of funding allocated by the Fund:	£19,909

This partnership project provides an exciting visual and interpretive experience of New Forest birds of prey, delivering key messages about threatened forest species and habitats, particularly ground nesting birds. A viewing station has been set up at the Reptile Centre, showing live images from the nests of birds of prey and images can also be viewed online.

3.3 New Forest Barbastelle and Bechstein's Bat Research

Total project cost:	£40,964
% project costs from the Fund:	47%
Amount of funding allocated by the Fund:	£19,263

Barbastelle and Bechstein's bats are two of the UK's rarest bat species. Hampshire Bat Group is carrying out research to identify areas of the New Forest where each species exists and assess the foraging areas and roost locations of colonies. It is anticipated that the research will be used to inform management of the Forest for these species.

3.4 Archaeological Excavation Equipment

Total project cost:	£8,601
% project costs from the Fund:	19%
Amount of funding allocated by the Fund:	£1,657

The Fund has helped a local archaeological society purchase essential tools and survey equipment in order to conduct archaeological excavations, designed to provide dating evidence to better understand the Forest's history.

3.5 Recording Boldre Parish

Total project cost:	£31,795
% project costs from the Fund:	38%
Amount of funding allocated by the Fund:	£12,118

A project to explore the recent history of Boldre Parish with the aim of increasing understanding of the area among residents. Photographs, documents, maps and anecdotes are being gathered to create three village exhibitions, the first of which was held in February 2007 and visited by over 600 people.

3.6 The Image Project

Total project cost:	£25,494
% project costs from the Fund:	37%
Amount of funding allocated by the Fund:	£9,400

This project promotes awareness and understanding of the special qualities of the National Park through the creation of an online image library. The library will contain 75% historical images obtained from the local communities and 25% new images generated by young people. Images will be available free of charge for educational purposes.

3.7 Sculpture Park Feasibility

Total project cost:	£3,980
% project costs from the Fund:	75%
Amount of funding allocated by the Fund:	£2,985

Now complete, this project undertook a feasibility study investigating the creation of a sculpture park within the National Park designed to interpret and reflect the special qualities of the New Forest. Sculptures would be chosen which interact with the natural elements and incorporate local, natural materials and traditional skills. The findings and proposed action plan are being used to develop the idea further at a site within the National Park.

4 Community

4.1 Hollies Cards and Calendars

Total project cost:	£6,916
% project costs from the Fund:	15%
Amount of funding allocated by the Fund:	£1,045

This project provides opportunities, through a day centre, for people with mental health issues to visit and engage with the New Forest. Participants explore the National Park taking photographs that they turn into a range of cards and calendars. This positive experience of the Forest results in an increase in self-confidence and self-esteem.

4.2 New Forest Aspirations

Total project cost:	£3,180
% project costs from the Fund:	50%
Amount of funding allocated by the Fund:	£1,590

This project provides opportunities for people who are participating in a wood occupations training course, to visit the New Forest to learn about woodland management and timber production. Participants from a variety of socially excluded backgrounds in Southampton will explore the origins of timber and the role of woodlands in our ecological systems through visits to woodlands sites and wood-based local businesses.

4.3 Discover the New Forest

Total project cost:	£12,688
% project costs from the Fund:	32%
Amount of funding allocated by the Fund:	£4,050

This project is researching the needs of New Milton community with regard to accessing the New Forest by public transport. Five focus groups of local individuals and organisations have been established to help them address access issues.

Sustainable Development Fund Project's Delivery Towards Objectives

	New Forest National Park Authority Corporate Plan Objectives										Defra Objectives													
	C 1	C 2	C 3	C 4	C 5	C 6	C 7	C 8	U 1	U 2	U 3	U 4	U 5	U 6	U 7	S E 1	S E 2	S E 3	A	B	C	D	E	
Eco-dormitory at Minstead Study Centre																								
New Forest Study Centre Rebuild																								
Sustainable Energy Study																								
BioMap New Forest																								
Ipley Manor District Heating System																								
The Mill Waterwheel Renewal																								
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Defra Sustainable Development Fund Objectives

- A Involve young people.
- B Promote social inclusion.
- C Promote understanding and support of the New Forest amongst our urban neighbours.
- D Demonstrate new ways or best practice in sustainable living.
- E Encourage people to work together.

New Forest National Park Authority Corporate Plan Objectives

- C1 Develop strategies and support schemes to help sustain agriculture and communing activity that is in keeping with the New Forest National Park.
- C2 Conserve, restore or recreate landscapes, and their component parts, which reflect the special qualities of the New Forest National Park.
- C3 Conserve and enhance the nature conservation value of the New Forest National Park.
- C4 Promote local cultural traditions, skills and products.
- C5 Work with relevant authorities to minimise the impacts of air, noise, water and light pollution on the special qualities of the National Park.
- C6 Strengthen protection, understanding and management of the historic, archaeological and cultural aspects of the National Park's landscape.
- C7 Support high quality building and open space design in village centres, reflecting the distinctive character of the built environment.
- C8 Co-ordinate a review of the likely impacts of climate change on the whole of the New Forest National Park and develop long term strategies and any short-term actions to address those impacts.

- U1 Produce a recreation and visitor management strategy for the National Park and surrounding areas.
- U2 Review strategies and develop proposals to reduce the impact of traffic on the special environment of the National Park and promote alternatives to private car use, working jointly with relevant authorities.
- U3 Improve everyone's understanding and awareness of the New Forest National Park, in particular hard to reach groups.
- U4 Prepare and implement a co-ordinated programme for education about the National Park, which emphasises environmental and sustainability issues.
- U5 Develop a co-ordinated National Park ranger service, working with relevant partner organisations to build on existing services.
- U6 Enhance opportunities for walking, cycling and horse riding, including developing an integrated network of accessible, safe and attractive footpath and cycle routes, and promote their use to local people and visitors.
- U7 Improve public access through implementation of the National Park Authority's responsibilities under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

- SE1 Promote sustainable development within the National Park as the basis for the social and economic well-being of local communities.
- SE2 Protect the existing affordable housing stock, and help increase the number of affordable houses for rent and shared ownership.
- SE3 Support existing and encourage new businesses and community services which enhance the New Forest environment while providing economic and community benefits.

Details of Sustainable Development Fund Publicity

Type of Publicity	Number
Authority news release	5
Article in an Authority associated publication (Parklife, The Update, New Forest Today, Forest Focus)	11
Article in other media publication	28
Radio	5
Total number of publicity items	49

The Sustainable Development Fund web pages have been viewed over 1,700 times and the Fund leaflet has been downloaded over 600 times.