

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 24 APRIL 2007

**WORKING VISION, OBJECTIVES AND ISSUES FOR THE NATIONAL PARK
MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Report by: Nick Evans, Senior Planning Officer

Summary

This paper presents the working draft of the Vision, strategic objectives and key issues for the National Park, based on work with members, statutory bodies, key partners and National Park Authority officers.

It outlines the relevant National Park Management Plan guidance, discusses examples provided by other national parks, and describes the approach taken for the New Forest National Park Management Plan.

It emphasises that the Vision, objectives and issues are all ‘works in progress’ and will evolve through further discussion, but notes that an agreed working draft is now needed to provide a basis for that discussion with stakeholder organisations.

Recommendation:

To agree, subject to any points raised in discussion

- i) the working Vision for the National Park shown in Annex 1;**
- ii) the working objectives listed in Annex 3; and**
- iii) the key issues outlined in Annex 4**

Resources: Continuing staff and consultancy involvement in the Management Plan process.

Papers:

NFNPA 181/07	Cover paper
NFNPA 181/07	Annex 1: Working Vision for the National Park
NFNPA 181/07	Annex 2: Vision Statement examples from other National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
NFNPA 181/07	Annex 3: Checklist of objectives

NFNPA 181/07 Annex 4: Working objectives for the National Park Management Plan, with rationale and issues

Contact:

Nick Evans

Tel: 01590 646679

E-mail: nick.evans@newforestnpa.gov.uk

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1 Background

- 1.1 The National Park Management Plan provides the overall strategic policy framework for the National Park. It is not just a document for the National Park Authority and must therefore achieve the ownership of all interested stakeholders and a strong commitment to delivery from the main partner organisations.
- 1.2 National Park Management Plan guidance has been revised relatively recently (Countryside Agency, 2005) and provides a suggested generic framework for the process and content of the management plans.
- 1.3 In line with this guidance there will be a number of key components in the New Forest National Park Management Plan, including:
 - A Vision for the Park, looking ahead 30 years or so
 - A description of the key issues to be addressed
 - A series of objectives setting out what needs to be done to achieve the Vision and address the issues.
- 1.4 Members have agreed that the final Plan should be relatively short and strategic, but with a clear New Forest relevance and sensibility.
- 1.5 A considerable amount of work has already been carried out by members and the statutory bodies on the Vision, objectives and issues. This is brought together in the drafts annexed to this paper. An agreed 'working draft' is now needed to allow the Management Plan to progress to the next main stage in the process, which will involve participative work with stakeholder organisations.

2 Links with other Plans

- 2.1 A number of major strategies relevant to the National Park are being produced at about the same time as the Management Plan, including the Local Development Framework Core Strategy and the New Forest District Community Strategy.

These processes are also considering visions and objectives relevant to their particular purposes and geographical areas.

- 2.2 It is essential that the result is a consistent approach to setting the future direction for National Park and that care is taken to avoid the considerable potential for confusion amongst the public and stakeholder organisations.

3 Vision for the National Park

- 3.1 The proposed working Vision for the National Park is shown at **Annex 1**. This has resulted from:

- workshops with members and statutory bodies
- input from the key partners steering group
- suggestions from Authority officers
- further discussion and comments from members and statutory bodies.

Approach taken to the Vision for the New Forest

- 3.2 The aim in developing the process and content for the Vision has been to:

- ensure inclusiveness at this early stage by direct involvement of members and statutory bodies;
- create an ambitious and aspirational Vision which is nevertheless credible (following the formal guidance);
- link together the two National Park purposes and the duty;
- clearly describe the place we want to see and experience in the future, within a time-frame of about 30 years;
- indicate that action is needed to achieve this; and
- include sufficient detail to make sure it is a Vision clearly related to the New Forest National Park (and not an 'anywhere' vision).

Approach taken in other National Park Management Plans

- 3.3 The approach taken in other national parks has varied, but most have adopted short, generic Visions which simply cover the national park purposes and duty.
- 3.4 Very few Vision statements incorporate any content which reflects the individuality of the place, although the Lake District and the Broads do refer to particular aspects of local farming and habitats respectively.
- 3.5 A selection of Vision statements from National Park and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plans are shown at **Annex 2**.

4 Objectives and issues

- 4.1 The proposed strategic objectives are listed as a reference checklist in **Annex 3**, and with the rationale and relevant key issues at **Annex 4**.
- 4.2 The key issues have been developed through a great deal of work over the past few years involving stakeholders, statutory bodies and National Park Authority members. Most recently the 'Future Matters' consultation brought together and clarified these issues, most of which have been clearly endorsed by the public as matters of major concern. Since that consultation National Park Authority technical officers have added further detail according to their areas of expertise.
- 4.3 The sixteen draft objectives for the National Park have resulted from:
- discussion with the key partners steering group and the statutory bodies
 - consultation with National Park Authority officers
 - discussion with Authority members
- 4.4 The formal guidance relating to objectives is not entirely clear. It suggests that they may be either strategic and ambitious or more specific and measurable. It also states that they should be linked to the Vision and relate to the same long-term timescale, but does not make any connection with tackling the key issues (current or predicted). The guidance does however make plain that the objectives should set out **what** should be achieved rather than **how** it will be achieved (the latter being the role of the policies and actions).

Approach taken to the objectives for the New Forest National Park

- 4.5 The aim in developing the objectives has been to:
- encompass the key areas of work that the Authority and its partners need to undertake in the medium to long-term, both in order to address the major issues and to move towards the Vision;
 - include goals which are ambitious, but are nevertheless achievable in practice if given sufficient priority (rather than providing a 'wish-list' of aspirations);
 - make sure each objective is clear, to the point and jargon-free;
 - keep the objectives strategic and relatively few in number (in keeping with a slim, strategic document), but allow for measuring progress through headline indicators and targets, to be agreed later in the process; and
 - focus the wording on the tangible outcomes or results for the National Park, rather than on the process required to reach those outcomes.

Approach taken in other national parks

- 4.6 National Park Management Plans have used the term 'objective' in a variety of ways or have avoided it altogether. The words 'aims', 'ambitions', 'objectives' and 'policies' have all been employed, almost interchangeably, to articulate desired outcomes.
- 4.7 The approach taken by the few management plans published (or substantially produced) since the 2005 guidance, include:
- i) **Peak District, 2007**
No specified objectives or targets, but a number of statements about the achievements desired over the next five years (34 statements in all), for instance:
 - 'By 2011 prosperity has been improved by....
Working together
Raising productivity
Developing a sustainable rural economy'
 - ii) **South Downs, 2006** (consultation draft covering the proposed National Park area)
No specified objectives, but with ten medium-term 'ambitions', each with strategic targets, for instance:
 - 'An unspoilt landscape of the highest quality and diversity reflecting its historic evolution'
Target (example) - design guidelines for highway improvements and maintenance developed and in use
Target (example) - three urban fringe projects taken forward
 - iii) **Exmoor, 2006** (consultation draft)
37 objectives, each with up to seven very specific targets (effectively a list of key actions), for instance:
 - 'Provide opportunities for young people from all backgrounds and abilities to learn about and enjoy the National Park, leading to greater understanding of Exmoor and its way of life'
Target (example) – Every pupil attending a school within the National Park will have contact with an Authority led activity at least once a year

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The Vision and objectives for the National Park will be of the highest importance in clearly setting the direction and long-term goals both for the Authority and other organisations with responsibilities for the area. They are also needed to encapsulate and promote the priorities of the Park to others, including the surrounding authorities and communities and regional and national decision-makers.

- 5.2 At this stage the Authority needs to set out its own views as a starting point for detailed consultation. Members should however be mindful that the 'working' Vision and objectives will develop further before a final published version is agreed and there will be opportunities for member involvement and input throughout the process.
- 5.3 The examples provided by other management plans for other national parks are interesting, but generally not helpful as a guide to good practice. It is therefore suggested that the Authority agree a working Vision, objectives and key issues which draw on the formal guidance, but also follow the overall approach developed for the New Forest National Park and given in sections 3.2 and 4.5 above.

6 Recommendation

To agree, subject to any points raised in discussion

- (i) the working Vision for the National Park shown in Annex 1;**
- (ii) the working objectives listed in Annex 3; and**
- (iii) the key issues outlined in Annex 4**

Working Vision for the National Park

Our Vision for the New Forest National Park is of:

A place where people work together towards a common goal.....

- where all organisations, communities and individuals with an interest in the New Forest are committed this vision, contributing fully in whatever ways are appropriate to them.

An area which has a unique and immediately recognisable sense of place....

- where the variety of landscapes, the villages and the people are intimately linked together and function as a whole;
- the Forest continues to create its own identity, responding to change (including the changing climate) while remaining true to the qualities which make it special; and
- the distinctiveness and significance of the Forest is known and appreciated locally, nationally and internationally.

A place where tranquillity and a sense of naturalness pervade large parts of the Park...

- where visually intrusive development, light pollution and noise is minimised, both within and surrounding the National Park;
- new technology has allowed motorised transport to become quiet, safe and truly sustainable in terms of fuel and pollution, and many areas within the National Park are traffic free; and
- the remoter parts of the Forest are enjoyed with respect for their natural peacefulness.

A place where the mosaic of distinctive landscapes and habitats have all been restored to the highest quality and a great variety of wildlife is able to flourish.....

- where the Open Forest heathland, mires, lawns and ancient woodland have been extended and reconnected and are managed with a 'light touch', allowing the landscape to evolve naturally through the relationship between common grazing and ecological processes;
- the enclosed lands create a feeling of intimacy and human-scale and are managed sustainably, with a mixture of grassland, arable and woodland according to the inherent productivity of the soils and climate;
- the changing coastal landscapes and habitats remain unspoiled by new development, and are allowed to evolve by managing the gradual realignment of the coastline
- above all a place which is a working Forest, shaped and maintained primarily by a thriving commoning and farming community, the private estates and woodland managers.

A place where cultural heritage is part of the fabric and spirit of the Forest...

- where the richness of the archaeology, historic built environment and designed landscapes is well understood and conserved, and the unique history and culture of the Forest continues to develop through living local traditions and skills;
- the villages and settlements are an integral part of the landscape, and have resisted suburbanisation, retaining an edge of grittiness amongst the prettiness; and
- new development meets the very highest standards of sustainability and employs forward thinking design, while remaining in context with its surroundings.

A place where all visitors gain inspiration, enjoyment, health and well-being....

- where there is a diverse range of recreational opportunities, providing a great richness and high quality of experience;
- all sectors of the community are welcomed and encouraged to appreciate the special qualities of the Forest;
- young people, in particular, have the opportunity to enjoy, and so relate to, the natural and historic environment;
- cars are no longer the main means of visiting the Forest, with benefits to health, safety and environmental quality;
- all those who visit the Forest understand and respect the needs of other users and those who live and work in the Forest; and
- recreational use and facilities are carefully managed and located to conserve the natural beauty, wildlife value and tranquillity of the countryside.

A place where people live and work sustainably and contribute to the care of the Forest....

- where communities are strong, dynamic and inclusive, with a sense of stewardship and pride in their local area and direct involvement its management and conservation;
- communities are increasingly self-sufficient, with all residents having access to housing, employment, sources of sustainable energy and a range of local services, including well established local food production;
- businesses are attracted by the quality of the local environment and availability of local skills, and contribute to the quality of the National Park through strong and innovative environmental policies and practices; and
- tourism is focused primarily on 'green tourism' which emphasises the special qualities of the destination, sustainable travel and the high quality and distinctiveness of local food and craft projects.

A place which looks outwards and has a clearly understood relevance and role within the wider region

- where neighbouring and regional authorities understand the relevance of the National Park's special qualities to their own communities and interests, and have adopted real policies and actions to conserve the area from the impacts of major development;

- the surrounding landscapes, including the marine environment, make a positive contribution to the National Park by extending wildlife habitats, providing accessible and high quality countryside areas, supplying holdings and backup land for commoners and giving a broader basis for the rural economy
- measures to adapt to climate change are in place, well understood by communities, land managers and businesses and are being actively pursued; and
- the Park works closely with other nationally protected landscapes to promote the value of their collective resource and influence decision-makers at the highest level.

Checklist of objectives

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES - CLIMATE CHANGE, SUSTAINABILITY and WORKING TOGETHER
<p>Objective 01: Improve the understanding of climate change at a local level and plan for the likely impacts on the special qualities of the Park</p>
<p>Objective 02: Reduce the environmental footprint*of the National Park <i>*The totality of the natural resources we use, compared with what is available</i></p>
<p>Objective 03: Achieve consistent policies and complementary work programmes which are aligned with National Park purposes and help bring about the Vision for the National Park</p>
<p>Objective 04: Work together to promote the regional, national and international importance of the area to other organisations and individuals</p>
<p>Objective 05: Establish a clear functional relationship between the National Park and the wider sub-region*, working with neighbouring authorities and communities <i>*Which helps secure the environmental quality, cultural heritage and rural economy of the Park and clarifies its contribution to the quality of life of the wider area</i></p>
CONSERVING AND ENHANCING THE NATIONAL PARK
<p>Objective 06: Take a joined-up approach to conserving the landscapes, biodiversity and cultural heritage of the whole National Park, recognising the strong and complex relationships between them</p>
<p>Objective 07: Restore or enhance landscapes and habitats of the New Forest at the landscape scale, where character or condition has been lost or degraded</p>
<p>Objective 08: Provide the highest possible level of protection for the cultural landscapes, habitats and built environment of the National Park in order to control the adverse impacts of development pressure</p>
<p>Objective 09: Improve understanding and good management of the wealth of individual features which contribute to local distinctiveness, and resist the small-scale changes which cause the gradual erosion of landscape character</p>
<p>Objective 10: Support 'traditional' land management which sustains the special qualities of the Forest</p>

UNDERSTANDING AND ENJOYING THE NATIONAL PARK
Objective 11: Achieve better understanding of the special qualities of the National Park by local people, visitors and organisations
Objective 12: Improve the richness and quality of peoples experience of the National Park
Objective 13: Manage the impacts of recreational pressure on the environment and communities of the National Park
LIVING AND WORKING IN THE NATIONAL PARK
Objective 14: Strengthen the cultural identity and sustainability of rural communities and the pride of local people in their area
Objective 15: Sustain a strong local economy which makes a clear contribution to the National Park
Objective 16: Reduce the impacts of traffic on the special qualities of the National Park and provide a range of real alternatives to private vehicle use

Working objectives for the National Park Management Plan, with rationale and issues

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES - CLIMATE CHANGE, SUSTAINABILITY and WORKING TOGETHER

A place where people live and work sustainably and contribute to the care of the Forest; a place where people work together towards a common goal; a place which looks outwards and has a clearly understood relevance and role within the wider region...
(draft Vision for the New Forest)

Objective 01:

Improve the understanding of climate change at a local level* and plan for the likely impacts on the special qualities of the Park

**by organisations, land managers and the public*

Rationale

Climate change is likely to be the biggest single factor influencing change in all aspects of the National Park over the next 30 years and beyond. Predictions are becoming clearer, but are still imprecise at the local level, with consequent lack of awareness generally amongst local people. Every effort should be made to reduce greenhouse gas emissions within the area (see objective 02), but climate change is clearly driven by the global economy and therefore adaptation to change is a major priority for the National Park.

Issues

Widespread impacts on habitats, landscape, archaeology, property, human safety, recreation, land management, water resources and the rural economy of:

- Continuing sea-level rise
- Increased flooding and storm events
- Drought and water shortages in summer, including fire risk and hydrological change
- General increase in average temperatures, including effects on established wildlife populations and the possible spread of invasive species and new plant and animal diseases

Objective 02:

Reduce the environmental footprint*of the National Park

**The totality of the natural resources we use, compared with what is available*

Rationale

The effects of lifestyle expectations and resource consumption are having increasing impacts on the overall environmental quality of the National Park, the quality of life of its residents and the planet as a whole. Sustainable ways of living are needed to reduce impacts at a local level (including climate change) as well as influencing / mitigating effects from outside the area. The purposes and duty of the National Park give the opportunity for the area to act as a model of good practice.

The 'environmental footprint' of an area is increasingly recognised as way of measuring its overall sustainability in relation to the carrying capacity of the environment of the planet. It includes (for instance) measures of the 'real cost' of transport, services, food, buildings, waste and energy consumption. A recent study comparing all local authority areas in England shows that New Forest District has a footprint considerably higher than the UK average (and current UK consumption will require the resources of 3 earths to continue).
(cross ref to 12 - tranquillity, and 16 - traffic)

Issues

General

- Lack of a co-ordinated approach, or agreed package of measures locally, to help mitigate against climate change

Pollution and traffic

- Increase in HGV and private car traffic on Forest roads, and lack of alternative means of transport (cross ref to objective 16)
- Poor air quality in Lyndhurst and effects of air pollution from Fawley on Forest habitats
- Water quality issues – single point pollution of rivers and coastal sewage outfalls, quality of groundwater

Waste and recycling

- Need for improved waste minimisation (domestic and business), better accessibility to recycling facilities for wider range of materials
- Traffic impacts and smell of Pound Bottom landfill site
- Minerals policies, impacts of existing sites (especially Avon Valley), implications of proposals for new sites close to the National Park

Resource consumption

- Need to improve energy conservation and sustainable energy consumption at the local level
- Need to take a more sustainable approach to water use (including crop irrigation)

Objective 03:

Achieve consistent policies and complementary work programmes which are aligned with National Park purposes and help bring about the Vision for the National Park

Rationale

Many organisations contribute directly to managing and administering the National Park, following their own strategic policies and work priorities. It is important that all help to deliver a shared vision for the National Park encompassing its primary purposes, with the effect that the results are greater than the sum of the parts.

Issues

- Number of different major plans / processes in progress
- (includes National Park Authority Corporate Plan and more specific strategic plans, Local Development Framework and Community Strategy(ies) processes, Crown Lands Management Plan, New Forest SAC Management Plan, Verderers Policies, Coastal strategies, Environment Agency strategic plans, Local Transport Plans etc)
- Differences of remit and approach
- Danger of similar but not entirely consistent policies and actions
- Need to gain agreement and commitment to action from all relevant delivery agencies
- Need to strengthen partner relationships (more efficient delivery, maximising resources, effectiveness in gaining external funding)

Objective 04:

Work together to promote the regional, national and international importance of the area to other organisations and individuals

Rationale

The National Park has been designated because of its importance and role in the national and international context. This can be overlooked in focusing on local issues, people and organisations. The New Forest is part of a wider 'family' of nationally protected landscapes (including Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty), which in the South East cover about 30% of the total land area and together have a key role in influencing the perceptions and policies of government and the major regional and national organisations.

Issues

- Need to work together to champion the National Park and make sure its national/international as well as local significance is widely understood and appreciated by relevant decision makers, organisations and individuals - regionally, nationally and internationally
- Lack of a strong voice for the protected landscapes in the south east (as a group) on regional forums and in regional decision-making

Objective 05:

Establish a clear functional relationship between the National Park and the wider sub-region*, working with neighbouring authorities and communities

**Which helps secure the environmental quality, cultural heritage and rural economy of the Park and clarifies its contribution to the quality of life of the wider area*

Rationale

There is a need to make clear the positive contribution the National Park makes to the quality of life and rural economy of the immediate sub-region, and the importance of the land uses and management of the surrounding area in allowing the Park to function sustainably (both environmentally and economically). This will involve influencing perceptions and developing a strong culture of cross-boundary working with nearby communities and authorities.

Issues

- Relatively small geographical area and therefore the importance of cross- boundary issues (including back-up land, landscape quality, habitat continuity, visual aspects (from within and into the Park), cultural identity, links to coast
- Different agendas / priorities of major decision-making organisations in adjacent sub-regions
- Proposals for economic growth and infrastructure requirements of adjacent urban areas (including recreation and transport pressures)
- Lack of awareness of S62 responsibilities
- Better understanding needed of the role of the National Park in the sustainability of the wider area

CONSERVING AND ENHANCING THE NATIONAL PARK

***An area which has a unique and immediately recognisable sense of place;
where the mosaic of distinctive landscapes and habitats have all been restored to the highest quality and a great variety of wildlife is able to flourish;
where cultural heritage is part of the fabric and spirit of the Forest...***
(draft Vision for the New Forest)

Objective 06:

Take a joined-up approach to conserving the landscapes, biodiversity and cultural heritage of the whole National Park*, recognising the strong and complex relationships between them

**by those responsible for their management*

Rationale

To date resources have tended to focus on the nationally or internationally important statutory sites (in particular the statutory nature conservation sites). There are large gaps in knowledge of sites and features of the historic environment, particularly outside the Crown Lands, of the wildlife resource not covered by SSSI designation and of the landscape condition of the wider countryside. The importance of the New Forest lies in how its cultural landscapes, historic settlements and wildlife habitats function together as an inter-related whole, both within and across the National Park boundary.

Issues

Gaps in knowledge preventing effective protection

- No comprehensive condition monitoring for non-statutory nature conservation sites
- Lack of comprehensive recording and conservation of the habitats of the wider countryside (eg farmland, hedgerows, road verges, streams, marine environment etc)
- Lack of knowledge of distribution and status of key species (needed to ensure their conservation)
- Major gaps in knowledge / understanding of cultural landscape (especially on privately owned land), and lack of control over management of non-statutory sites (for instance, by-laws cannot be put in place)
- Need for updated landscape character assessment

Better promotion, understanding, guidance

- Need for National Park specific guidance on the good management of designed landscapes, historic buildings and settlements and their contexts
- Lack of recognition / appreciation of the international importance ancient trees in the National Park
- Much 'academic' historical research, but lack of informative 'popular' publications
- Better understanding of complex interaction of communities and landscape (past and present) - the long continuity of social history, the creation of the historic environment, settlement patterns, the importance of commoning, other land management practices, social dependencies and the need to conserve the wealth of local knowledge, traditions and skills (*cross ref to objective 14*)

Management

- Most resources focused on SSSIs / SACs SPAs and especially the New Forest SAC
- Need for better involvement, understanding and management of local nature conservation and archaeological sites by land managers
- Need for whole-Forest approach to managing the biodiversity resource
- Need to balance / integrate landscape and habitat management

Cross boundary issues

- Cross-boundary impacts – loss or changes in landscape and habitat quality outside the National Park; integrated coastal zone management (including marine environment); conservation of New Forest cultural landscape which extends well beyond boundary; management of sites divided by the boundary (for instance, Conservation Areas)

Objective 07:

Restore or enhance landscapes and habitats of the New Forest at the landscape scale, where character or condition has been lost or degraded

Rationale

It is important that all landscapes and habitats within the National Park retain their distinctive character and qualities. In some parts of the Park these have been lost or degraded due to relatively recent changes in land use or past management practices. Opportunities should be sought for large-scale enhancement and restoration of these areas, including the re-creation of important landscape features where appropriate.

This objective raises the question of what the landscape should look like (ie the point in time taken to guide restoration) – which requires further discussion.

Issues

- Loss of landscape character, quality of habitats and archaeological features in certain geographical areas, due to intensification of farming, softwood forestry, urban fringe influences, mineral and waste extraction, drainage schemes, 'hard' coastal defences.
- Lack of favourable condition of c20% of national / international nature conservation sites (especially wetlands, Inclosures, coastal habitats, unimproved grassland)
- Need to improve the quality of major elements of the cultural landscape – such as the setting of SAMs, historic parks and gardens
- Sustainability of restoration and subsequent management needs assessing (avoiding high-cost on-going maintenance and taking into account viability in view of climate change)
- Loss of tranquillity (see objective 12)
- Need for substantial (ie external) funding

Objective 08:

Provide the highest possible level of protection for the cultural landscapes, habitats and built environment of the National Park in order to control the adverse impacts of development pressure

Rationale

There is continued development pressure both within and adjacent to the Park, much of which will impact on the fabric of the Forest, its visual setting and people's enjoyment of the area. This pressure, including new infrastructure, is likely to increase substantially in the medium term if proposals for the growth of nearby conurbations go ahead. While change is inevitable and in some cases may be positive, strong protective policies for the National Park will be needed to ensure its special character and qualities are retained.

Issues

National / regional policies and targets

- Impacts of Government targets for house building / economic growth
- Need to influence regional planning policies for SE and SW, and in particular the impacts of proposed growth in South Hampshire and South East Dorset
- Better understanding by policy makers / developers of national, European and international legislation relating to nature conservation sites, wildlife species, protected landscapes, historic environment designations (including new European Landscape Convention legislation, Water Framework Directive)

Local policies

- Need for strong local planning policies / design guidance and enforcement, including areas adjacent to boundary (visual impacts).
- Impacts of minerals and waste development adjacent to the National Park boundary
- Development threats to important trees
- Lack of comprehensive / easily accessible data (allowing better protection), especially for historic environment (gaps especially for enclosed lands and coast)
- Lack of statutory protective measures for sites of local significance for archaeology / historic buildings, and in particular loss of historic / distinctive buildings through speculative demolition
- Impacts of density and form of development on the character of main villages – urbanising effect
- Impacts of ancillary / adjoining buildings – for instance, large garages, extensions, conservatories
- Need for transport policies tailored to the issues and needs of the National Park

Objective 09:

Improve understanding and good management of the wealth of individual features which contribute to local distinctiveness, and resist the small-scale changes which cause the gradual erosion of landscape character

Rationale

There is currently a lack of awareness and guidance about those features which contribute to a distinctive 'New Forest' character, particularly in relation to the enclosed landscapes and villages.

Individually boundary treatments, road kerbings, path surfaces, 'improvements' to buildings, phone masts and new land uses may not be seen as important, but taken together their loss or change can cause a real impact on the landscape over time. Often the result is a suburbanising effect: reducing tranquillity, removing local distinctiveness and creating an homogenised landscape.

Many of these changes are outside the control of planning policies and are therefore particularly difficult to tackle.

Cross reference to objective 10 below

Issues

- Changes in boundary treatments (for instance, new fencing and gating of properties, tall conifer hedges, removal of banks and ditches near dwellings, lamps on gateposts)
- Changes in appearance of buildings (for instance, replacement of windows, doors, porches etc with mediocre design, increased security lighting, paving of front gardens, digital TV aerials, removal of vernacular farm or other outbuildings ('prettification'), new farm buildings or conversions of inappropriate design / materials)
- Changes in land management practices (for instance, amenity mowing of road verges near houses / farms, removal / changes in management of trees and hedgerows, gradual encroachment of gardens etc on the Open Forest, loss of previously open grazed land outside the Perambulation – for instance, non-registered commons)
- Changes in infrastructure and associated features (for instance, over-engineering / urban design of highways infrastructure, increase in street and business lighting, plethora of signage, especially highways + private signs, telecommunications masts, overhead cables)
- Removal of traditional features (for instance, style of field gates, fencing, footpath surfacing, 'historic' road signs)
- Other suburbanising effects?

Objective 10:

Support land management which sustains the special qualities of the Forest

Rationale

Commoning, farming and the management of trees and woodland have been essential to the rural economy and the shaping of the landscape of the New Forest throughout historic times. Without these activities, carried out in a 'forest-beneficial' way, the sustainable management of much of the area would not be possible.

Support in various forms (including management and business advice) is needed to ensure they remain viable and where appropriate are extended to improve the quality of areas where such management has ceased.

Issues

Viability

- Need to maintain the working Forest in as economically viable way as possible (avoiding over-reliance on public subsidy)
- Continued viability of commoning, especially due to property prices, lack of available / suitable back-up land, change of culture among younger people, cross-boundary issues
- Problems with implementation / funding of new 'higher-level' agri-environment schemes and woodland grant schemes
- Increasing reliance on external subsidy (rather than economic sustainability)
- Need to ensure sustainability of woodland management / timber production (including new markets – e.g. wood fuel schemes, furniture making, timber frame buildings etc)

Better understanding

- Lack of understanding of the fundamental importance of the New Forest as a working landscape (its importance for local employment, cultural identity and conservation)
- Better recognition of important role of mainstream farming and ways it can contribute to special qualities

Land management advice

- National / EU context and changes – creating uncertainty in the farming community
- Lack of integrated Forest-focused land management advice (bringing together business and conservation advice)
- Need for consistent management principles agreed by major land managers

Changes in land use

- Changes in crops / farming practice / businesses, including long-term impacts of climate change (options, e.g. guidance / advice on options for diversification which respect special qualities)
- Impact of change to recreational / amenity land uses, including horse-keeping

UNDERSTANDING AND ENJOYING THE NATIONAL PARK

***A place where all visitors gain inspiration, enjoyment, health and well-being;
where there is still tranquillity and an escape from the modern world.....
(Draft Vision for the New Forest)***

Objective 11:

Achieve better understanding of the special qualities of the National Park by local people, visitors and organisations

Cross ref to objective 04

Rationale:

Understanding the special qualities of the Park is the basis for good management, responsible behaviour and a fuller enjoyment of the area by residents and visitors. Information currently available to the public is not always consistent in conveying the importance of the special qualities and is targeted largely at holiday makers (rather than residents or day visitors).

There are a number of education providers within the area providing a broad range of services, but there is lack of co-ordination in terms of audience, subject matter and resources.

A great deal of technical information is held by different organisations using different systems. Better and easier access to data is needed by those involved in research, management and administration in the Forest.

Issues

Environmental and behavioural messages

- Lack of co-ordination / consistency in promoting key environmental messages relating to the National Park (headline special qualities and pressures on them, linked with behavioural messages) aimed at all visitors, including residents
- Need to continue work to influence attitudes and responsible behaviour, including resolving conflicting interests of different user groups and between users and land managers
- Better marketing needed for the New Forest as a 'green tourism' destination, including local products/produce

Access to information

- Need to make information about the National Park and its special qualities more accessible / useable, both for visitors and for local people
- Better availability/ accessibility of more detailed / technical information for organisations and interested individuals
- Confusion about the geographical extent of the National Park, and general lack of information about areas outside the Crown Lands (for instance the coast, villages, historic built environment)

Interpretation and education

- Lack of awareness amongst visitors of the 'working' nature of the National Park – appreciation of its importance and ways to avoid conflicts
- Need to build on work to co-ordinate environmental education with a Forest-focus, fill gaps in provision and create stronger links with formal education in schools / colleges

- Need for co-ordinated approach to interpretation, including the work of existing ranger services, events / activities programmes and appropriate design and scale of signage (minimising impact on landscape)
- Need to include certain audiences, where these are less aware of opportunities for them to enjoy the special qualities – for instance elderly, disabled, young people, ethnic backgrounds, communities outside the National Park

Objective 12:

Improve the richness and quality of peoples experience of the National Park

Rationale:

The experience of those visiting, using or living in the Park determines their attitudes towards it. The context should be a natural and built environment of consistently high quality coupled with a range of opportunities for enjoying the special qualities of the area. However it is often the small things which can affect people's perceptions of a place, such as the level of litter, the ability to find good local produce, the quality of accommodation or the enjoyment of peace and quiet.

Issues

Quality of built environment

- Inconsistent quality of the built environment (including 'gateway towns' adjacent to the Park) and pressure for development which is not of high quality or does not take its landscape context into account (in terms of scale, form, materials)
- Better access to a range of high quality facilities and services in the main villages (with greater local relevance/connection where possible) – including shops, restaurants, cultural facilities
- Car domination of village centres (cross ref objective 16)

Tranquillity

- Pervasiveness of traffic noise (cross ref to objective 16)
- Impacts of recreational activity especially in remote areas and on coast (cross ref to objective 13)
- Visual impacts of the Waterside and proposals for new development adjacent or close to the Park
- High levels of light pollution, especially from surrounding conurbations
- Noise from aircraft (including light aircraft and military helicopters)
- Visual impacts of infrastructure in the landscape (overhead cables, telecommunication masts) (cross ref to objective 09)

Health, well-being, and access

- Lack of understanding / opportunities linking outdoor recreation with health and well-being
- Various barriers / disincentives to enjoying cycling, walking, horse-riding– for instance, dangerous road crossings and on-road cycle routes, lack of information about RoW network, need for well-maintained and connected-up path/cycleway/bridleway routes and filling geographical gaps in provision, access for all
- Lack of choices of car-free transport (and better promotion of those that do exist) (cross ref to objective 16 below)

Local products

- Need for wider availability of local produce and products (including in restaurants / cafes)

Accommodation

- Lack of choice / spectrum of visitor accommodation

Litter

- Keeping the Forest clean

Objective 13:

Manage the impacts of recreation on the environment and communities of the National Park

Rationale:

More than 13 million visits are made to the National Park each year, the majority attracted to the most sensitive landscapes and habitats in the heart of the Forest. Most visits through the year are made by local people living within or immediately adjacent to the Park.

There are concerns amongst residents, land managers and user groups about the effects the numbers of visitors, patterns of use and behaviour may have on the fabric of the Forest and its wildlife, on day to day land management and community life and on the sense of remoteness and tranquillity. Although staying visitors clearly support the local economy, the majority of visitors make no direct contribution to the costs of managing the area which they come to enjoy.

Issues

Strategic management

- Dealing with the demand (and predicting future demand) in relation to 'capacity', including the impacts of regional house building targets - looking at numbers, visitor patterns and behaviour.
- Creating a clear evidence base for recreational impacts (building on work already done)
- Lack of strategic recreation policies and management within the National Park (with links to traffic management)
- Particular pressures on sensitive and remote areas
- Dealing with perceived 'rights' of visitors in terms of how they use the area

Recreational facilities / infrastructure

- Potential impacts of infrastructure associated with recreation (including design / location of facilities, infrastructure – for instance, visitor centres, campsites, car parks, cycle routes, toilet blocks, signage etc)
- Need for clear spatial planning policies relating to recreational development and tourism

Impacts on land management and local communities

- Conflicts with commoning and other people living and working in the National Park (largely locational –for instance, campsite location, organised recreational use not subject to formal permissions, disruption of drifts)
- Impacts of traffic and congestion (cross ref to objective 16)

Visitor contribution to management

- Lack of direct contribution of many visitors to the management of the Park

LIVING AND WORKING IN THE NATIONAL PARK

A place where people live and work sustainably and contribute to the care of the Forest; where cultural heritage is part of the fabric and spirit of the Forest; where there is still tranquillity and an escape from the modern world.....

(Draft Vision for the New Forest)

Objective 14:

Strengthen the cultural identity and sustainability of rural communities and the pride of local people in their area

Rationale:

The rural communities of the New Forest are changing rapidly in response to a combination of social and economic trends, including high property prices, the desirability of the area for commuting, second homes and retirement, and the lack of well paid local employment. An increasing proportion of residents do not have direct connections with the local area, and are retired or look to locations well beyond the Forest for their employment, as well as cultural, social and shopping needs. Local traditions, knowledge and the continuity of social history, which provide identity and are part of the cultural heritage of the New Forest, may be lost.

Nevertheless many residents (whether local or not) have very strong feelings about the New Forest and a sense of pride in their particular area. The challenge is to maintain mixed communities which can work together, support local services and facilities and maintain the distinctive character and culture of their village and the wider New Forest.

Issues

Access to housing and services

- Lack of affordable homes for local people and key workers (including removal of agricultural ties)
- Decline in local services and facilities, including local shops, schools, hospitals, public and community transport
- Hidden deprivation in apparently affluent communities

Changing demography, social patterns and culture

- Threats to villages and market towns as local focus for social / cultural life
- Increasing numbers of weekend / holiday homes
- Loss of distinctive local traditions, place-names, sense of history and living / evolving culture and identity
- Anti-social behaviour – car crime, graffiti, arson

Local decision-making

- Lack of involvement of whole community in local decision-making
- Feeling that views of local communities not heard or taken seriously by decision-makers
- Parishes / communities generally not proactive in seeking support for local projects which record / conserve local distinctiveness.

Objective 15:

Sustain a strong local economy which makes a clear contribution to the National Park

Rationale:

The land-based economy and traditional rural businesses have declined in economic importance over the last decade, but remain essential in maintaining the landscape, habitats and cultural heritage of the Forest (see land management objective above). At the same time the tourism industry has expanded and there has been a shift towards farm diversification, small home businesses (often internet-dependent) and service industries. It is important to encourage all these sectors to focus more strongly on the opportunities provided by the strong 'brand' of the New Forest, the environmental quality of the area and the growing interest in sustainable products, services and business practices.

Issues

Land-based economy

- Need for guidance on appropriate farm and estate diversification - to ensure new land uses are viable, but do not impact on the special qualities of the Park (and contribute positively to them where possible)
- Decline in opportunities for local employment and training, including loss of traditional skills (including agricultural practices) – need for skills and knowledge transfer as communities change. Cross ref to objectives 10 and 14.

Tourism

- Need for continued focus on sustainable/ 'green' tourism

Business development

- Continued / improved support needed for small businesses with a clear New Forest relevance– including those which support local land management / use local products
- Environmental constraints on new businesses / business expansion (including infrastructure)
- Achieving sustainability of new and existing businesses– design, location, materials, operations, homeworking etc (including leaders / exemplars in sustainability)
- Need to encourage entrepreneurial activity / culture (taking advantage of business ideas and funding available)

Objective 16:

Reduce the impacts of traffic on the special qualities of the National Park and provide a range of real alternatives to private vehicle use

(cross ref to a number of objectives, including 02, 12)

Rationale:

Traffic is major issue for many residents and visitors, affecting quality of life in local communities, the quiet enjoyment of the National Park, the welfare of stock and the integrity of the Forest's landscape and habitats. It is also a local contributor to climate change.

The contentious nature and cost of tackling traffic issues has resulted in little major action over the past 10 years. At the same time private vehicles have remained the only real transport choice for the majority of residents and visitors. Changing technology and attitudes (related in particular to climate change concerns) provide a major opportunity for a shift to 'greener' transport alternatives in the future.

Issues

Traffic volume

- Volume of traffic on roads within the National Park (including high level of through traffic and outbound commuting)
- Impact of regional development proposals (increased demand and potential road infrastructure needs), national, regional and county-based transport policies

Driver behaviour

- Deeply held social attitudes to car ownership and use
- Inappropriate / illegal use of road system – speeding, verge parking, heavy vehicles ignoring weight restriction etc
- High level of traffic accidents – compared to Hampshire as a whole (mainly involving cars rather than pedestrians)

Impacts on enjoyment / quality of life

- Quality of life of local people (congestion, noise, air pollution, traffic domination of villages, lack of 'safe streets')
- Barriers to access by pedestrians, riders, cyclists

Traffic management

- Lack of political will and finance to undertake (often controversial) traffic management schemes (eg road closures, charging, changes in size/location of car parks, review of road hierarchy etc)

Impacts on landscape/habitats/tranquillity

- Fragmentation of habitats
- Particular impact of A31 in bisecting the Park
- Heavy vehicle use of unfenced / minor roads
- Few areas with no intrusion from traffic noise / lights (cross ref to tranquillity in
- Animal accidents

Public transport

- Inadequate and (often) poorly used public bus system
- Need for improved capacity and better marketing of rail system
- Lack of safe and attractive network of routes for cyclists, horse riders and pedestrians – on-road and RoW network
- No effective, integrated visitor transport system within and around the National Park
- Uncertainty over viability of community transport schemes

Links to improving vitality of village centres – objective 14 - (reducing need for travel)