

**NFNPA 309/09
Annex 1
Part 1**

New Forest National Park Authority

Corporate Plan 2009–2010

30 June 2009

**New Forest National Park Authority
South Efford House
Milford Road
Lymington
Hampshire
SO41 0JD**

Our Mission

“We pledge to conserve and enhance the Forest’s unique beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage and to inspire everyone to respect, understand and enjoy it. Working with partners, we will actively encourage all those who live, work and visit here to care for the Forest into the future.”

Our Values

- Enthusiasm** We are passionate about the New Forest and dedicated to achieving national park purposes with energy and enthusiasm
- Achievement** Making a difference will be at the heart of everything we do; we will take the long view and respect for people and the environment will guide everything we do; we will be innovative, strive for continuous improvement and take pride in our achievements
- Integrity** We will be honest, objective, fair and diligent in our work; make decisions based on the best available evidence; and be personally accountable for what we do and collectively responsible as an organisation for our decisions and actions
- Openness** We will encourage, listen to and respect each other’s and other people’s views and contributions, freely share our knowledge and information, be clear in what we say and be open to fresh ideas and adaptable
- Teamwork** Strong leadership and teamwork will be the hallmark of the way we work together and with our partners
- Care** We value our staff and colleagues. We will care for the well-being of our staff and will invest in and develop their potential so that can all enjoy our work. We will treat each other, our partners and the public with courtesy and consideration and will provide a helpful, high quality and efficient service

About this Plan

This is the fourth Corporate Plan for the New Forest National Park Authority. It summarises what and who we are, updates last year's Plan and describes what we have done and what we plan to do in our fourth year to safeguard the New Forest National Park for the future.

The Plan explains:

- The role of the National Park Authority
- Our aim and objectives
- What we achieved in 2008-2009, our priorities for 2009-2010 and what it will cost and
- How and when we will review our progress and performance.

The Plan is for:

- Members and staff of the National Park Authority
- The Government and our Auditors, who will monitor and assess the effectiveness of our work
- Our partner organisations, who help to deliver national park purposes through their own work
- Anyone who is interested in finding out about our work.

How to Contact Us

We would welcome your view and comments on this Plan or any other aspect of the Authority's performance or services. You can do so by:

- Writing to:
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- Fax: 01590 646606
- Email: lindsay.cornish@newforestnpa.gov.uk

You can download this Plan from our website, www.newforestnpa.gov.uk. If you would like to receive a hard copy of the Plan or any other documents mentioned within it, please write to Martin O'Neill or email enquiries@newforestnpa.gov.uk. It is available in large-print format on request.

Space limits what we can include in this document. However, you can visit the New Forest National Park Authority's website www.newforestnpa.gov.uk where, among other things, you will find information about:

- The National Park / The National Park Authority
- Events and visitor information
- Planning / News releases, publications and consultations.

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Foreword

SETTING THE SCENE

The New Forest National Park

The New Forest has a long and proud history, a strong foundation for the National Park. William the Conqueror established the New Forest as a royal hunting ground in 1079. The practice of commoning and the system of common rights developed from medieval times or earlier and were formalised by the end of the 17th century. Although some of these rights are no longer practised, the rights of pasture (for ponies and cattle) and pannage (the foraging of pigs) are still very important and are protected by the New Forest Acts administered by the New Forest Court of Verderers. There are around 600 active commoners living in and around the Forest today.

In 1923, the Forestry Commission was made responsible for the management of the Crown Lands in the New Forest. These cover 25,825 hectares, 47% of the National Park. The New Forest Heritage Area was identified in 1985 and special planning policies were adopted to protect it. Five years later, in 1990, the New Forest Committee was established with the primary purpose of promoting and co-ordinating measures to ensure the conservation of the Heritage Area.

Designation of the National Park was confirmed on 1 March 2005. A profile of the New Forest National Park appears in **Appendix 1**.

The National Park's special qualities

The New Forest National Park's landscape is unique; it is a 'living' and working remnant of medieval England with an overwhelming sense of continuity, tradition, and history. It is the survival of not just one special quality but a whole range of features that brings a sense of completeness and integrity. These features include:

- the New Forest's outstanding natural beauty: the sights, sounds and smells of ancient woodland with veteran trees, heathland, bog, autumn colour and an unspoilt coastline with views of the Solent and Isle of Wight
- an extraordinary diversity of plants and animals of international importance
- a unique historic, cultural and archaeological heritage from royal hunting ground to ship-building, salt making and 500 years of military coastal defence
- an historic commoning system that maintains so much of what people know and love as 'the New Forest' forming the heart of a working landscape based on farming and forestry
- the iconic New Forest Pony together with donkeys, pigs and cattle roaming free
- tranquillity in the midst of the busy, built up south of England
- wonderful opportunities for quiet recreation, learning and discovery in one of the last extensive, gentle landscapes in the south including unmatched open access on foot and horseback
- a healthy environment: fresh air, clean water, local produce and a sense of 'wildness'
- strong and distinctive local communities with real pride in and sense of identity with their local area

The New Forest National Park Authority

Legal framework and remit

The National Park Authority's role is to ensure that the two purposes of national park designation are achieved:

- to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the Park; and
- to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the Park's special qualities by the public.

while also:

- seeking to foster the social and economic well-being of local communities within the National Park.

The National Park Authority was formally established on 1 April 2005 and took on its full statutory powers and responsibilities on 1 April 2006 as the local planning authority (responsible for spatial, and minerals and waste planning, development control and enforcement and tree work applications) and as the access authority and relevant authority for the National Park under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

The Authority is also required to:

- produce a Management Plan for the National Park; and
- administer a Sustainable Development Fund.

Apart from its statutory functions, the Authority has wide discretion in how to take forward national park purposes. It works closely with many organisations in the New Forest, some of whom have statutory or other responsibilities for taking the action needed to secure the achievement of national park purposes. The Authority's aim is to support the work of partners, fill gaps where no suitable action is taking place and avoid duplication. The full range of partnership working is set out in Sections A2 and A3 or the Performance Section of the Plan.

Organisation and funding

The Authority's 22 members have overall responsibility for making decisions, setting the strategic direction, policies and priorities for the National Park and ensuring efficient and effective use of resources. They act in the interests the National Park as a whole, reflecting both national and local perspectives. The membership, staff and Committee structure are summarised in **Appendix 2**.

All of the Authority's funding comes from central government (Defra), apart from fees raised from its services and successful bids for grants. This reflects the fact that unlike local councils the Authority is responsible, working with others, for looking after the National Park for the whole nation.

The Authority's strategies and plans

The Strategy for the New Forest was drawn up by the New Forest Committee in partnership with stakeholders in 2003. It was adopted by the National Park Authority as the **interim New Forest National Park Management Plan** and it can be viewed on the publications section of the Authority website www.newforestnpa.gov.uk

The replacement plan, the **New Forest National Park Plan**, which combines the national park management plan and the Local Development Framework Core Strategy was subject to formal consultation in summer 2008. The revised plan is expected to be submitted for approval before the end of 2009.

The New Forest National Park Plan is for the National Park as a whole and for all those with a stake in it, not just for the National Park Authority. It is intended to provide the long-term strategic policy framework for the National Park and to guide the work of the Authority and all the other organisations that contribute to the delivery of the national park purposes.

The Authority publishes a **Corporate Plan** each year which sets out its work programme for the coming year, how the Authority will achieve its objectives and how it has measured up to the targets it set itself the previous year. The Plan focuses largely on specific projects and action to achieve priority objectives rather than 'routine' work, other than the work as the local planning authority. The relationship between the National Park Plan, the Corporate Plan, other strategies and plans, and government policy is illustrated in the diagram on page 9.

The arrangements for producing a Corporate Plan are being reviewed and new arrangements will apply for 2010/11, to ensure that the Plan is aligned more closely with the National Park Plan.

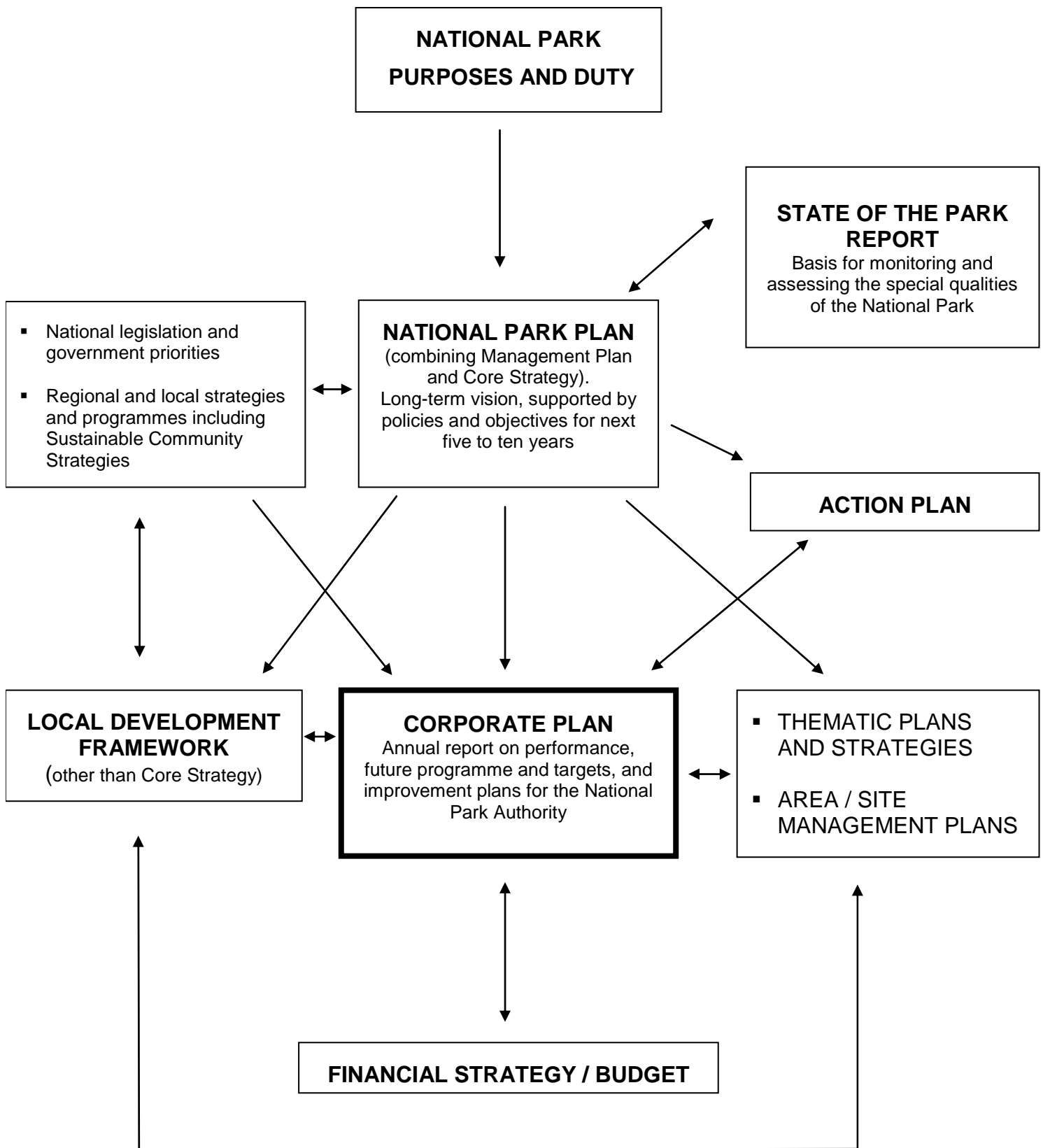
Our priorities

The Authority's aim

In 2006 the National Park Authority set itself the following aim to underpin its mission statement:

The New Forest National Park Authority will champion the New Forest National Park, working in partnership through co-ordinated and innovative policies and actions, which:

- conserve and enhance the unique environment of the New Forest National Park, and in particular the special qualities of its landscape, wildlife and cultural heritage;
- encourage everyone to understand and enjoy the New Forest National Park's special qualities, while ensuring that its character is not harmed; and
- support the social and economic well-being of local communities in ways that sustain the National Park's special character.



The Authority's priorities

The Authority's priorities were established in early 2006 following consultation with members and stakeholders and have remained largely unaltered since then. They are based on the interim Management Plan and are being used in 2009-2010 because new priorities arising from the National Park Plan were not available in time to inform the preparation of this Corporate Plan. Some changes in emphasis have taken place since 2006:

- work on both mitigating and adapting to climate change has increased in priority
- because a great deal has been achieved on support for commoning, activity in this area has moved away from direct funding issues, although the continuation of commoning remains fundamental to the conservation of the Forest.

The Authority's priorities for 2009-2010 are set out in the following two pages.

Priority objectives for the Authority's work in 2009-2010

A Champion the New Forest National Park, working in partnership through co-ordinated and innovative policies and action

- A1** Developing the Authority
- A2** Work with and through partners to achieve the Vision for the National Park and national park purposes
- A3** Provide a clear, up-to-date framework for the management of the National Park through a new strategic plan (the New Forest National Park Plan) by working with partners to review and replace the interim Management Plan and parts of the Development Plan
- A4** Develop spatial planning policies to support the deliver of the national park purposes and duty, working jointly with constituent and adjacent authorities
- A5** Provide a development control service and consultation process that helps to conserve and enhance the special qualities of the National Park, while supporting appropriate opportunities for economic and community development
- A6** Ensure that statutory and other relevant bodies' Section 62 responsibilities are fully recognised and delivered in both the South East and relevant parts of the South West region

C Conserve and enhance the unique environment of the New Forest National Park and in particular the special qualities of its landscape and cultural heritage

- C1** Develop strategies and support schemes to help sustain agriculture and promote thriving commoning 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 National Park
- C3** Conserve and enhance the nature conservation value of the New Forest National Park
- 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 and town 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 National Park and develop long-term strategies and any short-term actions to address these impacts

U Encourage everyone to understand and enjoy the National Park's special qualities, while ensuring that its character is not harmed

- U1** Produce a recreation and visitor management strategy to cover the National Park and surrounding areas
- U2** Review strategies and develop proposals to reduce the impact of traffic on the special qualities 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

SE Support the social and economic well-being of local communities in ways that sustain the New Forest National Park's special character

- 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

PERFORMANCE

Overview of 2008-2009

The first part of the year was dominated by finalising the consultation draft of the National Park Plan and Recreation Management Strategy, and the second half of the year in dealing with the results of the consultation. The volume and nature of responses to these documents meant that the objective of completing the Plan for adoption by the end of March 2009 could not be achieved and some other work in the Directorate of Strategy and Planning was also delayed.

During the summer staff were also heavily involved in the self-assessment process for the Peer Review, which culminated in a visit by the external Peer Review in early October.

After two years in operation, a review of the organisation's staffing structure was also completed and implemented. It involved some re-adjustment of working boundaries between directorates, to provide greater clarity, and a modest reduction in staffing on core services to free up resource for additional capacity on priority work on the two purposes, and some other areas such as climate change.

During the year efficiencies were also initiated through the pilot and roll out of internally tailored or developed systems for electronic data and records management of some core functions and for contacts management. For the first time the Authority was also able to record and assess levels of activity on its functions through an Authority-designed time recording system.

A review of the performance management system was initiated towards the end of the year and will be rolled out alongside the new Corporate Planning arrangements in the autumn of 2009-2010. During the year, the current performance management system was used to monitor progress and corporate risks were also kept under continuous review.

Overall, achievement of targets for work on the two purposes and duty improved over the previous year while work on spatial planning and on the completion of some outstanding Authority development work - particularly on HR policies and procedures was delayed. The delays in work on Authority development were due in part to some long-standing vacancies and also the volume of work in the latter part of the year arising from the re-organisation in combination with a very busy period of recruitment partly to fill new externally-funded fixed term posts. Work on achieving Investors in People accreditation was also held up, given other pressures on the HR function but also to anticipate the potential overlap in some areas with action to implement the Peer Review findings.

Financial Summary

The Authority's main source of funding is an annual grant from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). For 2009-2010 the grant is set at £4,121,000.

The Authority also expects to receive around £285,000 in fees for planning and related applications, £200,000 for the Sustainable Development Grant, £107,000 in Housing and Planning Delivery Grant and £34,000 interest on reserves. It has also received new grants totalling £64,000 for Habitat Regulations' Assessments, Climate Change and celebrations of the 60th Anniversary of National Parks. Significant external funding has also been secured in 2009-2010 consisting of £200,000 in grant-aid from Natural England towards the on-going work to bring Sites of Special Scientific Interest into good condition, £102,000 funding for Maritime Archaeology, £51,000 to support New Forest Local Produce and £25,000 towards New Forest Rangers.

The total funds available to the Authority are expected to be around £5.7 million including a transfer of £257,000 from the general reserve and carry forward of £163,000 from planned under-spending in 2008-2009. This is in line with the Authority's financial strategy for the period 2009-2012. The strategy does, however, recognise that with projected increases in the need to spend together with reductions in Defra grant, the current high level of reserves will be run down by 2011-2012, and the budget will not be sustainable. A major reconsideration of the medium term financial strategy is therefore planned for the summer of 2009.

The chart on this page illustrates the breakdown of planned expenditure between the main service activities in 2009-2010. The Authority's approved budget, using headings required by Defra is shown in **Appendix 3**.

