

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING - 13 SEPTEMBER 2007

DEVELOPING THE LANDSCAPE STRATEGY FOR THE NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK

Report by: Sarah Kelly, Landscape Officer, Conservation, Recreation and Sustainable Development

Summary:

This paper outlines the process and timetable proposed for developing a Landscape Strategy for the New Forest National Park.

Recommendation:

To note and approve the proposed timetable, preparation process, partnerships and scope for the Landscape Strategy.

Resources and Corporate Plan:

The strategy process will be coordinated by the New Forest National Park's landscape officer with input from other staff within the Authority. Financial resources to facilitate preparation workshops, consultation and report production have been allocated within existing budgets.

Corporate Plan objectives C2 and C5:

Conserve, restore or recreate landscapes, and their component parts, which reflect the special qualities of the New Forest National Park.
Work with the relevant authorities to minimise the impacts of air, noise, water and light pollution on the special qualities of the National Park.

Papers:

NFNPA 204/07: Cover paper

NFNPA 204/07: Annex 1 Outline of proposed groups

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Summary

This paper outlines the process and timetable proposed for developing a Landscape Strategy for the New Forest National Park.

1 Background

- 1.1 The New Forest landscape is sensitive, varied and complex and has been shaped by centuries of management by both people and animals. The special qualities that make the New Forest internationally renowned are under threat and a strategic approach is required to conserve and enhance its landscape.
- 1.2 The Strategy is a strategic land management plan for the New Forest. It will strive to maintain and enhance the distinctive sense of place and diversity of the New Forest's different landscapes and inform the Management Plan. It will also inform planning policies to ensure that new development respects the character of the landscape.
- 1.3 The Landscape Strategy will make reference to the two following initiatives:
 - 1.3.1 The European Landscape Convention (the Convention) was ratified by the UK Government on 21 November 2006 and it came into force on 1 March 2007¹. The Convention is the world's first landscape treaty and seeks to influence the importance which countries place on their landscape. Dr Roger Clarke, Natural England Board Member has said 'The convention is based on the assumption that landscape is a vital part of personal, regional and national identity. The convention speaks of landscape as an important part of people's quality of life. It suggests that the population should be involved in the assessment, protection, planning and management of landscape.'

¹ www.coe.int (Council for Europe website)

The Convention has a specific resonance in the New Forest National Park, with its definition of landscape being 'an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors'.

- 1.3.2 The Countryside Quality Counts project², which is sponsored by Natural England in partnership with Defra and English Heritage assesses how the countryside is changing, helps us to understand where change is occurring and whether change matters to people. The project focuses on the Joint Character Areas of England. The study has determined whether the scale and direction of change suggests that character has been maintained or enhanced, or alternatively, whether current changes suggest that an area remains neglected, or is continuing to transform. The New Forest's headline indicator was 'stable and maintained' in the period 1999 to 2003.

2 Content of the Landscape Strategy

2.1 The Strategy will address:

- the development of a robust, challenging and creative vision for the landscape of the New Forest, which will be adopted by the New Forest National Park Authority and key partners;
- the identification and examination of the different landscape types and landscape character areas as described in the New Forest District Landscape Character Assessment³;
- opportunities to conserve, enhance, restore and maintain the landscape of the New Forest and inform management and conservation policies. Referring to specific examples such as subdivision of fields for paddocks, grazing, conifer plantations, creeping urbanisation, light pollution and roadside clutter of signs;
- the most efficient way of informing Development Control about areas of the Forest that have particular sensitivities to development of different types;
- establishment of a baseline audit of the current state of the landscape and developing a system for the measurement of change.

2.2 It will take account of opportunities to promote:

- adaptation to climate change, including the fragile landscape of the coastal fringe;
- the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders to discuss the issues that affect the landscape of the New Forest;
- the engagement of the public in identifying pressures and subsequent impacts on the New Forest landscape;

² www.cgc.org.uk

³ New Forest District Council Character Assessment, NFDC. July 2000

- high quality development and land management practises (including the Forestry Commission's Forest Design Plan and the New Forest Association's Recovering Lost Landscapes paper⁴) which respect the character and environment of the New Forest;
- a greater understanding of the public perception of tranquillity and wilderness, with identification of where it is being lost and why;
- the reduction of noise, light and atmospheric pollution.

3 How the Landscape Strategy will be delivered

- 3.1 A Landscape Strategy Steering Group will be set up to oversee the development of the Strategy (using light touch project management), the remit and membership is set out in **Annex 1**. It is intended that the group will meet every two months, although this will remain flexible to reflect any fluctuations in the flow of information and research being undertaken, both in house, or by consultants.
- 3.2 A Landscape Strategy Forum (see **Annex 1** for remit and membership) will also be formed to enable consultation with a wider set of mainly New Forest stakeholders. It is intended that this group will meet once or twice, at critical points, such as prior to the publication of the draft and final Landscape Strategy.
- 3.3 Research, information gathering and analysis of existing documents will be undertaken both in house and by consultants. In house research will include the following:
- collation and analysis of existing GIS data sets relating to landscape character areas, landscape types and historic landscape groups;
 - assessment of existing documents/reports relating to landscape matters.

Consultants will be appointed to carry out the following:

- a review of the New Forest District Landscape Character Assessment (NFDC, July 2000) to critically assess its methodology and make recommendations for any updating that might be necessary;
- a landscape sensitivity study at district level to compliment the county level study being carried out by Hampshire County Council;
- a review of the Tranquillity Study carried out by the CPRE in 2006.

⁴ The New Forest Design Plan-Recovering Lost Landscapes. New Forest Association-Land Management sub-committee. October 2006

- 3.4 A facilitated formal consultation/engagement process will take place with key stakeholders, as part of the Management Plan Consultation. It will seek to:
- explore and understand the views of the stakeholder groups;
 - encourage a sense of ownership of the Landscape Strategy from stakeholders and interest groups;
 - identify and understand the issues to be addressed.
- 3.5 A draft Landscape Strategy will be produced, based on:
- confirmation of the major issues from the Landscape Steering Group;
 - analysis of the consultation/engagement process;
 - investigation of the issues;
 - development and evaluation of options and actions.
- 3.6 A final Landscape Strategy will be produced for adoption by the New Forest National Park Authority and key partners. This will establish a vision as well as key actions, targets and a monitoring mechanism. It will help inform the planning process and the New Forest National Park Management Plan. It will also be an accessible document to all the key partners who are involved with managing the landscape of the New Forest.

4 Timetable

- 4.1 A timetable of key actions for the process is presented in Table 1 below.

Table1: Outline of key stages planned in the preparation of the Landscape Strategy for the New Forest

Action	Timescale
Agree the project initiation document with key partners and the Landscape Strategy Steering Group	Autumn 2007
Research and survey – analysis of the current landscape character assessment resource and landscape sensitivity study methodology, trends and issues	Winter 2007/Spring 2008
Stakeholder consultation and consensus on issues and options for action (where possible this will utilise the Management Plan consultation workshops)	Autumn 2007
Member consultation on issues and options	Winter 2007
Prepare draft strategy	Spring/Summer 2008
Approval from members of draft strategy	Autumn 2008
Stakeholder and public consultation on draft strategy	Winter 2008
Approval of final strategy by members and adoption	Spring 2009
Launch event	Spring/Summer 2009

5 Engaging with stakeholders and the public

- 5.1 Opportunities will be afforded for consultation and engagement with the strategy production as shown in Table 1. Where possible, opportunities will be taken to utilise relevant consultation workshops planned for the National Park Management Plan. These will enable results of the research and survey to be communicated and views obtained on issues and options for action.
- 5.2 The draft Strategy will be the subject of a final consultation period. Key stakeholders, wider partners and the public will be targeted for their views. Consultation surgeries will be held to enable discussion of views directly with the landscape officer.

Recommendation

To note and approve the proposed timetable, preparation process, partnerships and scope for the Landscape Strategy.

**NFNPA 204/07
Annex 1**

Outline of proposed groups

	Internal Project Team	Landscape Strategy Steering Group	Landscape Strategy Forum
Remit	To ensure that there is coordination and cross fertilization between the various strategies currently due to be produced by the New Forest National Park Authority.	To actively contribute to the drafting of the Landscape Strategy. To steer the production of the strategy and monitor subsequent delivery actions.	To support the Landscape Strategy by contributing actions to fulfil strategic aims identified in the strategy.
Membership	Director of Conservation, Recreation and Sustainable Development, Landscape officer, Head of Policy and Plans, Senior Planner, Ecologist and Archaeologist.	Landscape architect from Hampshire County Council, Wiltshire County Council, New Forest District Council, Salisbury District Council, Test Valley Borough Council and representatives from Natural England, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and English Heritage.	Forestry Commission, New Forest Association, Commoners Defence Association, Verderers Court, National Trust, NFNEA, New Forest Consultative Panel.
Input required	Attendance at meetings, ownership of Landscape Strategy actions and incorporation into other corporate work.	Contributing data and information. Active participation in meetings. Actively assisting production. Actively supporting action by adopting objectives into corporate work programmes and allocating resources accordingly.	Contributions to the content of the landscape Strategy, agreeing objectives and taking ownership of the final document.