



Annual Review 2016 – 2017





Chairman's and Chief Executive's statement

This year has been all about partnership. In particular, it has been the first year of working together to deliver on our Partnership Plan published last year and taking forward our £4.5 million 'Our Past Our Future' Heritage Lottery Fund scheme.

In the following pages under our themes of 'Protect, Enjoy, Prosper and Achieving Excellence' there are many examples of joint working in action, including nearly 15,000 hours donated by volunteers to help care for the Forest. Habitats have been restored, water quality tested and archaeological features recorded. Hundreds of people helped with the Great British Spring Clean weekend in the Forest, collecting over 250 bags of litter to tidy up the landscape and ensure our stock and wildlife aren't harmed. A campaign to protect our precious fungi from large-scale commercial picking was supported by a range of partners for the first time during the autumn.

This action comes at a time when communities continue to grow and change around us, in particular in response to requirements for new homes. Change is also likely in the way land management in the Forest is supported in response to Brexit.

As a result, many people believe we're at a pivotal moment in the Forest's history and there is a growing feeling that now is the time for people to really come together to put the Forest first.

The foundations of partnership reflected in this review are vital; whilst

organisations like the National Park Authority have a remit to care for the Forest and help people enjoy and understand what is special about it, all of us who love the Forest have a responsibility to work together to ensure it thrives for future generations.

This year we launched a review of our Local Plan which will be physically shaping the future of the New Forest National Park – over 800 people attended community sessions to feed in views and find out more about proposed planning policies.

Building wider partnerships beyond our boundaries has also been in focus as we instigated the Green Halo Partnership. This brings businesses, communities and charities together to find ways to ensure our environment flourishes as an integral part of our wider area's thriving economy and society.

We have also been working with key partners to consider the approach to managing recreation in and around the National Park. As a result, we prepared our Future Forest consultation for launch in summer 2017, to gather a wide range of opinions about which aspects of recreation management we should prioritise.

Key questions we want to address together include:

- How can we provide the best recreational experience for local people and our visitors?
- How do we best protect the very thing people come to see – the spectacular, yet fragile landscape which is a haven for many rare wildlife species?
- How can we ensure limited resources are spent wisely?

In the coming year we intend to build on these vital partnerships and think about how we put the Forest first together with a range of organisations and individuals and shape it for future generations. A big thank you goes to all staff, members, partners, communities and individuals who have contributed to the successes this year and in anticipation of continued collaboration as we look to the future.

Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre, Chairman

Alison Barnes, Chief Executive



Main cover photo: Senior Tree Officer Nik Gruber helps Isla Rainbow to plant the first tree of a new community woodland in Ashurst at the 2016 Family Trees event

Cover photos left to right: Hedgelaying at Linwood; Pony and foal © Richard Alderman; Bluebells in Roydon Woods © Maggie Wood

Current page: Waterside pony © Luke Parkinson

About the New Forest National Park Authority

Our vision

The Vision for the National Park in 20 years' time is of an area which has a unique and immediately recognisable sense of place, where:

- tranquillity and a feeling of naturalness pervade large parts of the Park
- the mosaic of distinctive landscapes and habitats are all of the highest quality and a great variety of wildlife is able to flourish
- there is a strong sense and understanding of the heritage and living culture of the Forest
- all visitors can gain inspiration, health and well-being and enjoy the extensive areas of land with open access
- the far reaching consequences of climate change are taken into account in all policies and future plans
- people live and work sustainably and contribute to the care of the Forest
- local, regional and national organisations recognise the value of the National Park and there is a shared understanding of its role within the wider area
- everyone contributes in appropriate ways to keeping the National Park a special place for present and future generations.

Our mission – National Park purposes

As guardians of a national park the New Forest National Park Authority has statutory purposes and socio-economic responsibilities as specified in the Environment Act of 1995:

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area
- To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Park by the public.

Working in partnership with other organisations it is also the Authority's duty to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of the local communities within the National Park.

We like to sum this up as:

**Protect
Enjoy
Prosper**



Right: National Parks,
Britain's breathing spaces
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Our Authority board members 2016-17

National Park Authority members have overall responsibility for making decisions. They are responsible for setting policies and priorities, ensuring efficient and effective use of resources, and that money is well spent. It is their job to represent the interests of the National Park and to balance out any conflicting pressures.

Thanks go to all members who have served over the last year, in particular to Sally Arnold who sadly passed away this year. Sally was a greatly respected and popular member of the Authority, who will be missed enormously.

Local authority appointees



David Harrison,
Chairman of the
Resources, Audit
and Performance
Committee



Edward Heron,
Deputy Chairman
of the Authority



Gordon Bailey



Richard Frampton



Penny Jackman



Julian Johnson



Andy Moore



Keith Mans



Leo Randall,
Deputy Chairman
of the Planning
Committee



Barry Rickman



Ken Thornber



Pat Wyeth,
Chairman of
the Planning
Committee

Secretary of State appointees



Oliver
Crosthwaite-Eyre,
Chairman of
the Authority



Phil Marshall



John Pemberton



Marian Spain,
Deputy Chairman
of the Resources,
Audit and
Performance
Committee



Dr Russell Wynn



Position to
be filled

Parish appointees



Sally Arnold



George Bisson



Harry Oram



John Sanger

Our 22 members do not represent any particular political group. Driven by the National Park purposes and duty, they work with officers to establish and then deliver our work programme, with operational aspects delegated to officers.

- 12 are appointed by the county, district, and borough councils with land within the National Park
- six are appointed by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- four are selected from the Parish Councils within the National Park.

My year as a volunteer

Find out more about the wonderful volunteers working to conserve and enhance the New Forest and sign up for yourself at newforestnpa.gov.uk/volunteer.



'During 2016 I got involved with three different projects. Nature's Stepping Stones had me scrub bashing and clearing trees, an archaeological dig at Buckler's Hard had me uncovering the past and the Living Waters project introduced me to water testing. Without exception all were enjoyable experiences with opportunities to meet wonderful people and learn skills. It's great to feel that through the National Park Authority I'm making a positive, albeit small, contribution to New Forest conservation for future generations.'

John Rowan, Barton on Sea



'I helped to clear the ground for heathland restoration. I run, cycle or walk in the New Forest most days and I want to give something back and to help the Forest thrive in any way that I can. I love being outdoors in the beautiful surroundings and I met some fantastic people who share my passion for the Forest and the outdoors. I am looking forward to getting involved in more volunteer projects soon.'

Gemma Russhard, Tiptoe



'I volunteered to pull Himalayan balsam this year and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. We went to many different places, some where the balsam was very dense and other places where the impact of previous pulls could be seen. I found the work satisfying and very enjoyable, being on land the general public don't get to, with the peace and beauty of the area being an added bonus.'

Patsy Baverstock, Southampton



'I joined the team of volunteers for several sessions clearing invasive trees at Harrow Wood in Bransgore. The progress we made at each session gave me an enormous sense of satisfaction – despite some poor weather conditions! I enjoyed it so much I persuaded my daughter to join during her school holiday and she had a blast! I will definitely do it again.'

Ian Searle, Bransgore



'As a member of the New Forest RSPB group I was invited to volunteer for two New Forest bird surveys. Our Past, Our Future and New Forest Winter Birds Survey have helped me discover different parts of the New Forest and improve my bird identification ability.'

I feel I am doing something worthwhile by contributing statistics of bird counts and it has helped improve my quality of life by getting out in the fresh air and meeting similarly minded people.'

Graham Kesby, Southampton





PROTECT

Planning for the future



'Our planning service is a crucial tool in our work to protect the Forest for future generations. Over the last year we have been welcoming your views on a review of our planning policies. These policies are a key way through which we protect the National Park's special qualities, support the local economy and conserve the distinctive New Forest character of our communities.'

Pat Wyeth, Chairman of the Planning Committee

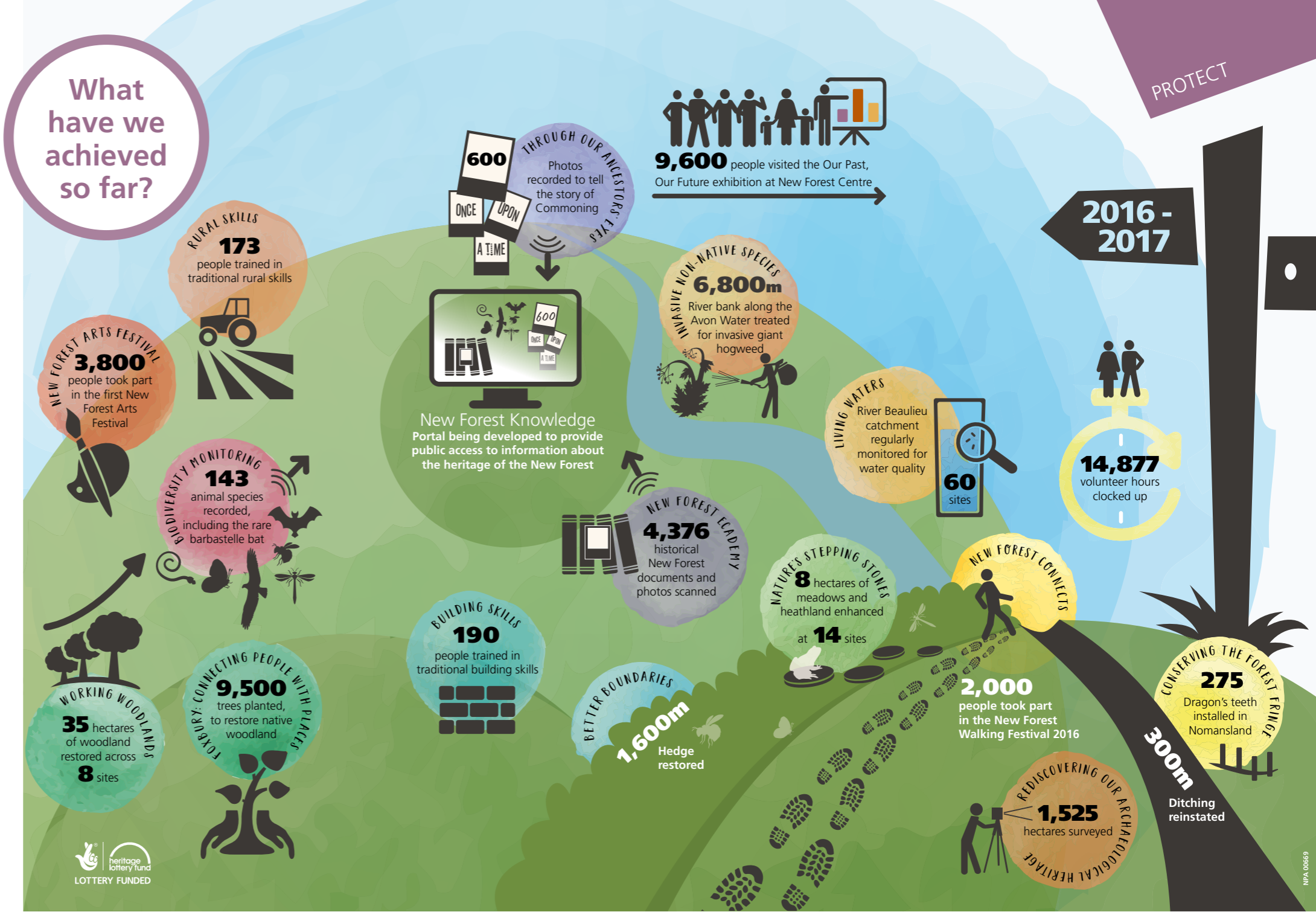
Marking a successful year for landscape partnership

Work has continued apace on the £4.4 million Heritage Lottery Fund Our Past, Our Future landscape partnership scheme. It aims to restore lost habitats, develop traditional Forest skills and inspire a new generation of people to cherish and care for the National Park.

We are leading the five year landscape partnership alongside 10 key partners. As well as having an overall coordination and reporting role we are leading on 10 of the 21 projects, with some highlights including:

- Our archaeology team and volunteers have been uncovering and conserving hidden, unknown and decaying heritage sites and archaeological features throughout the Forest. Highlights have included a week-long archaeology dig at Buckler's Hard, heritage mapping using laser scanning and churchyard monument surveys.
- We are working with the Forestry Commission, National Trust, Hampshire County Council and Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust to offer two environmental conservation apprenticeships per year over four years. The first two Apprentice Rangers have completed courses in manual handling, chainsaw operations and first aid.
- The Historic Routes and Past Pathways project is underway, investigating the history behind the rights of way in the New Forest. Volunteers are currently researching historic documents about existing rights of way and collecting stories and memories of the routes from historic publications before they walk the proposed new trails.
- The Ecademy project, led by the New Forest Centre, held a conference attended by 160 people on 'Ecology and management of the New Forest in an era of climate change'.
- The Common Cause projects, led by the Commoners Defence Association, are raising awareness and understanding of the past, current and future role that commoning has in the Forest, including campaigns for safe driving on Open Forest roads, giving a voice to commoners and restoring the Verderers' Hall.

newforestnpa.gov.uk/landscapepartnership



From left to right:

1. (L-R) Volunteers Bill and Audrey Clark, Angele Peters Land Advice Service, Richard Austin NPA and Gemma Russhard
2. Participants at a timber framing course at Buckler's Hard
3. Volunteers at a week-long archaeology dig at Buckler's Hard as part of the annual Festival of Archaeology
4. Surveying the graveyard at Christ Church, Emery Down
5. Audrey and Bill Clark scrub bashing at Avon Tyrrell



Project partners:





800
people attended
Local Plan drop-in
sessions

Reviewing our planning policies

Our planning policies are a key way in which we protect the National Park's special qualities, support the local economy and conserve the distinctive New Forest character of our communities.

The national planning system has changed significantly in recent years so we are updating our planning policies to ensure they continue to provide a clear framework for planning decisions in the Park.

The review of our planning policies started in summer 2015 and included a formal public consultation on the main issues to be addressed through the new Local Plan. As part of this initial consultation, we also launched

a 'call for sites', inviting landowners and other parties to put forward land which they would like to be considered for development.

The responses received in 2015 informed the preparation of a consultation draft Local Plan. Following awareness raising over summer 2016 (at the New Forest Show, parish quadrant meetings, the New Forest Consultative Panel and the annual planning agent's meeting), the draft Local Plan was

the subject of further consultation over eight weeks in autumn 2016.

More than 800 people attended a series of public drop-in sessions and nearly 400 written responses were received from organisations and individuals. Responses were received on a wide range of topics, including the approach to new development in the National Park to meet identified local housing needs, the need to sustain the local economy and the protection afforded to the wealth of habitats in the New Forest.

Steve Avery, National Park Authority Executive Director of Strategy and Planning, said: 'Our current policies continue to serve us well – 85% of the latest appeals have been dismissed, with the Planning Inspectorate offering strong support for our local planning policies.'

'However national and local changes mean we need to update our policies and feedback from this latest consultation will help revise the document, before the submission draft Local Plan is published for further public comment during autumn 2017.'

An updated draft version of the Local Plan will be published for a final period of public consultation in October 2017. It will then be submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination in early 2018. The Local Plan is expected to be adopted in late 2018 and will then form the basis for planning decisions within the Park.

Innovative housing celebrated

Our innovative affordable housing scheme in Bransgore was shortlisted in this year's Royal Town Planning Institute's (RTPI) Awards for Planning Excellence.

Being shortlisted in the Excellence in Planning to Deliver Housing category recognised the success of our scheme to build and let two affordable homes to local families.

A first for a National Park, we had to set up a new legal framework to allow us to construct the homes and become a landlord.

Pictured right are Alison Barnes, Desmond Swayne MP and Richard Frampton at the scheme opening

Around 80 people are on the council waiting list in the Bransgore area alone, and the New Forest housing market makes it difficult for many local people to find affordable homes to allow them to stay in the area.

The land at Ringwood Road was kindly provided on a 999 year lease by local landowner Richard Frampton, who is a National Park Authority member, specifically for affordable housing.



'We are pleased that our pioneering scheme to provide much-needed affordable housing in the New Forest has been recognised in this way. We hope it will inspire other landowners to bring forward similar sites in the future.'

Steve Avery Executive Director of Strategy and Planning

Recognising the Forest's best new buildings

The New Forest is well known for its free roaming animals, wide open heathland and ancient commoning traditions.

But the area's distinctive and attractive buildings also make an important contribution to its unique character.

So for the last couple of years we have been recognising the best new developments in the

New Forest National Park with our Building Design Awards.

The awards celebrate high quality development and recognise the contribution that excellent design makes to the built environment of the National Park.

The 2016 Design Awards panel, made up of National Park Authority members, chose the following winners:

Winners of the 2016 Building Design Awards



• **Best Individual Building**
Naboths Vineyard, Minstead



• **Best Larger Development**
The Boltons, Lyndhurst



• **Certificate of High Commendation:**
Woodis, Setley



• **Best Extension**
Cottage, Redlynch



PROTECT

An insight into our tree-mendous team

By **Nik Gruber**, Senior Tree Officer

The New Forest is packed full of interesting, ancient and special trees of all shapes and sizes. As the tree team, we work across the National Park and beyond to protect them.

We work with local tree contractors to ensure the Forest's trees are managed sensitively and make sure that any work undertaken is carried out using best practice. Not only does this ensure procedures are followed, it also creates important partnerships that will benefit the Forest and local businesses.

Our team undertakes a number of different statutory functions, from making tree preservation orders, of which there are more than 2,700, to providing advice on planning applications. This protects trees that might be affected by building work and ensures work on protected trees is appropriate.

This has been a busy year for the team. As well as our day to day planning work, we have been working as part of the Heritage Lottery Fund Our Past, Our Future scheme to help people understand more about ancient trees and how to manage them.

We also ran our Family Trees event again, where families come together to celebrate a birth, marriage or life of a relative by planting a sapling.

Over 300 people planted trees at Ashurst and Colbury Recreation Ground as part of the event in December, helping to create a new community woodland in the Forest. The next Family Trees planting event will take place in December 2017 in Brockenhurst.

Find out more about our work at newforestnpa.gov.uk/trees.

Did you know?

Our tree team is protecting **2,700** trees with tree preservation orders



Did you know?

Over the last year **173** people have been trained in traditional rural skills

Teaching traditional skills for the modern world

In rural communities, traditional skills such as hedge laying, scything and cattle breeding are becoming increasingly scarce. Without them, an environmentally-friendly aspect of Britain's rural heritage would be lost forever.

So the New Forest Land Advice Service has developed a rural skills training programme with the Commoners Defence Association for farmers, commoners, and other landowners and land managers around the New Forest. This is complemented by a mentoring scheme that has paired six experienced commoners with new and young commoners so that they can pass on their expertise and knowledge in order to help preserve the Forest's traditional practices such as head collar training, microchipping livestock and tagging calves.

Over the last year 173 people were trained in traditional rural skills through 13 courses at Sparsholt College, including chainsaw maintenance and cross cutting, tractor driving and 10 bespoke courses run by experts in the New Forest, such as tree safety and surveying and cattle breeding and management. The training

programme forms part of the Heritage Lottery Fund Our Past, Our Future landscape partnership scheme, which we lead with 10 key partners.

Local farmer Andrew Gill from South Gorley attended three of the training courses in 2016. These covered the use of pesticides and hedgerow management.

Andrew said: 'The hedgerow management course I attended in November 2016, together with a practical hedge laying course I went to in 2015, inspired me to lay a section of my boundary hedge during the winter and it has received positive comments from neighbours and passers-by. Without the course I would have struggled to source the stakes and binders and lacked the confidence to proceed.'

Local landowners have expanded their knowledge of best practice in habitat management of grasslands, hedgerows and woodlands as a result of their involvement, ensuring a greater level of expertise across the Forest.

The Land Advice Service has also provided the opportunity for additional training to participants in the Mentor Scheme by supplying

them with a voucher to use towards a Rural Skills course of their choice. To date, participants have completed qualifications in tractor driving, chainsaw maintenance, safe use of pesticides and learnt more about managing livestock on their holding.

Working in partnership with the Land Advice Service, we ran the first hedge laying open day in February. This rare opportunity to learn the secrets of traditional hedge laying and its management was attended by 47 people of all ages and featured demonstrations and the chance to ask expert hedge layer Andrew Birnie about the importance of this Forest skill.

The 2017 training calendar for the Rural Skills project can be found online at newforestnpa.gov.uk/training



'It has been extremely rewarding to see first-hand the benefits of upskilling local landowners and young commoners around the Forest through the training programme.'

Richard Austin New Forest Land Advice Service Training and Mentoring Coordinator

Improving the Forest on a grand scale

We work in partnership with the Verderers, Natural England and the Forestry Commission to run the New Forest Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) scheme. It is a rare opportunity to improve and conserve the New Forest's historical sites, commoning tradition and fragile habitats for future generations. The £19m scheme began in 2010 and over the last year it has made great strides to ensure the Forest flourishes in the future.

Advice for commoners

Over the last 12 months, the HLS scheme has provided much-needed support and grants to hundreds of commoners through grants and land management advice.

The scheme also contributes to the cost of micro-chipping New Forest ponies when they are sold at Beaulieu Road Salesyard, and supplies reflective collars for ponies and cattle.

Award-winning archaeologists

A high-tech approach funded by the HLS scheme, which has identified over 3,000 historical sites in the New Forest, was judged the UK's number one archaeological innovation of the last half century.

Laser mapping technique 'Lidar' was named as Current Archaeology magazine's Archaeological Innovation of the Last 50 Years, with the New Forest's heritage mapping project chosen as the best example.

A Forest education for all

More than 3,000 youngsters learnt more about nature on educational visits to the New Forest over the last year.

In total, 3,385 children from 50 schools and colleges visited the National Park for free to learn about rivers, how to care for the Forest and the impacts of tourism.

Restoring precious wetlands

Monitoring of wetland restoration within the HLS scheme has been increased to extend its benefits for rare species and habitats.

So far, the scheme has returned more than nine miles of streams to their natural meandering routes, protecting the New Forest's internationally-important wetlands by slowing water flow.

Monitoring work has been expanded to gather an even greater range of scientifically robust evidence concerning the effectiveness of its various restoration techniques. The work will shed more light on the environmental benefits of the scheme and any improvements that could be made in the future.



Preserving precious fungi

The New Forest is a wonderful place to see fungi, which makes it a very special and nationally-important area.

There has been an increasing trend for foraging in recent years and this puts additional pressures on areas such as the New Forest. Due to the growing concern from conservation bodies and very real fears from members of the local community, we have worked with the Forestry Commission to remove permission for picking on any scale from the New Forest Site of Special Scientific Interest.



Restored stream at Akercombe Bottom near Linford

PROTECT

Helping people be Forest friendly

The New Forest National Park is a great place to spend time in the great outdoors, but how can you help us care for this special place when you visit?



Case Study: Reducing animal accidents

In partnership with other organisations, we have continued our efforts to reduce the number of animal accidents on the New Forest's unfenced roads.

During 2016, 63 animals were killed as a result of a road accident, an increase on 2015 but still at historically low levels.

Every animal death is a tragedy for the Forest and the animal's owner, so we are always looking for opportunities to protect them.

New initiatives this year included:

- supplying more than 30,000 animal emergency hotline cards to be sent with new parking clocks to local people by New Forest District Council
- supporting the Commoners Defence Association in its Shared Forest project, working with local businesses and employers to increase awareness of the free-roaming animals among their staff
- working with Hampshire County Council to install new signage on high risk roads in the north of the Forest



'The combined work of several organisations, commoners and other local people have helped reduce the percentage of animals dying on Forest roads to historically low levels, but there is no room for complacency. Updated maps and analyses of accident statistics on our website clearly show routes, and times of day and year, that have the highest risk, but it's up to us all to drive very carefully whenever we set off. Go slowly, and pass animals slow and wide!'

Nigel Matthews
Head of Recreation
Management and Learning



Case Study: Keeping the Forest clean

This spring we helped organise the Great British Spring Clean in the New Forest, bringing together hundreds of volunteers to collect 250 bags of litter.

The volunteers joined our rangers and representatives from New Forest District Council, Forestry Commission and the Verderers over the three day event.

Some of the more unusual items found over the weekend of litter picking included a gazebo, golf caddy, BBQs and a giant pineapple-shaped bottle. A bank vole was found to have sought shelter in an old pair of walking boots, highlighting the impact litter can have on local wildlife.

The spring clean expanded on the litter assemblies delivered by our education team to 44 schools and nearly 9,500 children, double last year's total.



'It's fantastic to see so many people coming together to help keep their towns, villages and forest clean. Our thanks go to all the volunteers who took part and to the organisers for making it happen.'

Clr Barry Rickman,
Leader of New Forest
District Council

The issue

Ground nesting birds

The New Forest is a great place for all sorts of birds, especially those that nest on the ground in the open heathland and mires.

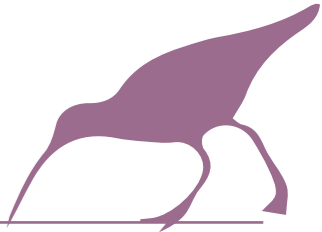
Some of these species are declining rapidly so we need to keep disturbance to a minimum.

What we have done

- Helped develop a dog walking code, compiled with dog owners and wildlife enthusiasts.
- Raising awareness through talking to walkers, education sessions with children, and talks at puppy training classes
- Improvements to recreational sites that are close to where people live to encourage people away from the sensitive breeding areas

What you can do

- To help rare ground nesting birds rear their young safely, keep yourself, dogs and ridden horses on the main tracks from the beginning of March to the end of July.



Animal accidents

The last year saw a rise in the number of accidents involving animals on New Forest roads to 63 killed. Every animal killed is a great loss to the Forest, and to its owner. However, the overall trend since 1991 is clearly downwards.

- Facilitated the Animal Accident Reduction Group which meets to review recent accident records and trends and consider what more can be done about them
- Distributed credit card sized animal emergency hotline cards and car window stickers
- Raised awareness in local press and on social media
- Developed signs with changing messages with the Highway Authority.

- The ponies and other animals have no road sense and frequently stand or walk on the unfenced roads, so give them (and walkers, cyclists and horse-riders) a wide berth and be especially careful when driving at night.



Wildfires

The forest is particularly vulnerable to the risk of wildfires; the majority are commonly started by arson, discarded cigarettes, barbeques and campfires.

- Raising awareness of the dangers of wildfires, especially amongst young people through our education programmes

- To reduce the risk of damaging wildfires, campfires are not permitted without the landowner's permission. Disposable BBQs are welcome at Bolderwood, Blackwater and Wilverley where stands and water are available. Raised non-disposable BBQs are allowed on the hard-standing areas of car parks, providing water is available. You can hire fixed stand party-sized BBQs from the Forestry Commission (call 0300 067 4601), and two barbecue sites are available for hire at Lepe Country Park provided by Hampshire County Council (please book in advance at: hants.gov.uk/lepe).



Litter

The New Forest's unspoilt natural beauty is one of the things that people value most about the area and litter can spoil this, as well as harming livestock and wildlife.

- We work with partner organisations, especially the Forestry Commission and New Forest District Council, to raise awareness of the problems caused by litter and to tackle them.
- We help organise and participate in the annual spring clean
- The education team and rangers attend school assemblies and talk to thousands of students about litter.

- Your food and litter could harm the ponies and donkeys. Please put your litter in a bin or take it home with you if bins are full.
- Volunteer on a local litter pick.



Forest animals

The system of commoning is vital to the New Forest. Many people do not understand that without it and the people who own the ponies, cattle and other animals, the open Forest would become overgrown, resulting in the loss of many heathland wildlife species.

- We support the work of commoners in raising awareness of the importance of the animals and their grazing.
- Rangers discourage people who are feeding the animals
- Pony-proof litter bins carry the message that 'Your food and litter could harm the ponies and donkeys. Please take yours home if this bin is full'.

- For their safety and your own please leave the animals alone – although owned and cared for by local people called commoners, they are unpredictable and best treated as wild. Please don't feed or pet them; there is plenty of natural food and it's best that they don't come to rely on people's attention. They may look friendly but they can bite and kick, especially mares with foals.





ENJOY

Inspiring people to care



'The New Forest is a special place for many millions of people who visit each year. We aim to help them learn more about the special qualities of the National Park when they visit, in the hope that this will encourage them to care for the area. This includes not dropping litter, being aware of animals when driving, or staying on the main tracks during ground nesting bird season. By working with visitors we can ensure that they help to preserve the very thing they come to see, this beautiful yet fragile landscape.'

Leo Randall, Deputy Chairman of
the Planning Committee

Family at Lepe Country Park



Marking an important anniversary

Many people are familiar with the origins of the New Forest, designated as a royal hunting forest by William the Conqueror around 1079, with forest laws and harsh punishments for breaking them.

But how did living in the Forest transform from a strict feudal system to the free society we enjoy today?

The long march to freedom for Forest dwellers began in 1217 when the 'Carta de Foresta', or Charter of the Forest, was reissued by the then nine-year-old king Henry III.

This bill of rights meant 'free men' became less restricted in how they could make use of the Forest and enjoyed new-found rights.

This year is the 800th anniversary of the Charter and we are marking it with a creation of a new Charter for Trees, Woods and People.



Top picture: Medieval hunting scene images from Gaston Phoebeus: Le Livre de la Chasse. Courtesy of the National Library of France

Thousands discover art in New Forest National Park

Over 3,800 people discovered art in the National Park in summer 2016 through the first New Forest Arts Festival.

The event encouraged visitors and residents to engage in the Forest's rich creative community and explore new parts of the Forest, with a diverse range of events in over 20 locations.

These included a performance of Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream in a treehouse, an art exhibition in a castle and a creative walk from a pub.

Thanks to the Heritage Lottery Fund, many of the events were free or discounted, making them accessible for families of all ages, adults with learning disabilities and the more mature generation.

The Festival drew to a close with a Showcase Day at Lyndhurst Community Centre, featuring works that had been produced throughout the Festival and artists that had taken part.

We led the event with local creative organisations to celebrate the Forest's landscape and culture through a variety of art forms.

To find out more about future Arts Festival events, visit newforestnpa.gov.uk/artsfestival



Cartoonist Simon Chadwick drawing at Lyndhurst Library

Helping people volunteer

We helped to match hundreds of budding volunteers with local organisations at our seventh annual New Forest Volunteer Fair.

Over 700 people came along looking to change their life through volunteering, a 40% increase on last year's event. The 46 organisations in attendance included groups as diverse as the RNLI, Exbury Gardens, Girlguiding, Maritime Archaeology Trust, the Forestry Commission and the National Trust.

Award-winning volunteer Brian Matthews joined National Park Authority chief executive Alison Barnes and Julian Lewis MP to open the fair. Brian, from Lymington, spent an astonishing 400 hours volunteering in 2016, and was named Project Champion for the New Forest non-native plants project.

Photos from top left: New Forest Nightstop at 2017 volunteer fair, Brian Matthews and Catherine Chatters © Ashley Basil



'I had even more people signing up to volunteer with our project than we have done in previous years and once again there was such an encouraging, enthusiastic "buzz" in the air all day.'

Catherine Chatters Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust

Guardians of the Rings



Reinterpreting Buckland Rings

We joined with local arts charity SPUD Youth, Hampshire County Council and St Barbe Museum to commission artists to work with young people to reinterpret an Iron Age hill fort.

Buckland Rings is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and important area of green space to the north of Lymington. It is rare to find such a well preserved hill fort so close to the coast in the South of England.

To bring alive the site's Iron Age past, a Heritage Lottery Fund grant (from the Young Roots programme) was secured to install the Guardians of the Rings, an eye-catching installation for the entrance to the site.

Atop a grassy knoll overlooking the hill fort are new carved wooden benches created by Brockenhurst-based artist Nicola Henshaw.

There are also two waymarked walks, known as the 'Ramparts Walk' and the 'Meadows Walk', with interpretation panels designed and illustrated by Christchurch-based artist Harrison Alcock. Along the route is an incredible tactile 3D metal plan of the site, created from laser mapping data from our National Park archaeologists. This reveals the shape of the site hidden beneath the trees.

For more information visit spudyouth.org/buckland-rings



'The Buckland Rings project has been an amazing opportunity for the young people to work with a wide range of professionals and project partners. Their interest and enthusiasm for the project has resulted in the creation of some fantastic new public art for Lymington along with much-needed visitor information for this important site.'

Mark Drury Co-Director of SPUD and Project Manager

Inspiring young people to care for the Forest

It is widely accepted that young people today have significantly fewer opportunities for outside activity than the generations before them. Typically, they spend increasing amounts of time at home using digital technology and social media.

We want to enthuse young people about spending time outside in the New Forest and enable them to enjoy, understand and care for the natural environment.

To achieve this, we have been helping children and young adults connect with the New Forest through schemes such as the National Citizenship Service (NCS), The Prince's Trust and the John Muir Award. We also instigated the New Forest Youth Action Project (NFYAP), a group of 10 Forest organisations offering engagement programmes to youth organisations.

The benefits of outdoor learning have been proven; children exposed to nature score higher on traits such as concentration, behaviour and observational skills, as well as in education.

So how can we inspire younger generations to get outside and care for the Forest?

One approach is a national programme aimed at developing skills such as confidence, leadership and independence, run by the NCS. Together with the Forestry Commission we have run the programme with 20 school leavers talking about the Forest's special qualities. By the end of summer 2017 we will have engaged with over 800 school leavers with the help of volunteers.

Research has shown that outdoor activities within nature appear to improve the concentration levels of a child with learning difficulties by 30%, an improvement that extends into the home and classroom. As part of the NFYAP project, rangers worked with staff from the Cambian

group of schools, located around the Forest. They identified sensory exercises and elements of wild play that will give them confidence to bring their students with severe learning difficulties into the Forest on their own.

Through The Prince's Trust programme rangers took part in a workshop examining how to better engage with young people in the outdoors. Over the last year we have helped 80 'NEET' (not in education, employment or training) young people aged between 16 and 23 take part in a week-long series of practical and educational activities across the Forest.

The John Muir Award has also been introduced in the New Forest, with considerable success.

The John Muir Discovery Award was achieved by 16 Brockenhurst College students as part of their Uniformed Public Services Diploma, and 16 year 10 students studying Horticulture and Animal Welfare at Priestlands School, Lymington.

It is such experiences and connections which can lead to a desire to protect and conserve the natural environment in adulthood. David Attenborough sums it up by saying: 'No one will protect what they don't care about and no one will care about what they have never experienced.'

What do the students say?

'I didn't know anyone and wouldn't have talked to them in any other classes, but having to work as a team to get things done helped us all get on.'

Holly

'It was really fun and it was so nice to get out of a classroom and learn loads without having to write.'

Isobel



Walkers with ranger Craig Daters near Ashurst

Walking festival makes great strides

The New Forest Walking Festival was a huge success in its fourth year, with almost 2,000 walkers learning about the New Forest during the two week event.

The festival took place between 15 and 30 October, with over 80 walks available. Walks covered a diverse range of activities, including wild play events for children, tours round historical sites, bird watching and even alpaca walks.

Some of the walks rewarded participants with discounted tickets if they left their car behind and arrived by public transport.

We received a huge amount of positive feedback from walkers, saying the walks they attended were 'fantastic', 'well organised and informative' and that they got the chance to explore new parts of the National Park.

The event is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund through the Our Past, Our Future landscape partnership scheme.

The New Forest Walking Festival will return from 14 to 29 October 2017
newforestnpa.gov.uk/walkingfestival

99%

of walkers who left feedback said they enjoyed the Festival

Seasonal rangers' summer success

Our Seasonal Rangers Georgia Spooner and Matt Heaver had a summer of success organising family fun activities to help people learn how to care for the Forest at several campsites run by Camping in the Forest. Over 3,000 people took part in the activities between the end of July and early September, and over 450 people joined in with guided dusk walks.



New top dog

A new four-legged 'apprentice' is learning how to be a forest friendly dog with our ranger team. Follow Cooper the cocker spaniel on Twitter at [@DoggieRanger](https://twitter.com/DoggieRanger) to see him going through his puppy training and New Forest adventures, learning how to behave around the Forest ponies and cattle and not disturb rare birds.



Cooper and Ranger Dawn

Students on The Prince's Trust programme (below and right); Students at Priestlands School, Lymington, receiving their John Muir Awards



A photograph of two white ponies grazing in a field of tall grass and wildflowers at sunset. The sky is a mix of orange, pink, and blue, and a line of trees is visible in the background. A teal triangle in the top right corner contains the word 'PROSPER' in white.

PROSPER

Supporting the working Forest



'The New Forest is a living, working Forest with thriving local communities. This last year has seen us support local people to live and work sustainably, run rural businesses and travel car-free around the National Park. This work ensures that the area continues to thrive and its residents prosper both economically and socially.'

Marian Spain, Deputy Chairman of the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee

Helping people travel sustainably

Improvements over the last year across the National Park mean getting around the New Forest car-free has never been easier.

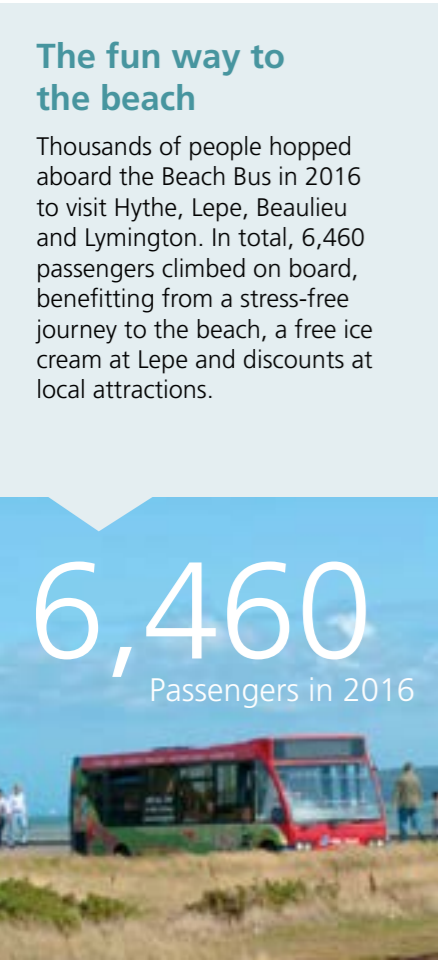
Plan your car-free journey at newforestnpa.gov.uk/travel



39,653
Tour users in 2016

Bumper year for open top tour

The New Forest Tour enjoyed a successful year, with 39,653 people enjoying grandstand views of the Forest in 2016. This contributed an estimated £645,000 to the local economy across its 79 day season.



The fun way to the beach

Thousands of people hopped aboard the Beach Bus in 2016 to visit Hythe, Lepe, Beaulieu and Lymington. In total, 6,460 passengers climbed on board, benefitting from a stress-free journey to the beach, a free ice cream at Lepe and discounts at local attractions.

6,460
Passengers in 2016



8,266
Visitors welcomed in 2016

Travel concierge offers helpful advice

The New Forest Travel Concierge welcomed a total of 8,266 people to the New Forest in 2016. Located at Brockenhurst Railway Station, the concierges showed visitors that they do not need a

car to explore the beauty of the National Park and helped them book tickets for the New Forest Tour and popular attractions.



Ashurst to Lyndhurst cycle route opening

New cycle route proves popular

New and resurfaced cycle paths along the Waterside have proven extremely popular in their first full year, with nearly 60,000 extra journeys by bike in 2016.

The resurfaced cycle path linking Lyndhurst to Ashurst was used by more than 28,000 cyclists, more than double the number that used it in 2014.

The new path between Marchwood and Eling was also extremely well used, with an average of 158 cyclists and 57 pedestrians a day in summer 2016.

This means thousands more journeys are being made by bike on the Waterside, reducing the number of cars used on surrounding roads.

Boost for visitor giving scheme

A visitor giving scheme raising £189,000 since 2006 for projects to support the Forest has received a boost from the National Park Authority.

Run by registered charity The New Forest Trust, the Love The Forest scheme has worked with nearly 50 businesses to encourage visitors to support conservation and education projects by giving donations or adding a small amount to their hotel or restaurant bill.

Now the National Park Authority has agreed to give the scheme a boost with additional staff time and resources to develop partnerships with new businesses and new funding streams.



Newly-appointed Marque Manager Claire Lee

Growing an award winning produce scheme

We continue to support the New Forest Marque local produce scheme, promoting authentic New Forest fare and encouraging people to shop locally. The New Forest Marque is awarded to produce which has been grown, reared, caught, brewed, produced or processed with the New Forest, with members including vineyards, bed and breakfasts, craftsmen, bakers and meat producers.

Membership continues to grow every year, with 21 new members joining in the last year to take the total to more than 130.

This year also saw Claire Lee taking up the post of Operations Manager at the end of February, taking over day to day running of the scheme from Chairman Jane Overall.

A full directory of members and more information about the scheme is at newforestmarque.co.uk





Left to right: Access and Sustainable Tourism Manager Mark Holroyd, Cyclexperience owners Nikki Ryce and Ross Kempson, Chairman Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre and Chief Executive Alison Barnes at the opening

Building a new hub for cyclists

We supported Cyclexperience in Brockenhurst to open new premises this year, to give visitors and residents the best possible experience when hiring a bike.

The new centre was built from mobile classrooms clad in timber from the Forest and provides a workshop and retail space, as well as toilets, showers and baby changing facilities. The relocation also freed up 20 car parking spaces for railway passengers.

We funded the centre through a £150,000 grant from the Department for Transport's

Cycling Ambition Fund, matched by private investment. As well as hiring a bike, visitors can find out fascinating facts about the National Park, plan their trip using a giant wall map and get advice on how to care for the area when visiting.

'We're grateful to the New Forest National Park Authority for their support, which has been instrumental in ensuring this centre becomes a reality. We hope this will mean visitors from across the country and abroad decide to arrive in the National Park by train and hire a bike to explore.'

Ross Kempson co-director, Cyclexperience Limited



Increasing corporate involvement in National Parks to secure future sustainability

The New Forest National Park is among a family of 15 National Parks in the UK who are working together to secure funding for the future of our most special places.

National Parks Partnerships was launched in May 2016 to enable businesses to readily engage with all 15 UK National Parks to enhance the quality and utility of the Parks now and for future generations. The Partnership is led by a management board of senior executives volunteering from the private sector and key commercial leaders from the UK National Parks.



Celebrating the successes of local people

For the fourth year running we joined forces with landowner organisation the CLA to recognise local people's achievements through our New Forest awards.

Each year, the awards are presented to organisations or individuals who have made a notable contribution to maintaining the unique landscape and way of life of the New Forest.

This year's winners were:

- Young Farmer/Commoner of the Year: **Julian Potheary**
- Best Supporter of Local Produce: **Appetite for Adventure**
- Sustainability Champion: **Gill Hickman**
- Rural Diversification: **New Forest Quality Feeds**



'I've been commoning since a young age and I think

this ancient tradition is incredibly important to the New Forest. That said, it's a lot of hard work and early mornings, so it was nice to win this young commoner award. It was fun to chat to the judges about my life and I enjoyed the awards giving and reception at the New Forest Show.'

Julian Potheary
Young Commoner of the Year 2016

Extending a warm welcome to walkers and cyclists

We worked with accommodation providers across the New Forest to help them provide the best possible welcome to walkers and cyclists.

With New Forest Tourism Association, we launched a Walkers and Cyclists Approved accreditation scheme for the National Park.

Dozens of guest houses, B&Bs and self-catering cottages have signed up to the welcome scheme to assure walkers and cyclists they'll receive all the help and assistance they need when visiting the Forest.

We hope this will encourage more people to explore the New Forest car-free, reducing the pressures of visitors on the National Park.



Did you know?

70 accommodation providers have joined the scheme

ACHIEVING
EXCELLENCE



Working hard to maximise our impact



'It is of paramount importance that we continue to use our funding to deliver the maximum positive impact on the Forest. By working on innovative projects with partners, we ensure that National Park status continues to bring a wide range of benefits to the area.'

Edward Heron, Deputy Chairman of the Authority



The Green Halo

Natural capital and ecosystem services – the elements of nature that produce value or benefits to people – are vital not only to the National Park and its communities but the wider area beyond our boundary.

Working with businesses, charities, public sector bodies and communities, the New Forest National Park Authority has developed a shared vision of a 'green halo' for the New Forest to strengthen the resilience of the habitats and ecosystems.

By recognising the contribution our natural environment makes to the local economy and society, the Green Halo Partnership wants to ensure that both the National Park and its surroundings work to protect and improve that environment.

The vision is to be a global exemplar of how our most precious landscapes can work in harmony with a thriving, economically successful community.

The Partnership is focused on actions which will make a clear difference on the ground, falling under four themes:

1. supporting the local economy
2. improving health and wellbeing
3. encouraging sustainable living
4. enhancing the natural environment.



One of the UK's leading independent environmentalists Chris Baines (pictured third from left), chaired the launch event attended by business and community leaders at the Ordnance Survey headquarters at Totton in July 2016.

Other speakers included Policy Director at the Green Alliance Sue Armstrong-Brown; Paul Stubbington of Ramboll consulting engineers; and Matthew Woodcock of the Forestry Commission.



Pictured top is environmentalist Chris Baines (third from left) with speakers at the Green Halo Partnership launch at the Ordnance Survey HQ

The vision

To be a global exemplar of how our most precious landscapes can work in harmony with a thriving, economically successful community



150 years of protecting the Forest

The New Forest Association celebrated its 150th anniversary by rebranding as Friends of the Forest and holding an anniversary launch in January attended by over 200 people.

Association council member Clive Chatters (centre) gave the keynote address about the future of the Forest, followed by responses from Deputy Surveyor for the New Forest Bruce Rothnie (left); National Park Authority Chief Executive Alison Barnes (centre); and Official Verderer Dominic May.

Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre (right), Friends of the New Forest President and National Park Authority Chairman, alluded to the many challenges facing the Forest, paid tribute to the work of the Association since its inception, and commented that 'the Forest needs all the friends it can get'.



Working more sustainably

As an organisation we seek to reduce the impact we have on the environment caused by our business operations. During 2016-2017 our carbon emissions reduced by seven per cent, despite an increase in staff numbers, through car sharing, less electricity usage and fewer car and rail journeys.

We encourage our staff to reduce their impact wherever possible. We provide cycle parking, use an electric car, operate an extensive recycling system, and purchase energy efficient and sustainably sourced goods when possible.

7%

Our reduction in carbon emissions over the last year

Working in partnership

With reduced funding across the public sector, working in partnership and sharing expertise has been a key focus for the year.

We provide services for a range of neighbouring organisations, including professional services in archaeology, building design and conservation, trees, ecology, communications and rangers. This brings in over £300,000 (not excluding costs) as well as providing a more joined-up and consistent approach across the Forest.

We also buy in several back-office services from New Forest District Council, including HR, health and safety advice, GIS mapping services, internal audit and accounts. This results in reduced costs for the Authority and an income of around £130,000 for the Council.

Working to improve the state of nature



Teaching hedgelaying near Linwood

Nature in the UK is in trouble. From John O’Groats to Land’s End, wildlife is struggling and habitat is being lost. The figures from the nationwide State of Nature report¹ in 2016 were startling and worrying in equal measure:

- 15% of UK’s most at-risk species are now extinct or threatened with extinction
- The UK ranks 29th worst in the world for biodiversity intactness
- Many endangered bird species have seen declines of more than 50% in the last 25 years, including cuckoo, nightingale and starling².

Locally, a recent survey found that the New Forest’s curlew population had declined by two thirds in just 10 years³.

The New Forest National Park is internationally renowned for the diversity and abundance of its animal and plant life and the rare habitats that support these. We are in a unique location, where the ancient practice of commoning has maintained the landscape in remarkable condition for hundreds of years. But, as curlew numbers show, we cannot be complacent.

The State of Nature report describes a range of modern factors are affecting the fortunes of nature in the UK. Two of the most important are climate change and agriculture. Around 75% of the UK is managed for food production, making its management crucial for wildlife. Climate change is altering our environment and leaving some species with nowhere to go.

In the New Forest the fightback is on.

Taking forward our important first purpose as a National Park ‘to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area’ we are working across the National Park to give nature a helping hand in its battle for survival.

The Government’s 8 Point Plan for National Parks, published in 2016, recognises the importance of National Park Authorities in this mission, especially supporting a wide range of people and organisations in doing their bit to help.

Thanks to the £4.4 million Our Past, Our Future Heritage Lottery Landscape

Partnership we are working with 11 local partners to deliver large scale improvements to habitats across the National Park. It is only by working on such a scale that tangible progress can be made.

This year we have helped mobilise an army of volunteers to survey at-risk species, remove invasive non-native plants and improve habitats, among many other tasks. Key achievements include:

- Over 500 volunteers contributing more than 13,000 hours
- National Trust volunteers planting nearly 10,000 trees at Foxbury
- 400 people removing litter harmful to wildlife as part of the Great British Spring Clean.

We are also working with agricultural landowners through our support of the New Forest Land Advice Service by offering advice to support existing environmental work, providing training and advice and exploring opportunities for further enhancements. In this financial year this has brought about

a raft of improvements across the National Park and beyond, including:

- 35 hectares of woodlands restored
- 1,600m of hedgerow laid or planted as wildlife corridors
- 173 people taught traditional, more environmentally friendly, rural skills.

Looking to the future, tools and support available to improve our environment will undoubtedly change as we leave the EU. So we are bringing together stakeholders to analyse the challenges and opportunities and together ensure the situation for nature improves in the New Forest post-2020.

There is no doubt that nature is under enormous pressure in the New Forest and throughout the UK, but by working with passionate volunteers, undertaking landscape scale habitat improvements and encouraging sustainable recreation, we have the opportunity to stem the tide in our National Park.

References

1. [rspb.org.uk/our-work/stateofnature2016/](https://www.rspb.org.uk/our-work/stateofnature2016/)
2. [bto.org/about-birds/birdtrends/2016/discussion/latest-long-term-alerts](https://www.bto.org/about-birds/birdtrends/2016/discussion/latest-long-term-alerts)
3. [wildnewforest.co.uk/new-forest-curlews-crisis/](https://www.wildnewforest.co.uk/new-forest-curlews-crisis/)

ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE

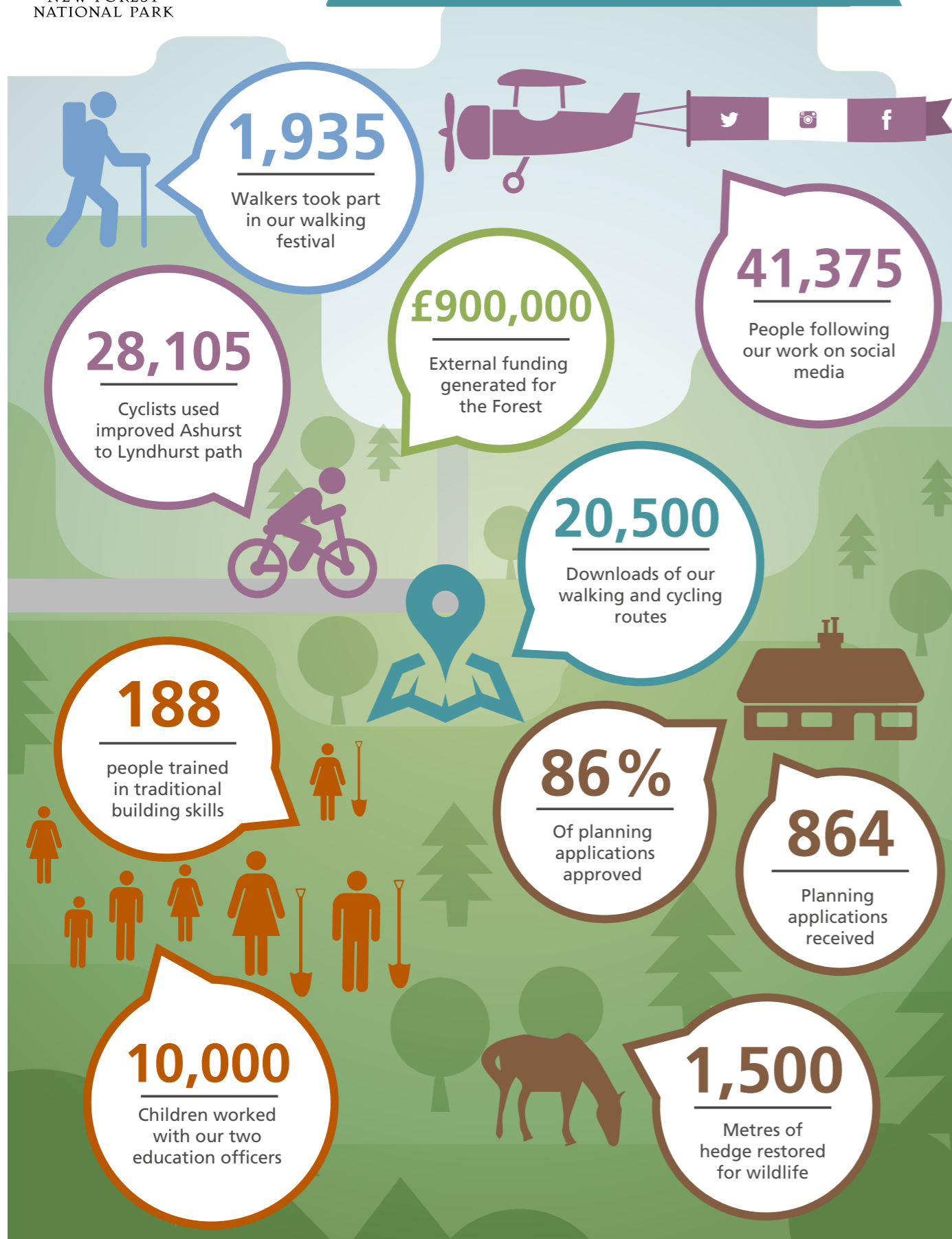


Curlew in New Forest © Marcus Ward

Silver studded blues at Acres Down © John Cuthbert



OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS



Producing an award winning New Forest Show stand

Thousands of people visited our stand at the New Forest Show last July, which won first prize in the show's best large stand category.

The stand focussed on the work of Our Past, Our Future landscape partnership scheme and featured five family-friendly activities related to some of the projects. As well as our own members of staff and volunteers, we were joined by others from partner organisations, offering the chance for visitors to find out what was taking place across the Forest.

The five activities on the stand gave visitors the chance to:

Become an amateur archaeologist for the day and use tools to excavate artefacts relating to the Forest's past

- Discover some unusual tools as they match the items to the traditional jobs using our touch table.
- Help complete a giant mindfulness colouring mural about the Forest and learn about its unique landscape and heritage.
- Learn about New Forest ponies through our creative poster activity.
- Find out about walks from our website's routes section through videos and a walking map.



Above: Visitors learnt about the Our Past, Our Future scheme by helping to complete our giant mindfulness colouring mural
Below: HRH Sophie Countess of Wessex presents Best Large Stand cup to Alison Barnes with judges



Bringing investment to the Forest



'We work hard to establish projects that bring in investment to benefit the National Park. In fact, for every £1 we spend, by working with partners and sharing services, we generate £13. That's a significant return for the Forest.'

David Harrison, Chairman of the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee



Financial Information

Following a number of years of significant reductions, our core grant from Defra has now been 'protected', which includes a 1.7% inflation-offsetting increase (equating to £52,000).

Despite this increased financial stability, we have continued to seek cost efficiencies where possible and sought ways to increase effectiveness in the work we do. We continue to generate substantial external partnership funding to further services and delivery. On average every £1 we contribute to joint projects generates a further £13 from partner organisations.

We received around:

£3.08m from Defra

£314,000 in statutory fees for planning and related applications

£306,000 for shared services we provided to other local authorities (trees, ecology, rangers, archaeology, building conservation and design, communications and administration)

£35,000 grants related to the planning service

£13,000 interest on our investments

£42,000 in other income generation (such as talks, guided walks, New Forest Tour advertising and charging of expert advice)

Significant external funding totalling £0.9m was secured for the Forest, including:

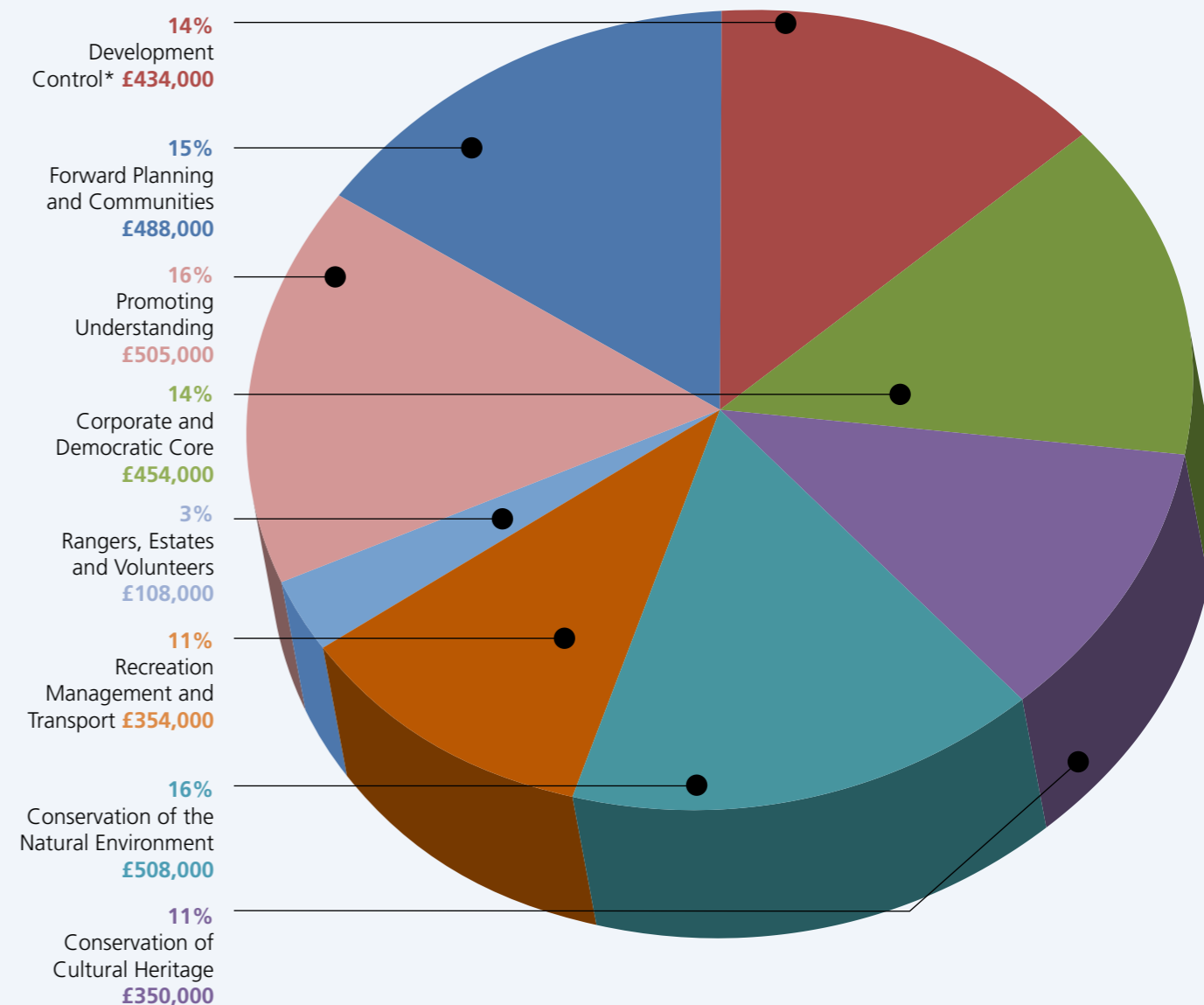
£830,000 Our Past, Our Future: Landscape Partnership Scheme

£60,000 Higher Level Stewardship Scheme

£40,000 New Forest Land Advice Service

Plus many more small projects...

2016-17 Net Expenditure



*Also includes enforcement and the tree service



Bolderwood in autumn by Matthew Pinner

Prize winner in our Seasonal Snaps online photo
competition in autumn 2016

Contact us

We welcome your views and comments about this Annual Review or any other aspect of our performance or services. For regular updates, please sign up to our email newsletter via our website.

Write to us at:

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