



The draft planning polices (DC12, DC 13 and DC 14)

The draft polices also contain supporting text on how to interpret them, which is based on work by the South East England Development Agency's (SEEDA) Equestrian Champion on recreational horse keeping in protected landscapes.

We would like to stress that we will not begin to review the policies until the consultation process finishes at the end of October so people will have plenty of time to set down their considered views.

How you can get involved

The consultation period on the draft National Park Plan closes on 31 October 2008. Copies of the draft Plan can be viewed at the Authority's main office near Lymington, at local district/ borough council offices, and via the Authority's website:
www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/consultations

Alternatively you can request a paper copy of the Plan and response form by emailing nationalparkplan@newforestnpa.gov.uk

Responses can be sent to the National Park Authority via email to nationalparkplan@newforestnpa.gov.uk

or in writing to:

Policy and Plans Team, New Forest National Park Authority, South Efford House, Milford Road, Lymington, Hampshire, SO41 0JD

A note about information/flyers circulated by others

The Authority is aware that a number of flyers have been circulated regarding the Authority's proposed policies, some of which contain misleading information. The Authority can confirm that the draft National Park Plan, the draft Recreation Management Strategy and this leaflet are the only sources information produced officially by the National Park Authority and we would encourage people to read the draft National Park Plan itself rather than information they have read or heard elsewhere before responding.



EXPLANATORY NOTE

Draft Planning Policies on Recreational Horse Keeping

We understand that some people are concerned about the Authority's draft planning polices for Recreational Horse Keeping which were published for consultation on 20 August 2008 as part of the Authority's draft National Park Plan.

This note should be read **in conjunction** with the draft planning policies. It helps to explain the background to the polices as well as answering some of the more common questions about what these polices might mean for people who already keep horses in the National Park.



Horses grazing land in the New Forest without any problems - or need for planning permission.

Recreational Horsekeeping in the National Park

The Authority recognises that horse riding has a long history within the New Forest and is part of the New Forest scene. There are currently some 3,500 horses kept for recreational purposes within and immediately surrounding the National Park. The draft Recreation Management Strategy (which was also published for consultation on 20 August 2008) acknowledges that where horse grazing is rented it can provide a welcome income as part of farm diversification and if appropriately managed, can provide additional benefits for wildlife and the landscape.

But more recently there is evidence that larger agricultural landholdings are being disposed of in smaller lots due to the high market value commanded by 'pony paddocks' (which is considerably higher than agricultural land).

Where this does occur, the landscape can be despoiled by a proliferation of insensitive fencing, poorly located stables and field shelters, bundles of plastic wrapped hay feed and an assortment of other items associated with horse keeping. The land can be overgrazed, becoming 'poached' in the winter months and increasingly nutrient deficient with a consequent degrading in the ecological value of the land.



These photographs show some examples of 'pony paddock' sites within the New Forest - these are the types of sites, with all the attendant fencing, polythene, pallets, horse boxes etc that the draft policies are seeking to address.

Left unchecked, an increase in the number of pony paddocks is also likely to reduce and displace the supply of grazing land available to New Forest Commoners.

Will I need planning permission to keep my horses in the New Forest?

The draft planning policies do not affect the need for planning permission, they simply set out the criteria against which new planning applications for equestrian development will be considered when planning permission is required.

Within England and Wales, planning permission has always been required for the keeping of recreational horses (as distinct from using or renting land for the grazing of horses). Indeed, there are existing planning policies that have covered the New Forest National Park for a number of years setting out the need for planning permission for recreational horse keeping, stables, field shelters and maneges.

Like the New Forest District Local Plan before it, the draft National Park Plan acknowledges that the distinction between grazing and keeping horses is not always clear. As a guideline, the supporting text to draft policy DC12 seeks to identify some of the characteristics that might indicate a change of use and the need for a planning application. These include:

- the keeping of more than one horse per hectare;
- the subdivision of a former single field into multiple pony paddocks ;
- the existence of maneges, stables and field shelters ('portable' or otherwise);
- other on site equine equipment, such as horse jumps and schooling rings;
- corrals for tacking up horses (normally by the field gate);
- regular supplementary feeding; and
- horses being regularly 'rugged' throughout the winter

In isolation, such characteristics may not involve a change of use. A change of use is only likely to occur as a result of a number of these characteristics being present on any one site.

Some people have expressed concern that if these policies are adopted, the Authority will be asking all those who already keep horses on land to apply for retrospective planning permission. In those cases where planning permission is required but has not been sought, we would always encourage people to try and regularise the situation by submitting a retrospective planning application. But we are only likely to actively pursue a retrospective planning application for those sites where the use of the land is having a harmful impact on the landscape character and appearance of the area, such as those shown in the photographs opposite.

And it is important to remember that where planning permission is required, the draft planning policies do not preclude planning consent being granted subject to the stated requirements being met.

Agricultural land can also be used temporarily for horse keeping, horse riding and horse training purposes or up to 28 days in any one calendar year without the need for planning permission.