

# Priority objectives

## Objective P1

Plan for the likely impacts of climate change on the Special Qualities of the area and reduce the overall environmental footprint of the National Park

Climate change is likely to have profound effects on the physical appearance of the National Park, and on its communities, land management and recreational use, over the course of this century.

The general direction of change is becoming clearer at the global level, although the speed of change is still a matter of debate. At the regional or local level detailed work is being undertaken on coastal change to inform the Shoreline Management Plan for the North Solent, and a number of studies have examined possible changes in the distribution of plant and animal species.

Although the full range of the impacts on the National Park are difficult to assess without further research, it seems probable that over the next 50 years under a 'business as usual' scenario (no major reduction in global emissions in the short term) the National Park will have to adapt to:

- **Realignment of the coast due to sea-level rise, including loss of internationally important coastal habitats, archaeological sites, threats to properties and communities and changes in coastal recreation (and associated businesses)**
- **Local extinctions of species currently on the edge of their range, the spread of new species from Europe and elsewhere and a greater incidence of plant and animal disease**
- **Major changes to the hydrology and landscape of the National Park due to prolonged periods of drought, including a decline in wetland and grassland habitats, the loss of some woodland types and increasing fire risk**
- **Changes in land management, including threats to the viability of commoning and pastoral farming and the introduction of new crops (see policies under land management objective)**
- **Impacts on recreation and tourism, with longer-term threats to important coastal activities such as sailing, or simply visiting the beach, as rising sea levels affect water-side facilities and severe weather becomes more frequent**

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The main focus for the National Park must be on adaptation: finding appropriate ways to adjust to climate change now, based on the best available evidence, with the emphasis on conserving the special qualities of the area. The approach will be to:

- **create a robust and interconnected mosaic of habitats, to improve resilience of the New Forest landscapes, reduce local extinctions of species and enable migration of wildlife within and beyond the Park**
- **accept the ‘natural’ realignment of the majority of the coast, while developing environmentally acceptable defences where essential**
- **co-ordinate forward planning for climate-related emergencies.**

In addition it is clear that all individuals, local communities, businesses and the public sector have an important responsibility and essential contribution to make in mitigating climate change by adopting more sustainable ways of living and working.

The environmental footprint of an area is an overall measure of the impacts of human activity on the environment, including the energy consumed by an individual or community, the natural resources used

and the amount of waste and pollution created. It is usually expressed as the area of land (in global hectares) needed to support the lifestyle of that person or society. Sustainable use of the earth’s resources requires everyone, on average, to use 1.8 global hectares. At present consumption in the UK is about 5.4 global hectares per person, while the footprint for New Forest District is considerably higher than this at 6.37<sup>5</sup>. Local people, businesses and organisations therefore require the resources of 3 ½ earths to continue their current lifestyles and practises.

The approach will be to:

- **encourage and enable a change in lifestyles locally**
- **promote the responsible use of energy and other natural resources by organisations, businesses and individuals.**

<sup>5</sup> National research by the Stockholm Institute

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## Policy framework

### PP1.1

Improve dialogue and understanding about climate change impacts with those most affected

This requires a co-ordinated approach from the key agencies to raise general awareness about the issues locally and what can be done about them – targeting land and recreation managers, tourism businesses, coastal interests and local communities. It should also ensure that emergency planning systems take account of the special qualities of the National Park and are designed to manage the direct impacts of climate change. Examples include the use of soft engineering and natural structures for flood protection, agreed procedures to control the spread of plant and animal disease and practical steps to minimise wildfires.

### PP1.2

Conserve and where necessary restore extensive areas of connected habitat, both within and across the National Park boundary, reducing fragmentation, improving the resilience of characteristic habitats and increasing the natural water holding and carbon sink capacity of the area

This applies, in particular, to extending the mosaic of semi-natural habitats typical of the Open Forest and creating stronger physical links with the woodlands, heathland, wetlands and unimproved grassland of the enclosed lands. Opportunities should be sought for reducing the barriers formed by major roads, built development, areas of intensive farmland and softwood plantation. Adjacent authorities and land managers will be encouraged to conserve habitat links extending across the wider sub-region and include new green infrastructure as an integral part of any development proposals.

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### PP1.3

Allow the natural realignment of the majority of the coast as a result of sea-level rise, assist the replacement of existing coastal habitats where possible and develop environmentally acceptable coastal defences where these are identified to be essential for the protection of local communities

Natural coastal change is the preferred approach for the National Park. Although it will result in major changes to the coastline and the loss of existing coastal habitats, new (albeit different) habitats will develop naturally where coastal defences are not imposed. In the longer term this is the only practical option for much of the coast.

It will be necessary to ensure that the main settlements, including Lymington, are given protection through carefully designed defences which do not adversely affect the sites of European nature conservation importance or create additional flooding issues for other parts of the coast. The relocation of some existing key facilities may be required, but new or relocated built development will not be permitted within areas likely to be at risk from fluvial or coastal flooding, now or in the future.

### PP1.4

Raise public awareness about the environmental footprint of the area and encourage a change in culture towards more sustainable lifestyles by organisations, communities, businesses and individuals

The outcomes to be sought through this policy include:

- **extended kerbside recycling services and a greater range of materials that can be recycled locally**
- **energy conservation, including reduction in unnecessary energy use**
- **water conservation, including more efficient and sustainable systems for conserving water and reducing the need for the irrigation of agricultural land**
- **improved waste minimisation, including household, commercial and farm waste, reduced packaging and community-based composting schemes**
- **use of locally produced food and products**
- **reduced use of the private car (see policies under Transport objective)**

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### PP1.5

Support local, small-scale or community-based initiatives for producing sustainable energy.

All forms of small-scale energy production, including innovative projects, will be encouraged where these are shown to be economically viable in the long term and can be designed and located with minimal impacts on the special qualities of the National Park. Particular emphasis will be given to developing wood fuel production and distribution where this is based on local raw materials from coppicing or other forms of sustainable woodland management.

### PP1.6

Ensure the use of sustainable design and construction and good environmental practices in all new developments

The aim will be to achieve a low, or no, carbon and environmental footprint for new buildings. Innovative design and technologies will be encouraged where these are shown to be effective and the use of materials sourced as locally as possible will be preferred. New development will not be permitted in areas identified to be of high flood risk.

*Conserve the wealth of individual features that contribute to local distinctiveness and resist the gradual loss of landscape character*

## Objective P2

Conserve the wealth of individual features that contribute to local distinctiveness and resist the gradual loss of landscape character

The New Forest Landscape Character Assessment defines 22 distinctive landscape character areas within the National Park, based on differences in the natural environment, built design, settlement pattern and historic land uses. Nevertheless all have a landscape rooted in the history and land management of the wider area and share common attributes which make them recognisably part of the New Forest.

Small-scale changes to the local landscape, buildings and settlements take place almost constantly in response to shifting values, fashions, availability of products and the spread of new technology. Although change is inevitable it is often at the expense of those features which give the New Forest its particular character. Over time these cause a real impact on the landscape, reducing the recognisable differences between different

parts of the National Park and leading to a general suburbanisation and loss of the rural quality of the New Forest as a whole.

Examples of changes contributing to the loss of local character include:

- **hard surfacing of paths, driveways and front gardens**
- **removal of traditional doors, windows and other building details**
- **widening of roads and the introduction of hard kerbing and other highways infrastructure**
- **new private access routes across Open Forest land**
- **loss of traditional village and directional signs**
- **removal of trees and hedgerows of high amenity and conservation value**
- **proliferation of security lighting**
- **subdivision of pasture land for pony paddocks**
- **decline in traditional management of meadows, hedgerows and woodland**
- **the general 'gentrification' of properties, boundary treatments and gardens**
- **piecemeal encroachment of Open Forest land.**

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Most small-scale changes in the landscape by their nature fall outside the remit of planning policies and are therefore difficult to control through regulatory procedure. There are some mechanisms which can be used in these circumstances, such as Article 4 Directions which remove permitted development rights if a development threatens the character of an area of recognised importance.

However, success in retaining local distinctiveness will depend largely on the interest and involvement of local people and statutory agencies. Many communities within the National Park have a strong interest in their local environment, but may be unclear about what precisely makes up the local distinctiveness of their area or the action they can take to help conserve it.

The approach will be to:

- **promote local awareness and pride in the features which create local distinctiveness**
- **involve local communities in local projects**
- **use the full range of planning powers to resist the suburbanisation of the National Park**
- **agree design and maintenance guidelines with the relevant statutory agencies.**



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## Policy framework

### PP2.1

Identify and raise awareness about the full range of features that contribute to local distinctiveness in the National Park

This should be achieved through practical guidance, a first stop source of information about local distinctiveness (including the sourcing of relevant materials, skills and funding) and schemes to encourage the good management of locally important sites for nature conservation and the historic environment. A system of local advocacy or 'championing' of local distinctiveness should be developed, involving key members of the community. Parishes should be encouraged to include local distinctiveness in their parish plans and village design statements.

### PP2.2

Support a phased programme of enhancements to the character of selected settlements, working closely with local communities

This should focus particularly on 'whole village' improvements developed with the support of local people, including rationalisation and design of signage, appropriate street design, undergrounding of cables, improving boundary treatments and reducing the impacts of lighting.

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### PP2.3

Develop specific design and maintenance protocols applicable to the National Park for highways and verges, telecommunications masts, overhead cables and other major services, in liaison with the relevant bodies

This should include an assessment of current design and maintenance procedures and the adoption of agreed modifications where this is necessary to conserve the local character of the National Park.

### PP2.4

Prevent small scale built development and changes of use which cumulatively erode local character and result in a gradual suburbanising effect within the National Park

Design advice, planning conditions, Article 4(2) directions and tree preservation orders will be used where appropriate. Examples of development likely to fall within the scope of this policy include, inappropriate and over elaborate boundary enclosures, the extension and enlargement of domestic curtilages, ornamental lamps, inappropriate signs and extensive hard standing areas.

*Maintain, extend and enhance the tranquillity of the National Park*

### Objective P3

Maintain, extend and enhance the tranquillity of the National Park

Nearly everyone who visits the National Park recognises and appreciates that tranquillity is a central part of their experience, both as an intrinsic quality of the landscape and as a benefit to their individual well-being. A recent consultation (Special Qualities, 2007) showed that 93% of people perceived tranquillity to be either an important or very important quality of the New Forest. Conserving this quality is a high priority in the context of the increasingly busy and built up south of England.

The last New Forest-wide tranquil areas mapping was undertaken in 1996, based on measures of noise from traffic and human activities, the extent of visually intrusive man-made structures and levels of light pollution. The most tranquil areas have few public roads, low levels of traffic noise, no intensive recreation or recreational facilities, no settlements and few visible modern structures. They cover about 11,500ha (20% of the National Park) and highly valued by both local people and visitors. Many are relatively small and fragmented,

although more extensive areas occur south of Beaulieu to the coast, and between the A31 and B3078 in the north west of the Park.

The greatest influence by far on tranquillity throughout the National Park is the main road network. Traffic noise travels long distances across the generally open landscape and there are additional visual impacts from moving traffic and car lights. The A31 dual carriageway, bisecting the National Park from east to west, has particularly wide ranging effects on large parts of the Park. This route is reaching capacity and there may soon be demands for additional infrastructure.

Two regional airports at Southampton and Bournemouth are located just outside the National Park, to the east and west respectively. Plans for the expansion of both these over the next 20 years will have major impacts on the tranquillity of the area, with combined passenger aircraft movements predicted to increase from 71,000 per annum in 2005 to 146,000 in 2030 (an increase of 106%). Low level aircraft training by the Ministry of Defence (mainly helicopters) takes place occasionally, largely in the north of the National Park. This is currently unregulated and unpredictable and is a particular issue for commoners' stock, horse riders and disturbance to breeding birds.

Light pollution and the loss of dark skies is a particular issue. The conurbations of Bournemouth and Southampton create a permanent night-time glow on the skyline to both the east and west,

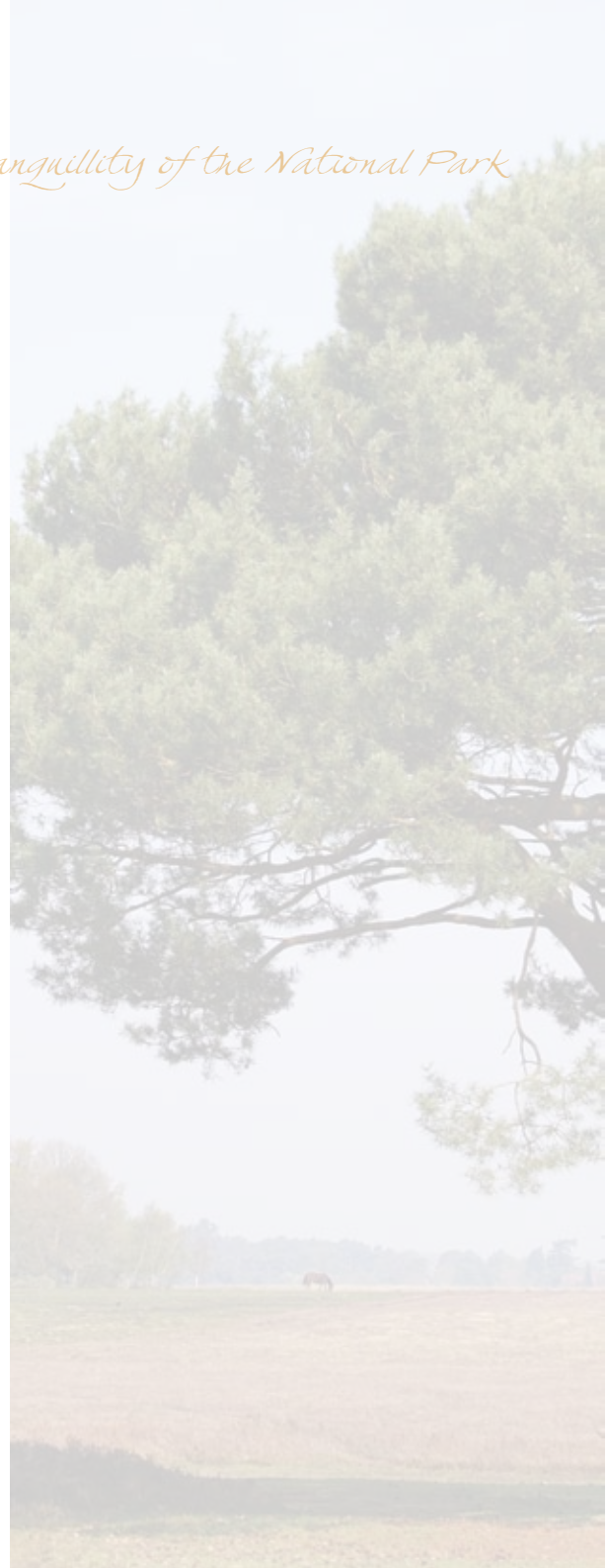
*Maintain, extend and enhance the tranquillity of the National Park*

while within the National Park there is increasing pressure for the urban paraphernalia of street lights, illuminated advertising, lighting of conservatories, floodlighting of car parks and sports grounds and individual security lights.

Visual impacts include the heavy industry along the Waterside, which is visible from higher ground across much of the south eastern part of the Forest, the growing demand for telecommunications masts and possible future pressure for wind turbines both within and around the National Park.

The approach will be to:

- **extend the most tranquil and remote areas**
- **tackle the impacts of the A31**
- **reduce light pollution and improve the visual setting of the National Park, working with nearby authorities.**



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## Policy framework

### PP3.1

Conserve and extend the most tranquil and remote areas of the National Park

This can be achieved largely through traffic and demand management measures, including permanent or seasonal closure of some roads, the introduction of quiet road surfaces, the regulation of heavy goods vehicles and the relocation of recreational facilities and infrastructure to create car free zones.

### PP3.2

Control and reduce the impacts of noise, visual intrusion and inappropriate activity generally; and in particular:

- **the noise and visual impacts of the A31 trunk road and its physical severance of the National Park**
- **the visual impacts of telecommunications masts and overhead pylons on the landscape of the National Park**

Mitigation of the impacts of the A31 trunk road may include a variety of measures, such as road and landscape design, quiet road surfacing, underpasses and crossing points, mounding and screening and road pricing. The practicality and viability of all measures will need assessment, taking into account the protection of areas adjacent to the road under European legislation. Across the whole Park the intention should be to reduce the overall numbers of pylons and masts, ensure the best possible design and location of new infrastructure and the under-grounding or relocation of the most intrusive existing structures.

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### PP3.3

Reduce the impacts of light pollution on the 'dark skies' of the National Park and control development to prevent artificial lighting from eroding rural darkness

This should include:

- **stricter planning controls and guidance for street lighting, floodlights, illuminated signs, commercial premises and private security lighting within the Park**
- **greater involvement and pressure from parish councils and amenity groups in influencing their local communities**
- **encouraging surrounding authorities and communities to reduce unnecessary lighting, including street lighting, offices and other premises in the major nearby.**

