

Working together to deliver the National Park Plan

Working with others across the boundary and in the wider region

Many of the major pressures, changes and opportunities affecting the National Park have, and will, result from decisions made outside the area. National and regional policies for transport, development, major infrastructure, the rural economy and many others have far-reaching implications for the New Forest. Specific proposals for new housing, economic development and associated infrastructure in nearby areas will have a particularly direct effect.

The National Park covers a relatively small geographical area and therefore the importance of cross-boundary partnership work is critical to its functioning. The land use of the surrounding areas provides its visual setting, including links to Southampton Water. The continuity of appropriate land management across the boundary is essential for the survival of the New Forest commoning system and to the integrity of the National Park's internationally important habitats and diversity of wildlife. Many communities outside the boundary remain very much involved in the economic and

social life of the National Park and derive much of their cultural identity from being part of the New Forest.

The National Park has been established because of its national importance. It must develop a clear, positive and valued role in the region and in the country as a whole. Closer relationships should be developed with neighbouring authorities and efforts made to influence the perceptions and policies of regional and national decision-makers, aided by explicit local guidance on Section 62 duties. The National Park should be firmly integrated into spatial planning for the sub-region and nearby authorities encouraged to adopt supportive land use policies. Full advantage should be taken of the positive opportunities for the National Park arising from economic change in the surrounding areas.

The approach will be to:

Create a shared understanding of the positive role the National Park can play in the sub-region, working with all relevant authorities and other protected landscapes to achieve policies and actions which complement National Park purposes.

Partnership work amongst the key organisations in the National Park

There are about a dozen key organisations involved in the day-to-day administration and management of the National Park. Many are statutory agencies with responsibilities covering a wider geographical area (such as the county councils, Natural England, the Forestry Commission and the Environment Agency), others are local land managers or service providers (including the district and borough councils).

All have developed their own organisational culture and priorities and have defined their role and relationship to the New Forest over many years. Clearly a great deal of 'on-the-ground' work already completed or in progress will help deliver national park purposes, but there will also need to be a period of assessment and re-evaluation of attitudes and priorities if the Vision for the National Park is to be achieved.

Regular liaison is needed between all the key organisations involved in directly managing the National Park to ensure effective co-ordination at a high level. Working relationships can be cemented further through jointly managed partnership projects, which in the past have proved effective in gaining external funding, focusing local resources and achieving major enhancements to the Special Qualities of the Park.

The approach will be to:

Continue to strengthen day-to-day working relationships between key partner organisations, take forward jointly owned partnership projects to deliver National Park purposes and develop a shared and accessible system for holding technical information about the National Park.

Involving local organisations and communities

There is a strong culture of the involvement of local interests and organisations in Forest matters, both in raising important issues of the day and advising on policies and proposals. In many cases the strength of feeling from the 'grass-roots' and their determination to protect the area, has successfully challenged the actions of the more powerful organisations.

The main strategic forums are the New Forest Consultative Panel and the Solent Forum, while groups with a more specific remit include the Open Forest Advisory Committee, the New Forest Access Forum and the Forest Design Plan forum. Other groups arise as a response to specific issues or are brought together to give advice on particular projects.

The parish councils have an essential role to play in representing the interests of their local communities. The increasing number of parishes producing parish plans (incorporating actions to improve the local area) will require improved means of direct communication between communities and the relevant statutory bodies.

The involvement of stakeholder organisations should be developed further to help build trust between different interests and create a sense of shared ownership of the National Park. Groups currently under-represented in New Forest affairs should be given a greater voice in the decision-making process, especially those, like young people, who will be inheriting the National Park of the future.

The approach will be to:

Seek engagement and active participation from the range of interested stakeholder organisations in advising on policies and projects for the National Park and taking these forward at the local level.

Monitoring and reporting on actions, targets and indicators

This draft National Park Plan includes 50 priority actions to be taken forward over the next five years as a core part of its implementation. The Plan also contains 12 headline indicators to monitor changes in the overall health of the National Park over the next 20 years and 12 targets designed to improve that health (see below).

The indicators, targets and actions are all at a preliminary stage and require further work before being finalised. An important part of this consultation will therefore be to gain views on the proposals as they stand, in particular from the statutory bodies and other organisations that are likely to be the lead organisations responsible for taking actions and targets forward. Agreed methodologies and basic survey work will also be needed to enable monitoring of the indicators.

Each year the National Park Authority will produce an Annual Monitoring Report to assess the effectiveness of the Plan's policies and report progress on the targets and actions. A State of the Park Report will be published every five years, describing any changes to the condition of the National Park shown through the monitoring of the indicators. This Report will help to confirm the effectiveness of the current policies or suggest changes for the next review of the Plan.

Priority actions

The following priority actions highlight the work which it is important to take forward over the next five years and beyond, listed under the four policy chapters in the Plan. They are necessarily selective and do not reflect the entirety of the work which will take place over this time. Each action is designed to be a practical step towards achieving one or more of the objectives.

ACTIONS FOR THE PRIORITY OBJECTIVES

PA1	Agree and implement a strategy for creating robust links between similar habitats across the National Park and across the boundary, including identified areas for habitat enhancement and new green infrastructure in surrounding areas.
PA2	Develop a co-ordinated awareness-raising campaign on climate change impacts aimed at local organisations and communities.
PA3	Produce and promote guidance for built development to encourage the highest standards of sustainability, including the use of new technologies to reduce the environmental footprint.
PA4	Agree criteria for measuring the overall environmental footprint of the area and produce baseline figures for the National Park for future monitoring.
PA5	Proactively support communities in developing projects that contribute to reducing waste production and energy use.
PA6	Develop National Park-wide guidance for the design and good management of the built environment, including boundary treatments and external lighting – aimed at developers and local communities.
PA7	Agree a highways and verges design guide for the National Park.
PA8	Publish and promote a basic checklist of key features which help define local distinctiveness in different parts of the National Park, for use and refinement by local communities (for instance in ‘welcome packs’ for new residents).
PA9	Agree and implement schemes to promote pride and good management of Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation and locally important historic features and buildings by land managers and owners.
PA10	Produce land management guidance for the keeping of horses aimed at recreational users and equestrian businesses.
PA11	Monitor, discourage and, where necessary, enforce against illegal encroachments on the Open Forest.
PA12	Produce revised and updated tranquillity mapping of the National Park and an action plan to extend tranquil and remote areas.
PA13	Agree a long-term strategy for reducing the impacts of the A31 on tranquillity and the physical severance of the Park.
PA14	Develop a phased programme for under-grounding or re-routing major overhead cables which have a significant visual impact on the landscape.
PA15	Agree and implement a ‘no lights at night’ campaign for offices, businesses and street lighting (both within and outside the National Park).

ACTIONS FOR CONSERVING AND ENHANCING THE NATIONAL PARK

CA1	Produce and implement a New Forest Biodiversity Action Plan which sets out actions to conserve the whole biodiversity resource, including the wider enclosed countryside and built up areas.
CA2	Produce and implement a Landscape Strategy for the National Park which includes an agreed vision for its different landscapes types.
CA3	Agree a prioritised programme for landscape and habitat restoration across the National Park (linked to the Biodiversity Action Plan and Landscape Strategy) and select specific projects to develop with land managers.
CA4	Undertake a condition survey of all non-statutory nature conservation sites and habitats.
CA5	Establish mechanisms for direct and regular liaison with surrounding authorities and sub-regional / regional decision makers.
CA6	Produce guidance on the design and scale of new development within and adjacent to the National Park to encourage proposals which contribute to the Park and its setting.
CA7	Design and carry out detailed research to clarify and monitor the cumulative impacts of development (including additional visitor pressure) on a range of important habitats and key species.
CA8	Develop a series of guidance notes on biodiversity and the historic environment aimed at improving pride and ownership of these features and their good management by land managers and owners.
CA9	Take forward the priority recommendations of the New Forest Commoning Review.
CA10	Develop a programme of 'learn about commoning and farming' events designed to raise awareness of land management and its importance to the New Forest amongst local communities.
CA11	Promote adoption of certification schemes for sustainable forestry and woodland management.
CA12	Establish a first stop farming advice service specific to the needs of the National Park, drawing on the range of existing services.

ACTIONS FOR UNDERSTANDING AND ENJOYING THE NATIONAL PARK

UA1	Develop a set of basic key messages for use / adaptation by all partners.
UA2	Produce an updated welcome pack about the National Park for new residents.
UA3	Produce a series of 'where to go and what to see' information sheets / booklets / web pages for specific groups.
UA4	Create a first stop for information on disability access in the National Park.
UA5	Identify and agree a coherent and strategic network of footpaths and other rights of way within the National Park, with links from adjacent settlements.
UA6	Develop a programme of outreach work with young people and other under-represented groups to clarify their interests and needs and develop specific projects to help make the Park more relevant to them.
UA7	Produce agreed principles for signage and interpretation across the Park, for use by different organisations.
UA8	Produce a range of information guides about the National Park (where to go and what to see) aimed at different interest groups (such as those interested in natural history, the historic environment, photography, sailing and canoeing, horse-riding).
UA9	Work with landfill operators and contractors to reduce litter close to waste sites.
UA10	Compile a comprehensive evidence base, and carry out regular monitoring, of recreational use and impacts.
UA11	Identify potential new sites for outdoor recreation in more robust areas within and outside the National Park.

ACTIONS FOR LIVING AND WORKING IN THE NATIONAL PARK

LA1	Develop schemes involving public and private land managers to improve the provision and affordability of private rented accommodation (including incentives), particularly for commoners and others involved in the local rural economy.
LA2	Provide support and advice for the parish plan process and encourage all parishes to produce plans which recognise their National Park context.
LA3	Develop a liaison network of individuals within local communities to act as a communication link and to help facilitate specific projects related to conservation, access, local culture and community identity.
LA4	Champion the particular needs of local rural communities amongst regional and national decision-makers concerned with rural services.
LA5	Develop and promote a 'first stop' service providing local business advice and funding information, involving the range of existing advice services.
LA6	Continue to provide funding and advice to encourage expansion of the 'family' of businesses involved in local produce and products, including support for joint processing and marketing initiatives, and availability of workshop units.
LA7	Establish a formal benchmarking / accreditation scheme which sets a high standard for sustainability in local businesses.
LA8	Review the effectiveness of freight route strategies and weight restrictions and take action as necessary to further limit impacts of heavy commercial vehicles.
LA9	Enforce speed limits on unfenced roads to reduce animal accidents and build on existing campaigns to improve driver-awareness.
LA10	Review the road hierarchy, assessing opportunities for de-fencing and reducing speed limits on selected routes, and reducing through-commuting.
LA11	Research the traffic implications for the National Park of major development planned for South Hampshire and South East Dorset.
LA12	Carry out a feasibility study of options and costs for local or Park-wide visitor transport systems, including links from the main accommodation centres to popular locations within the Park, and between nearby attractions.

Indicators and targets

The following 'headline' indicators and targets are designed to show progress in achieving the objectives of the National Park Plan. They are intentionally selective, but taken together will give a broad indication of changes in the condition of the Special Qualities and how effectively the Plan is being implemented overall.

PRIORITY OBJECTIVES		
Headline indicators	Targets	Key partners (suggested lead(s) in bold)
<p>Level of total resources used within the National Park (in global hectares/person)</p> <p><i>Baseline research and monitoring is needed for the Park.</i></p>	<p>Reduce the overall environmental footprint of the National Park by 30% by 2020</p> <p><i>2006 national research figures for New Forest District – current consumption levels require 6.37 hectares of land globally / person (1,8ha is the sustainable level globally).</i></p>	<p>New Forest District Council, Hampshire County Council, other local authorities, National Park Authority, local communities, businesses, and individual residents</p>
<p>Number and percentage of characteristic cultural and landscape features lost, degraded or enhanced (based on fixed point photography in sample locations)</p> <p><i>Methodology and baseline survey needed.</i></p>	<p>Complete 5 major 'whole village' projects to restore locally distinctive features by 2015</p>	<p>National Park Authority, county councils, town & parish councils</p>
<p>Area and percentage of the National Park which has a high level of tranquillity.</p> <p><i>Revised and updated tranquillity mapping needed.</i></p>	<p>Increase the area within the National Park which has a high level of tranquillity to 30% by 2020</p> <p><i>Currently about 20% of the Park falls within the highest levels of tranquillity.</i></p>	<p>National Park Authority, Natural England, local authorities, highway authorities, transport operators</p>

CONSERVING AND ENHANCING THE NATIONAL PARK

Headline indicators	Targets	Key partners (suggested lead(s) in bold)
<p>Total area and percentage of the National Park with habitats in favourable condition</p> <p><i>Condition monitoring and 'climate change proofing' of all habitats needed. No data current for sites which are not SSSIs.</i></p>	<p>Restore or enhance 1000 hectares of characteristic New Forest habitats by 2015, creating more extensive, robust and joined up habitats within and beyond the National Park</p>	<p>Natural England, National Park Authority Forestry Commission, Hants & IoW Wildlife Trust, Verderers, landowners</p>
<p>Percentage of development which contributes positively to the Special Qualities of the New Forest (a) within the National Park and (b) outside, but affecting, the National Park</p> <p><i>Agreed criteria and monitoring needed</i></p>	<p>All new development completed annually within the National Park contributes positively its special qualities</p> <p>And</p> <p>All new development outside the National Park which will have major impacts on the area is shown to have taken national park purposes into account</p>	<p>National Park Authority, development industry, relevant authorities, Natural England, Defra</p>
<p>Numbers of practising commoners and numbers of stock depastured</p>	<p>Maintain numbers of depastured stock within levels needed to maintain Open Forest habitats in favourable condition throughout the period of this plan</p>	<p>Verderers, Natural England, Forestry Commission, National Trust, National Park Authority</p>

UNDERSTANDING AND ENJOYING THE NATIONAL PARK		
Headline indicators	Targets	Key partners (suggested lead(s) in bold)
<p>Percentage of people using the National Park who understand and enjoy its special qualities</p> <p><i>Baseline survey and monitoring needed</i></p>	<p>Increase the proportion of visitors and local people who can identify and have an understanding of at least 5 of the Special Qualities of the National Park to 80% by 2020</p>	<p>National Park Authority, local authorities, Forestry Commission, National Trust, other land managers, recreation & leisure operators</p>
<p>Percentage of people who are highly satisfied with their experience of the National Park</p> <p><i>Baseline survey and monitoring needed.</i></p>	<p>Increase the number of visitors who gain a high level of satisfaction from their visit to 85% by 2015</p>	<p>National Park Authority, Forestry Commission, National Trust, Hampshire County Council, Wildlife Trusts, New Forest Tourism Association</p>
<p>Number of visits made using Open Forest car parks, as a percentage of all visits</p> <p><i>Using sample locations. Baseline survey and monitoring needed.</i></p>	<p>Increase the proportion of visits made to more robust locations by 25% by 2015</p>	<p>National Park Authority, Forestry Commission, Hampshire County Council, National Trust, private land owners</p>

LIVING AND WORKING IN THE NATIONAL PARK

Headline indicators	Targets	Key partners (suggested lead(s) in bold)
<p>Number and percentage of villages with a range of basic community facilities</p> <p><i>53% had village shops in 2004; updated survey needed.</i></p>	<p>Increase the number of villages with local shops, farm shops or farmers markets by 10% by 2015</p>	<p>New Forest District Council, other local authorities National Park Authority, local communities, business sector</p>
<p>Number and percentage of new businesses established that contribute to National Park purposes</p>	<p>Aid the establishment of 20 new businesses which contribute directly to National Park purposes by 2015</p>	<p>Business advice services, National Park Authority, local authorities, business sector</p>
<p>Number and percentage of visits made to the National Park by different modes of transport</p> <p><i>96% of all visitors travel to the National Park by car (Centre for Leisure Research, 1995)</i></p>	<p>Increase the number of visits made to the National Park by transport other than the private car by 20% by 2020</p>	<p>National Park Authority, highway authorities, Highways Agency, public transport operators</p>

