

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 13 SEPTEMBER 2007

DEVELOPING THE CULTURAL HERITAGE STRATEGY

Report by: Paula Freeland, Head of Environmental Design

Summary:

This report sets out the context of the National Park Authority's proposed Cultural Heritage Strategy, work currently being undertaken, project plan and framework for the Strategy.

Recommendation:

That members endorse the continuing preparation of a Cultural Heritage Strategy as proposed.

Resources and Corporate Plan:

Corporate Plan Objective C6 – Strengthen protection, understanding and management of the historic, archaeological and cultural aspects of the National Park's landscape.

Papers:

NFNPA 205/07: Cover paper

NFNPA 205/07: Annex 1 Cultural Heritage Background

NFNPA 205/07: Annex 2 Cultural Heritage Strategy Project Plan

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NFNPA 205/07

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1 Purpose of the Strategy

1.1 The National Park has a cultural heritage that is the result of thousands of years of human activity and reflects the unique history of the area. A summary description of the key components of the Forest's cultural heritage is at **Annex 1**. Conserving this cultural heritage is therefore critical to achieving the first purpose of the National Park. As a basis for this work a Cultural Heritage Strategy is being prepared.

1.2 The purpose of the strategy is to identify:

- key objectives for the sustainable management of the cultural heritage of the New Forest National Park;
- the actions and partners required to achieve them; and
- priorities, timescales, outputs and outcomes.

1.3 The intention to prepare a Cultural Heritage Strategy is set out in Corporate Plan at Objective C6.

2 Strategic context

2.1 The New Forest National Park Management Plan will set out a Vision for the National Park and identify over-arching objectives and actions to achieve that Vision. It is intended that a Cultural Heritage Strategy will provide a more detailed document to support the Management Plan. It will seek, through partnership working with a wide range of other people and organisations, the delivery of the Authority's statutory purposes and duty through sustainable management of the cultural heritage.

3 Stakeholder participation

- 3.1 The Authority performs a fundamental role in the sustainable management of the cultural heritage of New Forest National Park. However such management is neither the sole responsibility of the Authority nor of any other organisation, group or individual. Many people and organisations have a responsibility towards the cultural heritage that is discharged in a variety of ways according to roles, functions, objectives, abilities and opportunities. In recognising this it is proposed that workshops for stakeholders should be held to facilitate their contribution towards the development of a Cultural Heritage Strategy.

4 Strategy development

- 4.1 A review of currently available information on cultural heritage sites, the level of protection afforded, their condition and existing strategies and policies and their effectiveness is being undertaken. A report on this review will be prepared. Work is also being undertaken to produce a comprehensive register of New Forest traditions and language.
- 4.2 Workshops will be held to look, in the context of the present position, at what must, could or should be done and hence to identify key strategic issues and gaps. They will also examine where the Authority has total, partial or no control and begin to identify other key partners/stakeholders' remits (the Cultural Heritage Strategy will be for the Park not the Authority). The workshops will be informed by the review described above and a series of pre-prepared questions. The workshops will involve a range of Authority staff, all members and a range of partners/stakeholders with relevant interests.
- 4.3 The workshops will inform the preparation of a draft Cultural Heritage Strategy for public consultation. The Strategy will have an action plan which is derived from the key strategic issues and gaps identified at the workshops. It will also address current activities which should continue.
- 4.4 The Strategy will be reported to the Authority for adoption, published and launched.

5 Project plan

- 5.1 A project plan is set out at **Annex 2**.
- 5.2 The Plan identifies the following key milestones.
- complete review of currently available information about cultural heritage
 - workshops
 - agree draft strategy (Authority report)
 - public consultation
 - adoption
 - launch and publicity.

6 Framework of the strategy

- 6.1 It is proposed that the strategy will take the form of a two part document.
- 6.2 **Part 1** will cover the following headings, essentially setting out the context of the strategy:
- Purpose
 - Definition
 - Strategic context
 - Cultural heritage
 - Current protection
 - Understanding and education
 - Future developments
 - Partnership
 - Delivery
 - Resources
 - Explanation of format of Action Plan – part 2
- 6.3 **Part 2** will take the form of an Action Plan which will set out the key objectives for the sustainable management of the cultural heritage of the New Forest National Park; the actions and partners required to achieve them; and priorities, timescales, outputs and outcomes.
- 6.4 In July 2004, all English and Welsh National Park authorities, English Heritage, Cadw, the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, the Countryside Agency and the Countryside Council for Wales re-signed and re-affirmed their commitment to the '*Joint Statement on the Historic Environment in the National Parks of England and Wales*'. New Forest National Park signed the Joint Statement in December 2006. This document, revised in 2006, has seven topics:
- Strategies
 - Resources
 - Collaboration, Co-operation, Partnership and Liaison
 - Analysis and Understanding
 - Conservation
 - Education, Information and Interpretation
 - Continuing Professional Development and Training
- 6.5 Each of the Joint Statement topics has a suite of actions and outcomes to which New Forest National Park Authority is already committed.
- 6.6 It is proposed that the Cultural Heritage Strategy uses the structure of the Joint Statement to develop the range of objectives and action points that are considered essential to deliver the sustainable management of the cultural heritage of the New Forest National Park.

Recommendation

That members endorse the continuing preparation of a Cultural Heritage Strategy as proposed.

NFNPA 205/07 Annex 1

Cultural heritage background

- 1 The cultural heritage of the New Forest has been formed through the richness, complexity and peculiarities of its social history. Its development can be seen in archaeological sites, the domestic and agricultural buildings, historic houses and designed landscapes, settlement patterns and the character of the Forest landscape itself. Less tangible are the traditional craft skills, building techniques, dialect, artistic and literary achievements, and the people and events of the past which are remembered in fact and legend.
- 2 A wealth of **archaeology** survives in the Forest and many sites remain unrecorded. The first major human impact on the Forest landscape took place during the Bronze Age, and by about 1000BC there were settled communities in the Avon and Blackwater valleys, and probably some occupation within the core of the Forest. Bronze Age round barrows still exist. Their survival, mainly on heathland, indicates that extensive areas of the Open Forest were never subject to later deep ploughing or agricultural improvement. This was to be the settlement and land use pattern through to modern times. During the Iron Age the population expanded, indicated by well developed field systems, evidence of woodland clearance and the number of defended settlements and hillforts such as Tatchbury and Buckland which are visible today. Following the Roman invasion a considerable pottery industry developed, focused particularly on the North West of the Forest. Clusters of kilns have been found in use from about AD250 to 400.
- 3 The existing pattern of parishes and the older Forest villages probably originated in Anglo-Saxon times (AD410-1066). By late Saxon times large estates such as Lyndhurst were owned by the Crown and a group of royal holdings in the north may have formed the basis of a royal hunting preserve. It is also likely that the beginnings of a commoning system arose at this time, with those living in small settlements around the Forest using the unenclosed land for grazing. Following the Norman Conquest the administrative and social framework of the **Royal Forest** became formalised under Forest Law, designed to protect the area for the hunting of deer by the king.
- 4 The boundary of the Royal Forest remained remarkably consistent over time and Forest Law to a large extent helped preserve the overall **pattern of settlements** which had developed since prehistoric times, and which still exist today. The unenclosed Forest formed the core, with small settlements around its edges and larger privately owned estates beyond. Some decline in the enforcement of Forest Law from later medieval times did however lead to gradual enclosures around the heathland edge of the Open Forest. By the 17th and 18th centuries this encroachment had helped to create villages such as Nomansland, East Boldre and Norleywood.

- 5 The older settlements on the enclosed lands and in and around the Open Forest are generally linear and dispersed, with clusters of roadside dwellings located along a series of minor roads, and often with no obvious centre. Larger villages such as Burley, Brockenhurst and Lyndhurst have a denser pattern of settlement originating in late medieval times, generally still based on a linear pattern but now with local shops, businesses and Victorian buildings.
- 6 The **historic buildings** of the National Park vary widely in styles. Many dwellings are simple, small-scale buildings made from cheap locally available materials. This reflects the general poverty of the area, with a dispersed population gaining a living from subsistence small-holdings. The oldest surviving cottages date from the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries and are timber framed with thatched roofs. Cob survives from the 18th century. The later Victorian cottages, found in many villages, are typically simple semi-detached red brick buildings with slate roofs. Agricultural buildings were occasionally built of cob, but generally were timber framed and timber clad, often with cladding to be replaced later with corrugated iron.
- 7 The **commoning system** and way of life has remained a central part of the social fabric of the Forest and has undoubtedly played a major role in creating the present cultural landscape, and is responsible for the form of many of the buildings on the edge of the Forest and their relationship to one another.
- 8 In contrast the private wealthy estates were centred on large manor houses. The estates include a number of substantial farm houses often with substantial weather boarded barns, together with timber frames or brick cottages built in a distinctive style according to each estate. With the exception of Beaulieu Abbey the large Medieval houses have not survived, however some were replaced by later 18th and 19th century buildings, as for example at Exbury and Pylewell.
- 9 Associated with the more wealthy estates there are a number of **historic parks and gardens** which lie with the Forest some nationally recognised and others notable locally.
- 10 **Customs and traditions, folklore and legends** and **artistic links** form an essential part of the distinctiveness of the cultural heritage of the New Forest. There are tales of smugglers who planned their operations at pubs like the Royal Oak at Fritham. A number of Victorian and more recent writers have published accounts of the lives of gypsy families. Much has been written about special characters of the Forest.

There is a strong artistic and literary tradition associated with the Forest, for example Heyward Sumner the artist and archaeologist who produced a series of carefully observed Forest landscapes. The place names of the Forest reveal a living picture of its history. Almost every wood, heath, field and pond has its own name which is remembered recorded and used. Local skills and crafts survive such as thatching, sculpture, pottery and painting. There are also **craft skills** which are fundamental to the cultural heritage of the Forest.