

**NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK PLAN**  
**TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT WORKING GROUP: BACKGROUND**  
**INFORMATION**

## **THE KEY ISSUES RAISED IN THE CONSULTATION**

The vast majority of comments were made in response to the explanatory text for three policies - LP3.3, PP3.1 and PP3.2. The National Park Authority summary of these comments is given below. The relevant policies and some explanatory notes are included at the end of this section.

### **1. Road pricing**

A major issue of concern. There was a strong feeling that road pricing should not be included (unless part of a national government initiative), for the following reasons:

- Prohibitive cost
- Little positive benefit for the National Park (relating to the A31)
- Likely to increase traffic on other roads in Forest (relating to the A31)
- Lack of alternative public transport
- Added cost for residents
- Impacts on businesses due to reduced trade
- Impacts on tourism due to fewer visitors
- Impacts on the cost of food and services
- Would prevent public enjoyment of the New Forest
- Would create access difficulties for emergency vehicles
- Would be used as another form of taxation

A few responses noted that road pricing could be helpful if used carefully only on specific routes (but more detail of the routes was needed).

### **2. Road closures**

Another major issue of concern. The main points raised were that road closures would:

- Restrict access to residents
- Cause congestion on other routes
- Deter or restrict access for visitors
- Require better public transport as an alternative, which is currently lacking

However there was also support for carefully selected closures / temporary closures of minor roads, especially where this allowed access for local residents.

### **3. Car park location and size**

The main issue raised (included in letters circulated by the New Forest Dog Owners Group) was that:

- Changes to car parks should only take place if shown to be necessary, if there are no alternatives and after public debate on published data.

There was some support for the relocation of some car parks away from the most sensitive locations and temporary closures during bird breeding season.

### **4. Car free-zones**

The main concerns were that this:

- Would prevent public access and deter visitors
- Should only be considered if alternative public or non-car transport was in place.

### **5. Other traffic management measures**

There was generally strong support for a number of the traffic management measures included in the draft Plan, including:

- HGV regulation, quiet road surfaces, landscaping (particularly the A31), traffic calming, single lane routes, enforced / reduced speed limits.

**A number of comments were also made relating to the transport policies as a whole, or to current omissions or lack of clarity. The main points are summarised under the headings below. (A full list of all the transport policies is given in Annex 5).**

### **6. Responsibilities for transport**

Comments suggested that the Plan should be clearer about who is responsible for transport in the area, and emphasise the importance of the main agencies working together (including those with transport responsibilities in adjacent areas).

### **7. Need for a reality check**

Comments noted that the policies are ambitious and some of the measures suggested will be difficult to achieve; funding for major infrastructure projects (eg. underpasses) and improved public transport are unlikely to be available from mainstream budgets. A number of respondents felt that the impacts of traffic were inevitable and nothing effective could be done to address the issue.

## **8. The importance of access for local people, businesses and visitors**

Comments noted that the Plan should be clear that cars will remain the main form of transport for the foreseeable future (although the use of alternatives may be desirable). An important priority needs to be maintaining a safe and effective road network for local people, businesses and visitors.

## **9. The importance of improved public or community transport**

Comments noted that a reduction in car use is largely dependent on improvements in public or community transport and other modes of transport, and both must take place together.

### **Policies to which the majority of comments refer:**

#### **LP3.3 Reduce the impacts of road traffic on the tranquillity and environmental quality of the National Park through traffic and demand management, road design and landscaping.**

Various tools may be used, such as quiet road surfaces, reduced speed limits, road user pricing, weight and width restrictions, single track roads, selected road closures (including temporary and seasonal closures), revised road hierarchy, traffic routing, car park location and size, control of verge parking, car-free zones (only accessed by non-car transport) and landscaping for noise and visual screening. Planning policies will be used to control new development which increases private vehicle use.

**Thinking behind this policy:** to manage the impacts of increasing traffic volumes on the environment of the New Forest (including tranquillity) and on the quality of life of its communities. The text lists a variety of different traffic management tools that could potentially be used over the next 20 years or so to help deal with traffic issues. The assumption was that these would all need further investigation to assess if they are likely to be feasible and effective (including impacts on local people and businesses, assessment of costs and potential funding and public consultation).

**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.

**Thinking behind this policy:** to try to maintain those areas of the New Forest that are still relatively tranquil and remote, and if possible to extend them in places. As above, the assumption was that these would all be long-term solutions, requiring further investigation and consultation.

**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. 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.

**Thinking behind this policy:** to suggest a number of possible ways of reducing the major impact of the A31 on the Forest. Many of the ideas suggested would be costly, but were included as markers for the future. Major environmental improvement works are only likely if part of a road improvement / upgrading scheme, should this occur at some point in the future.

## **ANNEX 1 THE EXISTING TRANSPORT POLICIES RELEVANT TO THE NEW FOREST**

### **National guidance**

PPG 13 sets out the government's planning guidance for transport

The key objectives are to:

- Promote more sustainable transport choices for both people and the movement of freight
- Promote accessibility to jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services by public transport, walking and cycling
- Reduce the need to travel, especially by car

### **Regional guidance**

The Draft South East Plan sets out the following objectives for local planning documents and transport plans:

- Re-balance the transport system in favour of non-car modes
- Reduce average journey lengths
- Reduce road casualties
- Minimise the environmental impact of traffic
- Improve overall levels of accessibility
- Aim for a more sustainable pattern of development

### **Hampshire Local Transport Plan (2006-2011)**

The current plan includes a long-term strategy for the New Forest (the National Park and surrounding towns, but not the Waterside). It notes the importance of National Park designation, recognising the natural beauty and special qualities of the area.

The objectives of the New Forest strategy are:

- To promote new and improved passenger transport, cycling and walking facilities that are accessible to all and that provide safe, reliable, affordable and attractive alternatives to the car
- To provide imaginative local solutions that maintain the character of the New Forest and its towns and villages, contribute towards the development of a safe, attractive and cherished environment, reduce visual impact, noise and air pollution, and at the same time improve sustainable access to services, goods and markets for local people and businesses

- To ensure that any major development that is likely to generate significant additional traffic is located and planned to provide as far as possible alternative means of travel to the private car, preferably making use of existing services and interchanges
- To investigate measures such as road closures and road pricing to manage the use of the New Forest's highway network and reduce undesirable effects of traffic on wildlife, outdoor recreation, the unique New Forest environment and the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities

**NB. Hampshire County Council have recently issued public statements that make it clear that they will not be considering or taking forward road pricing as a form of traffic management in the foreseeable future.**

- To raise awareness of transport issues and maintain support for the strategy to bring about changes in travel behaviour
- To improve road safety and reduce the number of injuries to both people and animals
- To ensure adequate accessibility for disabled people
- To reduce the level and impact of through-traffic in the New Forest

#### **Wiltshire Local Transport Plan (2006-2011)**

The Plan does not have a specific strategy for the New Forest area, but overall the high priorities identified are:

- Road safety
- Public transport and accessibility
- Street scene
- Network management (making efficient use of existing resources)
- Delivery of major projects

## **ANNEX 2**

### **RESPONSIBILITIES FOR TRANSPORT IN THE NEW FOREST**

1. **Hampshire County Council** and **Wiltshire County Council** are the Highway Authorities for the area, with responsibilities for the entire road network and public transport, other than the strategic road network (the M27, A31 and A36).
2. The **Highways Agency** is responsible for the strategic road network.
3. The **National Park Authority** is responsible for planning policy and development control within the Park, and has overall responsibility for working with all organisations to ensure the purposes of the National Park and its special qualities are taken into account.
4. **New Forest District Council, Salisbury District Council and Test Valley Borough Councils** support the Highway Authorities in delivering traffic management measures and provide and manage public car parks. They are responsible for planning policy and development control adjacent to the Park, as are Christchurch Borough Council and East Dorset District Council.

### **ANNEX 3**

## **TRANSPORT ISSUES FOR THE NEW FOREST**

*Based on various sources: Strategy for the New Forest (New Forest Committee, 2003), Future Matters consultation (New Forest District Council, Changing Lives Partnership, New Forest National Park Authority, 2006), Hampshire Local Transport Plan (Hampshire County Council, 2006), New Forest, New Chapter workshops (National Park Authority, 2007)*

Private cars / other vehicles are likely to remain the dominant form of transport for the foreseeable future and are needed for businesses and communities within and adjacent to the National Park.

However there are particular issues of concern in the New Forest due to its geographical location, numbers of visitors and its special qualities:

- High traffic volumes, resulting from visitor pressure in summer and through-traffic / local commuting through the year. Likely increases in both visitors and through traffic due to future development adjacent to the Forest.
- Capacity of the strategic road network (Highways Agency predictions show that the A31 will be at over 100% stress level by 2026); a trend of annual increase in traffic volumes on all major routes, as well as on some cross-Forest unfenced roads.
- HGV use of the minor road system and rural villages.
- Congestion, pollution and impacts on the quality of life in the villages.
- Inappropriate use of the road system – speeding, verge parking, ignoring of weight restrictions.
- Loss of tranquillity due to traffic noise and visual impact of roads
- High level of animal accidents
- Limited public and community transport in more rural areas; limited choice of visitor transport within the National Park
- Safety and enjoyment of walkers / cyclists / horse riders sharing roads with cars and lorries
- Severance of access and communities (especially A31 and A326); fragmentation of natural habitats; restrictions on movement of wildlife and stock
- Carbon emissions and climate change

## **ANNEX 4 OVERALL STATUTORY CONTEXT FOR ALL NATIONAL PARKS**

### **Purposes and duty**

All National Parks in England and Wales have two statutory purposes (as set out in the Environment Act, 1995):

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

In pursuing the two purposes, National Park Authorities also have a duty to:

- seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Park.

All relevant authorities with responsibilities in the area must have regard to National Park purposes in carrying out their work.

### **Planning guidance**

Government planning guidance (PPS7) states that National Parks, “...*have been confirmed by the Government as having the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The conservation of the natural beauty of the landscape and countryside should therefore be given great weight in planning policies and development control decisions in these areas.*”

PPS7 goes on to state that planning policies in National Parks should also, “...*support suitably located and designed development necessary to facilitate the economic and social well-being of these designated areas and their communities...*”

### **National Park Management Plans and Local Development Framework Core Strategies**

Each National Park Authority is required by law to prepare and publish a National Park Management Plan. The central role of the Management Plan is to guide the delivery of the National Park purposes. The formal Government guidance states that, “*National Park Management Plans are Plans for National Parks, not just Park Authorities. All those with interests in a National Park should take account of the Management Plan’s vision of the area...The National Park Management Plan is the single most important document for each National Park...it is the over-arching strategic document for the National Park.*”

National Park Authorities are also the sole local planning authorities for their National Parks, with responsibility for producing policies for spatial planning, including minerals and waste, appropriate to the National Park purposes. All planning authorities are required to produce a Local Development Framework outlining the spatial planning strategy for their local area.

**ANNEX 5  
LIST OF ALL TRANSPORT-RELATED POLICIES IN THE DRAFT  
NATIONAL PARK PLAN**

**Transport**

**LP3.1 Influence regional and sub-regional transport policies and development proposals with transport implications (including air transport) to minimise impacts and, where possible, achieve benefits for the National Park.**

This requires the development of closer relationships with nearby and regional authorities, based on a clear and accepted role for the National Park in the national and regional context (see Working together, Chapter 8)

**LP3.2 Create a distinctive and different experience when travelling within the National Park which clearly indicates its special and protected status.**

Various visual and physical cues can be used to encourage appreciation and modify driver behaviour, such as reduced speed limits, road narrowing, boundary signs, appropriately designed highways signs, changes in road classification, 'natural' road edge design, changes in mowing regime of verges and avoidance of lighting.

**LP3.3 Reduce the impacts of road traffic on the tranquillity and environmental quality of the National Park through traffic and demand management, road design and landscaping.**

Various tools may be used, such as quiet road surfaces, reduced speed limits, road user pricing, weight and width restrictions, single track roads, selected road closures (including temporary and seasonal closures), revised road hierarchy, traffic routing, car park location and size, control of verge parking, car-free zones (only accessed by non-car transport) and landscaping for noise and visual screening. Planning policies will be used to control new development which increases private vehicle use.

**LP3.4 Improve the quality of life within the villages by reducing traffic and giving greater priority to pedestrians, cyclists and community use; and develop a safe and integrated network of public and community transport, footpaths and cycle routes designed to meet the needs of both residents and visitors.**

Residents and visitors will both benefit from villages which are less dominated by traffic, where streets in village centres can be used for events and community activities and by the provision of attractive alternatives to the car for local day-to-day transport.

This could include safe footpaths and cycleways linking residential areas and main village centres and schools, a wider network of routes and local public transport linking villages to nearby towns, more effective management of car parking, improved traffic management for areas with particular congestion problems and reduced speed limits through all villages.

There are also possibilities for introducing new public transport schemes linking villages, accommodation, places of interest and key entry points to the National Park. This could incorporate non-car transport for parts of the Open Forest, enabling car-free zones to be introduced. All schemes will require careful assessment to ensure they are viable and can cater for the different needs of local people and visitors.

**LP3.5 Reduce the number of animal accidents on unfenced New Forest roads.**

The focus will be on innovative awareness-raising campaigns aimed at local people, improved (but not increased) warning signs and better enforcement of speed limits, including consideration of the use of average speed cameras on high-risk routes.

**Tranquillity**

**PP3.1 Conserve and extend the most tranquil and remote areas of the National Park.**

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