

## **Draft Recreation Management Actions**

In a 2017 public consultation about the management of recreation in the New Forest, three clear themes emerged: raising awareness and understanding of the things that make the Forest special, managing where recreation happens and the need to find resources to deliver new actions. A wide range of other issues were raised and many specific suggestions for action were made, both by individuals and by organisations that operate in and around the area.

The Recreation Management Strategy Steering Group has used this feedback to draft the actions listed below and some possible examples of how the actions could be delivered. Whilst some actions clearly reflect current programmes of work, none are yet finalised – and in some cases the examples simply reflect suggestions that may be worthy of further investigation before a final decision can be made.

Feedback received during the summer 2018 consultation will help guide which actions can be taken forward if resources are secured.

**Raising awareness and understanding – ensuring recreation is sustainable, wherever it takes place**

**Objective 1: Convey the things that make the New Forest special to both visitors and local people in more consistent and effective ways, so that they understand the importance of making responsible recreation choices.**

This objective acknowledges that the level of awareness of the New Forest's special qualities, and their sensitivity, is currently insufficient. People who enjoy and come to understand the New Forest are much more likely to value and want to protect it, so it is important to work together in a range of ways to create a greater sense of ownership, respect and responsibility that ensures the Forest will retain its unique features into the future. The work needs to be tailored to resonate with the varying motivations, values and interests of different audiences.

| <b>Draft action</b>  | <b>Examples of possible delivery</b>   |
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| 1.1. Improve the quality and availability of information and interpretation about the special qualities of New Forest.   | Websites, social media, printed materials, exhibitions, film and face-to-face communication                                    |
| 1.2. Encourage organisations involved in tourism to inspire respect for the special qualities of the National Park by regularly including agreed key messages in their communications.   | Through Go New Forest, visitor attractions, publishers and accommodation providers   |
| 1.3. Develop the current programme of guided activities and themed events to give local people and visitors authentic experiences and meaningful connections with the special qualities. | Guided walks, public events, activities in villages and training courses   |
| 1.4. Increase the uptake of formal educational programmes on offer and provide additional supporting resources on New Forest specific topics.  | Through Educators Forum, online curriculum-linked resources, travel grants, school assemblies, eco-groups and teacher training |

**Objective 2: Address significant and/or widespread negative impacts caused by recreation in the most appropriate, proportionate and effective ways.**

This objective recognises that there are many different ways to encourage responsible recreation and to reduce or displace activities that might impact negatively on the New Forest or other people. It also emphasises the shared responsibility for protecting the Forest between relevant organisations and user groups. There is already broad recognition of the main issues, and some good initiatives are in place; but more work is needed to share best practice and jointly explore new ways to achieve the desired results.

| <b>Draft action</b>  | <b>Examples of possible delivery</b>   |
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| 2.1. To help address a range of different issues and aid joint working, develop a 'toolkit' of different ways to influence recreational behaviour.   | Best practice advice and training on face-to-face communication, 'nudge' techniques, making the right option the easiest one to take, printed materials and signage, websites, digital technology, social media, peer pressure |
| 2.2. Through working groups with appropriate terms of reference or other joint initiatives involving local organisations and user groups, identify and implement the most effective and long lasting strategies to address significant and widespread negative impacts caused by recreation. | Reduce disturbance of wildlife, feeding of animals, animal accidents, litter, verge parking, fungi picking and negative impacts of dog walking, cycling and horse riding   |
| 2.3. In support of other techniques, use appropriate and proportionate enforcement activities to deter illegal recreation-related activities.  | Address verge parking, litter, illegal flying of drones, wild camping, lighting fires, parking in car parks overnight, cycling off the permitted network and out of control dogs   |
| 2.4. Increase the number and effectiveness of staff, volunteers and ambassadors 'on the ground' who can encourage people to enjoy recreation responsibly.  | Through higher levels of funding, improved partner coordination, habitat mitigation scheme rangers, apprentices, joint training, citizenship policing and a new ambassador programme   |
| 2.5. Manage organised activities and larger events in order to minimise negative impacts on wildlife, the working Forest and on local people.  | Licences and permissions given for use of Crown land and other open Forest areas, and events given guidance by Safety Advisory Groups  |

**Objective 3: Reduce the barriers that limit participation in beneficial outdoor recreation among those who need it most**

The New Forest already helps people to maintain and improve their health and wellbeing, it provides training and employment opportunities and is an ‘outdoor classroom’ from which we can all learn. However, some people may feel excluded and others do not recognise the value of the Forest (to themselves, the wider population or to future generations). This in turn risks alienating important sectors of society and failing to make the most of the ‘natural health service’ that is available. This objective is therefore about targeted work with specific groups of people at locations that are well-suited for bespoke interventions or activities.

| <b>Draft action</b>   | <b>Examples of possible delivery</b>  |
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| 3.1. Inspire more young people to appreciate and understand the special qualities of the New Forest and realise its relevance and value to them and to future generations.  | Through wild play, digital technology, training and apprenticeships, award schemes and inspirational youth-led projects     |
| 3.2. Develop targeted schemes that harness the health benefits of outdoor activity in and around the New Forest, close to where people live and at agreed locations.  | Regular walking, cycling, green prescriptions, volunteering, Green Halo Partnership and Health and Wellbeing Forum projects |
| 3.3. Establish regular liaison between organisations that provide opportunities for outdoor recreation and organisations that represent people with a range of disabilities to identify and implement appropriate changes that will increase accessibility. | Better information, fewer stiles or other ‘barriers’, accessible toilets  |

## **Sustainable recreation in the right places – managing where it happens**

### **Objective 4: Achieve a net gain for the New Forest’s working and natural landscape and for the recreational experience by influencing where recreation takes place.**

This objective is primarily about geographical distribution of recreation and associated facilities; there are also links with earlier objectives with respect to specific sites where people are provided with information. An holistic, long-term vision and a short-term plan for agreed gateways, key sites and core routes is needed (within and beyond the National Park). Only by taking this ‘spatial approach’ can we be sure to attract people to the most appropriate sites and reduce the impact on the more sensitive areas and thereby protect the special qualities.

By using this approach, significant net benefits should be achieved. Desirable changes will vary considerably: from ‘easy wins’ such as the provision of additional information through local information points, through changes to the location of car parking provision (about which a range of views is likely to be expressed), to ambitions for new country parks outside the national park boundary that may take many years to come to fruition.

The long-term vision needs to address the following categories of locations:

- a) Gateways: key access points such as certain villages, visitor centres and information points, rail stations and car parks near the perimeter of the Forest or close to A roads
- b) Key sites: agreed popular sites for recreation such as country parks, wild play sites, campsites and Forest locations with facilities such as larger car parks, visitor information and toilet facilities.
- c) Core routes: walking, horse riding and cycling routes (on and off road) including sustainable travel options (walking, cycling or public transport from where people live).

| <b>Draft action</b>  | <b>Examples of possible delivery</b>   |
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| 4.1. Develop a long term vision for where within and around the National Park people should be encouraged to enjoy outdoor recreation.   | Changes to ‘gateways’, key sites and core routes   |
| 4.2. Within a year of publishing the update to the 2010 strategy, consult the public and relevant organisations on what changes should ideally be made to ‘gateways’, key sites and core routes to achieve this objective. | Maps showing sensitive habitats, conservation designations, and areas with higher tranquillity which need to be protected from adverse impacts of increased recreation; revisions to the location of parking capacity in the National Park; parking restrictions to prevent physical damage to the Forest; selective improvements to the network of off road cycle routes; rights of way where enhanced signage would be |

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|   | useful; locations for visitor information; locations where safety can be improved e.g. where off-road routes cross busy roads; possible areas where increased recreational opportunities might be desirable on private land and outside of the National Park |
| 4.3. Having taken account of feedback on the above action, and after obtaining appropriate regulatory consents, develop a phased programme of implementing changes that avoid temporary net or ongoing likely significant effects on the recognised features of designated areas. | Extend, relocate or reduce gateways, sites or routes to ensure impacts on recognised features are decreased  |
| 4.4. Implement the programme as resources allow, adapting and reassessing individual elements in the light of monitoring.   | Ensure that people park in the car parks and not on the verges, and use the sites and routes provided.   |

## **Finding funding – and using it effectively**

### **Objective 5: Increase the level of funding available for recreation management so that it is sufficient to address both existing and upcoming needs.**

This objective recognises that resources are limited and that some aspirations for improved management of recreation can only be achieved if additional funds can be found. For example, car park maintenance could occur more regularly and more rangers could be deployed across the National Park if additional funding can be found. New recreation sites such as country parks would require major capital funding and business plans which ensure they are sustainable financially.

| <b>Draft action</b>   | <b>Examples of possible delivery</b>   |
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| 5.1. Approach and work with organisations to raise funds and other resources for specific recreation-related projects.  | Local businesses and charities, Local Enterprise Partnerships, grant making bodies, youth and health-care organisations, Clinical Commissioning Groups   |
| 5.2. Develop a coordinated approach among planning authorities in and around the New Forest to mitigate the impacts of new housing on protected areas – with the aim of using developer contributions to support work that protects the Forest. | Agree a common approach to determine the levels of developer contributions, work together to boost awareness raising initiatives (including rangers) and, with funding from the Local Enterprise Partnerships, landowners and businesses, create significant new recreation sites outside of protected areas |
| 5.3. Through consultation, develop mechanisms through which those who benefit from recreation facilities can contribute towards their maintenance and the good of the wider Forest.   | Developing and promoting the voluntary Love the Forest visitor gift scheme, inviting donations to support specific recreation facilities, reviewing where and how much people are charged for parking, larger events and provision of services   |
| 5.4. Work with the Government to include incentives for access improvements on private land within future land management grants, where these would benefit the public and reduce (or not increase) pressure on nearby sensitive areas.         | New walking, cycling and horse riding routes; campsites and other recreation facilities; England Coast Path  |

## **Data and evidence – to help guide the work**

### **Objective 6: Collate data and evidence to help inform the ongoing management of recreation**

There is ample evidence of the benefits of quiet outdoor recreation to our health and wellbeing. It is also clear that people sometimes impact in negative ways on each other, on sensitive wildlife and on important aspects of the working New Forest. The actions in this strategy can and should therefore be progressed.

However, more data and evidence would help target resources more effectively and efficiently, clarify trends in recreation, help predict which interventions are most likely to work and monitor the success of different recreation management initiatives.

| <b>Draft action</b>  | <b>Examples of possible delivery</b>   |
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| 6.1. Through existing or new forums, collate existing data and evidence, agree which data can most usefully be used as 'key indicators', identify gaps in knowledge and develop plans to improve the evidence-base used by organisations that manage recreation in the New Forest. | Species population data, habitat condition assessments, frequency of incidents caused by recreation, numbers of people taking part in different recreation activities, traffic counts and visitor data from tourism businesses |
| 6.2. Analyse and publish data on a repeat or rolling basis to assess trends in recreational activity and on aspects of the New Forest that might be affected.  | Analysing data to show the degree to which recreation management interventions achieve the desired effect, State of the Park Report, Annual Monitoring Reports for local plans   |

## **Adaptive monitoring and implementation – keeping the strategy alive**

### **Objective 7: Regularly review progress against agreed recreation management actions and adapt forward plans to protect the special qualities of the National Park and enable people to enjoy and benefit from them**

It is impossible to predict the degree to which the actions in this strategy will be achieved, especially given the ambitious nature of some actions that will depend on new resources being found. However, the six organisations on the RMS Steering Group intend to remain focussed on protecting the Forest for the benefit of future generations; they will therefore continue to meet, monitor progress and consider how to respond to changing circumstances.

| <b>Draft action</b>   | <b>Examples of possible delivery</b>   |
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| 7.1. Regularly review the implementation of the actions in this strategy and the degree to which they achieve the desired outcomes.                             | Feedback from lead organisations, reports from joint forums, trends in the occurrence of incidents, analysis of the effectiveness of interventions where this is possible, feedback from user groups |
| 7.2. Where actions are not progressed or finalised, consider what could be done to redress the situation and gain agreement for revised actions where possible. | Find new resources or prioritise the most important actions  |
| 7.3. Review and update the Recreation Management Strategy actions after five years.   | Consultation with user groups, local organisations and the public  |