

4 Threats and Opportunities

4.1 Introduction

The landscape of the New Forest has changed considerably over the last 100 years and will almost certainly continue to change, potentially at a significantly faster rate in the future than in the past and on a landscape-scale.

This section explores the key threats and also looks at some of the opportunities for addressing these threats; these are expanded further in **Section 5** which shows how the OPOF scheme projects will specifically help to address these threats and opportunities within the scheme.

This section is not an assessment of the risk of the individual projects; this is covered under **Section 5.10**.

4.2 Threats

There are a number of pressures that will put the heritage, wildlife and landscape of the New Forest at risk: changes in land management, increases in population and loss of connection with the land all threaten the intrinsic character and quality of the Forest. All these threats are common to the whole of the National Park, where specific to either the Open Forest Crown lands or the areas outside of the Open Forest (i.e. the OPOF core area) this is highlighted. Threats to the Open Forest are also included as they are inextricably linked to the overall landscape value of the wider OPOF area. The following section explores these and other in greater detail under the themes of:

- Environment
- Economic
- Social

4.2.1 Environmental Threats

4.2.1.1 Climate change

There is scientific consensus that the climate is changing and will continue to change significantly over the next 50 years and beyond unless there are major and continuing reductions in global greenhouse gas emissions. This will alter the character of large parts of the National Park, modify landscapes, habitats and biodiversity, affect local communities and influence the way the Park is perceived and used. The potential implications for the New Forest are:

- Sea level rise: at present sea levels are rising by an average of 4mm a year along the South Coast. This is expected to increase to 15mm per annum by 2080. One forecast is that by 2050 sea levels will have risen by 34cm in the English Channel over current levels and possibly by 50cm in some parts of the Solent. The effects of this will result in loss of coastal land or the construction of more coastal defences to protect coastal communities. Coastal habitats will be effected by 'coastal squeeze' with coastal salt marsh and mudflats 'squeezed' out

between rising sea levels and hard defences. This is particularly relevant to the core OPOF area along the southern boundary from Hurst spit to Calshot spit.

- Increased storminess and flooding: Marine storm surges will create an additional threat for coastal communities and the Avon, Lymington and Beaulieu Rivers will be subject to more frequent flooding. This particularly relevant to the core OPOF area along the southern boundary from Hurst spit to Calshot spit.
- Wooded areas are likely to suffer more frequent wind throw and tree loss.
- Periods of summer drought will cause a decline in wetland and woodland habitats and a change in species composition – beech will be particularly susceptible to drought. Streams and rivers are likely to suffer from increased summer low flows and may dry out, especially if abstracted to augment public water supply. Storage of water will become increasingly important.
- An increase in the number of hot, dry summers, with impact the pattern of recreational use, fire risk and water resources.
- Spread of invasive pests and diseases could affect the health of oak, beech, ash and other species.
- Changes in land management are likely with the arrival of crops currently associated with southern European countries.
- An increase in extreme weather events, such as storms, flooding and heat waves, with impacts on the day to day lives of local people and businesses, and on the natural environment.

4.2.1.2 Non Native Invasive Species

The impact of Invasive Non Native Species (INNS) has been identified as possibly the greatest threat to biodiversity worldwide. In the UK many species have become naturalised but only a handful of these species have developed into a significant problem.

Within the New Forest a large proportion of the key problem species are associated with wetlands and riverbanks, particularly on areas outside of the Open Forest. These species include New Zealand pigmyweed (a matt forming species found in ponds), Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed, giant hogweed and American skunk cabbage. The impact of INNS on the New Forest is particularly acute because of the extremely high wildlife value of the semi natural habitats within the area.

Himalayan balsam is well established in several river valleys and, despite some successes with control using volunteers, is spreading. Japanese knotweed has recently been recorded on the Cadnam River and giant hogweed is well established on the Avon Water. American skunk cabbage occurs along the Lymington River and the Fleet Water. All four of these species have the potential to detrimentally affect the condition of the riparian habitats if left unchecked. They are not such an issue in the open forest because grazing prevents these species from taking hold.

Spread of rhododendron, birch and pine in woodland through a lack of management, decreases their biodiversity value, again this is an issue mainly in the privately owned woodland outside of the Crown lands although also an issue throughout the Forest.

4.2.1.3 Habitat Fragmentation

Habitat fragmentation has occurred and continues to occur where the native habitats and species of the New Forest are cleared for agriculture and development. Habitats

which were once continuous become divided into separate fragments or islands isolated from each other. This affects biodiversity by a reduction in the amount of available habitat for a particular species in an ecological niche as it isolates the populations and means they are unable to move around, if there is not enough habitat then the populations become unviable. The Open Forest is covered by numerous nature conservation designations and is therefore protected, so this is more of an issue in the areas surrounding the Open Forest.

4.2.1.4 Water quality

Increased intensity of land management and changes in land management practice in the enclosed areas of the Forest mean that the naturally high water quality of the Forest headwater streams and ponds generally deteriorates as they leave the Open Forest. This can be caused by the following:

- sudden runoff following rainfall where large areas of hard standing and agricultural farm buildings and drainage run straight to the river;
- diffuse agricultural runoff – nutrient runoff to naturally low nutrient freshwater habitats from livestock and cultivation of crops.
- Run-off from small horse pasture paddocks and increasing pressure from recreational vehicles in car parks (i.e. disposal of grey water).

The results of this are a lack of suitable habitat for key freshwater species within agricultural areas surrounding the New Forest (i.e. amphibians and dragonflies), limiting dispersal beyond the boundary of the protected area. A secondary, but significant effect is the impact poor water quality flowing from terrestrial sources can have on the shell fish waters into which these streams drain. In the open forest the streams are surrounded by low levels of agricultural use so the water quality is high, however this becomes more of an issue in the areas outside of the Open Forest, such as stretches of the Beaulieu River. Within the Open Forest individual stressors also cause some localised pollution issues such as waste water in camp sites.

4.2.1.5 Erosion

Natural processes such as wave action, weathering, and animal burrowing can cause erosion of soil, habitats and historic remains. In some instances this may lead to the loss of species such as windblown trees, or complete loss of land in the case of coastal erosion. This may be exacerbated by climate change with increased storminess and extreme weather events making impacts more frequent.

4.2.2 Economic Threats

4.2.2.1 A decrease in land-based jobs

Employment in the land-based sector in the New Forest has been decreasing over decades, with estates reducing their land management staff and the number of young people going into agriculture or forestry decreasing year on year. Whereas 40-50 years ago, many of those living in the Forest would automatically follow in their parents footsteps by becoming commoners, farmers and foresters, this is no longer the case. This results in a younger generation who don't have the same link and connection with their surrounding landscape and who don't necessarily learn the traditional land management skills from their parents as previous generations would have done. This is resulting in a younger generation of Forest residents who are increasingly disconnected from the natural environment and who are growing up without the skills or knowledge to care for the Forest in future.

4.2.2.2 Changes in land management practices

Traditional land management has created the distinctive landscape of the New Forest over the last 1,000 years, underpinned by the continuation of commoning, stock grazing and burning and cutting of vegetation. Economic pressures over the last century have resulted in larger scale changes of land-use from heathland or deciduous woodland to conifer plantation, thus resulting in a loss of biodiversity and landscape character on a much larger scale which if left unchecked could lead to the irrevocable change and the eventual loss of this unique part of the Forest's cultural legacy.

This is due to a number land management changes:

- **Changes in Forestry practises**
Planting of conifers on areas of once open heathland, pasture woodland and within existing woodland areas has been a threat in the past. New Forest streams have also been subject to extensive modification, often associated with drainage and forestry practice. This prevents them from functioning naturally, and damages the quality and diversity of habitats and species which live both in the streams and adjacent to them. In addition, many streams have historically been modified to hold water back or to control tidal inflows which creates obstacles for species such as the European Eel.

Policy has come full circle and under the Forest Design Plans the Forestry Commission is returning areas of conifer plantation to their original heathland habitat or to native board leaf woodland.

The National Trust at Foxbury Plantation has also restored areas of commercial conifer plantation to open heathland.

Restoration is on-going to reinstate some wetlands and original stream courses on the Open Forest, however the existing programme of stream restoration projects within the Open Forest does little to address these issues outside of the protected areas such as Beaulieu River and other streams.

- **Changes in Agricultural Practices**
 - As agriculture has intensified, the hedgerows, rough margins, buffer strips and woodlands which are part of the landscape character of many of the enclosed Forest lands have been gradually removed due to changes in land use or enlargement of fields through amalgamation to suit modern, intensive farming methods. This has erased the historic small scale field patterns closely associated with the landscape's traditional character.
 - Loss of, or fragmentation of, hedgerows has effected the field pattern sense of enclosure and eroded the rural character of the landscape. It has also resulted in the fragmentation and loss of UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats and a resulting landscape which offers less in the way of stepping stones and green corridors for wildlife and which is less resilient to challenges such as climate change and disease.
 - Fields which were in agricultural production are now being used for other enterprises such as hobby farming, recreational horse keeping and often further subdivided with fences.

- Some pastures and small woodlands are not managed, resulting in a decrease in the landscape and conservation value of these habitats.
- Changes in land use, larger machinery and the ability to farm areas of land that would otherwise have been left, have also resulted in a high amount of damage to archaeological sites which in many cases were unknown, locations inexact or significance not understood by the land manager in question.
- Increased intensity of land management and changes in land management practice in agricultural areas means that the naturally high water quality of many streams generally deteriorates as they leave the Open Forest. Ponds are also impacted when they are surrounded by agricultural land rather than the semi-natural grazed habitats of the Open Forest. Restoration projects in other areas of lowland England often struggle to make a detectable difference in water quality because diffuse pollution issues can be intractable over large areas. However, in the New Forest there is the chance to make a real difference because of relatively low intensity agricultural landscapes and small catchment size.
- Increasing competition from different land uses, including more intensive arable production (in response to global food shortages), bio-fuels and growing demand for natural resources e.g. ground mounted solar arrays producing renewable energy.

All these issues are a particular threat in the areas outside of the Open Forest.

- **Increases in Land/Property Prices**

One of the main drivers for change in land management is the high cost of land and property which has resulted in many small-holdings coming out of productive use. These smallholdings, previously provided the back-bone to commoning whether it be directly or through the provision of back-up grazing for rent. The gap between house prices and local earnings has widened considerably over the last 10 years. House and land prices are now well beyond the reach of the majority of local residents. Young commoners, farmers and foresters find that the prices make it extremely difficult to get property within the New Forest, thus providing just another reason to reconsider their employment and lifestyle choices. This has had a major impact on young commoners who need housing in the area to enable them to continue commoning but who have been priced out of the housing market. A commoner's dwelling scheme has helped some practising commoners to build suitable holdings on exception sites and ensures that these properties remain tied to commoning use in the future, but the numbers of these are fairly minimal.

4.2.2.3 A Decrease in the Traditional Skills

Landowners and managers remain crucial to retaining the character of the New Forest, but traditional skills in the Forest are decreasing year on year.

- Land management skills

The changes in agricultural requirements, land management practices and land ownership have resulted in a new generation of farmers, commoners and landowners who don't necessarily have the traditional skills to best manage this heritage landscape. These skills are wide ranging and include pasture management, hedge laying, hedge management, ditch and stream management, copse / woodland management / coppicing. As well as the lack of skills to be able to carry out some of these tasks, there is often also a basic lack of understanding about why these tasks are required, what tools and machinery are best for the task and what time of year tasks should be carried out. There is also a lack of understanding of agricultural paper work required for seeking grants and dealing with other administrative requirements. The result of this lack of skills is a gradual deterioration of the landscape, fragmentation of habitats and a decrease in biodiversity.

Commoning in the New Forest is a highly specialised form of farming which requires specific skills. Many of these skills have been traditional to the community and have been learned as young commoners grow up in the family environment. However, changes in the make-up of the commoning population (notably the decline in the number of established commoning families), and Health and Safety legislation have made certified qualifications an essential part of the commoner's education.

- **Building Skills**

For the built environment, the loss of traditional building skills is also an increasing problem. Historic buildings form the core of virtually every settlement within the New Forest and the special character of these buildings is often irretrievably lost by the use of inappropriate materials and methods of repair. Examples which are frequent in the New Forest include the use of cement mortar rather than the traditional lime mortar, the use of non-lime based renders on cob walls (see box), using new materials which are not of an appropriate character, as well as being visually obtrusive.

Earth cob walling



Earth cob walling needs appropriate repair techniques to ensure longevity and any render and decoration should be in a like for like material and lime based to allow the walls to breathe. Often inappropriate hard materials, such as cement, are used internally or externally to repair cob and this can have a negative impact upon the structure and its ability to breathe and cope successfully with damp and water ingress.

Figure 34 - Un-rendered and unprotected end elevation of clay cob building

Unfortunately at present, local building companies do not always have the specialist skills and experience in carrying out works to historic buildings. The result of this is that work either goes to larger companies from further afield or that work is carried out locally but not to a high standard. Similarly those planning agents, surveyors and architects specifying the work can also lack an understanding of the traditional skills and methods which will conserve these buildings and materials. There is also a concern that home owners of traditional buildings do not have the necessary access to specialists to carry out appropriate work to their buildings. Feedback from a small pilot project with a number of existing builders who carry out repairs to heritage buildings within the New Forest has confirmed that many people in the trade now don't have the understanding and skills to carry out repairs to these buildings using the correct methods and materials. However, the pilot project also confirmed that once engaged, they are very keen to learn and then to put their new skills into practice.

4.2.2.4 Development Pressure

There is a continued demand for new development within and immediately adjacent to the Park, and the need for careful design to avoid impacts on the rural character of the area, its visual setting and the conservation of its rich historic and natural heritage. Key threats include:

- Major housing growth in South Hampshire and South East Dorset, with the likelihood of further increased traffic and recreational pressure
- Economic development in and around Bournemouth and Southampton, including the expansion of both airports
- New development, alterations, signs and planting out of keeping with local vernacular styles and local landscape setting which led to an erosion of local landscape character.
- Presence of telecommunication masts and pylons
- Increased demand for sand and gravel, placing increased pressure on the resources of the New Forest along the Avon Valley and the southern coastal area
- Continued pressure for small-scale development within and adjacent to the National Park causing gradual erosion of the distinctive character of the New Forest
- Increased pressure for renewable energy developments such as large scale ground mounted solar arrays and off shore wind farms.

4.2.2.5 Increased Pressure on Resources

Resources within all of the partnership organisations are stretched to the maximum at the present time, with no sign that this will improve in the foreseeable future. Decreasing public sector budgets and an increase in competition for other funds mean that staffing resources and funds to deliver capital works are minimal thus making it almost impossible to deliver the step change to enable integrated, landscape-scale improvements. Instead, organisations are focussing on small-scale one-off projects as and when the funding is available, which although successful individually, don't have the impact of an integrated, co-ordinated programme of delivery.

The lack of staff resources in particular is having a detrimental impact on the engagement with communities and other organisations as these more time-heavy areas of work are often those which are decreased when staff resources are stretched. Conversely, the lack of resources does provide an opportunity for organisations to reflect on their ways of working and look at improving integrated partnership working where the collective impacts will produce results which are greater than the sum of their parts.

Similarly, farmers, commoners and estate owners are finding it increasingly difficult to find funds to make environmental improvements and manage the land sustainably when the economics of farming are so tight, with low livestock prices and high commodity prices. This Scheme offers an ideal opportunity to address this situation by pooling together the resources, knowledge and enthusiasm of all of these groups, resulting in a collective impact which is greater than the sum of its parts.

4.2.3 Social Pressures

4.2.3.1 Population Changes

The population of the South East is predicted to grow by 12% over the next 20 years as a result of increased life expectancy and inwards migration. The majority of this growth will happen outside the National Park boundary but is likely to cause increased pressure on the National Park with:

- New development on the immediate boundary of the National Park with views from the National Park to urban development and industry affecting perceived levels of remoteness and tranquillity
- Major housing growth in South Hampshire and South East Dorset potentially bringing increased traffic and recreational pressure

New Residents

The increasing number of new residents within the New Forest area has had a wide range of impacts. Many are now landowners who are enthusiastic to learn but don't yet have the understanding or the traditional land management skills needed to manage their pastures, woodlands or boundary features. This has resulted in large areas of land which are either under-managed or mis-managed and which are losing both their landscape and conservation value. For instance, few of the woodlands that are outside of the Open Forest are now in active management.

Similarly as many of the properties within the New Forest have heritage value, there are a generation of new property owners who don't necessarily understand the history of their property or appreciate its historic value and features. This often results in a gradual degradation of the building or in some cases complete removal. Many unlisted cob buildings, simple brick cottages and early bungalows give parts of the New Forest their distinctive character, but every year fewer (and much fewer in original condition) survive.

Each year, some of the newer residents to the Forest take up the challenge of becoming active commoners. This is extremely positive for the future of commoning but in most cases the new and young commoners keep only ponies and may only do so for a short period of time. This is because there are increased skills required to manage and breed cattle, as well as a plethora of regulations which owners have to contend with. The Forest however, relies on there being a mix of grazing animals due to their different browsing and grazing habits. Cattle will browse on the heather and tougher vegetation that ponies will not and it is this mix of grazing habits that keep the habitats in favourable condition. Opportunities exist to support new commoners in learning the skills and procedures necessary for cattle ownership.

4.2.3.2 Loss of Connection with the Natural Environment

Changes in lifestyle have had a huge impact on the way people interact with the natural environment today. Children growing up today spend less time in the outdoors than they ever have, with competing interests such as ipads, the internet, computer games and the shopping centre taking them away from the informal play that would have taken up a significant proportion of their time in previous generations:

- Fewer than 10% of kids play in wild places, down from 50% a generation ago
- The roaming radius for young people has declined by 90% in one generation
- A 2008 study showed that half of all kids had been stopped from climbing trees

This is resulting in a generation of young people who have little interaction with the natural environment, let alone an understanding of its history or what keeps it the way it is. Work undertaken by the National Park in 2014 found that children in and around the New Forest are willing but generally discouraged from playing in and around the 'wilder' areas of the New Forest. Parents seem unwilling to allow

unsupervised play in these areas due to perceptions of risk which are disproportionate to the actual risk. It also highlighted a need for wild play on the fringe of the New Forest, in more urban areas, close to where families live that can act as stepping stones into engaging with the wilder areas of the New Forest.

4.2.3.3 Loss of Local distinctiveness

Local distinctiveness is the sum of all landscape features and attributes that create the particular character of the New Forest and individual areas within it. Although change is inevitable, it is often at the expense of those features which give the New Forest its particular character. Over time these are having a real impact, leading to a general suburbanisation and a dilution of character. Although the New Forest as a whole is still clearly different in many ways from its surroundings, there has been a gradual and continuing loss of character, including:

- Suburbanisation of the villages
- Inappropriate scale and design of new buildings
- Increase in signs and other infrastructure in the countryside
- Decline in traditional rural crafts and land management.
- Increase in the number of second homes
- Small-scale changes to homes and properties in response to shifting values/fashions and availability of products.
- Use of non-native and ornamental plants within gardens and ponds
- Loss of local knowledge, movement of people and changes in lifestyle effecting language, traditions and place names and myths.

This is a particular issue in the areas surrounding the Open Forest.

4.2.3.4 Increase in car use and careless driving

The high numbers of cars travelling in and around the Forest (**Figure 35**) has an impact on congestion and air pollution, careless driving and speeding can also impact on the number of animal accidents on the Forest roads, whether it is commoners' livestock or wildlife such as deer.

New Forest District Council placed Speed Data Recorders on six 40mph roads in the New Forest in July 2012, recording vehicle speeds in both directions. The work was carried out for the Animal Accident Reduction Group. It found the following:

- During this time it was found that 89% of the vehicles were travelling above 41mph and 4% were travelling above 61mph, showing a speeding problem across the New Forest.
- The number of speeding vehicles tended to increase in line with the number of total vehicles. There was a higher volume of traffic during the week than at weekends.
- The peaks in speeding during the week were associated with the morning and evening rush hours, whilst at the weekend the pattern was less defined.
- The presence of large junctions seemed to reduce the speeds of the traffic.
- Traffic speed at locations with nearby animal warning signs appeared to be no less than at other locations
- Three quarters of the vehicles were travelling at 41-56mph.

Animal Accidents

The open landscape of the New Forest where ponies, cattle, donkeys, sheep and pigs roam free is one its distinctive features and it is one of the few areas in England, especially in the busy and developed south, where drivers come face-to-face with animals on the road, both in daylight and at night.

The highest number of deaths caused by road traffic accidents was 313 in 1962 which represented 4.82% of the total stock. This number then gradually fell due to a number of changes such as fencing the perambulation and fencing of various roads such as the A31, A35, A337 and the introduction of the 40mph speed limit zone across the Open Forest when numbers fell to around 100-120. There has been an overall downward trend of animals killed and injured and over the last 30 years. The most recent figures for 2014 reported 68 animals were killed (0.73% of total number depastured) and 23 injured in road traffic accidents.

Public educational campaigns have been carried out by a number of different organisations trying to influence the public about the feeding of livestock, having regard for livestock on the roads, having a better understanding and regard for safety during the management of the livestock, for example, during the drifts

The Animal Accident Reduction Group was formed in 2007 to improve analysis of the accident statistics and coordinate the actions of the various organisations. This group is attended by representatives from the New Forest National Park Authority, the Verderers/Agisters, New Forest District Council, Hampshire County Council, Hampshire Constabulary, Forestry Commission, the New Forest Trust, British Deer Society and the Commoners Defence Association.

Measures to reduce the number of accidents can be grouped into the following categories:

1. Road signs (e.g. bespoke changing signs and more permanent signage)
2. Speed enforcement and driver awareness training (including some activity by the Police on high risk routes)
3. Traffic calming, for example through width restrictions
4. Increasing the visibility of ponies (cutting back verges and fitting animals with reflective collars and stickers)
5. Awareness campaigns (constant 'educational' initiatives via the media, car window stickers, hotline cards, activities at public events, booklets etc.)
Schools and colleges (e.g. using accident statistics in the maths curriculum and attendance at Brockenhurst College 'drive safe days')

In October 2014 the NFCDA launched a project in partnership with the New Forest Verderers, and Hampshire Police for a dedicated speed enforcement officer using new technology effective at night. Work has been prioritised on routes which have been identified due to human casualties or animal deaths in the past.

Drive time radius of the New Forest National Park

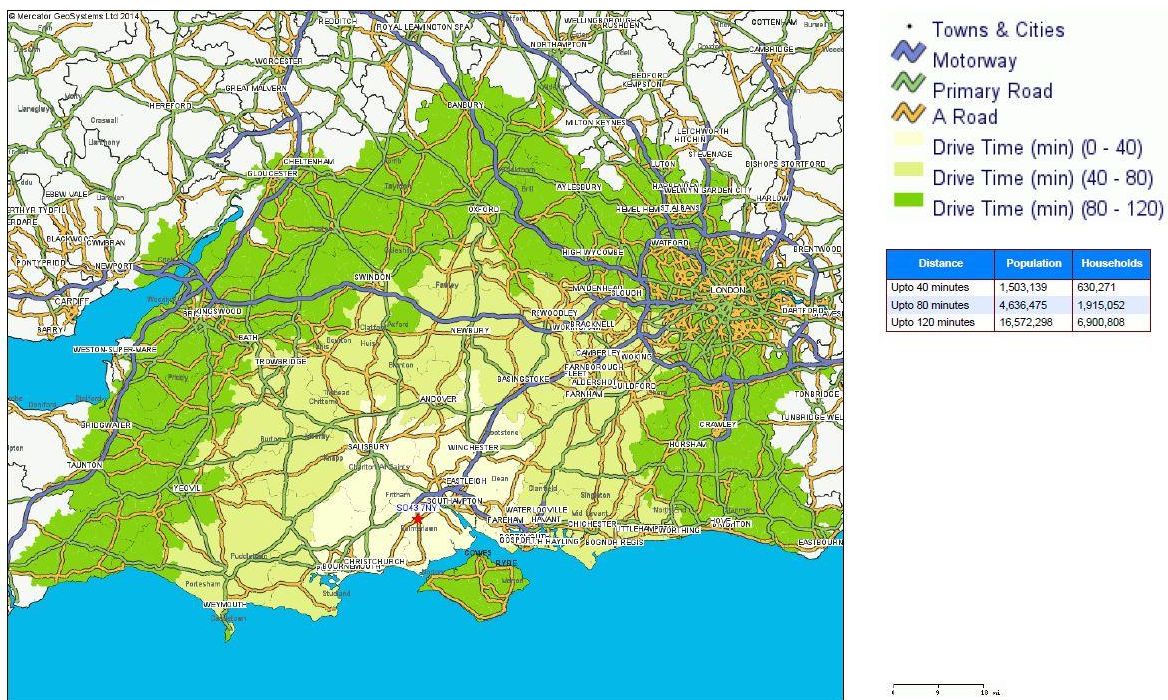


Figure 35: Diagram showing drive time to the New Forest. Copyright: Mercator GeoSystems Ltd 2014. Crown copyright material is reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO.

4.2.3.5 Recreation Pressure

The current number of visitor days is 13.5 million per year. Preliminary work suggests that this could increase by about 8% (or an additional 1.05 million visits each year) by 2026, as a result of major development proposals for the surrounding areas. This together with population growth will create greater pressure on the habitats and species from recreational use. Threats include

- High levels of visitor traffic in the summer months impact on tranquillity (e.g. at Buckler's Hard)
- Recreational pressures leads to erosion of heathland and lawns and the potential to damage the heritage such as at raised sites such as Bronze Age barrows
- Disposal of grey water by recreational vehicles and campers outside of designated campsites impacting on otherwise pristine freshwater habitats
- Wildlife disturbance can affect breeding success, winter survival and whether species are forced to migrate and become excluded from the areas they would otherwise occupy
- Increase in feeding of commoners livestock (resulting in some animals having to be taken off the Open Forest as through progressive feeding, they are exhibiting aggressive behaviour when they see food)
- Increase in animal accidents on the roads, gates being left open and dog attacks on stock
- Visitors wanting to watch management activities such as the drifts (when the ponies are rounded up into a pound) but not realising the safety implications of getting in the way of hundreds of galloping ponies

- Increase in health and fitness activities and events such as boot camps, marathons and mass cycling events
- Dog fouling
- Pollution and litter
- Congestion

4.2.3.6 Encroachment onto Open Forest land

There are an ever increasing number of encroachments from private land owners land onto the Open Forest. These include moving boundary fencing, inappropriate furniture, signage, illegal parking and inappropriate storage on the Open Forest, all leading to diminution of Commoner's rights, particularly grazing and also visual amenity.

Property owners or managers, who have responsibility for land, do not always understand or appreciate the significance of their boundary features and what they represent. They may deliberately remove them to secure advantage to their property or they may just not maintain the feature or even be aware that they may have an obligation to look after them and to fence against the Forest. They may absorb fields and small woodlands into gardens, remove trees and hedgerows, small scale subdivision of land. In addition many private owners look to alter and 'improve' the land outside their direct ownership by introducing 'urban' feature such as kerb stones, rocks, signs etc.

4.2.3.7 Access to Knowledge

Due to the unique nature of the New Forests heritage landscape, every year statutory bodies, students, researchers, consultants, specialist interest groups and members of the local community collect data and research information which expands knowledge of the environment, geography, wildlife, history, archaeology, economy, sociology and culture of the New Forest. This information is often disseminated only within their own group or organisation, as a result much of this is not easily available (hidden away in universities, libraries or only available in an inaccessible hard copy) and a big proportion is only known about by the organisation, business or individual that produced it. This effectively means that Forest organisations and land managers are not getting access to all of the appropriate information which could be available to support integrated working and land management decisions. There is no method for gaining access to this wealth of knowledge and there is no forum or mechanism for bringing these research communities together. This allows researchers to unknowingly duplicate research, and provides no mechanism for gaps in the research to be identified and filled.

In some areas of work such as the condition of vernacular buildings, information about our heritage is clearly lacking and survey work is much needed to be able to provide a baseline to monitor against and information on which to make management and policy decisions.

4.2.3.8 Lack of Understanding

Whilst the New Forest is loved by its residents and by the millions of people that visit the National Park each year, many people are still unaware of its many-layered

history and the reasons why the Forest is how it is today. This includes the role of commoning in maintaining the landscape and also all of the individual small characteristics of the New Forest which on the whole remain unnoticed but collectively create the New Forest landscape that people know and love today.

Changes to these smaller elements of the landscape whether it is the natural or built heritage are often due to a lack of detailed understanding of the heritage and can individually seem small and inconsequential to those involved. However, collectively these changes can chip away at the landscape character of the area, resulting in a landscape which eventually has lost its heritage significance.

The 2007 Commoning Review listed public understanding as one of the key issues/concerns for commoners. There is a general lack of understanding about commoning and the livestock which can lead to behavioural issues. The animals are widely considered to be 'wild' and not owned by anyone. The socio-economic structure and cultural heritage of commoning that underpins the management of the stock – including drifts, colt hunting and pony sales - is either completely invisible to visitors and those who live and work locally, or is seen as a quaint relic of the past. There is also a lack of awareness from some residents regarding Forest law and customs which can cause danger to the Commoner's stock; most notably the need to fence against the Forest, the placing of rubbish on the Forest for bin collection which results in access by livestock, and encroachments beyond a property's boundary which reduces the grazing land available.

In other areas private landowner may not know they have land of conservation importance and/or do not carry out active or appropriate management on the site. As a consequence many areas are in decline resulting in a decrease in biodiversity value over time. In addition landowners or visitors may be unaware of a sites historical importance.

The Audience Development Plan developed a typology of audience engagement for heritage projects which is designed to help understand how particular audiences currently engage with heritage, how they might wish this engagement to change and the level of engagement that the Landscape Partnership wishes to achieve. As a minimum it hopes to move audiences from unaware to aware, to understand, but ideally would continue to move them to engage and then to participate. It was thought that those audiences that were not at the 'understanding' level included: residents living in the forest (passive); New Forest Neighbours; visitors (families staying to play; visitors (day trippers); and young active (see the ADP for further details).

4.2.3.9 Changes to Legislation

Legislation affects all people and activities operating in the New Forest. However the volume of legislation, its piecemeal structure, its level of detail and frequent amendments and reforms, the interaction with common law and European law, mean that it can be complex, hard to understand and difficult to comply with and the public will often need help or guidance in understanding the law. This is particularly relevant to the farming and commoning community who have to deal with the Single Payment Scheme, Rural Land Registry, health and safety issues, resource protection issues,

Cross Compliance issues and applications for land management related grants such as Environmental Stewardship and English Woodland Grant Scheme etc. Excessive complexity can hinder economic activity and create burdens for individuals and can obstruct sustainable management if not clearly understood by people with consequences for the New Forests Heritage.

4.3 Opportunities

4.3.1 Building a Partnership

The New Forest has a complex range of both public sector and voluntary sector organisations involved in the management of its heritage landscape, all with different views, areas of interest, responsibilities and ways of working.

Whilst all of these groups work together on a smaller-scale, it has been difficult in the past to form larger long-lasting partnerships which will address key issues and areas of work within the Forest. In fact, a previous attempt to take forward a Landscape Partnership Scheme in the New Forest proved unsuccessful for this reason, as political issues in the Forest at the time flared up and resulted in the Partnership dissolving. Whilst this was disappointing at the time, the organisations in the Forest learnt a lot from this experience and have moved on considerably since this time in their approach to working together. In fact, many of the projects developed for the previous Landscape Partnership Scheme have since been progressed through the New Forest HLS Scheme (covering only the Open Forest) which is being delivered through a partnership of three of the key Forest organisations, with input from many others.

There is an opportunity for Forest organisations to build on this success by working together to deliver a successful landscape-scale scheme. This will result in a continuing building of working relations within the Forest and a more effective joined up approach to the delivery of areas of work and address key issues which is essential if the Forest is to adequately address the threats that it faces today.

4.3.2 Working with land managers

There is a clear need to work more closely with landowners and managers in order to increase understanding of the characteristics and special qualities of the Forest and create robust and high quality natural habitats. This is particularly important in the areas surrounding the Open Forest, where private land managers may not traditionally have had the skills and resources to be able to manage their land sustainably. There is an opportunity to:

- promote wildlife-friendly farming agreements on farmland.
- provide farm and land management advice that can help keep the land managed traditionally
- give land managers the knowledge and skills required to manage the land and help keep the traditional landscape.
- provide resources to landowners to assist with the sensitive management of their land holdings
- encourage local initiatives such as joint marketing and the production of premium New Forest products.
- accurate survey and assessment and the creation of a comprehensive database that can be used to enhance the local Historic Environment Records so that land

managers can fully understand, protect and disseminate the unique and varied physical remains of the New Forest.

4.3.3 Working with Commoners

There is an opportunity to deliver comprehensive support and skills development for commoners, particularly focussed on new and young commoners who will be the foundation for future generations of commoners. This should focus on passing down the knowledge and experience of existing commoners to the new generations to ensure that the practice continues in the long-term. It will also build up stronger partnerships between the commoners and policy-making organisations which will ensure that commoners have a more significant influence on the development of policies which effect their sustainability and way of life.

4.3.4 Working with nature

There is an opportunity to secure biodiversity gain on a landscape-scale, reducing habitat deterioration and fragmentation, and increasing connectivity through green corridors and stepping stones which will enable species to move across the landscape. This will also result in a landscape which is more robust and able to withstand challenges such as climate change and disease.

4.3.5 Working with Communities and People

There is a need to work more closely with residents and communities in order to increase understanding of the overall story of the New Forest, increase appreciation of the individual characteristics and special qualities of the Forest and inspire enthusiasm for people to be involved in caring about the Forest. This will enable people to enjoy the area more fully and help increase respect and a sense of responsibility for the New Forest. Understanding underpins the good management of the area by local organisations and is essential in developing the interest of new generations and inspiring them to protect the National Park into the future.

A survey undertaken during the development stage for the audience development work asked people how they like to learn about the landscape and heritage. **Figure 36** shows the popularity of 'way marked activity and discovery trails' and 'guided walks' which suggests that people would like to learn more about the places that they are visiting.

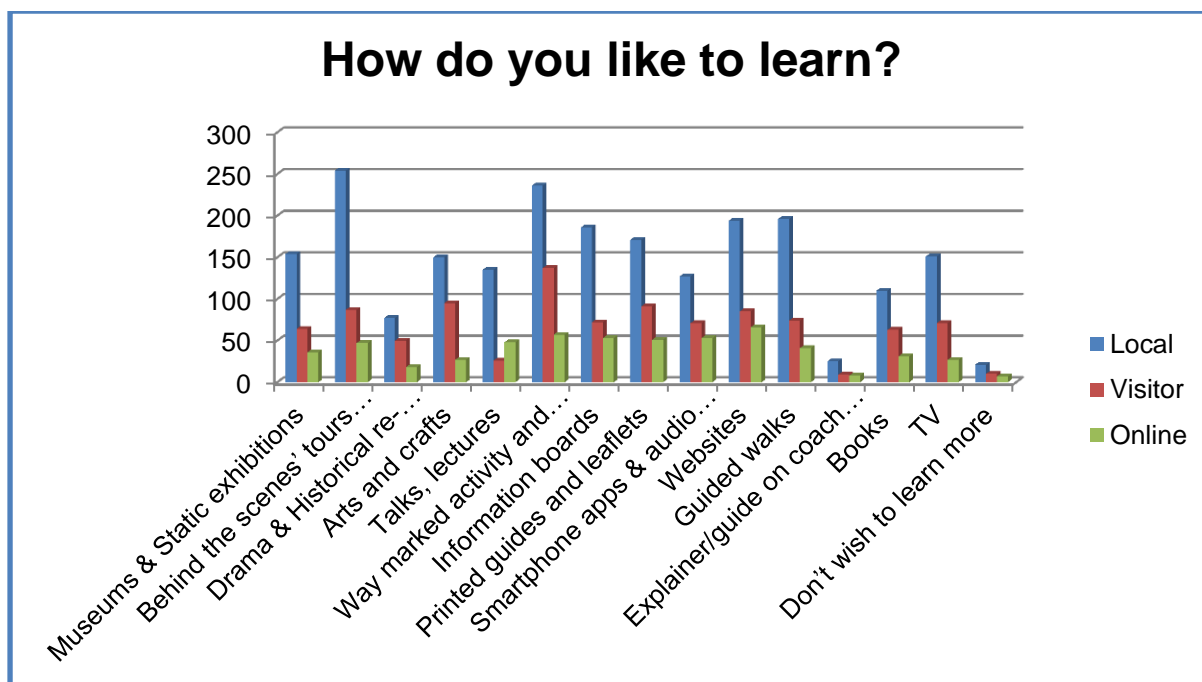


Figure 36 - How people would like to find out about New Forest Heritage

There is an opportunity to

- support communities in championing local distinctiveness
- stimulate community participation and develop community-based projects that can enhance the character of particular settlements and give better protection to buildings of local interest
- encourage community groups to seek additional funding
- use key visitor attractions and the range of local access hubs to raise awareness and promote the responsible use of the Forest
- encourage partner organisations, landowners and farmers to allow greater and more diverse public access on land by creating new low-impact access opportunities such as behind the scene tours.
- raise awareness of the significance of the historic environment assets in the Forest
- use a variety of communication means to underline the importance of the landscape and its importance to people.
- find new ways to interpret the landscape heritage and provide new, fun and engaging ways for people to experience the landscape and its unique heritage.
- improve contact with rangers and other trained staff and better co-ordinate the work of the existing ranger services and further develop a joint events programme
- provide opportunities for personal learning within the Forest itself
- ensure a co-ordinated and consistent approach to interpretation
- help tourism businesses communicate information about the National Park and its special qualities directly to visitors
- promote the recording of local stories, through oral history projects, local research projects and the organisation of local heritage events

- undertake outreach work to engage with hard-to-reach groups and communicate the importance of the landscape
- work with schools to increase the role of local landscape heritage in learning programmes
- widen the audience through targeted information and events programmes which address the needs
- link local heritage with people's living, working and wellbeing needs
- provide pride in local heritage; show people what's at their doorstep
- encourage visitors, to contribute to the Love The Forest (see box) to support ongoing conservation and education in the Forest
- promoting opportunities to enjoy the special qualities of the New Forest

Love The Forest



The Love the Forest Scheme is run by the New Forest Trust and is a way in which visitors to the New Forest are able to make a contribution to its upkeep by a small donation when they pay for their accommodation, meal or drinks at participating businesses. Some businesses also donate to the scheme themselves to demonstrate their Corporate Social Responsibility.

The New Forest Trust was founded in 2003 with the aim to secure the future of the New Forest for those who live in it and for those who love it, now and in the future. Their objective is to secure financial support locally and from the millions of people who visit the New Forest every year. This support is then used to fund conservation projects in the Forest:

- Protecting the Landscape
- Looking after animals
- Promoting understanding of how the Forest works

Some key successes that have been funded are the A to Z book of commoning, reflective stickers for ponies and assisting local volunteers, to establish a Community Woodland at the Pondhead Inclosure on the outskirts of Lyndhurst.

4.3.6 Working with Volunteers

Evidence from volunteer initiatives such as the annual New Forest Volunteer Fair demonstrate that there is a clear demand for opportunities for volunteers to be involved in a range of tasks from basic practical conservation tasks, though to specialist surveys, oral histories or helping out at events. This demand is also evidenced though local community groups and more specialist heritage groups who want to get involved in recording, conserving and telling the story of their local heritage features. Existing smaller-scale projects have been inundated with potential volunteers, to the extent that the limited members of staff involved in those projects have been unable to cope with the level of demand.

The New Forest has a high proportion of the population that is not economically active. Much of this group is retired, has time available, enthusiasm and a wealth of experience that could be captured through a range of volunteering opportunities to support and care for the Forest.

There is therefore an opportunity to tap into this pool of volunteers to create a bigger and strongly-skilled volunteer-base and to provide a range of volunteering opportunities.