

NFNPA 537/18

**NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
AUTHORITY MEETING – 18 JANUARY 2018**

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

Report by: Alison Barnes, Chief Executive

Summary:

This report covers the period since the Authority meeting on 12 October 2017. The report has been formatted to accord with the 'Protect, Enjoy, Prosper and Aiming for Excellence' themes from the 2015-18 Business Plan, summarised below:

Protect	Enjoy	Prosper
<p><i>Our priorities:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enhancing the New Forest's landscapes and habitats ▪ Ensuring new development is sympathetic and in keeping with its surrounding ▪ Conserving the historic and local way of life 	<p><i>Our priorities:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enabling high quality experiences of the National Park ▪ Improving understanding of the National Park ▪ Managing recreation to benefit the National Park 	<p><i>Our priorities:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supporting a distinctive and prosperous local economy ▪ Promoting sustainable transport ▪ Encouraging sustainable communities
<p>Aiming for Excellence</p>		
<p><i>In all we do:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Providing the highest quality of service ▪ Working with others in achieving maximum benefits for the National Park ▪ Using available resources effectively and efficiently 		

Recommendation:

To note the report

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Equality & Diversity Implications:

There are no equality or diversity implications arising directly from this report.

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We are increasingly looking beyond our National Park boundary to help us secure the future of the New Forest. As part of this work, the Green Halo Partnership was formally launched at Ordnance Survey, Southampton on 22 November. Partners were invited to sign up to protect and enhance our 'natural capital' - the benefits we derive from nature such as clean air and water, protection from flooding, food and healthy outdoor activities. Over 100 people attended the event, representing organisations from across Dorset, Hampshire and Wiltshire and the Partnership will be driving forward projects centred around four themes: the local economy, health and wellbeing, sustainable living and the natural environment.

We were encouraged by Environment Secretary Michael Gove's speech on the future funding for farming, post-Brexit and that farmers will be rewarded for delivering 'public benefit', including planting woodland, boosting wildlife, improving water quality and recreating wildflower meadows. We are also encouraged by the 25 Year Environment Plan and its emphasis on the importance of natural capital. These aspects have already formed the basis of our discussions with Defra and we look forward to continuing our work to work with partner Forest organisations to secure the future of the New Forest and the commoning system when we jointly host a visit by Defra Deputy Directors at the end of the month.

It has been a busy period for our planning service, with pre-application discussions continuing with Fawley Waterside as they progress their plans to redevelop the former power station site on our boundary and proposals for an area within the National Park. This topic was discussed extensively at the Waterside Development Conference in November. The event was attended by representatives from a range of organisations and backgrounds to discuss the future development of the Waterside area and its economy. We delivered a speech at the event, highlighting how the landscape of the New Forest National Park can support a thriving local economy.

A number of other significant planning applications have recently been determined including proposals for Lyndhurst Park Hotel which resulted in over 800 comments – the most we have ever received on a single application.

Following December's Extraordinary Authority meeting, we are preparing for the final consultation phase on our updated Local Plan which sets out all the planning policies for the National Park, including our approach to the significant Fawley Waterside site, the scale and location of new development, measures to increase the availability of affordable housing, and the need to conserve the local distinctiveness of the area.

This quarter a number of award schemes have announced their winners, with prizes for some of the Forest's most successful business people:

- The New Forest Business Partnership held its annual Brilliance in Business Awards in November and the winner of our Award for Outstanding Contribution to the National Park went to Cyclexperience from Brockenhurst.
- The outstanding contribution to the support of local produce by the Chair of the New Forest Marque, Jane Overall, was recognised with her award of 'National Park Hero' - an annual award that recognises individual outstanding contribution in each of the UK's 15 National Parks.

The award season was completed when we received an award for our Bransgore Affordable Housing Scheme, which won the South East RTPI award for Planning Excellence in Housing Delivery.

Trees are a key feature of the natural beauty of the New Forest and make an important contribution to the appearance of towns and villages. We provide the tree service for both the National Park and surrounding New Forest District area, registering a high volume of tree work applications since October at 348 applications. We have also made 11 Tree Preservation Orders to protect trees of high amenity value that were otherwise under threat from new development or inappropriate works.

We also held our third Family Trees event in Brockenhurst in December. Over 300 people planted trees at St Nicholas' Churchyard choosing one of 13 native tree species, providing a legacy for future generations and a lasting memory of a loved-one. This year's event also included the planting of a beech tree, donated by the Woodland Trust, to celebrate the 800th anniversary of the Charter of the Forest and the launch of the new Charter for Trees. A commemorative woodland themed bench was also created for the site using the trunk of a fallen oak tree from the churchyard. Meanwhile 15,490 people visited our Tree Charter exhibition at the New Forest Centre from October until mid-December.

Other successful events held this quarter included the launch of the upgraded YHA New Forest at Burley in October. The Hostel received £31,000 of funding from the Authority as part of the £700,000 revamp and was officially opened by YHA Ambassador and British athlete and adventurer Sarah Outen MBE.

This was swiftly followed by the return of our annual walking festival, run in partnership with local organisations. This year 1,500 people attended despite some inclement weather and 94% of walkers surveyed said they learnt something new about the Forest.

This theme of partnership working continued with the opening of the first Green Way Dog Activity Area at Calmore in December. This circuit gives a great opportunity to exercise dogs, develop new skills and improve the bond between owners and their pets in a dedicated space away from sensitive wildlife and livestock found on the Open Forest. We are working with NFDC to deliver its Green Way Mitigation Strategy and host a ranger post funded by the project.

We now look forward to the 2018 New Forest National Park Volunteer Fair, which takes place on 28 January. Preparations have been progressing well, with over 40 partner groups looking to recruit volunteers to help their work protecting the Forest and its inhabitants. This includes Milford Conservation Volunteers, with whom we have recently worked to produce interpretation boards at their new bird hide on Keyhaven causeway.

Our staff will be looking particularly smart at the Fair thanks to a National Parks Partnership sponsorship deal with Columbia Clothing. We received a delivery of uniform that has kitted out all staff with a soft shell jacket and provided outdoors staff with wet weather clothing.

Finally, some heartening news that will be welcomed by all. A new joint #ShareForest campaign by Forest organisations to cut the number of New Forest animals killed or injured on the roads in the dark winter months has coincided with casualties reducing by half. This is indeed a welcome reduction, but there is plenty more work to do to ensure that accident rates continue to drop.

DELIVERY OF NATIONAL PARK PURPOSES AND FUNCTIONS

The report has been formatted to accord with the 'Protect, Enjoy, Prosper' objectives from the 2015-18 Business Plan, a summary of which is set out on the first page. In addition, a fourth section, 'Aiming for Excellence', summarises those activities that support and contribute overall to all our work, and the final section lists Members' activities and events.

1 Protect

1.1 Enhancing the Forest's landscapes and habitats

Archaeology

As part of the Our Past, Our Future Discovering and Conserving our Archaeological Heritage project the Listed Tombs in St Michael's churchyard at Lyndhurst, all on the local buildings at risk register, have been repaired and conserved. New Forest District Council, as manager of the churchyard, was granted Listed Building Consent by our planners and we were granted approval from the Church of England through the 'Faculty' approval system. The repair work involved providing scaffolding for safe working areas and the stone mason had to cut new stone to replace missing and damaged sections to match the original details. All the work was completed in early December and attention is now on monuments at Emery Down and Dibden Churchyards.



Before repairs



After repairs



Work in progress to a listed tomb at St Michael's churchyard in Lyndhurst



Completed work

Our Past, Our Future (OPOF) Landscape Partnership Scheme

The Landscape Partnership Scheme is now moving into the third year (of five). External consultants, Resources for Change, are in the process of undertaking a mid-term evaluation of the scheme. They are conducting interviews with project leads and beneficiaries which will result in a report in February 2018, this will help inform the remaining three years of the scheme.

A Board meeting was held in November to consider progress and the matched funding situation. £109,000 additional funding has been secured since the start of the scheme but a potential shortfall of £31,000 remains. A funding strategy is in place to raise a further £30-40,000 which will enable the scheme to maximise the HLF funds available. However, the Board agreed that they need to make provision for a possible future scenario where a shortfall still remains. Options being considered include sharing the shortfall between partners or cutting the scheme budget to reduce the need to find all the matched funding. The majority of the members of the Board agreed in principle to underwriting, to some degree, any potential shortfall in matched funding, rather than cutting the Scheme budget and returning money to the HLF. A final approach will be agreed at the next Board meeting in February 2018.

All partners are continuing to progress their projects. Key highlights include the following:

- The New Forest Knowledge conference (a joint venture between the E-cademy and Heritage on My Doorstep projects) took place on 27/28 October with 130 attendees and received excellent feedback. The theme of the conference was history and archaeology of the New Forest and included talks by academics, professionals and representatives from local community groups. The conference showcased research on a number of topics ranging from D-Day remains at Lepe to a Domesday account of the New Forest and using aerial imagery. The New Forest Knowledge website was officially launched at the conference. Work continues to add further data sets and volunteers are continuing to digitise the Christopher Tower library's collection for inclusion. The web site can be accessed at www.nfknowledge.org.
- The autumn exhibition at the New Forest Centre built on the New Forest Show exhibition and work commissioned for the Arts Festival to celebrate the 800 year anniversary of the Charter of the Forest. A private viewing was held on 6 November and a public event on 25 November to mark the first 'Trees and People day'.
- Over 1,500 people took part in this year's autumn Walking Festival. Record bookings were taken, but inclement weather including Storm Brian forced the cancellation of some events.
- The Arts Festival project is considering how to best take this forward in 2018 by looking at a new vision for the festival, raising the quality and addressing the problem of the geographic spread by looking at a new vision for the Festival. A sub group of the Arts Festival Steering Group is considering how best to raise the quality of future events, raise the profile of arts in the New Forest and provide more of a geographical focus for next year's festival.
- The Shared Forest project has completed a first draft of an education toolkit which focuses on commoning. This has now been trialled at Marchwood and Hyde school as well as with Brownie and Scout groups. This will be more widely available during 2018.

- Practical conservation tasks have resumed through many of the Restoring Lost Landscapes projects. Most practical work needs to take place during the Autumn/Winter so contractors and volunteers have been out clearing scrub and thinning trees etc. on a number of privately owned Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) in order to improve the habitats and their conservation value.
- Conserving the Forest Fringe project is developing excellent local links and a networking framework and is also establishing small working parties of volunteers to continue the work in the parishes where work has already commenced. The focus is currently on encroachments in the Harbridge and Linwood areas and all work is being co-ordinated with the new Verge Restoration Officer appointed by HLS.
- Year two apprentice rangers (Martin Meaker and Peter Dovey) started during October 2017 and are currently on placement at the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust as well as more formal training at Kingston Maurwood College.
- The first phase of research on the Rights of Way in the New Forest through the Historic Routes project is underway. To date 24 of the 37 parishes have been allocated to 20 volunteers and the first phase of research has been completed on six of these.

National Grid Visual Impact Provision (VIP) and Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) programmes.

A draft report has been produced for National Grid by Professor Carys Swanwick which sets out the landscape benefits of undergrounding the high voltage power cables and removal of the pylons at Hale Purlieu. This is to provide evidence for the Environmental Impact Assessment that National Grid and its consultants are preparing in advance of a planning application expected in 2018 for undergrounding the power lines and removal of the pylons. This will assist us in weighing up the benefits to the landscape of losing the pylons and cables and the potential disbenefits of excavating the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) heathland to bury power cables, as part of the planning process.

The grant of £33,000 from National Grid's Landscape Enhancement Initiative fund has been confirmed by OFGEM for the woodland management and wild play facilities at Warren's Copse, Holbury. The funded work will now be able to start in 2018.

The Landscape Officer and Grants Officer have met with Wiltshire Wildlife Trust (WWT) to discuss the possibility of applying for an LEI grant for landscape improvements at Landford Bog, which is located adjacent to the National Grid high voltage line. Development of the grant application with WWT is ongoing and a meeting with them is planned for January 2018 to fine tune the application.

New Forest Land Advice Service

Core NFLAS work

This quarter we hosted the National Parks Farm Liaison Group Officer meeting here in the New Forest. 19 land management and wildlife conservation experts from 10 of the other National Parks attended and we spent 2 days showing them examples of our work and visiting farmers and commoners.



Afterwards the North York Moors National Park wrote a blog on the event which can be found here <https://northyorkmoorsnationalpark.wordpress.com/2017/11/06/sharing-ground/> and includes some of Jules' pictures.

During this quarter our work with commoners has included giving advice to about 30 people on a range of issues including grants, subsidies, land based regulations and subsidies.

OPOF project work

Tom Murphy will be leaving us in January and we hope to recruit a new Working Woodlands Co-ordinator in January to continue with this project work and also deliver a small amount of other work funded by the Forestry Commission to look at timber and woodfuel markets in the New Forest and facilitate networking between relevant parties.

Tom and Jules carried out a very successful Woodland Management course which attracted 21 landowners.



The Better Boundaries Project is nearing completion with the last few hundred metres of boundaries in and around Hyde currently being restored this winter.



Hedgelaying by one of our contractors in Hyde on a 12 year old 380 metre hedge

The Rural Skills Project ran 24 courses during 2017 with 300 places filled. The new 2018 calendar has gone out to landowners, farmers and commoners. Courses this quarter included woodland management, tractor driving and chainsaw. 8 people are being mentored through the commoner mentor scheme and we have organised a site visit and talk for all mentors and mentorees, including the ones from last year, to the Stallion Scheme holding in January.

Nature's Stepping Stones has mainly been focused on two Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation in Emery Down this winter where a second year of willow scrub removal by contractors has been taking place to restore species rich grassland/fen habitats.



Emery Down Meadows – several weeks of willow scrub removal by contractors

Growing the Forest and Ecology

The Green Halo Partnership was formally launched at Ordnance Survey, Southampton on 22 November. Over 100 people attended the event, representing around 70 organisations from across Dorset, Hampshire and Wiltshire. Partners have signed up to protect and enhance our 'natural capital' - the benefits we derive from nature such as clean air and water, protection from flooding, food and healthy outdoor activities. Four Forums around the themes of support for the local economy, health and wellbeing, sustainable living and the natural environment will be shaping and driving forward a programme of activity to build partnerships and ensure projects are delivered. A Green Halo Steering Group will support and co-ordinate the work of the Forums. The Green Halo website will be launched in the New Year and will contain details of our aims and objectives and the work of each Forum and all members of the Partnership. It will help all who want to take part keep up to date, and provide opportunities to input their thoughts, ideas and projects.

In December our Parish appointed members attended a workshop to review the New Forest Freshwater and Wetland Restoration Strategy. Natural England, along with the Forestry Commission are looking to set the direction for future management of the wetlands in the New Forest. A number of stakeholders agreed a set of eight Principles, the primary one amongst them being a commitment to the co-production of a revised strategy, acknowledging that the current strategy has been contested by stakeholders and that policy, practice and science has evolved since the original plan was published in 2006. There will be further opportunities to influence the development of the strategy before its planned publication in March.

This period saw us work in partnership with the Freshwater Habitats Trust, Environment Agency and New Forest Land Advice Service to develop a project bid for ongoing catchment funding from 2018. New sources of funding are being developed at a national level and it is hoped the Catchment Partnership can obtain resources for the New Forest catchment. The project would include building on our work with local businesses, landowner and land managers to implement practical solutions to diffuse water pollution issues as well as aiding engagement with local

communities. Our current assistance with practical projects continues and the period saw extensive work on navigating the various regulatory regimes required to implement schemes such as water harvesting and conservation. We continue to be thankful for the enthusiasm of volunteers and willingness of land managers to work with the Catchment project.

We helped support the New Forest Walking Festival by leading a guided walk around some of the Forest's most important ponds, profiling the nationally important species they support and communicating our work in facilitating the New Forest Catchment Partnership.

We met with Southampton University and other local partners to help support their New Forest module which sees students learn about the wildlife of the New Forest and undertake local surveys. We are developing ideas for how their participation in data collection can form part of longer term datasets for site and National Park monitoring.

As well as supporting input to the ongoing process of development at Fawley Waterside, we facilitated a meeting with key environmental NGOs to seek their views and gain a better understanding about their concerns as well as identify any benefits that might accrue.

We attended meetings organised by the Solent Forum. The Forum is developing a project working group to address littering in the marine and coastal environments, including micro-plastics which may be affecting local as well as more widespread marine life. We are considering how best to engage with any ongoing work to address such issues. The Forum is also seeking proposals from partners as to how to work in partnership to develop a bid for Coastal Communities funding across the Solent and possibly including the New Forest National Park's Coast.

1.2 Ensuring new development is sympathetic and in keeping with its surroundings

Development Management

Since the last meeting we have received 172 new planning applications (up to 3 January) and in the same period, determined 186 applications with an approval rate of 83%. Performance has improved during this period with 100% of major applications, 84% of minor applications and 92% of householder/other applications being determined within time. A number of significant planning applications have been determined in this period which include the proposals for Lyndhurst Park Hotel, Bashley Sawmills and Hatch Motors, Sway.

Pre-application discussions have continued with Fawley Waterside as they progress their plans for the redevelopment of the former power station site. In November, Fawley Waterside Limited submitted a formal request for a Scoping Opinion to inform the EIA to accompany the future planning application. Officers are continuing to liaise closely with NFDC colleagues given that the application site straddles the two different planning administrative areas.

Four appeal decisions have been received since the last meeting; three dismissed and one allowed.

Entries for this year's Building Design Awards closed at the end of October and the Awards Panel considered the nominations following the Planning Committee meeting on 16 January 2018. The awards will be presented at the Authority meeting in March.

The Government has confirmed that planning application fees will increase by 20% with effect from 17 January 2018. At the same time, we are reviewing our charges for pre-application advice

and an updated set of charges will be reported to the Authority meeting in March, proposed to take effect from 1 April 2018.

Enforcement and Trees

We held our very successful Family Trees event in Brockenhurst in December. Over 300 people planted trees at St Nicholas' Churchyard choosing one of 13 native tree species. Trees and woodlands are of course a key feature of the natural beauty of the New Forest and make an important contribution to the appearance of towns and villages. As the Family Trees wildlife space grows and matures it will provide a legacy for future generations and provide a lasting memory of a loved-one. This year's event also included the planting of a beech tree, donated by the Woodlands Trust, to celebrate the 800th anniversary of the Charter of the Forest and the launch of the new Charter for Trees. A commemorative woodland themed bench was also created for this year's site using the trunk of a fallen oak tree from the churchyard.

Since October we have investigated and closed 71 enforcement cases which resulted in the service of two Enforcement Notices directed against the most harmful breaches of planning control and the resolution of 34 cases through the grant of planning permission or the negotiated removal of unauthorised development. We also secured compliance with five Enforcement Notices directed at the removal of fencing, lighting, caravans and tracks. Furthermore we took direct action to remove caravans, equipment and a building from a site near Ringwood after the landowner failed to remove them despite being taken to Court and fined following enforcement action and an appeal in 2015. Members consequently authorised the action which was then satisfactorily concluded within a day to restore the land to its former agricultural condition.

We have registered a high volume of tree work applications for the National Park and surrounding New Forest District areas at 348 since October. We have also made 11 Tree Preservation Orders to protect trees of high amenity value that were otherwise under threat from new development or inappropriate works.

Policy

The focus of the Policy team's work has been the production of the proposed Submission draft Local Plan 2016 – 2036. The draft Plan was considered by members at the full Authority meeting on 14 December 2017 and the final six week public consultation on the Local Plan will take place between mid-January and the end of February 2018. Everyone who has submitted representations during the Local Plan preparation process (which dates back to Summer 2015) will be directly informed of this consultation, alongside statutory consultees.

The draft Plan has been informed by a range of evidence-base studies, including an updated assessment of local housing needs arising within the National Park; a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment covering the National Park; and a whole Plan viability assessment, which has been undertaken in accordance with the requirements of national planning policy to illustrate that the policy requirements placed on new development in the National Park will not render them unviable. The draft Local Plan includes a number of new planning policy approaches aimed at delivering the two statutory National Park purposes and related socio-economic duty. This includes the allocation of a number of housing sites to meet some of the identified local needs.

The team has also prepared our first Brownfield Register by the Government's deadline of the end of December 2017. The aim of the register is to provide up-to-date and consistent information on sites that are considered to be appropriate for residential development having regard to the Government's criteria.

We continue to liaise closely with neighbouring planning authorities on a range of cross-boundary matters. This includes habitat mitigation measures, with authorities around the New Forest recognising the desire for a more co-ordinated and strategic approach. Discussions with neighbouring authorities and the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH) have also taken place on meeting the National Park's unmet housing needs.

Conserving the historic environment and local way of life

Design advice and guidance

Development control consultations from NPA and NFDC (through the SLA shared service) remain high in terms of formal applications and pre-application advice. The team has set up design surgeries with both DC teams to help manage the workloads and these are working well. Regular meetings take place with NFDC to review matters and the feedback from the District Council continues to be positive.

Work to review the current Buildings at Risk Lists for the National Park and the District Council has begun and by the end of 2018 we hope to have an updated Heritage Assets which are at risk. This will allow the team to prioritise work on the most vulnerable and important buildings.

Our Past, Our Future Traditional Building Skills Courses

For the second year the Building Conservation Team has been leading on the Building Skills Project as part of the wider OPOF project. The project involves promoting the conservation and enhancement of the historic built environment of the National Park, through raising awareness, developing specialist building skills, encouraging sensitive management and promoting availability and access to these skills. Training has taken place so far for homeowners of historic buildings. These courses have been run in Beaulieu and have covered local traditional building materials, techniques and sympathetic repair methods. Several courses have also been held for professionals and agents who work regularly within the National Park. These courses have included specialist areas such as historic masonry structures, timber framing and lime mortars, renders and plasters at Buckler's Hard. Other topics are planned across the remainder of the year. Positive feedback continues to be received for both courses.

Conservation Area Action Plan for the Western Escarpment Conservation Area

The Western Escarpment Conservation Area Steering Group met in Fordingbridge in November 2017. The agenda included the proposed update to the Conservation Area Action Plan and potential methods for recording features of local distinctiveness. Representatives of the Steering Group met with the Forestry Commission in mid-January to discuss the approach to verge protection measures in the New Forest and how the Steering Group could assist the Forestry Commission in the Western Escarpment.

2 Enjoy

2.1 Enabling high quality experiences of the National Park

Preparations for the 2018 New Forest National Park Volunteer Fair have been progressing well, with over 40 groups booked to exhibit. Promotion of the Fair has started with letters and flyers being sent to every parish, and adverts planned in local publications and on social media.

We are in the process of recruiting new Local Information Points in Brockenhurst and Burley following the vacancies that have arisen there. Alongside this we have starting thinking more

broadly about information provision across the National Park, and how we might work together with partners take this work forward in 2018, responding to pertinent themes emerging from the Recreation Management Strategy consultation.

Outreach, health and wellbeing

We have supported the Green Halo Health and Wellbeing forum, attending both the focus group session and the launch to listen to partners and help shape possible projects to deliver this area of work.

2.2 Improving understanding of the National Park

Public and community events / rangers

Rangers engaged with 1,768 people during this period.

On 14 December the first Green Way Dog Activity Area opened at King George V Recreation Ground at Calmore. This circuit gives a great opportunity to exercise dogs, develop new skills and improve the bond between owners and their pets in a dedicated space away from sensitive wildlife and livestock found on the Open Forest. We are working with NFDC to deliver its Green Way Mitigation Strategy and host a ranger post funded by the project. This new area will be a valuable resource used by the People and Wildlife Ranger in their work to reduce recreational disturbance on the protected areas within the National Park.

Rangers continue to utilise the mobile unit to attend events promoting responsible use of the National Park by both local people and visitors. Key events in this period included a busy weekend at the Burley Steam Pressing Weekend (cider festival) speaking to more than 400 people, Exbury Christmas Fair with the NPA elves engaging with at least 350 people in one day. Rangers continue to provide a presence at Beaulieu Road pony sales braving the last one of the year on a very wet and cold day.

Rangers have provided assistance and support to partner organisations and other teams in the Authority which has included assisting with supervision of Working Woodlands project volunteers at Harrow Wood, Walhampton, Pennington and Emery Down, supporting Woodlander Bashley's outdoor activities session for New Milton Junior School children and assisting with volunteer sessions at Pondhead, including an archaeological survey of the inclosure organised in conjunction with OPOF.

Rangers have delivered over 1,000 animal accident hotline cards and 'I Go Slow For Ponies' stickers to hotels, B&Bs and local businesses prior to the clocks going back and to tie in with the Shared Forest #add3minutes campaign.

Our north area Ranger spent a week in December working with the Prince's Trust gaining work experience and job shadowing their youth workers. He has returned with a host of ideas and skills transferable to how the RML team and wider Authority can engage and develop links with young people. Our work currently includes the Youth Action Project coordinated by us but delivered in conjunction with many New Forest partners and continued delivery of the John Muir Award across the National Park.

We attended the Houses of Parliament in early November for the official launch and promotion of the British Mountaineering Council's Make a Million Campaign, which aims to raise £1 million for a range of vital path repair projects within Britain's entire family of 15 National Parks. Publicity

for our local project to improve access around the Lepe Loop will commence in the next few months.

The Ranger Team along with the Authority cheered on Chris Marshall our Coastal Ranger as she took some time off to climb Mount Kilimanjaro in November and then visit the good work being done for the street children of Nairobi with money she raised and the charity she climbed with. She flew the NFNPA banner en route and was supported by Columbia Clothing, our new National Parks uniform supplier.

Following the NPP sponsorship deal with Columbia Clothing, we received our first delivery of staff and members uniform with a soft shell jacket having been allocated to all. Additional clothing for some teams and shirts for all staff are due for delivery later in the spring.

Interpretation projects

The autumn exhibition at the New Forest Centre proved successful with 15,490 people visiting from October until mid-December. The exhibition included a giveaway of special edition bookmarks for lottery players as part of a national initiative by the lottery to thank players and raise awareness of the sorts of activities that they fund through purchasing of tickets.

We have assisted with the production of interpretation at the new Milford Conservation Volunteers bird observatory (hide) on Keyhaven causeway, which opened on 25 November. The conservation volunteers created the hide by converting the old pumping house, part-funded by an NPA Sustainable Communities Grant. It will be used on open days and by groups interested in the wildlife of the National Park coast.

In November, we discussed ways in which the provision of visitor information at the New Forest Centre could be improved in 2018. In essence, the NPA travel ambassadors that had been present through the busiest weeks of the summer had been a significant help answering many of the questions people wanted to ask – but there is scope for further improvements. Go New Forest attended the meeting, and helpfully agreed to provide a simple leaflet to help answer questions about accommodation. The NPA Members' Day on 6 December was also useful in giving Members opportunity to learn more about what the Centre achieves.

Communications

We coordinated and promoted a number of key events and campaigns during this quarter.

The Green Halo Partnership was launched at Ordnance Survey HQ on 22 November with 100 organisations represented. Natural England's COO was the keynote speaker, who said that natural capital will be central to the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan.

Over 300 families and friends came together to celebrate their loved ones by helping to plant a community wildlife space at St Nicholas' Churchyard in Brockenhurst. The Family Trees event was held during National Tree Week at the start of December.

More than 130 people discovered more about the Forest's history and archaeology at a two-day conference in Lyndhurst, which also saw the launch of the New Forest Knowledge website.

More than 1,500 walkers attended expert-led walks during the two week Walking Festival, with 94% of those who left feedback saying they learnt something new about the National Park.

We assisted with the launch of the upgraded YHA New Forest at Burley. It received £31,000 of funding from the Authority as part of the £700,000 revamp and was officially opened by YHA Ambassador and British athlete and adventurer Sarah Outen MBE.

A new joint campaign to cut the number of New Forest animals killed or injured on the roads in the dark winter months has coincided with casualties reducing by half. Social media engagement has been high, helped by social media training for commoners as part of the OPOF scheme.

We issued a press release and social media posts about the dangers of fireworks to Forest stock, horses and pets, which received newspaper and social media coverage.

A new Authority website will be launched in Q4 as the old software is end of life. We have taken the opportunity to review our messaging and re-focus our communications, as well as updating several sections to provide an improved online service to residents and visitors.

Formal education

The autumn term saw the education team teaching 405 pupils from 10 schools and colleges. Many of these were secondary or university level students studying habitat management or river studies. Primary school bookings were mainly 'in school' sessions introducing the special qualities of the National Park, or exploring the Forest at Night, though one junior school brought 90 children out in November for an exciting day learning about the habitats of the National Park. This year, once again, the team have worked with schools outside in every month of the year.

Red Riding Hood has now put away her cloak after presenting the New Forest Marque assembly to 2,372 pupils from 14 schools since October. The assembly promoted the idea that local produce is 'good for you and good for the Forest'. The team is now planning this year's Litter Assembly.

Students from local secondary schools have been applying for work experience this year. All available places were very quickly taken, and each student has attended an interview; after meeting staff and touring the office, all nine have enthusiastically confirmed their place.

The term ended with a meeting of the New Forest Educators' Forum, hosted by Avon Tyrell and chaired by the education team. 34 representatives from 21 of the Forum organisations contributed to a packed agenda which featured the full range of excellent outdoor education available in the national park. Items included an introduction to the Shared Forest toolkit, an overview of the Children's University and a discussion on seeking sources of funding for transport for schools. The highlight of the meeting was an inspirational presentation by Alex Jamieson from Priestlands School on the benefits to her pupils of outdoor learning, in particular the John Muir Award.

2.3 Managing recreation to benefit the National Park

Recreation Management

Two reports have been prepared following the 'call for views' consultation to inform an update of the New Forest National Park Recreation Management Strategy 2010-2030 that we had been asked to lead on by the RMS Steering Group (Forestry Commission, Natural England, Verderers, Hampshire County Council, NPA and New Forest District Council). One is a Findings Report (summarising what people said); the other is a 'Next Steps' Report, summarising how the feedback received is influencing the ongoing work. See agenda item for further details.

The upgraded byway in Hordle was opened to the public in December, images below show the transformation. This was supported with £4,000 from our Small Grants Scheme for Countryside Access, with additional funding from Hampshire County Council's Rural Communities Fund and local donations.



The England Coast Path consultation has been delayed, but we have continued to support Natural England in their work. In the New Year, discussions will start with neighbouring access authorities regarding the most efficient maintenance arrangements for the new trail once established.

Educational campaigns

The animal accident rates usually go up when the clocks change and more people travel home in the dark. This year, we suggested to partner organisations that eye-catching temporary signs should be installed on high risk routes through the autumn to highlight the increased risk at this time of year. The idea led to a multifaceted joint campaign, starting with a high-profile media launch at the Sales Yard on 23 October. Through the Shared Forest project, various commoners and their animals became involved and social media was used to the full. The total of animals killed and injured during following weeks (15) was less than half the number recorded in the same weeks the year before (31) – giving us more information on which to continue to ride the wave of public interest just before Christmas. Although we cannot prove a direct cause and effect, there is good reason to plan for a similarly focused campaign next year.

The last of the year's larger cycle events (the Gridiron) was on 8 October; 1,000 people booked and almost 700 took part. This event has been running for very many years and, as usual, it caused few issues. See agenda item for further information about the degree to which cycle event organisers comply with the Cycle Event Organiser's Charter.

The Joint Litter Working Group (NFDC, NPA and FC staff) met on 18 October, and a broader meeting (including the National Trust, CDA, Verderers and HCC) met on 12 December to plan the 2018 Spring Clean, on the first weekend in March.

Officers hosted a one-day workshop for officers from other English and Welsh NPAs, including arranging for a presentation by Stephen Jenkinson (who is leading on a range of national dog walking initiatives). We also attended a meeting of the 'Bird Aware Solent' dogs initiatives working group. In both cases, our work on promoting responsible dog walking and reducing disturbance of birds and other wildlife is highly relevant and useful to other organisations for whom this is a relatively new area of work.

New Forest Access Forum

The Forum met in Lymington on 4 December. They received an update from Alison Barnes on priorities for the NPA, an update on the England Coast Path from Natural England and a presentation on the Local Plan for the National Park. The developer for the proposed Fawley Waterside development gave a presentation on their intentions and the Forum was able to give initial feedback. The Forum is keen to ensure this development is accompanied by significant and permanent countryside access improvements to the south eastern corner of the National Park.

3 Prosper

3.1 Supporting a distinctive and prosperous local economy

The New Forest Business Partnership held its annual Brilliance in Business Awards evening at Carey's Manor in November. The winner of the NFNPA Award for Outstanding Contribution to the National Park went to Cyclexperience, the Brockenhurst based Cycle Hire company.

The outstanding contribution to the support of local produce by the Chair of the New Forest Marque, Jane Overall, was recognised with her award of 'National Park Hero' - an annual award that recognises individual outstanding contribution in each of the UK's 15 National Parks. As Chair of New Forest Produce Limited, Jane has helped maintain the New Forest Marque scheme which continues to attract new members and promotes the work of local producers, suppliers and craftspeople in the New Forest.

3.2 Improving affordable housing provision

The agreement to purchase some land in Burley to provide two affordable homes and a local heritage centre (subject to planning permission) was completed in December 2017. The drawings to accompany the planning application are now being prepared following topographical and tree surveys. A more detailed report on progress is to be presented to the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee meeting on 5 February 2018.

Meanwhile, the Bransgore Affordable Housing Scheme won the South East RTPI award for Planning Excellence in Housing Delivery at the regional awards ceremony held in Brighton last November. An extract from the judging panel's citation states that "*As well as being an exemplar development in terms of quality, the project serves as a model for such developments elsewhere in the New Forest and other National Parks.*"

Elsewhere in the National Park there is growing interest in providing small scale affordable housing schemes as evidenced by a number of pre-application discussions held recently which are likely to result in new planning application submissions over the coming months.

3.3 Promoting sustainable transport

Visitor bus services

We held our annual review meeting with New Forest Tour operator, GoSouthCoast to discuss future plans for our services. The New Forest Tour had a successful season in 2017 and will remain viable in 2018. We are developing an updated partnership agreement with the operator to ensure roles and responsibilities are clear as we move into the next business plan period. The Beach Bus is struggling to remain a viable concern; we are exploring whether a short, frequent service between the Waterside and Lepe Country Park may be a viable option in 2018.

3.4 Encouraging sustainable communities

Sustainable Communities Fund

Funds have been awarded to New Forest Transition to set up a Refill New Forest scheme aimed at reducing single-use plastic bottle pollution by improving access to free drinking water, on the go. The scheme will promote free tap-water refill points in cafes, shops, businesses and transport hubs by encouraging businesses to sign up to the scheme and display a round, blue Refill window sticker alerting passers-by that they're welcome to fill up their water bottle for free. New Forest Transition will be active champions and 'sign-up' local businesses. Funding will cover the cost of the new Refill New Forest logo, stickers to advertise the scheme within premises windows and purchasing the licence agreement from Refill, the national tap water campaign. An official launch of the scheme will take place once a number of businesses have signed up to take part.

4 Aiming for Excellence

4.1 Providing the highest quality of service

Meetings and Authority membership

Support to Members and teams across the corporate structure has included support to the Authority and committee meetings, Members' days and briefings, Executive Board, All Staff team meetings and Managers Forum. We are assisting in the induction of David Bence new Secretary of State member with effect from 1 January 2018 (replacing Russell Wynn). David will be attending the Authority meeting on 18 January where he will have an opportunity to meet with members. This final appointment means that the Authority now has its full membership of 22 members.

The list of Authority and committee meetings for 2018/19 has now been finalised and distributed.

4.2 Working with others in achieving maximum benefits for the National Park

Working with Partners

We continue to respond to and arrange requests for public speaking by local organisations on a range of topics. Support is provided for parish quadrant meetings (last meeting considered external partners such as the New Forest Marque, Access Forum and Consultative Panel. At its last meeting the Panel considered an update from the NPA on the local plan review, the Green Halo partnership, development along the Waterside and updates from the Forestry Commission on the Forest Design Plan and various other projects. The Panel also considered updates on the England Coast Path and approved a revision of its Constitution.

4.3 Using available resources effectively and efficiently

Human Resources

As at 5 January 2018 the total staff headcount was 90 or 78.76 full-time equivalents (FTEs).

	Headcount	Variation from previous report	FTE	Variation from previous report
Core funded	72*	0	63.34*	- 0.58
Funded by external projects	18	+ 2	15.42	+ 2
Total	90	+ 2	78.76	+ 1.42

*Of the core funded roles, 10 staff (8.92 FTEs) are working in shared services, 25 are part-time and three are on a fixed-term contract to provide maternity cover.

In the last three months we welcomed the following new staff:

Name	Job title	Contract type	How funded
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Peter Dovey ▪ Martyn Meaker 	New Forest Apprentice Ranger	Fixed-term	Project funded – Our Past, Our Future
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Georgia Foy 	Assistant Conservation Officer	Permanent	Core funded
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Jo Read 	Administration Assistant (Trees)	Permanent	Core funded

Recently we said goodbye to Hilary Short (Administration Assistant – Trees) and to Mark Holroyd (Transport, Access and Sustainable Tourism Manager). We wish them well in their future ventures.

Recruitment is currently underway for:

Job title	Contract type	How funded
Project Co-ordinator – Working Woodlands	Fixed-term, part-time	Project funded – Our Past, Our Future

ICT Services

The ICT team has completed the roll out of new PCs and laptops with the Windows 10 upgrade. The team is now working with the Data Protection Officer in progressing the migration of corporate documents to the new SharePoint records management system under Office 365.

5 Members

5.1 Some Members were involved in some or all of the following meetings and events

- Planning Development Control Committee – 17 October 2017
- Resources, Audit and Performance Committee – 13 November 2017
- Planning Development Control Committee – 21 November 2017
- New Forest Centre Members Day – 6 December 2017
- Consultative Panel – 7 December
- Extraordinary Full Authority Meeting – 14 December 2017
- Planning Development Control Committee – 19 December 2017
- Planning Development Control Committee – 16 January 2018

5.2 Forthcoming activities include:

- Resources, Audit and Performance Committee – 5 February 2018
- Planning Development Control Committee – 20 February 2018
- Consultative Panel – 1 March 2018
- Resource, Audit and Performance Committee – 5 March 2018
- Members Day – 8 March 2018
- Planning Development Control Committee – 20 March 2018

5.3 Chief Executive's engagements

- Green Halo Project Briefing for Test Valley Borough Council – 12 October 2017
- National Parks Society Conference – 14 October 2017
- UK National Parks Conference – 25-27 October 2017
- Leadership Group meeting – 31 October 2017
- Landscape Institute Board and Council Away Day – 3 November 2017
- Local Plan workshop – 6 November 2017
- Tree Charter Anniversary event – 6 November 2017
- Rural Forum Steering Group – 7 November 2017
- Fawley Waterside event – 7 November 2017
- Business South Directors Dinner – 9 November 2017
- Resource, Audit and Performance Committee – 13 November 2017
- Visits to Soffe and BSW sawmills – 14 November 2017
- APPG on National Parks – 15 November 2017
- E-NPOG meeting – 16 November 2017
- Meeting with Forestry Commission and Natural England – 17 November 2017
- Green Halo Leads meeting – 20 November 2017
- Family Trees site visit – 21 November 2017
- Green Halo Partnership launch – 22 November 2017
- HIOWLGA – 24 November 2017
- Beaulieu Estate Dinner – 24 November 2017
- Opening of Keahaven Bird Observatory – 25 November 2017
- Business South Board meeting – 28 November 2017
- New Forest Waterside Conference – 29 November 2017
- Family Trees Event – 2 December 2017
- New Forest Access Forum – 4 December 2017
- Green Halo Steering Group – 5 December 2017
- Members Day – 6 December 2017
- Verderers Tour of Stock – 8 December 2017
- Enterprise M3 Rural Action Group meeting – 12 December 2017
- Forestry Commission Accord – 14 December 2017
- NPA Christmas Carol Concert – 21 December 2017

- Safer New Forest Strategy & Delivery Group – 8 January 2018
- Meeting with Robert Deane – 9 January 2018
- HLS Board meeting – 10 January 2018
- Meeting with SW and SE RSPB – 11 January 2018
- NPUK Chief Executive meeting – 15 January 2018
- Meeting with Lord Montagu – 15 January 2018
- Meeting with Auditors – 17 January 2018

5.4 Chairman's engagements

- NPE Board meeting – 24 October 2017
- NPUK Board meeting – 25 October 2017
- Defra teleconference – 2 November 2017
- Green Halo Partnership launch – 22 November 2017
- Chair, Recreation Management Strategy Steering Group – 29 November 2017
- NPE Board meeting – 7 December 2017
- Meeting with Lord Montagu – 15 January 2018

6 Recommendation

To note the report.