

NFNPA 530/17

**NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY  
AUTHORITY MEETING – 12 OCTOBER 2017**

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT**

**Report by:** Alison Barnes, Chief Executive

**Summary:**

This report covers the period since the Authority meeting on 13 July 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><b><i>Our priorities:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Enhancing the New Forest's landscapes and habitats</li><li>▪ Ensuring new development is sympathetic and in keeping with its surrounding</li><li>▪ Conserving the historic and local way of life</li></ul>	<p><b><i>Our priorities:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Enabling high quality experiences of the National Park</li><li>▪ Improving understanding of the National Park</li><li>▪ Managing recreation to benefit the National Park</li></ul>	<p><b><i>Our priorities:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Supporting a distinctive and prosperous local economy</li><li>▪ Promoting sustainable transport</li><li>▪ Encouraging sustainable communities</li></ul>
<p><b>Aiming for Excellence</b></p>		
<p><b><i>In all we do:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Providing the highest quality of service</li><li>▪ Working with others in achieving maximum benefits for the National Park</li><li>▪ Using available resources effectively and efficiently</li></ul>		

**Recommendation:**

**To note the report**

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**Equality & Diversity Implications:**

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

## NFNPA 530/17

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Government's Eight Point Plan for National Parks calls on National Parks to make a central contribution to our national health and wellbeing. So I'm delighted to report that in early September, National Parks England and Public Health England launched an accord which will effectively see collaboration to promote a 'natural health service' based around National Parks.

In the New Forest we are developing our approach, enhancing existing initiatives to encompass health and wellbeing objectives, such as through the PEDALL inclusive cycling scheme, our support for the Walking for Health project which GPs refer patients to, the Walking Festival and volunteering.

PEDALL was recently awarded a £300,000 Big Lottery Fund grant to expand its range of sessions for young people with disabilities and families using a fleet of specially adapted bicycles.

This quarter we have also launched the Walking Festival taking place at the end of October, with 80 walks guided by experts. Last year over 2,000 people took part, finding out more about the Forest and how to care for it while enjoying some gentle exercise.

Connecting children to nature is crucial not only to health and wellbeing in childhood, but evidence shows that this encourages contact with and care for nature as they become adults. Our plans to establish three 'wild play' areas are progressing well and our most recent wild play day attracted over 400 people.

This summer also saw our rangers deliver 28 sessions to 589 16 and 17 year olds as part of the National Citizenship Service scheme. Despite torrential rain on many of the sessions, the feedback was very encouraging - 88% agreed that they enjoyed their time in the National Park with 83% understanding more about the National Park as a result. As well as a good opportunity to engage volunteers in working with the teenagers out in the Forest, we received £7,000 for our services which can be put back into other National Park projects.

Many of the events in the Arts Festival this quarter had a focus on health and wellbeing – over 60 events engaged around 5,000 people, involving groups such as poetry with the Headway brain injury charity; hArt art therapy charity working with Forest Forge Theatre Company in schools; and adults with learning disabilities at the Minstead Trust.

As we move into the third quarter of the financial year, our focus remains very much on the challenges facing the National Park into the future.

Over 1,500 individuals and organisations responded to the Future Forest recreation management consultation this summer. The aim was to reach new audiences in the recreation management debate and over 80% of respondents said they had not taken part in Forest

consultations before. On behalf of the Recreation Management Steering Group which asked us to lead on the consultation, we are now analysing over 7,000 comments.

We have met with our partners to discuss a 'Green Brexit', showing how investment in Forest management provides good return for public money. At the New Forest Show we were able to present National Parks Minister Lord Gardiner proposals developed by Forest organisations for supporting commoning and farming post-Brexit.

We are also in discussions with neighbouring planning authorities about housing allocations around the National Park and major schemes such as the Fawley Waterside proposals.

Meanwhile our planning team continues to receive a high caseload with 165 new planning applications this quarter and 217 tree works applications. The service is backed up by our enforcement officers who began investigations into 33 allegations of planning breaches this summer.

As well as looking forward, several of the Our Past, Our Future Heritage Lottery Fund projects looking at our cultural heritage have seen some exciting progress.

The Beaulieu Estate ice house – a listed structure – saw some careful cleaning and repointing undertaken by experts and volunteers, with Lord Montagu himself taking a keen interest in the efforts to record and protect an interesting part of our heritage.

A New Forest Knowledge website, which provides access to thousands of documents and photographs from the Christopher Tower Record Library, is about to be launched. This will take place as part of a two-day conference on New Forest Archaeology and History at the Lyndhurst Community Centre on 27 and 28 October.

In November, an exhibition will open to mark the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Charter of the Forest. The exhibition will highlight people's rights to benefit from our trees and woodlands and how these still have an impact on the modern New Forest. The exhibits build on creative work from the Arts Festival and contributions from the public at the New Forest Show.

Finally, as the nights draw in, we are working with the Animal Accident Group to ensure we redouble efforts to raise awareness of the need to drive with care across the Forest. We are proud to be one of the founding members of the Shared Forest Initiative launched at the New Forest Show and have signed up to the charter promoting safe driving within Forest businesses.

## **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*

Work towards the Conservation of the Beaulieu Estate ice house (Heritage Open Days Weekend 9 September) as part of Our Past, Our Future, Rediscovering our Archaeological Heritage project.

The Beaulieu Estate ice house is a late example constructed in the 1870s when Beaulieu Palace House was extended as a main residence in 1872 for the then Lord Montagu. The first 'modern' English ice house was constructed for James I in 1619 in Greenwich Park.

The first phase of the conservation work to this listed structure was undertaken with our volunteers and staff and greatly helped on the day by David Cooper, the Beaulieu Estate Clerk of Works. Lord Montagu visited during the day and it was possible to explain the work to him and take his advice on how better access and viewing can be created for the public to visit, see the building's interior and learn about past 'refrigeration' food preparation and use of ice.

The on-site cleaning and repointing work of the Beaulieu Estate ice house has revealed details of the method of construction and of the various alterations to the structure as documented by the Estate. The ice house was used as an apple store, for the adjacent orchard in the Second World War.

The store is an interesting later era use for a structure that had become redundant with the introduction of electric refrigerators, that large country houses rapidly took advantage of, especially after the First World War.

The next phase of work will be informed by an engineering report and the requirements of Listed Building consent.

##### *National Grid Visual Impact Provision (VIP) and Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) Programmes*

A meeting was held by National Grid on 19 July at the Lyndhurst Community Centre with national and local representation from Natural England and the National Trust with our CEO and Landscape Officer. A range of topics regarding the potential undergrounding of the high voltage line at Hale Purlieu were discussed and it was agreed that further borehole and trial pit tests would be carried out on part of an alternative route for undergrounding that would avoid the steepest part of the valley mire at the west end of the route. National Grid held the Stakeholder Reference Group meeting on 12 September in Lyndhurst where progress in the investigation work undertaken by National Grid and its consultants was discussed by the wider stakeholder group which includes the Verderers.

The announcement of whether the National Grid LEI grant has been awarded for the Warren Copse project in Marchwood is expected in October.

### *Our Past, Our Future (OPOF) Landscape Partnership Scheme*

All partners are continuing to progress their projects as part of the scheme. Key highlights include the following:

- Lord Gardiner attended a volunteer task day to remove Himalayan Balsam near the Cadnam River at Ower, as part of the New Forest Non-Native Plants Project led by the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust.
- Our stand at the New Forest Show (25-27 July) celebrated the 800 year anniversary of the Charter of the Forest and included activities that formed part of the New Forest Connects project including a 'tree time challenge' and live film animation based on models made by visitors to the show.
- The Shared Forest project which is being led by the CDA has created a new website [www.newforestcommoners.com](http://www.newforestcommoners.com), this will be expanded as the project develops. The project is progressing several campaigns and in July the Shared Forest Business Group (patron The Hon Mary Montagu-Scott, High Sheriff of Hampshire) was launched at the CDA's stand at the New Forest Show. This currently involves six local employers and it is hoped it will be expanded to other Forest businesses with the aim to spread advice to commuters and delivery drivers about safe driving on the roads across the open forest.
- Delivery and engagement is progressing well at the National Trust's heathland restoration project at Foxbury. All cabins are now installed and record numbers of volunteers are working on the outside areas. Recreational offsetting is working well, for example orienteering has been brought off the Commons to Foxbury reducing pressure on ground nesting birds. The site has recorded its greatest ever number of breeding nightjars (27 males and six females were counted during a recent survey at the site) made possible by clearing the conifers, planting native broadleaved trees, introducing traditional grazing and controlling access and disturbance.
- We hosted a visit from the 'Heart of the Forest' project which included a look at the OPOF projects at Foxbury.
- An OPOF newsletter was distributed in July 2017 which included an infographic of progress achieved during the first year of the Scheme.

Many of the individual projects are led by the NFNPA and NFLAS and these are reported below:

- Restoring Lost Landscapes Project (Working Woodlands, Better Boundaries and Natures Stepping Stone). These projects have been liaising with landowners and planning for practical work that will recommence in the autumn.
- Rediscovering Our Archaeological Heritage.  
Contractual work on the restoration of three monuments at Lyndhurst Parish Church is underway, and archaeological surveys have taken place on Keyhaven Marshes this August.
- Apprentice Rangers.  
Year 2 apprentice rangers have been recruited and will commence their placements/training in October.

- **Rural Skills Training project**  
Numerous courses have been held on land management, including flower rich grasslands management, hedgerow management, heathland management, level one certificate in deer stalking, cross compliance, and tractor driving. A meeting with the Young Commoners Group is being arranged to understand their training requirements which can help develop potential future courses.
- **Rural Skills Mentoring project**  
New mentors and mentorees have been identified for the second year of the project. This year each mentor will put on a teaching event for all mentorees to attend. This will provide a social as well as an educational benefit to the mentorees and mean that all the mentorees are benefitting from all the mentors.
- **Building Skills**  
Building skills courses have taken place for homeowners and for professionals on cob building, historic joinery and historic metal work.
- **Veteran Trees**  
A total of 36 tree surgeons attended a Veteran Tree course delivered by the Arboricultural Association in June. A further course on pest and disease control will be delivered in 2018.
- **Heritage on My Doorstep**  
New Forest Knowledge portal is in the final stages of testing and will be launched in October. The final programme for the October conference has been produced, the two-day conference on New Forest Archaeology and History will be held at the Lyndhurst Community Centre on 27 and 28 October.
- **Historic Routes**  
Volunteers continue to research the historic significance of their local rights of way. The initial map research for two parishes has now been complete and work continues on the rest. Eight new volunteers have registered their interest in joining the team.
- **New Forest Connects**  
Commoners Voice project aimed at raising awareness and understanding of commoners and commoning amongst the general public is underway and a number of events have taken place. A successful stand was held at the New Forest Show. Planning is now underway for the autumn exhibition at the New Forest Centre which will build on the show exhibition and work commissioned for the Arts Festival to celebrate the 800 year anniversary of the Charter of the Forest. A private viewing is planned for 6 November and a public event on 25 November to mark the first 'Trees and People day' (the beginning of tree week, which ends with the Family Trees day the following weekend).
- **Wildplay**  
Sway wildplay site is progressing well and a wildplay event was held during August.
- **Arts Festival**  
The June 2017 festival is being evaluated in order to inform plans for the next festival.

The Board met in August to discuss progress. Funding is still being sought to fill the match funding gap, we await feedback from the Landscape Enhancement Initiative and several other avenues by the end of October. The Board has agreed that at its next meeting in November they will make some final decisions as to how the remaining funding will be sourced.

A timetable has been agreed to undertake a mid-term evaluation of OPOF. This will be undertaken by consultants (Resources for Change) who will conduct field work and interview project leads and beneficiaries. Information collected will be collated to feed into February 2018 workshops with POs and project leads, with a final report to follow. The timetable also includes a legacy planning workshop in 2018 to assess whether projects are on target and what still needs to be done, to look at issues of legacy, and to flag up what will not be achieved and therefore form a basis for future partnership working.

## **New Forest Land Advice Service**

### *Core NFLAS work*

During this period we have worked with 13 commoners to give them advice on legislation, regulations and best practice land management on their holdings. For example, we are carrying out enhancement work on a grassland in Pilley to make the meadow more species-rich.

In addition, we are working with four commoners who turn out on the Northern Commons to work up grant applications to the National Trust grant scheme which we administer for the NT. These grants fund capital items such as cattle handling facilities and fencing of back up grazing land.

We are also currently helping to encourage and work up 10 Countryside Stewardship agreements, many with strong elements of water quality capital grants within them.

We continue to support and advise commoners on their Basic Payment Scheme applications with 10 commoners currently benefitting from our help.

We ran a Cross Compliance and NVZ training course and had 30 commoners book onto it.

We are working closely with the Young Commoners group at the moment to facilitate discussions about the future of commoning and the risks and challenges that are facing them.

### *Growing the Forest and Ecology*

We hosted a meeting of the New Forest Amphibian and Reptile Monitoring and Survey Partnership (NF-ARMS). The partnership has been successful in implementing expert survey for the rare smooth snake on the Open Forest again this year, coordinated by Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (ARC). Work is underway by a group of dedicated volunteers. ARC has been successful in obtaining the first stage of a Heritage Lottery Fund to implement a national project centred on the species which will facilitate an extension of the work in the New Forest in 2019. Partners are working to help develop the project and identify a way of ensuring survey work can continue locally in 2018 to fill the gap prior to the national project starting. The award by the Heritage Lottery Fund demonstrates that the work that has been started in the New Forest is seen as a national exemplar in citizen science and biological survey for reptiles.

We also facilitated work with the New Forest Catchment Partnership. This is continuing to deliver practical enhancements with the assistance of local landowners and businesses as part of the 'Our Past, Our Future' Living Waters project and we have been successful in obtaining further support from the Environment Agency via grants and match funding. August was New Forest Water Month and saw a programme of public activities around the freshwater habitats of the New Forest to engage local communities and celebrate the unique quality of the New Forest's

water environment. The end of September saw partners and local stakeholders attend the first New Forest Water Forum 'Working Together for Water & Wildlife'.

We continued to deliver the Service Level Agreement for ecological advice to New Forest District Council, receiving over 50 requests for input and attending Planning Committee as required. Work has varied between smaller scale development and input to large Local Plan allocations. We also received over 40 requests for input to National Park planning processes.

We met with Southern Water to discuss opportunities for joint working on issues of mutual benefit and have agreed to work in partnership on a campaign next year. We also met with representatives of the Defence Infrastructure Organisation and local bodies and experts to investigate measures to mitigate the impact of low flying aircraft on the rare Hen harrier that uses parts of the Open Forest as winter roost sites, as well as other impacts on the Park and local communities. An expansion of the 'local avoid' in the north of the National Park was agreed with the DIO to protect ground nesting birds.

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

### *Development Management*

The team welcomed Natalie Walter who joined us at the end of August as our new Principal Planning Officer. Since the last meeting the team has received 165 new planning applications (up to 22 September) and in the same period, determined 143 applications with an approval rate of 80%. Performance has dipped slightly during this period with 70% of minor applications and 84% of householder/other applications being determined within eight weeks (due mainly to the team carrying a vacancy for two months).

Seven appeal decisions were received with four appeals being dismissed and three allowed.

Pre-application discussions have continued with Fawley Waterside as they progress their plans for the redevelopment of the former power station site. The developer held a series of local Public Exhibitions between 27 – 30 September so that local people could 'learn more about the project.'

This year's Annual Members' Planning Tour was held on 5 October 2017 with a focus on new development completed in the north west of the National Park. Entries for this year's Building Design Awards close at the end of the month and nominations have been encouraged following the recent round of quadrant meetings.

### *Enforcement and Trees*

During July and August we registered 217 tree works applications for the National Park and surrounding New Forest District areas. We made 10 Tree Preservation Orders to protect trees of high amenity value that were otherwise under threat from new development or inappropriate works. We have also secured compliance with one Enforcement Notice and served eight further Notices directed at the most harmful breaches of planning control. There are consequently a number of new appeals which need to be defended. Furthermore, we have commenced investigations into 33 allegations of planning breaches and been able to conclude 34 investigations where there was either no breach of planning control or through negotiation whereby those concerned have either undertaken remedial works or secured planning permission.



## *Policy*

The main focus of the Policy Team's work over the last quarter has been the Local Plan Review. Over the summer the team ran a six-week public consultation on potential alternative housing sites following updated advice from Natural England on the potential impacts of new residential development close to the New Forest Special Protection Area (SPA). A number of evidence base studies – including the New Forest Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and Viability Assessment – have been completed and are informing the review. Further details on the Local Plan Review can be found in the separate report being considered at this meeting.

On 14 September 2017 the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) launched a consultation on further measures set out in the housing white paper to boost housing supply in England. This includes a standard method for calculating local authorities' housing need; as well as proposals to increase planning application fees in those areas where local planning authorities are delivering housing against their targets. We will be working with other national park authorities in England to respond to this consultation by the deadline of early November 2017.

### **1.3 Conserving the historic environment and local way of life**

#### *Design advice and guidance*

Development control work consultations remain high in terms of formal applications, and pre-application advice. In addition the team carries out a great deal of informal advice to householders, professionals and the community. The work continues to range between that relating to heritage assets and ensuring high design standards are maintained on new build projects. The team maintains a proactive role in advice giving and has supplied graphic solutions to many schemes as well as general written guidance. Liaison with the wider Hampshire design professionals and those at National Parks around the country ensures we maintain consistency and keep updated on best practice. A couple of key focuses for the team are the applications at Lyndhurst Park Hotel and those regarding smaller new forest cottages at threat from demolition. The team also continues to provide heritage and design advice to the District Council through a service level agreement.

#### *Our Past, Our Future Traditional Building Skills Courses*

This project is now in its second year and is aimed at training building professionals and householders about repair of historic buildings in the New Forest. The courses continue to be well attended as with last year and the feedback from both professional agents and house owners is very positive. We are now looking forward to next year to plan the events and hopefully reach a wider audience.

#### *Conservation Area Action Plan for the Western Escarpment Conservation Area*

The Western Escarpment Conservation Area Steering Group met on 11 September 2017. The meeting covered the Action Plan for the Conservation Area, which covers the period to the end of 2017 and the work being trialled in the Conservation Area on recording features of local distinctiveness. The Steering Group will be meeting again in November 2017 where the main focus will be on updating the Conservation Area Plan to identify priority projects for the next five years.

## **2 Enjoy**

### **2.1 Enabling high quality experiences of the National Park**

From the start of the Our Past, Our Future scheme in 2016 to June 2017 a total of 20,956 hours of volunteering time had been recorded against the projects. This included 39 volunteers who have volunteered more than 100 hours each and 28 volunteers who have volunteered on 3 or more projects. Three volunteers have surpassed 500 hours of volunteering. The partnership 'Date with Nature in the New Forest' finished in September, this year there was a total of 617 volunteer days over the six months during which it ran.

#### *Outreach, health and wellbeing*

We helped launch a new partnership between Public Health England and National Parks. We have committed to work together, through a new national accord, to realise the benefits of national parks to health and wellbeing. Here in the New Forest we are developing new and enhancing existing projects to encompass health and wellbeing objectives, such as the PEDALL inclusive cycling scheme, our support for the Walking for Health project, the Walking Festival and volunteering offer.

Our Kick the Dust application to the Heritage Lottery Fund was unsuccessful but feedback was positive and has led to conversations with UK Youth about support for a National Park England-wide programme focussed on young people's mental health.

The OPOF scheme Wild Play site at Sway continued ahead of schedule. Some work at the Holbury site was delayed until after the summer bird nesting season but overall the project is on track. We delivered a successful Wild Play day in August attracting over 400 people. Feedback in the form of a questionnaire reveals a huge appetite and enthusiasm from local and visiting families for this type of event.

We have continued to support the West Hampshire CCG Get Hampshire Walking scheme through promotion, steering group membership and events. We supported art therapy sessions delivered by local group Hampshire Art for Recreation and Therapy as part of the 2017 Arts Festival.

Rangers successfully delivered 28 New Forest sessions over six weeks to young people undertaking the National Citizenship Scheme (NCS). They were supported by Education Officers, one Member, 19 volunteer days and nine days with partner organisation assistance. Although challenging at times, especially keeping 22 16-17 year olds content in the Forest in torrential rain for six hours, 88% agreed that they enjoyed their time in the National Park with 83% understanding more about the National Park as a result of the sessions. The Authority received £7,000 for its services.

### **2.2 Improving understanding of the National Park**

#### *Public and community events / rangers*

Rangers engaged with 4,900 people during this period.

After six weeks of NCS delivery, Rangers started the busy summer holiday period with many events and opportunities to ensure visitors (both local and further afield) were using the Forest responsibly and increasing their understanding of the special place they were visiting.

Wild Wednesdays continued as a partnership event at the Reptile Centre - Date with Nature (with RSPB and FC). Weekly Fun in the Forest events were held at four key sites with drop in activities during the days, attracting nearly 250 participants.

The annual Marine Wonders event returned to Lepe Country Park, celebrating our marine heritage and highlighting the diversity and importance of the life in the Solent and South Wight Seas. It is a partnership event between NPA, HCC, Friends of Lepe, Natural England and Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust.

After a very successful ground nesting bird awareness engagement period speaking with over 3,000 people, our two seasonal rangers moved to engaging with Camping in the Forest visitors. They delivered 57 sessions over a period of 10 weeks at eight campsites, engaging with 1,764 people. The dusk walks proved particularly popular with numbers attending often between 50 and 70. The programme supported the New Forest Trust by collecting donations for the activities and including them in promotional material.

The mobile information unit went to 23 events including Sway Carnival, Burley Show, Big Bike Bash and the New Forest Marathon.

### *Interpretation projects*

At the New Forest Show we celebrated 800 years since the Charter of the Forest. During the show the public produced the characters and scenery to be used in a short animated film about the Charter of the Forest in the New Forest. We captured over 8,000 images and the animation team is now working to produce the first rushes for review. Also at the New Forest Show was the first use of the Tree Time Challenge unit, an engaging display unit exploring the work of the NPA Tree Team, dendrochronology and the history of the New Forest. Both the above (and other items) will form a temporary exhibition at the New Forest Centre from 14 October to 14 January 2018.

### *Communications*

Feedback from the Arts Festival organisations show a total of over 5,000 people attend a wide range of events across the Forest, learning more about the National Park's special qualities.

The Future Forest recreation management consultation resulted in 1,553 individuals and organisations, who gave over 7,000 comments on different aspects of the consultation. With the aim of engaging new audiences in the recreation management debate, over 80% of respondents had not taken part in Forest consultations before and more than half found out about the consultation through social media.

The consultation was also represented at the New Forest Show. Our stand at the Show focused on the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Forest Charter, looking at how people use and interact with woodlands from ancient times up to the present day. Our Chairman hosted a reception to mark National Parks Week including a visit by National Parks Minister Lord Gardiner, and presented him with a paper from New Forest organisations calling on the government to support commoners, Verderers, farmers and landowners in a 'Green Brexit'. We also presented our awards to Forest champions with the CLA followed by a reception.

Salisbury MP John Glen, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for DCMS, visited on the final day to meet Forest organisations and hear about our conservation and cultural partnership projects.

We launched the Open Art competition and exhibition with the New Forest Centre.

Working with National Parks UK, we launched an Accord with Public Health England to establish a 'natural health service' of projects to improve people's health and wellbeing and a partnership with outdoor apparel company Columbia.

### *Formal education*

We ran the final schools sessions of the academic year during the very last week of term, teaching 367 children from six schools in the second half of July. Seven schools are bringing 780 pupils to learn in the New Forest National Park during September, with more bookings coming in now that the new school year is underway. We received very good news at the end of July concerning the HLS Education Access funding, which the HLS Board agreed could return to its previous level of 50 schools being able to learn about the culture, history and landscape of the New Forest whilst accessing its incredible learning opportunities.

During August, the education team supported colleagues and partners at a range of events, including a very wet and windy Marine Wonders at Lepe Country Park, a very successful Wildplay Day at Whitefield Moor and Discovery Days at New Forest Centre.

Students from our Young People's Forum responded to the Recreation Management Strategy review at a series of lunchtime meetings at four local secondary schools. The students' view on the quality which made the Forest most special to them was overwhelmingly cited as its tranquillity. This view was shared by our Work Experience students, eight of whom joined us during the second half of July; as usual, NPA staff made them very welcome and ensured that their first experience of the world of work was successful.

This term sees the education team joining with New Forest Marque to offer schools an assembly with the option of follow up sessions on the importance of local food and produce: 'Grandma's Groceries'. The assembly features Red Riding Hood on her way to visit Grandma, who always says 'Know where it's grown, not far from home!' and has been very well received, with 17 schools already booked.

## **2.3 Managing recreation to benefit the National Park**

### *Recreation Management*

The 'call for views' consultation to inform an update of the New Forest National Park Recreation Management Strategy 2010-2030 attracted over 1,500 responses. We had been asked to lead on this by the RMS Steering Group (Forestry Commission, Natural England, Verderers, Hampshire County Council, NPA and New Forest District Council). Work to analyse the comments is ongoing – see agenda item for further details.

The SLA we have with NFDC to deliver aspects of its habitat mitigation strategy through a People and Wildlife Ranger has been extended for a further year (from April 2018-March 2019). The work includes both helping to improve sites for recreation within the NFDC planning area (outside of the designated New Forest SPA) and a range of ways to reduce impacts when people choose to spend time on the SPA including a strong focus on promoting responsible dog walking.

Natural England's timetable to complete the work to develop the route proposal for the England Coast Path through the National Park has been further extended; the public consultation on the proposals may now start at the end of October. We have been supporting Natural England staff

with the cost estimates for the infrastructure which will be required for the new route, in anticipation for our role in establishing the route once it is agreed.

We have been approached by the British Mountaineering Council to participate in a one year fundraising campaign to raise money for footpath improvement projects in all 15 UK National Parks. Through discussions with Hampshire County Council and the Friends of Lepe we have identified some improvements which can be made to the Lepe Loop – a popular five mile circular walk inland of Lepe Country Park. The BMC is looking to raise £1 million nationally for 15 projects through donations and crowdfunding. If the BMC achieve its target, this would deliver about £35,000 towards the Lepe Loop project which has a total cost of £90,000, however, anything upwards of a £20,000 donation would make a real difference to the quality of the route. The work would add value to the redevelopment of the country park site, and provide an interesting circular walk which will likely link to the new England Coast Path.

### *Educational campaigns*

The number of animal road traffic incidents is roughly the same as this time last year. Accident rates usually go up when the clocks change and more people travel home in the dark. With HCC, the Verderers and the Commoners Defence Association, we are exploring the potential to use some new eye-catching temporary signs through the autumn to highlight the increased risk at this time of year. We have also checked and commented on HCC proposals for refreshed signage around the Burley area (following the same process as was used across the north of the Forest last year).

The Shared Forest Business Group – a new scheme led by the CDA as part of the OPOF project – was launched at the New Forest Show. As a founding member of this group we have signed up to a charter which lists 10 things we agree to do to reduce animal accidents, e.g. raising awareness of the risks through staff induction procedures, on our vehicles and website.

As usual, UK Cycling Events ran its Wiggle New Forest 100 event over the weekend of 16 & 17 September. Officers had attended a debrief meeting with the Safety Advisory Group following UKCE's last New Forest event; we and the New Forest Parish Council representative also discussed aspects of event organisation with UKCE staff at their base in Fordingbridge and attended a Sway Parish Council meeting at which UKCE staff responded to various questions and concerns. The net result of these efforts was that communication about the event was improved, rates of release of cyclists was kept to a maximum of 10/minute and rear numbers were again trialled; numbers participating were roughly twice that advised in the Charter. A full summary of the degree to which cycle event organisers comply with the Cycle Event Organiser's Charter will be provided at the January Authority meeting.

Officers continue to build a range of other educational messages into their work programmes, including litter, ground nesting birds, responsible dog walking and not picking fungi.

### *New Forest Access Forum*

The New Forest Access Forum met on 4 September in Lyndhurst Community Centre. The Forum discussed progress with the Recreation Management Strategy and the National Park Partnership Plan. They finalised a response to the House of Lords select committee on the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 – the act of Parliament which created Natural England. The Forum is looking to proactively explore three areas of work in detail over the next year, including education, health and wellbeing and signage/ease of navigation.

### **3 Prosper**

#### **3.1 Supporting a distinctive and prosperous local economy**

We continue to be involved with local and regional business networks to help support the local New Forest economy; supporting the work of the New Forest Business Partnership, helping to administer LEADER grants as part of the Local Action Group, advising the EM3 Local Enterprise Partnership and directly supporting the New Forest Marque. Local rural businesses were recognised by the CLA/NFNPA Awards at the New Forest Show in July. The forthcoming Brilliance in Business Awards will be a further opportunity to celebrate and showcase the work of local businesses.

#### **3.2 Improving affordable housing provision**

It is hoped that an agreement to purchase some land in Burley to provide two affordable homes and a local heritage centre (subject to planning permission) will be completed very soon now that all the vendor's outstanding queries have been satisfactorily addressed.

#### **3.3 Promoting sustainable transport**

##### *Visitor bus services*

This summer we operated the New Forest Tour, the Beach Bus and the New Forest Travel Concierge service at Brockenhurst and Lyndhurst. We're awaiting final numbers for our bus services, but our expectations are that numbers are slightly down on these services due to poor weather in the main summer holidays and a slightly shortened season. However, we continue to be encouraged by positive feedback forms and Tripadvisor reviews. We are exploring options to refresh the green route, serving the south east of the National Park in 2018 and explore the feasibility of a headset based commentary system. Revenue from our Travel Concierge service at Brockenhurst was up this year in spite of the weather, and the new Lyndhurst information service has been well received by visitors and staff within the New Forest Centre.

##### *Transport policy*

We have been engaging with HCC officers around new traffic calming proposals for Bramshaw parish. We have been encouraging HCC to ensure that the designs for the final schemes fit with the rural character of the area. We hosted a short visit by transport officers from other National Parks in England, where we looked at the challenges of developing and sustaining rural bus services, walking & cycling infrastructure and air quality issues.

#### **3.4 Encouraging sustainable communities**

##### *Sustainable Communities Fund*

Tiptoe Primary School has recently installed new wood sculptures within their grounds as part of plans to create an outdoor classroom aimed at helping the children learn outside and embrace the natural world. The sculptures have been designed and created by local artist, Nicola Henshaw through workshops with the children, staff and governors. The sculptures help to raise awareness of the special qualities of the National Park and provide opportunities for the children to learn about the forest. The outdoor area will be further developed and future work will continue to involve Nicola's designs, particularly the creative writing elements and art classes.

A new learning greenhouse has been installed at Minstead Study Centre to help children learn about the importance of soil and how to propagate plants. The new greenhouse is large enough to accommodate a small group of 10 children who are able to work undercover to complete simple gardening tasks all-year round. Sliding doors at each end of the greenhouse enable the space to be used as a small outdoor classroom. The greenhouse extends Minstead Study Centre's range of gardening activities with schools by introducing children to the organic gardening system and experiencing vegetable growing first hand as well as having the opportunity to harvest the fresh produce ready for eating that day. The greenhouse also benefits the wider community events programme with at least two gardening courses run each year for local residents e.g. garden design, planting your vegetable garden, composting.

## 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 two new Secretary of State members: Patrick Heneghan and Gavin Parker (replacing Judith Webb and John Pemberton) a further Secretary of State member is likely to be appointed in January 2018 (replacing Russell Wynn) which will re-establish the full complement of 22 Authority members.

Following the elections for the North East Quadrant representative on the Authority in June, Richard Taylor was confirmed in his appointment by the Minister in August 2017.

### 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, external partners such as the New Forest Marque, Access Forum and Consultative Panel (at its last meeting the Panel considered its Terms of Reference and Constitution, welcomed the Official Verderer Lord Manners and received updates from both the NPA and Forestry Commission and the progress of the review of the Recreation Management Strategy.

### 4.3 **Using available resources effectively and efficiently**

As part of the national clothing deal secured by National Park Partnerships earlier this year, our first order of new clothing for staff has been placed. We are expecting receipt later in October. The total RRP value of the partnership over 5 years is £2.5m.

#### *Human Resources*

As at 30 September 2017 the total staff headcount was 88 or 77.34 full-time equivalents (FTEs).

	<b>Headcount</b>	Variation from previous report	<b>FTE</b>	Variation from previous report
Core funded	72*	+ 2	63.92*	+ 1.81
Funded by external projects	16	- 4	13.42	- 4.20

<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	– 2	<b>77.34</b>	– 2.39
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\*Of the core funded roles, 9 staff (8.31 FTEs) are working in shared services, 24 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:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Job title</b>	<b>Contract type</b>	<b>How funded</b>
Pauline Megson	Building Design and Conservation Officer	Fixed-term (maternity cover)	Core funded
Donna Neseiyif	Inclusive Cycling Project Manager	Fixed-term	Grant funded (Big Lottery Reaching Communities Fund)
Gareth Jones	Inclusive Cycling Ride Leader	Fixed-term	Grant funded (Big Lottery Reaching Communities Fund)
Natalie Walter	Principal Planning Officer	Permanent	Core funded

Recently we said goodbye to Katherine Argyrou (New Forest Apprentice Ranger) and to five seasonal staff as their summer contracts ended; Diana Collett, Daniel Hipkiss, Julie Sims (Sustainable Travel Ambassadors), Rosie Bowman and Maddy Evans (Seasonal Assistant Rangers). We wish them well in their future ventures.

Recruitment is currently underway for:

<b>Job title</b>	<b>Contract type</b>	<b>How funded</b>
Administration Assistant (Trees)	Permanent, part-time	Core funded
Assistant Conservation Officer	Permanent, part-time	Core funded

### *ICT Services*

The ITC team are currently rolling out new PCs and laptops with Windows 10 upgrade and setting up the new SharePoint intranet site. Following completion of this and a number of other priority IT projects the IT team will then look to progress the migration of corporate documents to the new SharePoint. The team is working closely with the Data Protection Officer in preparing for the new General Data Protection Regulation.

## **5 Members**

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

- Planning Development Control Committee – 18 July
- New Forest Show – 25-27 July
- Planning Development Control Committee – 15 August
- New Forest Access Forum – 4 September
- Consultative Panel – 7 September
- Resource, Audit and Performance Committee – 11 September
- Planning Development Control Committee – 19 September



- Members Day Arne Visit – 29 September
- Standards Committee – 2 October
- Planning Tour – 5 October
- Members Day Grant Funding – 11 October
- Planning Development Control Committee – 17 October

## 5.2 Forthcoming activities include:

- Resource, Audit and Performance Committee – 13 November
- Planning Development Control Committee – 21 November
- New Forest Access Forum – 4 December
- Members Day New Forest Centre – 6 December
- Consultative Panel – 7 December
- Planning Development Control Committee – 19 December
- Planning Development Control Committee – 16 January 2018

## 5.3 Chief Executive's engagements

- Heart of England Forest Trustees visit - 14 July
- Management Plan Leadership Group meeting – 17 July
- Forest Farming Group – 17 July
- NPE Board meeting – 18 July
- National Grid project meeting – 19 July
- NFDC member briefing – 19 July
- England Health Leads Group meeting – 21 July
- Meeting with Mind – 21 July
- New Forest Show – 25-27 July
- NFNPA Chairman's Reception – 25 July
- CLA / NFNPA Awards – 26 July
- Meeting with John Glen MP – 27 July
- Green Halo Steering Group – 1 August
- Meeting with CX and Leader Test Valley Borough Council – 2 August
- Introductory meeting with Assistant Director of Planning and Environment, HCC – 3 August
- Opening of St Barbe Museum – 4 August
- National Park Transport Officers Group – 11 August
- Meeting with John Glen MP – 25 August
- Defra meeting – 30 August
- Meeting with Business South – 31 August
- Meeting with Bob Seely MP – 1 September
- Safer New Forest Strategy & Delivery Group – 4 September
- Introductory meeting with new Executive Head of Planning & Housing, NFDC – 4 September
- 'Inspire Your Team' training session – 6 September
- Health Accord launch with Health Minister – 8 September
- ELT Awayday – 12 September
- NPO Awaydays – 14-15 September
- Green Halo Steering Group – 18 September
- Meeting with Cllr Mans, HCC – 18 September
- Natural Environment Strategy Group – 19 September
- Mentoring course – 22 September
- Landscape Institute Management Leadership Forum – 26 September
- SE FWAC – 26-27 September

- Members Day visit to RSPB Arne Reserve – 29 September
- HLS Board – 4 October
- Landscape Institute informal meeting – 4 October
- YHA Burley re-opening – 5 October
- Welcome the Farmers Liaison Officers Group – 10 October
- Campaign for National Parks' Park Protector Award Reception – 11 October

#### **5.4 Chairman's engagements**

- Heart of England Forest Trustees visit - 14 July
- Chair, Forest Farming Group - 17 July
- NPE Board meeting – 18 July
- Meeting with Bob Seely MP – 1 September
- Meeting with Official Verderer – 18 September
- NPE Board meeting & AGM – 27 September

## **6 Recommendation**

**To note the report.**