

BUSINESS PLAN 2015-2018

Fourth Quarter, 2015-16 Work Programme

Protect

We will endeavour to ensure the qualities that make the National Park a unique and special place are conserved, enhanced and resilient.

Protect Priority 1: Enhancing the New Forest's landscapes and habitats

We will work with land managers, land owners and commoners to enhance the New Forest's landscapes and wildlife habitats, by:

- giving clear advice and guidance, using the Landscape Character Assessment, Landscape Action Plan and tranquillity mapping
- developing and delivering projects which restore, enhance and maintain important wildlife sites
- offering support, advice and training
- working with partners to enhance the New Forest at a 'landscape scale'.

Action/Outcome	Officer	Progress during the Quarter	RAG status	Risks and mitigation (if amber or red)
<p>Complete the Our Past Our Future Landscape Partnership bid for submission. Maintain the partnerships concerned with the Restoring Lost landscapes element of the programme which will deliver landscape and habitat enhancements, enabling work to begin once the outcome of the submission is known.</p>	<p>Rachael Gallagher</p>	<p>The HLF funded Our Past, Our Future Landscape Partnership Scheme is now 6 months into the delivery phase. The Board has met during Feb. Progress reports and payment requests submitted to HLF covering periods Oct to end Jan and Feb-Mar 2016. The first payment has been received. One post left to recruit. Volunteer Database has been set up and various events attended to attract volunteers onto the scheme e.g. the New Forest Volunteer Fair in Jan. A total of 114 new volunteers have now signed up to the OPOF and are regularly updated. The NPA and partner organisations have made some excellent progress with the individual projects. Key achievements to date include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 4 volunteer scrub removal tasks, ▪ over 300m of hedge laying ▪ Surveys of industrial archaeology sites and graveyards. ▪ 5 land management/farming courses have been run in partnership with Sparshalt College; ▪ First set of Traditional Building Skills courses have been run for agents and homeowners. ▪ Car park, timber cabin and composting toilet have been completed at the National Trusts' Foxbury reserve and volunteers have planted 5,000 trees. 	<p style="background-color: #92d050;"></p>	

Action/Outcome	Officer	Progress during the Quarter	RAG status	Risks and mitigation (if amber or red)
<p>Continue our representation on the New Forest Catchment Partnership to maintain effective management of the whole river system.</p>	<p>Ian Barker</p>	<p>Our Partnership with the Freshwater Trust has successfully delivered capital works (rainwater harvesting), kindly assisted by the local landowner and farm business. This enabled match funding from the Environment Agency to be secured for the HLF bid. The work on the 'Living Water' element of the HLF is set to continue in partnership with the Trust.</p> <p>The Catchment Partnership approved provision of the remaining match funding for the Living Waters HLF work so the HLF programme for this element is successfully match funded.</p> <p>This quarter saw the launch of the New Forest 'WaterBlitz' – a citizen science event to find the best freshwater waterbodies in the Forest and engage the public and other stakeholders in water issues. An article was posted on the Warbler, inviting staff and Members to participate.</p> <p>The period also saw delivery of other practical improvements to the Sowley catchment to improve water quality and biodiversity, these included intercept ponds to reduce phosphate pollution and sedimentation which threatens a SSSI lake, as well as marginal vegetation management to improve the potential for aquatic plants and rare insects to thrive.</p> <p>Our partnership with other catchments has seen the delivery of interpretation and campaign materials to engage stakeholders regarding appropriate management of septic tanks, landowner responsibilities and ways to reduce phosphate pollution. These will be rolled out during the 2016/17 period.</p> <p>We attended an Environment Agency meeting focussing on the New Forest catchment and are continuing to work with them to facilitate further works to improve water quality and fish passage in the next year. It is hoped that some resources will be made available to Catchment Partnerships for work locally by the EA but this is subject to their budget setting.</p>	<p></p>	<p></p>

Action/Outcome	Officer	Progress during the Quarter	RAG status	Risks and mitigation (if amber or red)
Continue representation on the Solent and New Forest Special Protection Area groups.	Ian Barker	Via our SLA we provided advice to NFDC in relation to Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace design. We also met with Natural England and HCC to discuss approaches to mitigating potentially harmful development on the coast. We met with Natural England to discuss local cases and the desirability of a meeting with surrounding Planning Authorities to facilitate joint approaches to SPA mitigation.		
Develop a Green Infrastructure Plan for the National Park, linking with plans and strategies of neighbouring authorities.	Paul Walton/ David Illsley	We have continued to release S106 monies for parishes to develop and enhance their local green spaces. The Our Past Our Future project will add to the network of green spaces through the identification of sites in the Better Boundaries, Nature Stepping Stones and WildIPlay projects. The Local Plan Review will incorporate a revision of the existing Green Infrastructure Strategy for the National Park.		

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<p>Establish the scope and means of monitoring the status of priority habitats and wildlife species to help inform future management decisions.</p>	<p>Ian Barker</p>	<p>We met with the Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (HBIC) to allocate the 14 days habitat survey that our current funding allows. During the next three years this will be used to facilitate our HLF work. Our allocation of time to provide data will be split between the HLF work and initial planning screening. Our partnership with the Wiltshire Biological Records Centre continues and they will undertake surveys to wildlife sites in the Wiltshire area as required.</p> <p>We have received mapping from HBIC that identifies opportunities for expanding priority habitats. This will complement our existing mapping on Ecosystem Services which included assessment of biodiversity value.</p> <p>Our partnership work with the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust continues with the help of the Sustainable Communities Fund. Spring and summer will see survey for smooth snake and other reptiles continue and the project staff have been successful in obtaining consents for extending the work on the Open Forest. The project will deliver training for land managers later in 2016/17 to help inform management. We continue to facilitate an Amphibian and reptile Monitoring and Survey partnership which is looking at establishing an evidence base for all species.</p>	<p></p>	<p></p>

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Provide a programme of land management support, advice and training for landowners, farmers and commoners.	Julie Melin-Stubbs	We carried out a day long cross compliance training event which included an afternoon farm visit. This attracted over 30 commoners. Our main focus this quarter was supporting the commoners in their IT skills and online applications for the Basic Payment Scheme which many rely upon to continue their commoning activity. Hundreds of commoners received our written advice, telephone support or booked 1:1 appointments to look through their paperwork and online accounts with the Rural Payments Agency. In addition the New Forest Rural Skills Project now has a project officer within NFLAS, Richard Austin, and an extensive programme of training is now being organised with 5 courses planned for April and up to another 30 planned for the coming year.		

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Establish a 'Growing the Forest' forum to identify and take forward landscape scale enhancements in the Forest and its 20km 'halo', using the ecosystem services maps as an evidence base for future partnership working.	Paul Walton	<p>Work has continued to build the Growing the Forest partnership. A joint visit was held with Natural England in January to learn from landscape scale projects in Dorset. A meeting with the South Downs NPA in February explored opportunities for closer working in this area. The Natural Environment Strategy Group, led by NFNPA brought together a number of partners to develop the "Halo" concept.</p> <p>A Members Day on ecosystem services was held in March.</p>		
Work with public and voluntary sector to identify and safeguard land for use as back-up grazing for commoning.	Julie Melin-Stubbs	We continue to talk with all landowners to identify grazing sites which could be let as back up grazing for commoners. However, as previously reported, for a variety of reasons these conversations do not often lead to the desired outcome.		<p>NFLAS will continue to work with comoners and landowners.</p> <p>Identifying and safeguarding land for back-up grazing is to be addressed in the local plan review</p>

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Continue the development of the Working Woodlands project as part of the Heritage Lottery Fund submission and link with emerging plans for the development of a woodfuel hub network in the Enterprise M3 LEP area.	Julie Melin-Stubbs	No change from last quarter. Development work finished in May 2015 and submitted as part of the bid. The 1.5 days a week biodiversity element of the project will begin in Autumn 2016.	Amber	A funding bid was submitted last quarter to DCLG for the woodfuel hub and economy side to this project. Response still awaited from DCLG.
Seek support for the undergrounding of high voltage electricity cables in the north of the Forest.	Sarah Kelly	Ongoing development of feasibility study by National Grid for Hale Purlieu overhead cables with information given by NPA specialists.	Green	
Complete a climate change adaptation plan for the National Park.	Andy Brennan	Little progress has been made in this quarter as officer time has been redirected to development of the PEDALL project following the departure of the inclusive cycling project officer.	Red	This work will roll over to 2016-2017

Protect Priority 2: Ensuring new development is sympathetic and in keeping with its surroundings

We will seek the highest quality of development in the New Forest to minimise impacts on its special qualities and deliver enhancements by:

- providing clear National Park planning policies and a high quality planning service
- working with neighbouring authorities in the development of their planning policies and proposals that may affect the National Park
- increasing knowledge and evidence about changes to the special qualities of the National Park
- supporting delivery of green infrastructure plans within and outside the National Park to reduce pressure on the most sensitive areas.

Action/Outcome	Officer	Progress during the Quarter	RAG status	Risks and mitigation (if amber or red)
Undertake a full review of our adopted Core Strategy (2010), taking into account the experiences of the last four years and changes in national planning policy (introduced through the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Policy Guidance).	David Illsley	Good progress on the Local Plan Review has been made in Q4. This has included a series of workshops with the Enterprise M3 LEP; neighbouring planning authorities and socio-economic bodies, as well as a session with members in NPA February 2016. The timetable for the Local Plan Review was approved by members at the March 2016 NPA meeting.		
Co-ordinate the use and distribution of developer contributions to support habitat mitigation measures within the National Park.	Steve Avery	The Authority continues to successfully negotiate developer contributions towards habitat mitigation measures. To date over £30,000 has been collected and this has been directed towards a range of measures including interpretative material and the employment of a seasonal ranger.		
Re-visit the merits of introducing Community Infrastructure Levies for the National Park (now that in most cases we are unable to collect developer contributions for the provision of 'off site' affordable housing and public open space).	Steve Avery	The national position in relation to Section 106 agreements and financial contributions has been unclear throughout 2015/16 due to a series of Government planning changes and legal challenges. The Authority has been able to negotiate Section 106 agreements from small developments for the majority of the year, but the Government's successful legal challenge to this approach means there is an increasingly likelihood that the Authority will need to implement the Community Infrastructure Levy as the only viable route for seeking contributions towards local infrastructure.		Restrictions on the use of S106 agreements make it increasingly likely that the Authority will need to introduce the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) as an alternative. This requires significant resources, but could also deliver useful funding towards local infrastructure in the Park. A paper will be presented to the PDCC meeting in June.

Action/Outcome	Officer	Progress during the Quarter	RAG status	Risks and mitigation (if amber or red)
Work with the other Hampshire minerals and waste planning authorities to prepare additional planning guidance on the safeguarding of minerals resources and oil and gas development.	David Illsley	Following the consideration of all of the consultation comments received in 2015, the two Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) were formally adopted by the National Park Authority in January 2016 (and went through the same process at Hampshire County Council, Portsmouth City Council and Southampton City Council in early 2016).		
Launch the local design awards scheme to recognise and promote exemplary development in the National Park.	David Illsley	The first annual Design Awards were presented at the January 2016 Authority meeting and plans are in place to build on the success of the awards by running them again in 2016.		
Support the Western Escarpment Conservation Area Action Plan by working with parish councils in delivering the actions identified in the Plan.	Lisa Crouch	The Steering Group met in March to discuss the Verge Protection Project and also to identify other actions from the Management Plan to progress.		

Protect Priority 3: Conserving the historic environment and local way of life

We will support the conservation of features that contribute to the local distinctiveness of the New Forest, by:

- enabling local people to retain and promote traditional building skills and crafts
- developing initiatives that encourage recording and celebration of features of interest to local communities
- providing advice and resources for specific community-led projects that promote local distinctiveness and cultural heritage
- improving knowledge and skills amongst the public to further protect the archaeology of the National Park.

Action/Outcome	Officer	Progress during the Quarter	RAG status	Risks and mitigation (if amber or red)
Deliver specific New Forest Higher Level Scheme agreement objectives, including bringing a minimum of 10 monuments into favourable condition and continuation of LIDAR data verification.	Lawrence Shaw	<p>During the last quarter 1,400 ha. of Lidar analysis and field survey have been undertaken at eight different sites. These surveys have seen 46 volunteer survey days carry out with a total of 322 volunteer hours.</p> <p>The HLS funded Lidar exhibition proved to a great success with nearly 20,000 visitors attending. A weekend long event organised as part of the exhibition, saw 800 people in attendance and a strong promotion of the project and the HLS scheme as a whole.</p>		
From a completed scoping exercise, identify the initial phase of work required to address gaps in the knowledge of specific time periods of the Forest's archaeological record.	Frank Green	<p>Two one day seminars held to determine the archaeological research priorities for the Roman and Iron Age periods and the Palaeolithic and Early Holocene periods.</p> <p>Iron Age and Roman research priorities to be circulated to the Our Past Our Future New Forest Community Heritage Forum for consultation.</p>		