



## The rise of tourism

In 1847 the London to Southampton railway was extended to Dorchester. This made the New Forest much more accessible and marked the beginning of modern tourism in the area.



Beaulieu Road Station

In the early years the number of tourists was small and their overall impact low. However the Victorian and Edwardian gentlemen butterfly collectors arguably created the first undesirable impact of tourism!

## Introduction

**This factsheet examines the impact of tourism and recreation on the National Park and some of the ways that this is being managed. For further information on the number of visitors and the types of activities see the Tourism and Recreation: Facts and Figures fact sheet.**

Numbers of visitors rose throughout the first half of the twentieth century but it was not until after the Second World War that tourism and recreation really developed. This was the time of important social change. Most families were wealthier and also had more leisure time in which to enjoy their wealth. Car ownership increased and this allowed families to travel further for recreation.

During the 1960's and 1970's camping and car parking were relatively uncontrolled with cars venturing as far as they could off the roads. The rise in the number of tourists meant that these activities began to cause unwanted environmental impacts on the Forest. Vegetation was damaged and the sheer number of vehicles on the landscape caused a visual impact. Tourism and recreation needed to be managed. The Forestry Commission began this process in 1972 with the construction of barriers to prevent cars from leaving the roads and the creation of 142 car parks. Camping was restricted to 18 campsites and subsequently reduced to 10.

Today there are an estimated 13.5 million visitor days spent in the New Forest National Park every year. These visitor days are divided between local residents, those coming on day visits from further afield and people visiting and staying overnight. 35% of all visits to the National Park are by people who live locally and a further 25% by day visitors from a variety of locations outside the New Forest.

## Benefits of tourism

The popularity of the New Forest with visitors undoubtedly brings its benefits. With over 15 million people living within 90 minutes of the Park that benefit could be considerable! At present the total spending associated with leisure visits to the New Forest is estimated at around £107.6 million per year. However, taking into account "leakage" from the area the actual amount contributing to the local economy is estimated at £72 million.

The total number of jobs sustained directly and indirectly by visitor activity is estimated as 2,451.



## Potential negative impacts

### Livestock

Some of the environments of the New Forest such as the lowland heath need grazing and other management (such as periodic burning) in order to maintain their character. Visitor access therefore poses different potential conflicts such as those between landowners, livestock, wildlife and visitors, in particular, problems arise from the feeding and petting of livestock.

### Trampling

This is defined as mechanical erosion by foot, horseback or cycle. It can lead to compaction of fragile soils and changes to the nature of vegetation cover. Severely trampled areas can become inaccessible and this further increases the area affected as people seek alternative ways through.

### Traffic

The volume of visitors arriving by car (96% of all visitors) means an increase in congestion along main routes. This generates higher levels of air pollution as traffic queues along main roads. An associated issue is that of animal accidents. These are caused when traffic travelling on unfenced roads across the Forest comes into contact with the free roaming livestock. Around 100 animals are killed each year.

### Disturbance to wildlife

This is a particular problem from March to July when the Forest is home to a number of ground nesting birds such as the curlew and snipe. During this time there is a potential conflict between visitors and birds, and dog walkers should take care to keep their dogs under close control during this period.

### Increased access to tranquil areas

This could reduce the remoteness and tranquillity of some parts of the National Park.

### Camping

This may cause erosion, compaction, changes to microclimates, and alteration to behaviour patterns of commoners stock.

### Litter

Although this is not a big problem in certain areas it can be a very visual problem. Litter is not only unsightly but can be harmful to wildlife and could also cause fires.

### Forest fires

Careless use of barbecues or dropping cigarettes in the Forest can trigger forest fires. These can have a devastating impact on the habitat concerned not to mention posing a danger to wildlife and humans alike.

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## Honeypot sites

These are sites that have very high concentrations and numbers of visitors due to the special nature of what they have to offer. The village of Lyndhurst is a classic honeypot site. For more information see factsheet 4 Lyndhurst: a classic honeypot site.

## New Forest Marque

This is awarded to quality produce which has been grown, reared, caught, brewed or produced in the historic landscape of New Forest. This not only supports the local farming community but it also goes some way to reducing food miles. It is therefore a sustainable initiative that celebrates local produce whilst helping to look after the planet.



Tourism creates jobs

## The Green Leaf Tourism scheme

This is a local scheme which aims to reward accommodation providers for taking a sustainable approach to running their businesses. The key points of the scheme involve the support of: Car-Free Tourism, New Forest Marque Produce, Energy, Waste & Recycling initiatives, Landscape Conservation, Forest Friends - Visitor Stewardship and Community Tourism.





## Role of the Authority in visitor management

It is not the purpose of the National Park Authority to actively promote tourism. There is, however, a very active New Forest Tourism Association which represents approximately 300 local businesses. The New Forest District Council is responsible for promotion and marketing of tourism and sustainable tourism within the New Forest. The Tourism section actively promotes the 'VICE' model which seeks to represent the collective interests of visitors, industry, community and environment.

### **Like other national parks, the New Forest National Park Authority has two clear purposes:**

1. To conserve and enhance the unique environment of the National Park, and in particular the special qualities of its landscape, wildlife and cultural heritage.
2. To encourage everyone to understand and enjoy the National Park's special qualities, while ensuring that its character is not harmed.

In meeting these purposes it should also support the social and economic wellbeing of local communities in ways that sustain the National Park's special character.

Sustainable management is, therefore, implicit in the Authority's work as stated in the purposes above. The key way in which this will be addressed is in partnership with the many organisations already working in the area. The main way in which this joint effort will happen will be worked out through the formulation of two key strategic documents which will be 'owned' by all partners:

1. The New Forest National Park Management Plan which is being developed through a full consultation process due to be completed by April 2009.
2. As a key daughter document of the Management Plan, the Recreation Management Strategy (RMS) will look at ways of managing the impact of recreation. The RMS will underpin the Authority's work related to recreation and visitor management. It is currently being developed through an extensive process of consultation with different groups and should be completed by Autumn 2008.

## Types of recreation

What people do after they arrive varies considerably. A large percentage of visitors engage in passive or quiet recreation, participating in such activities as going for a short walk, touring around in the car, stopping off for a cream tea in a café or general sightseeing. Other more active reasons for visiting include cycling, water sports and long walks. Factsheet 1 looks at the visitor profiles in more detail.

## Sustainable tourism

**The principles of Sustainable Tourism as defined by the Department of Employment, 1991 state that:**

- The environment has an intrinsic value, which outweighs its value as a tourism asset
- Tourism should be recognised as a positive activity, with the potential to benefit the community and the place as well as the visitor
- The relationship between tourism and the environment must be managed so that the environment is sustainable in the long term
- Tourism activities should respect the scale, nature and character of the place in which they are sited
- In any location harmony must be sought between the needs of the visitor, the place and the host community
- In a dynamic world, some change is inevitable and change can often be beneficial

The tourism industry, local authorities and environmental agencies all have a duty to respect the above principles and to work together to achieve their practical realisation.

Fortunately sustainable tourism and green tourism are not a new phenomenon in the New Forest with schemes such as the New Forest Marque and the green leaf scheme already in place. More information about both of these schemes can be found on

[www.thenewforest.co.uk](http://www.thenewforest.co.uk).



Partnership Working

## Partnership approach

All National Park Authorities must work in partnership with others to foster tourism in innovative ways which ensure a better quality of life for everyone - socially, economically and environmentally - now and for generations to come.

Fortunately there is a strong culture and long history of partnership working within the New Forest. Prior to the National Park Authority, the New Forest Committee was a body consisting of members from a range of interested groups (stakeholders) such as the Countryside Agency, English Nature, the Environment Agency, the Forestry Commission, County Councils, District Councils, the Verderers of the New Forest and the Commoners Defence Association.

The National Park Authority is continuing with this partnership approach. There are also independent forums such as the New Forest Consultative Panel and the New Forest Access Forum who work in partnership with a range of interested parties to ensure that conservation and access are managed in the National Park. These organisations ensure that there is a working debate and dialogue between all concerned about the future of the New Forest.

## There are several ways that this partnership approach happens such as:

### Education & Interpretation

The completion of an Education and Interpretation Strategy in June 2007 underlined the Authority's plans to use education and interpretation as a way of ensuring all parties are involved in the conservation of the Park.

### Codes of Conduct (PROGRESS)

Partnership working led to the production of codes of conduct for the open Forest. The PROGRESS research itself has generated codes of conduct for dog walkers, cyclists, walkers and a general out and about leaflet. These were compiled by a forum of local people, representing both conservation and recreation interest, under European Union funding. The code is endorsed by the New Forest Verderers, the Commoners' Defence Association and the Forestry Commission. They can be seen on the Forestry Commission web-site [www.forestry.gov.uk/newforest](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/newforest).



Codes of conduct

## Further reading and useful information

Other New Forest National Park Authority factsheets

Managing Environments for Leisure and Recreation: Richard Broadhurst, 2001

[www.thenewforest.co.uk](http://www.thenewforest.co.uk): The Official New Forest Visitors website

[www.nfta.co.uk](http://www.nfta.co.uk): The New Forest Tourist Association website

[www.newforestnpa.gov.uk](http://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk) Factsheet available on CD, in large-print, or Braille on request

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