

**NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
AUTHORITY MEETING – 28 MARCH 2019**

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

Report by: Alison Barnes, Chief Executive

Summary:

This report covers the period since the Authority meeting on 17 January 2019. The report has been formatted to accord with the 'Protect, Enjoy, Prosper and Achieving Excellence' themes from the 2018-21 Business Plan, summarised below:

Protect	Enjoy	Prosper
<p>Our priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protecting and growing the natural capital across the National park Landscape, connecting with surrounding areas to ensure habitats and wildlife are sustainable. Ensuring new development is sympathetic and in keeping with the National Park, promoting high quality design and environmental net gain. Conserving the historic and built heritage; supporting local culture with continued focus on commoning. 	<p>Our priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helping more people to understand and value the things that make the New Forest National Park unique and special. Enabling high quality and beneficial experiences of the National Park. Facilitating a partnership approach to managing recreation to achieve a net gain for both the working and natural landscape as well as for the recreational experience. 	<p>Our priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting a distinctive and prosperous local economy where natural capital is an integral component of doing business. Promoting connectivity across the National Park through sustainable transport and information and communication technologies. Supporting the social wellbeing and sustainability of New Forest Communities.
Achieving Excellence		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintaining and enhancing a capable, motivated team that delivers high quality service. Championing the National Park and brokering partnership to achieve collaboration for the benefit of the New Forest and its communities Identifying new resources and using them alongside our existing 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.

NFNPA 566/19

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This quarter has seen what we expect to be the final phase of the examination of the draft Local Plan – our suite of planning policies for the national park. A six-week consultation on the proposed policy for development on part of the Ashurst Hospital site was undertaken, followed by a one-day Examination hearing. The final report from the planning inspectors is expected later this year and then members will be asked to consider formally adopting it.

We continued to respond to a high level of planning casework. For example, the planning enforcement team has seen a significant increase in the last four months with 130 live cases and 55 new cases opened in the first two months of 2019. A members' day is planned to support implementation of planning enforcement.

A number of projects have been completed in the Our Past, Our Future (OPOF) scheme this quarter including archaeological surveys of the National Trust commons and restoration of some ancient scheduled monuments.

Work has continued on protecting and improving the New Forest's pristine freshwater habitats as part of the OPOF Living Waters project, including through advice and management at two farms to improve water quality at Cockford Stream. Further funding has been awarded by the Environment Agency to continue to develop work at Hatchet Pond - one of the most important freshwater waterbodies for wildlife in the UK.

Engaging children and young people with the natural world is a key aspect of the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan and much focus this quarter has been on working with young people through education programmes across the Forest.

We are delighted that a new wild play site at Sway is now complete. A toolkit has been developed to help others create wild play sites, to encourage younger children to enjoy the outdoors and connect with the natural world in an informal setting.

Over 200 school visits have taken place during the winter period, as well as a number of litter assemblies. We are getting great feedback from staff and students and are hopeful that some of those benefitting from these education sessions will become national park custodians of the future.

On that theme, in National Apprenticeship Week we were thrilled to hear that Marty Meaker, one of our apprentice rangers last year, was awarded 'Intermediate Environmental Conservation Apprentice 2018' and 'Best Apprentice of the Year' at Kingston Maurward College. This is a testament to the way that Marty applied himself to his apprenticeship and the effort and dedication he put into it throughout the 13 months with us and our partners and demonstrates the success and value of this project.

A number of our campaigns with Forest partners have been very active this quarter. Four seasonal rangers have started work to raise awareness of rare ground nesting birds and to encourage people to stick to the tracks during the nesting season, as well as other 'caring for the forest' messages and campaigns.

Our People and Wildlife Ranger has been developing a dog walking charter in conjunction with commercial dog walking businesses to promote responsible dog walking and raise awareness about ground nesting birds. She has also been attending puppy classes, gave a presentation at the Outdoor Recreation Network conference and attended Crufts.

Working with the Commoners Defence Association, life-size animal silhouettes showing accident statistics have been touring the Forest over the autumn and winter to encourage drivers to slow down. The campaign was backed by social media posts which achieved a wide reach. Cards with the animal accident hotline numbers have also been updated and printed and the latest statistics were released to the media which resulted in two radio interviews as well as print coverage.

The BBC Four documentary A Year in the Wild Wood broadcast in January gave a real boost to our work aiming to communicate the unique and special biodiversity supported by commoning. We helped arrange the filming and script as well as commissioning some short natural history films from the production company which we can use to further promote understanding of the national park's spectacular wildlife.

We welcomed a record 750 people to our Volunteer Fair in January and many of the 50 organisations which attended reported a large number of sign-ups from people keen to take part in community, charity and practical activities across the Forest. Honeypot children's charity was a great example with 15 people who left their names resulting in seven new volunteers attending an induction session. The charity had had no new volunteers for a few years and were very pleased with the response.

The Volunteer Fair was also where we had the New Forest launch of the Government's Year of Green Action to celebrate the 70th anniversary of national parks. Following on from this we announced our Green Action Grants for schools and groups with over 60 applications so far. More events and initiatives are planned throughout the year, with the full list available on our website.

The work we've been doing with young people, volunteers and communities this quarter has also been complimented by some significant meetings with important National and regional organisations.

We hosted senior officials from Defra (Director of Natural Environment and YoGA lead), introducing them to the New Forest and our work with key Forest organisations. We also connected key government officials with Forest Farming Group – focusing on Forest schemes post Brexit. We met with the Chief Executive of Solent LEP, following the LEP boundary changes, making the case for them to include Natural Capital as part of the baseline for their forthcoming Local Industrial Strategy. We continue to work with National Parks England to feed into the Glover Review of protected landscapes due to report later this year.

DELIVERY OF NATIONAL PARK PURPOSES AND FUNCTIONS

The report has been formatted to accord with the 'Protect, Enjoy, Prosper' objectives from the 2018-21 Business Plan, a summary of which is set out on the first page. In addition, a fourth section, 'Achieving Excellence', summarises those activities that support and contribute overall to all our work, and the final section lists Members' activities and events.

1 Protect

Protecting and growing the natural capital across the National Park landscape, connecting with surrounding areas to ensure habitats and wildlife are sustainable

Our Past, Our Future (OPOF) Landscape Partnership Scheme

We are now into the fourth year of the Our Past, Our Future Landscape Partnership scheme. The OPOF Board met in February to discuss progress across the scheme and all reported positive outcomes to date.

A year three review of projects progress and budgets is now underway and will be discussed with the Board and HLF in May.

Practical conservation work has continued over the winter on several privately-owned woodland, meadow and heathland sites. This has involved contractors and numerous volunteer work parties removing scrub and undertaking other conservation work in liaison with private landowners. Rediscovering our Archaeological Heritage has now completed archaeological surveys of all the National Trust commons and followed up with restoration work on some scheduled barrows and pillow mounds e.g. Hale and Rockford. Work is now being planned for a community archaeology festival, 'Dig Burley'. This is being organised jointly between the Burley Local History Society, Burley Parish Council and the New Forest National Park Authority and will take place in and around Burley from 11 to 14 April 2019 and will include talks, workshops and exhibitions. Local residents and families have been asked to volunteer to open up a small archaeological test pit on their property in order to search for any finds which may reveal more about Burley's past.

Developing Forest Skills projects have continued to train people in a number of areas. This has provided people with skills to look after their local natural and built heritage and to support a sustainable landscape and in this period has included courses on hedgelaying, coppicing, venison butchery and pony breeding.

Marty Meaker, who was one of our apprentice rangers last year, won Kingston Maurward College's award for best 'Intermediate Environmental Conservation Apprentice 2018' and the award of 'Best Apprentice of the Year'. This is a testament to the way that Marty applied himself to his Apprenticeship and the effort and dedication he put into it throughout the 13 months and demonstrates the success and value of this project.

Work has continued within the Discovering Forest Heritage and Inspiring a New Generation theme. In relation to commoning, work will now draw together the project messages to focus on promoting education and understanding of the commoning way of life, with a particular focus on digital media and touring the Commoning Voices exhibition throughout 2019.

The official opening of the wild play site at Stanford Rise, Sway, unfortunately had to be postponed due to the weather. However the site is already getting positive feedback from local promotion by the Parish and Friends of Stanford Rise Green social media pages. We have also published a 'Wild Play Toolkit' for parish councils, groups, organisations and individuals who would like to develop wild play opportunities within their community. The toolkit is a guide through the process of setting up a wild play site or event, including site identification, general resources, activities, community engagement, health and safety and insurance considerations and is a result of the lessons learnt through the development of the Holbury and Sway wild play sites.

A volunteer celebration event will be held in Brockenhurst on 5 April to thank the volunteers for their work on all the OPOF projects over the past three years. As the projects are entering their last year all are starting to consider the legacy of volunteering after OPOF.

New Forest Land Advice Service (NFLAS)

1. National Trust Small Grant Scheme

Now that the National Trust had its one-year HLS extension for the Northern Commons agreed by Natural England, we have been asked to run their Small Grant Scheme (£6,000 a year) again, now in its fourth year. NT has agreed to contribute to our time this year and is donating £1,000 to the Service. So far since 2015 we have given out 16 grants of up to £1,000 each.

A report of the grants given between 2015 and 2018 and the benefits they bring to the New Forest SSSI has been written, is available on request and will be provided in the Member's Bulletin.

2. NFLAS work within the New Forest Catchment Partnership

We have completed our advice and work on two farms, Norley Farm and Ravensbeck Farm, where we have been funded by the Freshwater Habitats Trust over the past few months to carry out partnership work with FHT, the farmers, the Environment Agency and Natural England to reduce diffuse pollution going into the Crockford Stream. Problems we found such as inappropriate manure storage, rutted fields, broken culverts and non-functioning ditches have been assessed and solutions found, contractors found and overseen to carry out necessary work on the ground. This follows on from similar work undertaken last year at Park Farm.

3. Basic Payment Scheme

With the 2019 claims window opening in March, with deadlines in May, we have worked with officers from the NPA and Verderers to organise and advertise this year's booking system for the 1:1 clinics we offer to complete the complex paperwork required for the New Forest situation. In previous years this has assisted approximately one hundred commoners and we expect a similar number this year.

4. Core reactive advice work

Sixteen land holdings have been visited this quarter as part of our reactive work and advice and support given on a range of items such as hedgerows, grants, subsidies, equine pasture management, Nitrate Vulnerable Zones regulations, drainage, ditch management, woodland management and pond management.

5. Countryside Stewardship Schemes

Harbridge Farm (Somerville Estate) – we are assisting this tenant of the Somerville Estate to transfer from ELS/HLS into Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS).

Norley Farm – the work we have done with this landowner under the Freshwater Habitats Trust project has led to us working up and submitting a CSS scheme which, if successful, would fund capital works to carry out rainwater harvesting on the farm yard.

6. NFLAS Our Past, Our Future Projects

Rural Skills – three courses were run this quarter with 29 places filled; hedgelaying, coppicing and venison butchery. There were commoners on all courses.

The Mentor Scheme continues with some interesting and varied reports coming in from mentorees outlining what they are learning and experiencing through their time on the scheme. Example of this in recent months have been halter breaking, attending drifts, colt hunting, going to Salisbury livestock market and the Pony Sales, confirmation, foal assessments and mare grading, attending court, learning about paperwork e.g. passports and record keeping, assisting with cattle ear tagging and TB testing.

Nature's Stepping Stones – we continue to work with owners of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation and have carried out several volunteer work parties this quarter. For example, we spent a day at Emery Down Meadows managing bramble and scrub. This project is due to end in November.

Better Boundaries – although this project has essentially finished (4km of restored hedgerows) we are still doing a few bits of follow up work on some land holdings such as replacing failed hedgerow whips in and clearing bramble and bracken to give the new and restored hedgerows a better chance. Volunteers have also helped to do this with us.

Working Woodlands – our busiest quarter of the year and we have been managing contractors carrying out forestry works and invasive plant removal in several woodlands and carrying out numerous volunteer work parties across our sites. This project is due to end in three months' time.

7. Encroachment Working Group

We organised the third meeting of this new group which NFLAS set up after a request from the CDA for a more collaborative and streamlined approach to dealing with encroachments on the SSSI. The partners who sit on the group, which is chaired by the Official Verderer, are pleased with the progress of the group and there is a general consensus that progress has been made. This is another good example of how NFLAS is able to facilitate partnership work in order to generate positive action on the ground.

8. Future funding for the New Forest post EU Exit

We continue to attend the New Forest Future Farming Group meetings to work with other partners towards understanding and preparing for the new agricultural policy, schemes and legislation which Defra are currently working on. This includes working with Robert Deane to complete a report on the New Forest's natural capital.

New Forest Catchment Partnership

We facilitated a successful Partnership Meeting with key local partners and we also saw the production of the latest New Forest Catchment e-newsletter 'Water News'. This has a growing readership and is proving to be an effective way to engage with local communities and partners.

An agricultural liaison group of land advisors and water specialists has been established by the New Forest Land Advice Service and Environment Agency. This will help coordinate resources and input to local businesses, making the best of time, resources and sharing local expertise to improve the quality of advice.

The Partnership has just been awarded further funding from the Environment Agency to continue to develop work at Hatchet Pond. The pond is one of the most important freshwater waterbodies for wildlife in the UK. There is evidence that water quality is deteriorating so funding has been awarded to monitor the water quality, identify causes and implement a variety of measures to help address pressures and reverse the downward trend.

We also met with representatives of the Hampshire Avon Catchment Partnership in order to work collaboratively on improvements to waterbodies just outside the New Forest catchment but within the National Park, or close enough to support its special qualities. Such projects contribute to the Green Halo initiative and are the first step towards establishing a 'blue band' of landscape scale water initiatives around the Park.

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

Ofgem, the government regulator for electricity markets in the UK, has held a consultation on the benefit of extending the VIP provision and LEI programmes into the next price

control period which runs from 2021 to 2026 (known as RIIO-2). National Parks England has responded to the consultation.

We still await a response from Ofgem on both the LEI application for Landford Bog and the Expression of Interest submitted to the programme on behalf of the RSPB at Franchises Lodge.

1.1 Ensuring new development is sympathetic and in keeping with the National Park, promoting high quality design and environmental net gain.

Development Management

We received 124 applications in the period 6 January to 6 March and in the same period determined 110 applications with an approval rate of 86%.

Significant planning applications determined include the former Lloyds TSB site in Brockenhurst for conversion to residential use and associated landscaping. Pre-application discussions have continued with Fawley Waterside as they progress their plans for the redevelopment of the former power station site.

Eleven appeal decisions have been received since the last meeting: eight were dismissed; two were allowed; and one split decision was received.

Ecology

The period has seen us successfully bid for continuation of the shared ecology service with New Forest District Council. We will be entering a new three-year service level agreement from April.

Current shared service work has included work related to major developments at Fawley, the Waterside and Ringwood and Fordingbridge areas. In addition, over 30 consultations and requests for input from the District have been received in the period and slightly more have also been received from within the Authority area.

Enforcement and Trees

The Planning Enforcement team currently has around 130 live enforcement cases being investigated at various stages of investigation and monitoring. This is a significant uplift over the last four months or so reflecting the complexities of some cases and the investigations necessary particularly when trying to review the history and established lawful uses. A total of 55 new enforcement cases have been opened in the first two months of 2019.

The 2 Tanners Lane public Inquiry is due to commence on 9 April and will consider the change of use of agricultural land into residential garden.

It is proposed to have a members' workshop towards the end of March to brief members on the requirements of planning enforcement and the context and expediency when action is necessary or not as the case may be.

Since the last Chief Executive's Report, the Tree Team has registered a higher than average number of tree work applications, 155 in total (53 from outside the Park and 102 inside the Park).

Eight Tree Preservation Orders have been made since December 2018 and these were due to the potential threat to important amenity trees.

Since December 2018 the Team has commented on 48 planning applications from the National Park Authority's Development Management Team and 68 consultations for NFDC Development Management. The Tree Service SLA with NFDC will come to an end on 31 March 2019.

Policy

The six-week consultation on the proposed Local Plan policy for the Ashurst Hospital site ran from January – March 2019. During this period representations were received from 25 individuals and organisations, including Natural England, Ashurst & Colbury Parish Council, Hampshire County Council and Historic England. The majority of the written representations received were supportive of the draft Local Plan policy and the proposed restrictions on the form of development on the site. The one-day Examination hearing session on the site was held at Lymington Town Hall on Thursday 21 March, with participants including Natural England, Ashurst & Colbury Parish Council and NHS Property Services.

Now that the final Local Plan Examination hearing session has been held, we anticipate receiving further correspondence from the two Planning Inspectors shortly. The final Report is expected later in 2019 and the formal adoption of it will then be considered by members at a full National Park Authority meeting.

In addition to our own Local Plan work, the Policy team has submitted written statements for the New Forest District Council Local Plan Examination hearing sessions which are due to take place in June and July 2019. The Authority's statements acknowledge the pressures on the District Council to meet ambitious housing targets and also emphasise that this must be considered against the range of landscape and habitat designations in the New Forest, which indicate that the scale of future development should be restricted.

The National Park Authority and New Forest District Council have also been working with Hythe & Dibden Parish Council on the production of their Neighbourhood Plan. This was formally submitted to the two authorities (as the parish includes land in both areas) and the final six-week consultation commenced in March 2019. The draft Neighbourhood Plan, supporting evidence base and representations will then be sent to the Examiner to be assessed and, pending their conclusions, will then proceed to a local referendum.

Following a successful bid for central Government funding, we are working with Natural England and five other local planning authorities in and around the New Forest to develop a robust evidence base regarding the impacts of planned new development on the protected habitats of the New Forest. Specialist consultants have been appointed to undertake primary research in the New Forest and the evidence gathered will inform the preparation of a strategic, cross-boundary approach to mitigating the impacts of new development on the New Forest's Natura 2000 sites.

1.2 Conserving the historic and built heritage; supporting local culture with continued focus on commoning.

Archaeology

We were successful with a bid to continue to deliver archaeology services to New Forest District Council for the period April 2019 to March 2022. A formal Service Level Agreement will be drawn up soon.

Churchyard monument conservation

Work has progressed on the recording and conservation of monuments in the churchyards at Lyndhurst and Emery Down as part of OPOF heritage projects. The conservation work involves obtaining consents through the Church of England's 'Faculty' jurisdiction system and in some cases obtaining Listed Building Consent for those that are listed. Churches only have responsibility to ensure safe access to their buildings through churchyards as public open spaces. Monuments and memorials in churchyards are essentially heirlooms of the families or executors that paid for their construction. Maintenance is not the responsibility of parish churches; or where churchyards are closed by an order of the 'Privy Council', the responsibility of the local authority for maintenance. Rarely do families maintain their ancestral tomb stones or monuments; assuming such families have descendants and families even know where ancestors are buried. The recording of monuments and making the information available through the New Forest knowledge web site <https://nfknowledge.org>. will allow greater access to family history research. At Emery down timber grave markers have been repaired along with the very large Jackson family monument as part of the ongoing work.

Community led projects

We continue to support the work of the Western Escarpment Conservation Area Steering Group. At their meeting on 28 February 2019 the Group agreed to work with the Authority to consider the scope for using available planning controls (e.g. Article 4 Directions) to help conserve the local distinctiveness of the Conservation Area. The town and parish councils that make up the Steering Group are also mapping damaged or redundant signage within the Conservation Area (which detracts from its character) and will be

sharing this information with the highway authority for action.

As part of the Our Past, Our Future Project the Traditional Building Skills courses have also been promoted, with a specialist course on masonry structure held at Bucklers Hard on 22 March and the course for homeowners held in Minstead on 23 March. The subsidised courses are aimed at local agents, builders and homeowners and focus on the importance of traditional buildings to the area's character. The courses have been well attended and provide practical advice on the skills required in specialist repair techniques to help conserve the built heritage of the National Park. Further information on the courses available can be found on our website [here](#).

At the end of March, the four-year Service Level Agreement for the Building Design & Conservation service between the National Park Authority and New Forest District Council comes to an end. The service has been positively received and we wish Warren Lever and Lynette Fawkes all the best as they start their roles with the District Council in April.

2 Enjoy

2.1 Helping more people to understand and value the things that make the New Forest National Park unique and special.

Education

The Year of Green Action (YoGA) has got off to a flying start, with the Education team presenting our 2019 Litter Assembly entitled 'What If....?' to over 7,500 children in 34 schools. The assembly takes the form of a rhyming story (written by Chris Marshall, our Education and Coastal Ranger) which asks the children to imagine what the world would be like if all the Forest animals and birds ate food wrapped in plastic packaging as we do.

The main message is that lots of small individual actions can add up to a big change, so we ask all the children to commit to one small action to help nature.

The assemblies are linked to 'Our Green Action Grants', which enable children and young people to devise and carry out projects which connect them with nature or improve or enhance the environment.

Information about the grants was sent to the 54 eligible schools (those within the National Park, or with pupils or staff who reside within the boundary), and we are delighted that 33 of those schools have already registered bids just seven days after registration opened.

We have continued to work with other NPA teams to develop outreach to education professionals, with personal development sessions delivered to trainee social workers from Solent University, support with risk assessing outdoor exploring for Honey-pot Children's Charity care staff, and interactive workshops for the Teacher Zone at Southampton University's STEM Day.

The team has taught over 200 pupils from five schools this term, both in school and out in the National Park. The best moment of the winter was when a very small boy from a Southampton school who had never visited the national park before said shyly that he really wanted to come back and live here 'because it is so peaceful and quiet, and it never is at home.' Proof that the tranquillity of the National Park is valued as highly by seven year olds as it is by adults.

Public and community events / rangers

A busy winter saw the ranger team engaging with over 1,400 people.

As it was peak season for practical conservation work, a lot of our time was spent working outdoors with volunteers. We led our final winter scrub clearance session for the Friends of Priestlands Ponds, a group of residents who together gave over 180 hours of their time to enhance the amenity space at Pennington for both wildlife and people. We also joined forces with Hampshire Countryside Service to run volunteer sessions at Lymington-Keyhaven Nature Reserve, and we supported the Forestry Commission when 31 Defra staff visited the Forest for two days to engage in practical work and learn about the challenges of managing recreation.

We were invited by Hordle Parish Council to two tree planting sessions for staff and pupils from the village primary school. These were enjoyed by everyone involved and the end result was an impressive living willow structure in a parish amenity area.

We were happy to help our Land Advice Service colleagues deliver Our Past, Our Future conservation volunteer tasks at Bransgore, Walhampton, Hyde and Bramshaw and we further supported the OPOF Working Woodlands project by inviting young people from Brockenhurst College, Southampton Children's Hospital and Quay School (for pupils with challenging behaviour) to do practical work and learn about woodland management and habitat creation. Two groups from local schools for young people with autistic spectrum disorders also enjoyed practical conservation and learning sessions with the rangers.

The people and wildlife ranger spoke to around 90 dog owners at puppy classes in the Forest. She also gave a practical demonstration at the *People and Dogs in the Outdoors* national conference, organised by the Outdoor Recreation Network in association with the Forestry Commission and the Kennel Club, and gave a talk about the positive engagement methods developed in the New Forest for working with dog walkers.

Our work engaging with young people included several ranger visits to preschools, a talk about our work to Sway Junior Parish Council and delivery of learning activities during school trips to the Forest. Two ranger sessions held in local libraries during the spring half-term break were well received by children and their carers.

Earlier this month we were pleased to welcome four seasonal rangers to the team: they will greatly enhance our ability to share caring for the Forest messages with people during our busiest time of the year.

Communications

The Year of Green Action (YoGA) started in January with the broadcast of the BBC Four documentary 'A Year in the Wild Wood', featuring the spectacular wildlife and the commoning traditions of the New Forest. We were approached by the film company after they had produced a BBC Four documentary for the South Downs National Park. We advised on the script, introduced the Forestry Commission and the Commoners Defence Association to the filmmakers and negotiated some short wildlife films on different New Forest habitats, which were filmed alongside the documentary. The documentary was very well received and we look forward to the short films being released for us to use in June. Promotions on Facebook saw a reach of 300,000 people with 20,000 engagements (likes, comments and shares).

YoGA was officially launched at the Volunteer Fair, with a series of events and opportunities to make a difference to the environment planned throughout the year. A press release was issued and social media posts to promote the green grants as part of YoGA.

The animal accident statistics were published and a press release highlighting the four main accident routes was issued, which resulted in widespread coverage including two radio interviews. A Facebook post reached over 34,000 people with over 6,000 clicking the website link for more information and nearly 850 likes, comments and shares.

A Facebook post quiz about the special qualities to mark the national park's 14th birthday had a reach of over 13,000 with 3,500 engagements.

We also started regular newsletters for New Forest businesses, which will promote the joint 'caring for the forest' campaigns and the special qualities of the National Park, in the hope businesses will help share these messages in a more coordinated way with the statutory organisations.

We promoted the Local Plan Ashurst consultation and set up a new email newsletter system to contact previous consultees which is more compliant with GDPR.

2.2 Enabling high quality and beneficial experiences of the National Park

Interpretation projects

We met with Lymington and Pennington Town Council regarding interpretation on Pennington Common and will be assisting them in production of suitable interpretation on site.

We assisted with the Commoners Voices exhibition. Whilst at the Town Hall an estimated 500 people engaged with it. It has now moved to SPUDworks in Sway until late April.

Historic Routes project

The suggested draft trails have now been filtered down to eight with good potential, from these the final five will be selected by the Steering Group. Current volunteer numbers are positive with 36 fully signed up volunteers (13 listed as trained Volunteer Surveyors, 17 as Researcher). There are also at least 13 new people awaiting completion of paperwork. Most of the 18 parishes (having suggested trails within) have given feedback on their suggested trail/s. All have put forward local parish liaison to facilitate ease of communication and constructive feedback, suggestions and amendments have been received and implemented into the draft trail routes. This crucial local knowledge fed into the trail filtering mentioned above.

Health and Wellbeing

We attended local networking sessions of the Primary Care Networks which will be established in the New Forest as part of the 10 year NHS plan. There are five areas (New Milton, Lymington, Totton, Waterside and Fordingbridge) in Hampshire (Wiltshire PCNs still to be decided). We are investigating how we can better link with local organisations and potentially be part of a social prescribing network.

We responded to the Hampshire Health and Wellbeing strategy consultation, responding jointly with the South Downs National Park on the value of natural greenspace both in and around National Parks for health and wellbeing.

Pedall

PEDALL has continued to run rides throughout the winter with 537 riders and carers participating from November 2018 – February 2019.

The new base is proving a success providing a hub for volunteers to plan rides and work on maintaining the bikes. Training of volunteers continues with a view to the project becoming volunteer led.

The charity 'Friends of PEDALL' has been established and the remit confirmed as fundraising for the PEDALL project. There are 5 Trustees and the first fundraising event is a sponsored relay ride from Brockenhurst to the new base in Burley, on 15 May, this will be led by Darren Kelly para-Olympian gold medal winning cyclist. The Trustees are also looking at ways of PEDALL becoming socially prescribed.

Looking to the future we are starting to work on new partnerships and funding opportunities for PEDALL after the Lottery funding ends in August 2020.

Volunteering

The 9th annual volunteer fair took place on 28 January with over 700 people attending the 45 stalls at the Fair, making it the most successful Fair so far. Feedback from groups was very positive with many sign ups and early indications are that those signing up at the Fair have gone on to start volunteering with the organisations. One local organisation who was attending the Fair reported they had seven new volunteers from the 15 interested people on the day- their new first volunteers for three years. Groups report that it is a major highlight of their year. This year we launched the Year of Green Action at the Fair with local campaigner Gemma Wilkes and OPOF volunteer Charlie Davis.

We are taking a greater role in the Date with Nature project in the New Forest (at the Reptile Centre) project. The seasonal rangers will be managing around a third of the days over the period April to September and we are recruiting volunteers to assist them.

Further OPOF volunteering information is provided in the Protect section.

2.3 Facilitating a partnership approach to managing recreation to achieve a net gain for both the working and natural landscape as well as for the recreational experience

Recreation Management

The Recreation Management Strategy Steering Group is considering which 'legal framework' is best suited to take forward a spatial strategy for where recreation is encouraged and enabled across the National Park and beyond. In the meantime, officers have facilitated discussions with partner organisations about managing illegal recreation-related activities, verge parking and managing events and organised activities. Multiple other strands of work that relate to the draft emerging actions are also being progressed.

We have met with Footprint Ecology, the consultant that is conducting the year-long habitat mitigation research on behalf of six local planning authorities. Our aim is to ensure the research dovetails with and supports the wider RMS work. A meeting is being planned for June to discuss with key stakeholders which measures are thought to be most effective at mitigating the impacts of recreation on the protected habitats and species.

The report on increased visitor numbers to the New Forest attracted predictable interest when it was published in January. Above all it confirms the importance of developing an approach to recreation management that will stand the test of time – and the predicted further increases in recreation.

Educational campaigns

We are developing a more concise and focused 'caring for the Forest code' to make it easier to use in situations where space is limited or brevity is important.

Animal accidents have received a lot of helpful publicity over the winter, both through the joint efforts of partner organisations and sadly as a result of further accidents. We are particularly grateful for the CDA members that moved the touring 'display' of near-life-size animal silhouettes several times. We have redesigned the hotline cards to give greater emphasis to the need to report accidents as soon as possible. With Love the Forest funding support, we are also hoping to produce some new card and window sticker dispensers to replace the current Perspex ones. Lastly, we led on the release of a full analysis of accident data which quickly resulted in interviews for two local radio stations. We have been asked to share the New Forest's approach to reducing these accidents – in both Gloucestershire and Dartmoor.

Rangers are gearing up for the 2019 ground nesting birds season, with four externally funded seasonal rangers appointed. This involves close working with Forestry Commission staff and wildlife surveyors and, once trained, a lot of time in car parks talking with local people and visitors from further afield about how to avoid disturbance.

The 2019 Spring Clean will run from 22 March – 24 April and as usual will comprise a range of site-specific litter picks either organised by lead organisations / landowners or by community groups which choose their own dates and locations. Open Forest 40mph roadsides will be litter picked by contractors.

The Dogs Forum has worked hard to develop a draft Professional Dog Walkers' Charter that sets very high standards of operation for the many commercial businesses that operate across the Forest. See agenda item for further information.

We met with partners to discuss renewed efforts to reduce the feeding and petting of ponies. The Forestry Commission has developed a much better system for recording incidents so we hope this will help focus mitigation measures in the future. Subject to Verderers consent, new stand-alone signs are to be located on campsites and at Hatchet Pond where we know there are ongoing issues.

The season of cycle sportives is set to start on 30 March with a new event being run out of the Pylewell estate. This event is being sponsored by Wiggle (who are no longer sponsoring UK Cycling Events). Although we have met with the event organiser and were assured that they will cap entries at 1,000 and provide front and rear numbers, we have yet to see an event plan. We will monitor the event so that we have first-hand knowledge of what happens as well as feedback via other means.

Access and Rights of Way

The Rural Communities Fund has replaced a broken gate and added hoggin to a muddy section of footpath in Brockenhurst. Brockenhurst Parish Council first highlighted the

issue as the footpath is well used by local residents to reach the primary school.

We are setting up a volunteer partnership with Hampshire County Council with the aim of accurately surveying the network of rights of way and then working to improving its condition. Hampshire will provide the framework and be legally responsible for the volunteers; we will provide training, direct management and co-ordinate the work plan.

The New Forest Access Forum met on 11 March. They were exceedingly supportive of our plans to improve the accessibility of the New Forest by better information provision on our website. They also discussed plans to create more of a joined-up network between organisations which work with people requiring additional needs.

3 Prosper

3.1 Supporting a distinctive and prosperous local economy where natural capital is an integral component of doing business.

Green Halo Partnership

We have continued to promote the Green Halo Partnership to government as one means by which the ambitions of the 25 Year Environment Plan can be delivered here in Hampshire. In February we hosted a visit by the Edward Barker, Director of Natural Environment at Defra. In March Alison Barnes met with Dieter Helm, Chair of the Natural Capital Committee which advises government on the sustainable use of natural capital. Meetings have also been held with representatives of the Solent Local Economic Partnership as work begins on developing the Local Industrial Strategy.

Sustainable Tourism / business

With the closure of Minstead Village Shop, the provision of local information also ceased in Minstead. However, an additional Local Information Point for 2019 is located at the Woodlander on the Hoburne Bashley site.

Go New Forest Members Day and Literature Exchange took place on 27 March where there was an opportunity to distribute key literature, and to engage with those present regarding the email newsletter to businesses in and around the National Park.

On 12 February 14 people from seven different arts organisations took part in a discovery day we organised entitled 'Rough guide to the New Forest'. Participants found out who does what in the New Forest and also went on a guided walk at Beaulieu Road sales yard, led by Lyndsey Stride of the CDA and Richard Daponte of the Forestry Commission. One participant's feedback was 'I learnt more in a day than I have in the last 25 years of being in the New Forest. The knowledge I gained will mean I will enjoy my time in the Forest even more now'.

3.2 Promoting connectivity across the National Park through sustainable transport and information and communication technologies.

Sustainable Transport

New Forest Tour timetable has been drafted and will soon be registered through Hampshire County Council. A meeting with the operator is planned in April where operational and marketing details will be finalised for both the New Forest Tour and the Bluestar 9 Lepe extension.

The Cycle Working Group have met to collectively identify missing links in the cycle network, with a view to improving connectivity for all including residents and visitors. The suggestions have been compiled and will be 'ground-truthed' before being fed into the Recreation Management Strategy process.

3.3 Supporting the social wellbeing and sustainability of New Forest communities.

Affordable Housing

Early conversations regarding potential affordable housing schemes in East Boldre and Copythorne continue with the parish councils. Recent presentations at the respective parish council meetings by HARAHA's (Hampshire Alliance for Rural Affordable Housing) Rural Housing Enabler, a representative from English Rural and the Authority's Partnerships and Community Officer explained the process of planning affordable homes which included examples of successful schemes.

Sustainable Communities Fund

As part of this year's Year of Green Action, we are inviting schools and youth groups across the National Park to apply for funds for green actions that benefit young people. "Micro-grants" of up to £150 can be used to build a bug hotel, buy equipment for litter picking, establish a wildlife garden, or any other green activity. We are encouraging children and young people to input as much as possible, but applications must be submitted by an adult. The deadline is 31 March 2019 and funds will be awarded in April.

In addition, funds have also been awarded to two new projects:

A new naval heritage trail will be created by Milford-on-Sea Historical Records Society taking in a range of sites across the National Park including memorials, houses, graves, ship-building sites and marked trees giving people a better sense of the New Forest's naval tradition. The trail will follow on from an exhibition at St Barbe Museum and Art Gallery in July as part of 'Cornwallis Remembered' which aims to highlight the role of the New Forest in providing timber and ship-building skills.

Sea Vessels will re-tell the story of Lepe's involvement in D-Day as part of the event's 75th anniversary. The work involves an artist creating clay pots on the beach, with each pot representative of a soldier who left from Lepe as part of D-Day. On 6 June the pots will be laid out along the coastline, and as the tide comes in, the pots will be washed away. A team of volunteers will assist with public engagement whilst the artist is working for two weeks in the run-up to 6 June. The work includes lots of opportunities for people to be involved – to make pots on site, walk amongst the work taking place and view the livestream at locations both inside and outside the New Forest.

Reducing plastics

We have continued to raise awareness about the impact of plastics in the marine environment whilst providing positive messages about reducing use and promoting suitable alternatives to single use plastics.

Working with partners organisations we screened a second viewing of the film 'A Plastic Ocean' to a further 31 residents in the National Park and set up a display stand about marine plastics at this year's Volunteers Fair.

The Coastal Ranger was invited to help produce a trailer about marine plastics along the National Park coastline to promote a competition launched by spudFILM. The competition, entitled 'Wasted: Global Problems - Local Solutions' encourages people across the world to submit films that have a positive impact, showing people affecting real change in their environment at a grass roots level.

4 Achieving Excellence

4.1 Maintaining and enhancing a capable, motivated staff team that delivers high quality services.

Human Resources

As at 15 March 2019 the total staff headcount was 89 or 78.08 full-time equivalents (FTEs).

	Headcount	Variation from previous report	FTE	Variation from previous report
Core funded	68*	- 1	58.55*	- 1.40
Funded by external projects	21	+ 3	19.53	+ 3.50
Total	89	+ 2	78.08	+ 2.11

*Of the core funded roles, 9 staff (7.92 FTEs) are working in shared services, 27 are part-time and one is on a fixed-term contract.

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

Name	Job title	Contract type	How funded
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Annie Bird• Leo Brooke• Charlie Davis• Erika Dovey	Seasonal Assistant Ranger	Fixed-term	Jointly funded by the Authority, Camping in the Forest, the Forestry Commission and NFD OG

Recently we said goodbye to Jo Ivey (Project Co-ordinator – A Shared Forest) and to Richard Nash (Planning Officer). We wish them well in their future ventures.

Recruitment is currently underway for:

Job title	Contract type	How funded
Seasonal Education Officer	Maternity cover, part-time	Core funded
Planning Officer	Permanent, full-time	Core funded

Information Management

The number of new information requests received continues to be ahead of last year; in the first two months of the final quarter we received 11 requests compared to only six last year. As at the end of February we had received 57 requests compared to 47 in total last year. We have recently received notification from the Information Commissioner's Office that they are dealing with a new appeal.

We have received seven new complaints in Q4, although the number of complaints received to date this year are still down on last year (17 versus 22). The majority of complaints are related to planning and enforcement matters; however, we are starting to see a small number of concerns being raised regarding the handling of personal data, which is likely to be as a consequence of greater awareness of GDPR.

Data Protection

A number of projects, such as the new HR/Payroll system and the extraction of NFDC's tree data from our systems, have warranted a Data Protection Impact Assessment and required input from the Data Protection Officer, and we continue to make steady progress on reviewing and updating, if necessary, various procedures, practices and privacy notices.

4.2 Championing the National Park and brokering partnership to achieve collaboration for the benefit of the New Forest communities.

Team New Forest

Officers from the NPA and Forestry Commission have been working to implement the national Accord between Forestry Commission (England) and National Parks England which was agreed in 2018. We already work closely with the FC staff on a range of issues – recreation management, communications and events, the HLS work and the archaeology SLA. In this quarter we have held two workshops to identify local opportunities to further strengthen joint working in the year ahead.

Support continues to be provided for parish quadrant meetings, New Forest Marque, New Forest Access Forum and Consultative Panel. At its last meeting on 7 March, the Panel considered updates from the NPA and Forestry Commission as well as a presentation by the Environment Agency on its flood and coastal risk management maintenance programme.

4.3 Identifying new resources and using them alongside our existing resources, effectively and efficiently.

ICT Services

Moving to Office 365 remains a key part of the work programme with much behind the scenes work taking place. Users machines have had new versions of Microsoft Office and Windows 10 installed. All users personal files and desktops have been migrated to OneDrive. Preparations have been made to hold OneDrive and office app workshops. Some new intranet sites have been created – GIS, Discovery Day, People Plan. We are on target to release the new intranet in April/May. The ICT Intranet pages have been updated and improved to make learning simpler and easier to identify.

We are in the final stages of discussions with Idox regarding a new planning database (Uniform). With the assistance of the Systems Support team Idox have now identified a flaw in their redaction software and will begin to remote in out of hours from mid-March to rectify historically affected documents (this error does not affect the redaction itself.)

The new Microsoft Licensing has been implemented and we are currently in the process of reviewing and deploying new security features to help keep data secure. A new onsite systems email server is in the process of being built, due to go live in April. A test migration for the tree documents has been completed and over 37,000 documents were successfully transferred to NFDC in preparation for the switch over on April 1. Users are now using the new ICT Help desk to log calls.

Security remains extremely high on the ICT agenda, with emails being of particular concern. A new software package has been purchased to help assist with user training / awareness. Regular security patching continues to be carried out - to minimise disruption to users this is currently being done out of hours.

5 Members

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

- Resources, Audit and Performance Committee – 4 February
- New Forest Marque Members Day – 5 February
- Planning Committee – 19 February
- Resources, Audit and Performance Committee – 4 March
- Consultative Panel – 7 March
- RAPC workshop on the 2019/20 Work Programme – 8 March
- New Forest Access Forum – 11 March
- Planning Committee – 19 March

5.2 Forthcoming activities include:

- Planning Committee – 16 April
- Planning Committee – 21 May
- Resources, Audit and Performance Committee – 3 June
- New Forest Access Forum – 10 June
- Members Day TBC – 12 June
- Planning Committee – 18 June

5.3 Chief Executive's engagements

- NFNPA / FC Accord meeting – 18 January
- HCC Rural Forum Workshop – 18 January
- Speaker at Business South Local Produce Show – 22 January
- HLOW CX meeting – 25 January
- Volunteering Fair – 27 January
- Meeting with Friends of Brockenhurst – 28 January
- Meeting with CX Eastleigh Borough Council – 29 January
- NPE Board meeting – 31 January
- Launch of NP Experience Collection – 31 January
- New Forest Marque – members day – 5 February
- Visit by Defra – 7 February
- Housing seminar – 7 February
- Leadership Group meeting – 8 February

- Meeting with Solent LEP Chief Executive – 12 February
- Workforce South Action Group – 13 February
- Meeting CX Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust – 15 February
- The Lymington Society – Friends of Sir Harry launch event – 15 February
- Business South Board meeting – 19 February
- Meeting with New Forest Business Partnership – 20 February
- Local Nature Partnership Development Group awayday – 21 February
- Friends of the New Forest event - Re-wilding the New Forest – 21 February
- Hosting table at Business South Directors Dinner – 27 February
- NFNPA / FC Accord meeting – 28 February
- Industry lunch with the Housing Minister – 1 March
- Meeting with Pricewaterhouse Coopers – 1 March
- Visit to Honeypot House – 5 March
- Meeting with Chair of Natural Capital Committee – 7 March
- Meeting with CX Celador – 8 March
- SE FWAC – 18 March
- ELT Awayday – 20 March
- Filming with BBC Countryfile – 21 March
- Meeting with Vice Chair NFA – 22 March
- Meeting with Assistant Director Planning and Environment HCC – 25 March
- Forest Farming Group – 26 March

5.4 Chairman's engagements

- Volunteer Fair – 22 January
- NPE Board meeting – 30-31 January
- Screening of Re-wilding the New Forest – 21 February
- RMS Steering Group – 13 March 15, 2019

6 Recommendation

To note the report.