

**NFNPA 557/18**  
**NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**  
**AUTHORITY MEETING – 11 OCTOBER 2018**

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT**

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

**Summary:**

This report covers the period since the Authority meeting on 12 July 2018. 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><b><i>Our priorities:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protecting and growing the natural capital across the National park Landscape, connecting with surrounding areas to ensure habitats and wildlife are sustainable.</li> <li>• Ensuring new development is sympathetic and in keeping with the National Park, promoting high quality design and environmental net gain.</li> <li>• Conserving the historic and built heritage; supporting local culture with continued focus on commoning.</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Our priorities:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helping more people to understand and value the things that make the New Forest National Park unique and special.</li> <li>• Enabling high quality and beneficial experiences of the National Park.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Our priorities:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting a distinctive and prosperous local economy where natural capital is an integral component of doing business.</li> <li>• Promoting connectivity across the National Park through sustainable transport and information and communication technologies.</li> <li>• Supporting the social wellbeing and sustainability of New Forest Communities.</li> </ul>
<b>Achieving Excellence</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintaining and enhancing a capable, motivated team that delivers high quality service.</li> <li>• Championing the National Park and brokering partnership to achieve collaboration for the benefit of the New Forest and its communities</li> <li>• Identifying new resources and using them alongside our existing 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.

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Many initiatives supporting commoning have progressed well this quarter.

A commoner has agreed to put his Aberdeen Angus cattle on newly restored meadows at Emery Down during the autumn each year. The site is a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation and has been restored by the New Forest Land Advice Service as part of the Our Past, Our Future (OPOF) landscape partnership scheme.

One of our OPOF apprentice rangers is now going on to join the Commoning Mentor Scheme which has started its third year. In July our six new or young commoners began to spend time with their commoning mentors and committing to at least 10 days together over the coming year.

The Shared Forest project – part of the OPOF scheme led by the Commoners Defence Association – has produced a commoning education toolkit for teachers across the Forest. The Business Group has signed up more local employers to its charter which pledges that their staff will be encouraged to drive safely across the Forest.

Working with the Shared Forest project, the Forestry Commission and others, we helped launch a 'keep your distance' campaign asking people not to feed or touch commoners animals out on the Forest.

We look forward to the New Forest Knowledge Conference on 29 October with a theme looking at the role of commoning in maintaining the landscape and ecology.

Preparations continue for the Local Plan examination of our draft planning policies. The two Government-appointed Planning Inspectors have identified 14 broad topic areas that they wish to discuss at the Examination hearing sessions between 6 and 15 November.

One aspect of the Local Plan draft policies looks at providing affordable housing for local people. Meanwhile planning permission has been granted for two new affordable dwellings which we will build in Burley for local people in housing need to rent. This complements the two homes which we built a few years ago at Bransgore and are let to local families.

The eight week Future Forest public consultation on the draft proposed actions for managing recreation attracted over 1,000 respondents including 40 organisations. On average 78% of people agreed or strongly agreed with the actions and we are currently working through over 600 comments provided in the consultation.

The Future Forest consultation and recreation management was the theme behind this year's New Forest Show stand. Over 2,700 people attended and staff from our partner organisations joined us on the stand to help explain why the work is so important.

Test Valley Borough Council, working with us and other partners, has received central Government funding for research into the visitor pressures from any planned new development in the region on the National Park's protected habitats. It will also fund the preparation of a joint framework for measures to mitigate against the additional pressures on the landscape. The work involves six local planning authorities, Natural England and the Forestry Commission and will report back by August 2019.

Around 40 people attended the National Park Partnership Plan tour from a wide range of partner organisations, including parish councils and local authorities. The event was a chance to show what the Partnership had achieved to date, including visits to the restored ice house in Beaulieu, the wild play project at Holbury Manor and the Lookout restaurant and visitor centre at Lepe Country Park. Feedback was very positive and we now begin to think about how we update the plan next year.

Forest organisations are working well together at coordinating campaigns to change behaviour and promote messages about caring for the National Park. One example was during the heatwave when Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service contacted all New Forest public sector communicators to coordinate wild fire warnings. The joint response was commended by HFRS New Forest Group Manager Steve Ash at a recent Safer New Forest meeting with helping to reduce the number of incidents here compared to other parts of the country. Our Facebook post about wild fires had a reach of 135,000 people and engagement by nearly 24,000 people.

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## 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*

Work is progressing on the 21 projects within the Our Past, Our Future scheme and most are on track to achieve their targets. The Partnership Plan Tour held on 4 September showcased a number of the OPOF projects, including a visit to the restored Beaulieu ice house, hearing about work which had been carried out by the New Forest Catchment Partnership to improve water quality in the Beaulieu catchment and a visit to the new wild play site at Holbury woods. OPOF is helping to deliver 19 out of the 90 actions in the Partnership Plan.

The OPOF Board met in August to discuss progress across the scheme. The Board is planning a workshop in November to look at legacy issues post OPOF.

Progress on some of the projects over the last quarter is highlighted below under the three main themes of the scheme. Work on other OPOF projects being managed by us are also included under other sections of this report.

#### **Restoring Lost Landscapes**

- The **Rediscovering and Conserving Our Archaeological Heritage project** has been working with Bournemouth Archaeology and local volunteers to run a week-long excavation and landscape investigation at Park Farm on the Beaulieu Estate. Work at Park Farm has taken place in the past to excavate the potential Roman Temple site and the WWII gun battery; this excavation will investigate the Bronze Age Barrow. Earlier this year volunteers from LoCATE (Local Community Archaeological Training and Equipment) undertook a small geophysical survey on the site the results of which identified an original mound and primary burial that have been ploughed away in the past. The barrow ditch contains Bronze Age cremation urns that await detailed analysis.
- The **Better Boundaries project** was shortlisted for the Hampshire Campaign for Rural England Countryside Awards. Judges visited the Forest to see several of the hedges we have restored and meet some of the landowners, hedgelayers and countryside contractors who have worked on the project. The New Forest Land Advice Service (NFLAS) attended the awards ceremony on 18 September and although the project didn't win, they were presented with a certificate by the Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire, Nigel Atkinson.

- The NFLAS's restoration of Emery Down Meadows Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (**Nature's Stepping Stones Project**) has entered its next phase with the meadows being prepared for seasonal cattle grazing. Fencing has been completed and a commoner has agreed to put his Aberdeen Angus cattle on the meadows during the autumn each year. A bridge and gate have been installed to enable him to take in a water bowser and trough.
- Through the **Working Woodlands project**, two woodlands in the same ownership near Pilley have had the timber we felled last year extracted by heavy horses this quarter. The trees were taken out of the woodland in order to open up the canopy to let more light in and encourage a more diverse flora and fauna. The woodland's small size, hydrology and lack of accessibility meant the best way to take the timber out was using this more traditional method rather than machinery. Woodland owners and project volunteers were invited to watch the horses in action during an organised event we ran while the horses were on site. A film is being made from footage taken while they were working in the woodlands. The timber has been sold and the income put back into the project.
- Phase one of the **Historic Routes and Past Pathways Project** is now complete with desk-based research completed on approximately 700 rights of way. An initial sift has identified the routes with the most potential to be part of a new trail. Volunteers are now undertaking walkover surveys of these routes and carrying out more in-depth historical research to help determine which to recommend as one of the five proposed new trails. The first survey took place in August on Rockford Common, Ibsley, with 18 rights of way being surveyed over two days, by seven volunteers and four members of our staff. Adam Vasey, Access Ranger, gave a project update at the last round of quadrant meetings (which has prompted some positive responses) and at the New Forest Access Forum.
- Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust has had another busy season removing Himalayan Balsam along the river valleys in the New Forest as part of the **New Forest Invasive Non-Native Plants project**. This has involved a large number of their regular volunteers plus volunteers from a number of local businesses and organisations.

### Developing Forest Skills

- This year's two Apprentice Rangers, Pete Dovey and Martyn Meeker, are nearing the end of their contracts. They have been working towards their Level 2 Diploma in Environmental Conservation at Kingston Maurwood College. They have also spent time with each of the five ranger teams in the New Forest to gain invaluable work experience including practical conservation work, working with volunteers and engagement with the public. Pete Dovey will be moving onto full time employment as Trainee Wildlife Ranger with the Forestry Commission in the Chilterns. Martyn is joining the NFLAS's Commoning Mentor Scheme as a mentoree for 2018/19. We have recruited the next two apprentices, Jake and Hayden, who are due to start on 6 October. They will have

a four week induction based with us, before commencing their two month placement with the Wildlife Trust at Blashford Lakes on 8 November.

- The third year of the **Commoning Mentor Scheme** began in July with our six new mentorees starting to spend time with their mentors and committing to at least 10 days together over the coming year. This includes one of last year's OPOF Apprentice Rangers, Martyn Meaker.
- The **Building Skills and Rural Skills projects** continue to attract good take-up on a range of different practical courses.

### **Discovering Forest Heritage and Inspiring a New Generation**

**Wildplay Project.** Over the summer holidays, approximately 650 people joined us to get involved in wild play. Two events were held; a wild play day at Whitefield Moor and a pop-up wild play event at our Holbury Manor wild play site. It was great to see so many people getting out and enjoying themselves.

The **Shared Forest project** has been working on a number of topics:

- Launch of the 'keep your distance campaign', led by the Forestry Commission, to encourage people to not feed or touch the ponies.
- Shared Forest Business Group continues to grow, with local employers signing up to the Charter to ensure that their employees drive safely across the Forest.
- The commoning education toolkit has been completed and is now available for schools across the Forest.

Commoning has been a theme that many projects are highlighting during 2018. Two major events linked to this theme are coming up in the autumn.

- This year's **New Forest Connects** exhibition will be all about commoning and will be held at the New Forest Heritage Centre from Saturday 3 November 2018 – Sunday 6 January 2019.
- The next **Ecademy** annual conference will be held at Lyndhurst Community Centre on Monday 29 October. The title is: 'The role of commoning in the maintenance of landscape and ecology: a New Forest, national and global perspective. Tickets cost £15. More information, a programme and tickets are available at: [www.nfknowledge.org](http://www.nfknowledge.org).

### *New Forest Land Advice Service (NFLAS)*

#### Core NFLAS work:

Six commoners turning out animals on the National Trust Northern Commons have had grants approved this quarter. These include funding to upgrade stock fencing, carry out livestock barn improvements and purchase of mobile cattle handling facilities.

We have been working on three Environmental Stewardship agreements in liaison with Natural England and the landowners; a Countryside Stewardship for Harbridge Farm on the Somerley Estate (Avon Valley), a Higher Level Scheme land addition at Manor Farm, Bramshaw, and a Catchment Sensitive Farming grant at Decoy Pond Farm which will reduce nitrate pollution in the Beaulieu River.

We gave advice on grassland management to the Commoners Trust which owns land near Cadnam that produces hay each year for commoners.

### **National Grid Visual Impact Provision (VIP)**

National Grid has continued to carry out investigations on its preferred route for the potential undergrounding of the high voltage power line across Hale Purlieu. It is intending to submit a planning application to us for the undergrounding in spring 2019.

National Grid had a stand at the New Forest Show (24/25/26 July) and was busy during the three days with queries from members of the public and residents of Hale and surrounding villages.

National Grid held two public information sessions at Hale Village Hall and Woodgreen Village Hall on July 27 and 31 respectively. The Protect Hale Purlieu Movement was present at the Hale and Woodgreen events. We attended the Hale and Woodgreen events to listen to resident's concerns and answer any queries about the planning process.

### **Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) programmes**

The full application for funding from National Grid for the Landscape Enhancement Initiative fund for landscape improvements at Landford Bog (a joint application with Wiltshire Wildlife Trust) has been approved by the LEI panel. It now has to go before an Ofgem panel for final approval.

The successful LEI funding for Warren's Copse, Holbury, has continued to be spent and a new footpath has been constructed between the car park and the wild play area, making a compacted hoggin path in place of a muddy track. This has been designed to make it easier to reach the wild play area for all including those pushing young children in buggies and those in wheelchairs making it a more inclusive play area. It is also low key in design and informal to fit in with Holbury Manor and the woodland.

The next part of the LEI funded work will be the replacement of existing timber steps and small footbridges with culverts underneath, in Warren's Copse, where the existing structures have fallen into disrepair. Oak will be used to replace the existing softwood so that the structures will be long lasting and less of a maintenance burden to Fawley Parish Council which owns the site and are responsible for its maintenance.

## **Landford Village signs**

We worked with Landford Community Partnership and Landford Parish Council to replace four village signs mounted on timber posts. We part-funded the signs which were designed in collaboration with the Community Partnership and Parish Council to reflect the rural nature of Landford. Our logo was included to remind road users that they are within the New Forest National Park. This may help drivers to keep to the speed limit and it is hoped that other parishes and villages in the National Park may wish to have similar signs.

### **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 151 applications in the period 12 July to 12 September and in the same period determined 131 applications with an approval rate of 83%.

The public inquiry for the Lyndhurst Park Hotel appeal has now been scheduled to take place from 29 January 2019 for five days.

Six appeal decisions have been received since the last meeting: four were dismissed and two allowed. The judicial review of an appeal where the Inspector misapplied a cornerstone local plan policy was successful and the decision has been quashed. The appeal will now be re-determined by the Planning Inspectorate.

During the period mid-June to mid-September the shared ecological advice service with New Forest District Council received 54 consultations as well as other enquiries for support, over 62 NFDC applications were screened as having potential impacts on biodiversity. Support is also being provided to major projects related to Fawley Refinery as well as the ongoing work with Fawley Waterside. During the same period, our ecologist received 43 consultations for applications within the National Park area and 86 applications were screened as having potential impacts.

#### *Enforcement and Trees*

Since July we have received 50 new allegations about breaches and served seven Enforcement Notices directed against the most harmful breaches of planning control. We have also resolved 37 investigations through the grant of planning permission or the negotiated removal or amendment of unauthorised development (or upon investigation it was concluded to not be a breach of planning control). This is a lower than usual volume as there is currently a vacancy in the Enforcement team – recruitment for a replacement Enforcement Officer and for the soon to be vacated manager's role are under-way. We continue to register a high volume of tree work applications for the National Park and surrounding New Forest District areas at 261 between July and September. We have also made 10 Tree Preservation Orders to protect trees of high amenity value during this period that were otherwise under threat from new development or inappropriate works. We also

successfully brought a prosecution against an individual who undertook unauthorised works to a protected tree (damaging roots) which led to the sudden death and consequent felling of the Oak tree which stood at 15 meters in height; being nearly 100 years in age.

### *Policy*

As discussed at the Partnership Plan tour, the National Park Authority and five other local planning authorities around the New Forest have received central Government funding to (i) support research into the visitor pressures on the protected habitats of the New Forest National Park arising from planned new development; and (ii) prepare a strategic mitigation framework. Specialist consultants have been appointed to work with the six local planning authorities, Natural England and the Forestry Commission to undertake this work which is scheduled to report by August 2019.

Following the submission of the draft Local Plan 2016 – 2036, supporting evidence and all of the representations received during the final consultation to the Secretary of State in May 2018, we have now received the full list of Examination matters, issues and questions. The two Government-appointed Planning Inspectors have identified 14 broad topic areas that they wish to discuss at the Examination hearing sessions. As part of the Examination process, we submitted our further hearing statements addressing all of the questions raised by the Inspectors in early September. The Examination hearing sessions will take place between 6 November and 15 November 2018 at Lymington Town Hall and the timetable and list of participants for the Examination hearing sessions are available to view on our website.

The Policy team has also responded to a range of consultations from neighbouring local planning authorities in recent months. This includes Local Plan consultations from New Forest District Council, Test Valley Borough Council, Christchurch Borough Council and East Dorset District Council. The recent consultations illustrate the significant scale of future development close to the National Park boundary and the pressure on local authorities to meet national house building targets.

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

### *Community led projects*

The Western Escarpment Conservation Area Steering Group met on 24 September. The meeting included a presentation from the Forestry Commission on its work on verge protection in the Western Escarpment and the wider New Forest; discussion around the potential use of Article 4 Directions to conserve local character where particular issues have been identified; and how the Steering Group can work with Hampshire County Council to address the matter of sign clutter and its impacts on the character of the Conservation Area.

The New Forest National Park Building Design Awards have been launched and updates provided at the recent round of Parish Quadrant meetings. The Awards have been run for a number of years now and aim to celebrate good design in the National Park, recognising the contribution it makes to the built heritage of the area.

## **2 Enjoy**

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

#### *Education*

We are delighted that the New Forest Curriculum teachers' resources have been successfully transferred to our new look website - thanks to Helen Robinson's (Education Officer) hard work and the support of the communications team. The New Forest Curriculum will also be the home of the excellent Shared Forest toolkit for teachers devised by Lyndsey Stride. A preview of the resources, which focus on commoning, is now available, with the launch for schools to follow later this year. The materials enable teachers with little knowledge of commoning to increase their pupils' understanding whilst meeting curriculum objectives and are a very valuable resource.

We welcomed two groups of work experience students and three work placement students this summer. Thanks to all the members of staff who gave their time to ensure the young people's first experience of the world of work was a rewarding one. In the words of one student: *'You are such an amazing team of people and so lovely. I'm going to miss working with NFNPA but happy I've got to do my work experience here. I hope to see you all again.'*

Supporting the students is time consuming for officers, but its value to both the young people and the Authority is proved by the fact that two of the students returned as young volunteers during their summer holiday.

Once again we had school bookings right up to the end of term and were particularly pleased that three of the groups were studying for GCSE Geography; the changes to the curriculum have meant that many secondary schools are no longer running field trips, but we have worked with these schools to devise field visits which are relevant to the new syllabus.

The diary for September is full, with primary schools studying national parks visiting us to learn about the special qualities of the New Forest National Park.

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

We welcomed over 2,700 people to our stand at the New Forest Show. The stand focussed on the recreation management consultation and four fun activities helped tell the story of why this work is going on. We asked people what was special about the Forest, what they liked to see, where they liked to go and what they liked to do, and also to plan their own National Park. Feedback was again positive and we were awarded second prize in the

large trade stands category. Partner organisation staff joined us on the stand to talk about the consultation and encourage people to take part.

The Show heralds the start of the ranger team's busiest period, and the summer of 2018 was no exception as we shared 'caring for the Forest' messages with around 7,500 people. Over 1,500 of these were visitors who met our seasonal rangers at Camping in the Forest campsites. The dusk walks were particularly popular and one happy father emailed us afterwards to say: *"We both enjoyed it immensely. My kid felt like it was an adventure in the dark. Our two guides were knowledgeable and engaging and kept my kid enthralled...I really appreciate that it was free. You don't get that in Birmingham."*

We met the other 6,000-plus people at a host of events in and around the National Park. These included family sessions such as Fun in the Forest, Marine Wonders at Lepe and Wild Wednesdays at the New Forest Reptile Centre. We also took the mobile unit to village fairs in Frogham, Burley, Hordle and East Boldre, and to Doggy Days at Sandy Balls Holiday Park. In September we attended the New Forest Marathon, which is now one of the most popular sporting events in the National Park, and Romsey Show. Glorious weather helped to attract a high turnout at the Lymington-Keyhaven Marshes Open Day and our rangers spoke to around 700 people there.

Any gaps in our calendar were filled by 'pop up' roadshow events to share key messages about fire awareness - particularly crucial during the unusually hot and dry weather – and feeding / petting livestock. Incidents of conflict between cattle and dog walkers prompted additional awareness-raising sessions at Bolton's Bench.

### *Communications*

National Parks Minister Lord Gardiner, National Parks England's (NPE) chairman and FC officials attended a national launch of an accord on woodlands between NPE and the Forestry Commission at the New Forest Show, which we helped organise.

The Future Forest recreation management consultation was promoted with joint partner press releases, online survey, newspaper and social media adverts, with over 1,000 responses.

We have had particular success this summer with coordinated approaches to our 'caring for the forest' campaigns, with our messages reaching wide audiences particularly via social media. The commoners, Go New Forest, Forestry Commission, Verderers and ourselves came together to launch the 'keep your distance' campaign to encourage people not to feed and pet ponies, in particular during the visitor season. This included posters at key locations, leaflets for rangers to hand out, a press release and social media posts.

Other 'caring for the forest' messages included a Facebook post on behalf of the Verderers asking people not to put water out for the stock during the hot weather, which had a reach of 92,000 people and engagement from over 9,000 people (likes, clicks and shares). A Facebook post about wild fires had a reach of 135,000 people and engagement by nearly

24,000 people. Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service contacted all New Forest public sector communicators asking them to help put out wild fire warnings through their channels and the coordinated response was commended by HFRS New Forest Group Manager Steve Ash at the Safer New Forest meeting with helping to reduce the number of incidents here compared to other parts of the country. Another Facebook post warning people about ticks and Lyme Disease reached over 175,000 people with engagement from over 11,000 Facebook users.

Our joint New Forest Awards with the Country Land and Business Association (CLA) were a great success again this year with young commoners, local producers, sustainability champions, land managers and rural businesses recognised. Lord Gardiner presented the awards in the main ring at the New Forest Show, which was followed by a reception.

We produced an infographic summarising the successes of the Our Past, Our Future (OPOF) scheme at the half-way point. The infographic has been shared on social media, sent to the Heritage Lottery Fund and the scheme's partners, and printed in our annual review.

As part of the OPOF programme, over 70 guided walks have been planned for the Walking Festival and the marketing materials are now in circulation.

We attended the first apprentice rangers guided walk with a group from Help for Heroes to the tranquil Pitts Wood inclosure, Godshill, to promote the apprenticeship scheme. The rangers talked to the servicemen about volunteering in the National Park and how this benefits health and wellbeing.

Other promotions this quarter have included the Building Design Awards, National Parks Week, wild play events, new village signs at Landford, the Partnership Plan tour of projects, the Love the Forest visitor giving scheme with the New Forest Trust, open art exhibition with the New Forest Centre and the New Forest Tour working with MoreBus.

## **2.2 Enabling high quality and beneficial experiences of the National Park**

### *Interpretation projects*

Commoners Voices project: see above in the OPOF section. We have been supporting Lyndsey Stride to curate the upcoming Commoners Voices exhibition.

We have been assisting Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (ARC) in their bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund regarding protection and awareness of reptiles several southern counties, including Hampshire and the New Forest National Park. The project is called Snakes in the Heather (SitH) and we are developing a programme of interpretation and outreach to compliment the survey and conservation objectives of the project.

## *Health and Wellbeing*

PEDALL New Forest Inclusive Cycling, with the support of the Forestry Commission, has secured a base from which the project can operate. The base is a redundant building at the FC Burley yard site. A successful planning application was made for change of use and it is anticipated PEDALL will be operating from Burley by November 2018. This means a reduction in the use of the diesel van to transport the bikes to the cycle tracks and will enable the project to operate more efficiently. The base contributes to the long term sustainability of the project by providing a place for volunteers to meet and work on the maintenance of the bikes.

To also assist with the long term sustainability of PEDALL, a charity 'Friends of PEDALL' charity number 1177795, has been established. It is envisaged 'Friends of PEDALL' will continue running the project when the Lottery funding ceases in August 2020.

PEDALL staff and volunteers also organised a bike workshop for staff at the NPA office, carrying out bike maintenance in return for a donation to the charity.

## *Volunteering*

PEDALL has been successful in recruiting 15 volunteers to the project to assist with leading rides and maintaining the bikes.

We were delighted to host the presentation of the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service (the 'MBE' for voluntary groups) to Pondhead Conservation Trust in the Council Chamber on 5 September. We nominated the group for the award earlier in the year and the Trust was one of only a handful in Hampshire to receive the award. The Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire visited to present the award to the volunteers and trustees.

## **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 eight week Future Forest public consultation on the draft proposed actions for managing recreation attracted 1,074 respondents including 40 organisations. On average 78% of people agreed or strongly agreed with the actions and only 6% disagreed or strongly disagreed. 670 provided additional comments. See agenda item for further information and next steps.

We have inputted to research related to recreation management including mapping informal parking areas by the Forestry Commission, bird species research by Hampshire Ornithological Society, the use of sensors to detect movements of people, bicycles and cars in remote car parks and the year-long habitat mitigation research that has been commissioned by six local planning authorities.

### *Educational campaigns*

As usual our educational campaign work is embedded across a wide range of activities, including events, much of the work of rangers and the communications team.

The Dogs Forum met in July to help coordinate work on protecting ground nesting birds, agree small changes to the Dog Walking Code and to the proposed new Professional Dog Walkers' Charter.

Positive feedback has been received from NFDog about the work of the seasonal ranger that it part-funded. They will be reviewing whether they can do the same again next year. We will be discussing with Forestry Commission staff how the work on ground nesting birds can be improved so that we are well prepared ahead of next spring.

We helped design of promotional materials for the 'keep your distance' campaign (to reduce the petting and feeding of ponies and donkeys) and its launch at Bolton's Bench.

We met with representatives from the British Horse Society and attended the Equine Forum to discuss issues and opportunities arising around horse riding.

We have monitored the impacts of some of the larger cycle events (The Rattler: 26 August; Garmin Ride Out: 31 August; New Forest 100: 15 and 16 September) and are following up with event organisers where we feel standards can be raised.

Recent discussions about raising awareness about ticks and the associated risk of Lyme Disease have concluded that regular (albeit perhaps just annual) meetings should be convened. We are helping to ensure people with the right expertise and remit are involved so that outcomes are useful and realistic.

### *New Forest Access Forum*

Three new members were recruited to the New Forest Access Forum: Jane Horton to lead on equestrian matters, Nick Tomalin on landowners and wildlife conservation and Henry Mellor on disability and access for all.

The Forum met in September and received several presentations including updates on the Hampshire County Council Rural Communities Fund and the Green Way New Forest Mitigation Strategy. The meeting was followed by a site visit to inspect an improved section of bridleway in Lymington. The Coastal Access sub-committee met at Calshot Activity Centre and was briefed by John Truswell, Natural England, about the planned route from Calshot to Gosport.

### **3 Prosper**

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

##### *New Forest Marque*

As usual the Marque was well represented at the New Forest Show in July. Over 500 directories were distributed to members of the public and there were 18 membership enquiries. A newly produced map – where to find, buy and enjoy local produce has been well received.

James Golding, Head Chef at the Pig Hotel has offered to be an ambassador for the Marque and spoke about the importance of local food at the induction for new National Park members at the recent National Parks UK event held here in the New Forest.

##### *Sustainable Tourism*

We attended the Go New Forest (GNF) advisory group meeting. Via GNF, businesses are being encouraged to circulate 'caring for' messages. GNF member training and awareness days will ensure that key messaging is widely shared to guests and visitors. A Discovery Day (commoning theme) has been planned for 9 October.

We have engaged a consultant to assess by how much the figure of 13.5 million day visits to the New Forest may have changed since 2004/2005 when this was estimated by the Tourism South East study. RJS Associates are applying existing datasets for key 'drivers of change' (e.g. for traffic, tourism, population change etc.) to bring the figure up to date and predict future changes.

##### *New Forest Trust*

Seven new businesses have been recruited to support the scheme and grants totalling £6,500 awarded to three projects: New Forest Smooth Snake Survey, Calshot Nature Club and New Forest History and Archaeology Group.

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

##### *Sustainable Transport*

The three Travel Ambassadors have completed their seasonal work at Brockenhurst Station and the New Forest Centre. Meaningful engagements across both sites during the New Forest Tour season totalled 9,309 (ca. 5% increase on last year).

Initial reports indicate that this was a successful year for the New Forest Tour, both in terms of patronage and revenue. Not all ticket sales have been processed so more detailed information will be available in the next reporting period.

New Forest Tour pre-season driver training in June paid dividends as Tour drivers were fully prepared for the upcoming season. The positive feedback around staff (both drivers and Travel Ambassadors) friendliness and helpfulness was very encouraging. A review of the season and plans for 2019 are taking place.

The new Bluestar 9 extension from Southampton-Langley Farm-Lepe Beach saw a total patronage of 1,389 over its eight-week duration. We will meet with Go South Coast, the operator, to discuss the success of this route, resources required and evaluate its feasibility for 2019.

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

#### *Affordable Housing*

At the September Planning Committee meeting planning permission was granted for two new affordable dwellings in the village of Burley, which will be available for local people in housing need.

#### *Sustainable Communities Fund*

Funds of £2,000 have been awarded to Community First New Forest to develop three new dementia walks in the National Park. Access to the natural environment can significantly benefit people living with dementia through improved emotional and physical health, memory, attention, sense of well-being and even a delay in the progression of the disease and prevention of comorbidities (Greening Dementia, Natural England, Woodland Trust & Dementia Adventure, 2013). The new walks will enable people to be out and about amongst the beauty of the National Park and encourage them to be positive and happy. This in turn builds confidence in carers and people with dementia to get outdoors and try new things resulting in significant improvements in how they feel, whilst simultaneously feeling more included in their communities. The first walk will launch at the New Forest Walking Festival and two more will be developed throughout the year aimed at connecting or reconnecting people living with dementia with the special qualities of the National Park.

#### *Reducing plastics*

The Coastal Ranger has engaged with people of all ages through church groups, community groups, schools and a local preschool to raise awareness of marine plastic. She continues to liaise with local businesses such as The New Forest Paddle Sports Company, New Forest Transition and Surfers against Sewage. She provided activities and information displays based around marine plastics at Marine Wonders, a two-day event at Lepe Country Park to which over 600 people attended. We also provided an interactive activity sifting out tiny plastic particles from the sand and seaweed for the Lymington - Keyhaven Nature Reserve Open Day, which was well received by children and adults alike. In conjunction with Lymington and Pennington Town Council the Coastal Ranger organised an extensive litter pick round the Priestlands Pond site in Lymington with members of the local community.

## 4 **Achieving Excellence**

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

#### *Human Resources*

As at 30 September 2018 the total staff headcount was 85 or 73.73 full-time equivalents (FTEs).

	<b>Headcount</b>	Variation from previous report	<b>FTE</b>	Variation from previous report
Core funded	67*	– 3	57.70*	– 2.73
Funded by external projects	18	– 5	16.03	– 4.61
<b>Total</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>– 8</b>	<b>73.73</b>	<b>– 7.34</b>

\*Of the core funded roles, 9 staff (7.92 FTEs) are working in shared services, 26 are part-time and one is on a fixed-term contract.

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>
Adam Vasey	National Park Access Ranger	Fixed-term for three years	Part core / part project

Recently we said goodbye to six seasonal staff as their summer contracts ended; Emily Fergusson, Kat Saleiko, Heidi Staines (Seasonal Assistant Rangers), Diana Collett, Daniel Hipkiss and Agnes Kalauz (Sustainable Travel Ambassadors). We also said goodbye to Georgia Foy (Assistant Conservation Officer) and to Julia Mutlow (Senior Solicitor). 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>
Planning Enforcement Manager	Permanent	Core funded
Planning Enforcement Officer	Permanent	Core funded
New Forest Apprentice Rangers x 2	Fixed-term (13 months)	Partnership between five organisations; the NPA, the Forestry Commission, the National Trust, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and Hampshire County Council.

## *Information Management*

Following the appointment of the Project Assistant – Records Management, we have made good progress on this project and much work has been completed in identifying the types of records that we hold and where and how we hold them. We are populating our Information Asset Register which will provide a framework to inform the overhaul of the Retention Schedule and is key to ensuring compliance with GDPR, requests for information and the move to SharePoint. Members have moved over to a new system to access their Authority emails.

Freedom of information requests have increased by 42% year on year (34 vs 24). We have had two requests relating to Brexit and six requests relating to affordable housing provision and / or the development sites proposed in the Draft Local Plan so it remains to be seen if this increase is a trend that will continue or whether it is as a result of current affairs. In contrast, complaints are down year on year (7 vs 13). Complaint numbers are historically variable and all seven relate to planning and enforcement and trees work.

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

### *Team New Forest*

Support is provided for parish quadrant meeting, New Forest Marque, New Forest Access Forum and Consultative Panel. At its last meeting the Panel considered an update from us on the local plan review, development along the Waterside and updates from the Forestry Commission including the Forest Design Plan.

On 4 September the New Forest National Park Partnership Plan tour was held in the south east of the National Park, starting in Beaulieu and finishing at Lepe Country Park. Around 40 attendees joined the event from a wide range of partner organisations, including parish councils and local authorities. The event provided an opportunity to showcase the partnership working that takes place in the New Forest, with visits to the ice house in Beaulieu and the wild play project at Holbury Manor; and presentations on the Beaulieu River Catchment Project, the Higher Level Stewardship verge protection and wetland restoration project, the joint New Forest mitigation study and coastal defence work. Speakers included the Forestry Commission, New Forest District Council, the Environment Agency, Test Valley Borough Council, the Freshwater Habitats Trust and the Verderers of the New Forest. The feedback from the event has been very positive.

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

#### *ICT Services*

In July the virtual server infrastructure upgrade work took place, along with implementation of two new major domain servers, and decommissioning of the old ones.

Work commenced at the end of August on upgrading Idox Public Access, Idox DMS, and the Acolaid database with completion due mid-October. The opportunity was taken to move the Idox Public Access and DMS servers on to 2018 servers, allowing the old servers to be decommissioned. In total there are 18 2008 servers left to be decommissioned by the end of 2019.

The increase of security threats has seen an increase in the number of security patches released. Much of this patching has been run out of hours to minimise disruption to staff. Mid-September one of the discs in the SAN failed. This major incident was promptly resolved, with no impact to data or systems.

We are currently out to tender for renewal of the Microsoft licences slightly earlier than needed in order to secure current pricing levels, which will allow considerable savings. The new licences will come into effect in March 2019 at which point all users will require a licence assigned specifically to them to use Authority equipment.

A short overview and demonstration outlining the potential benefits of Microsoft Power BI was given to the Data and Evidence Group. All the Members' email accounts have now been moved across to the cloud with a workshop being run following the next Authority meeting. Discussions continue to be held with both Idox and NFDC regarding the options for upgrading the planning database, with a review of the joint feasibility study due in October 2018.

Having been provided with the necessary information, the team has started building the Microsoft Office 365 team sites, this being the first step towards migrating to Microsoft Office 365 SharePoint as our document management system. We are awaiting some final testing by the Records Management Project Assistant before commencing work/roll out with the staff champions.

## **5 Members**

### *Meetings and Authority membership*

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

- Planning Committee – 17 July
- New Forest Show – 24/25/26 July
- Planning Committee – 21 August
- New Forest Access Forum – 3 September
- Consultative Panel – 6 September
- Resource, Audit and Performance Committee – 10 September
- Planning Committee – 18 September
- Standards Committee – 1 October
- RMS Members Day – 10 October

#### **5.2 Forthcoming activities include:**

- Planning Committee – 16 October
- Resource, Audit and Performance Committee – 5 November
- Planning Committee – 20 November
- New Forest Access Forum – 3 December
- Members Day TBC – 5 December
- Consultative Panel – 6 December
- Planning Committee – 18 December
- Planning Committee – 15 January

#### **5.3 Chief Executive's engagements**

- HIOW CX meeting – 13 July
- National Parks Review meeting – 16 July
- Meeting with consultant re Green Halo – 17 July
- Leadership Team training – 18 July
- Hampshire Net Gain meeting – 23 July
- New Forest Show dinner – 23 July
- New Forest Show – 24-26 July
- Meeting with PyTerra – 30 July
- Meeting with Coda – 30 July
- Meeting with consultant re Green Halo – 1 August
- Meeting with Leader HCC – 20 August
- Executive Board meeting – 22 August
- Partnership Plan bus tour – 4 September

- Waterside Prospectus launch – 4 September
- Queen's Award for Voluntary Service ceremony – 5 September
- Telephone call with Area Manager, Natural England – 6 September
- Speaker at Landscape Institute Annual Conference – 7 September
- Resources Audit & Performance Committee – 10 September
- Panel session at NPUK members induction– 11 September
- Leadership Fellows gathering – 11 September
- Members Induction evening dinner – 12 September
- Meeting with NFDC Portfolio Holder – 13 September
- Presenting at HIOW CX meeting – 14 September
- Evening preview art exhibition at New Forest Centre – 14 September
- Attending EUROPARC conference – 18-21 September
- Telephone call with M3 LEP – 25 September
- Forest Farming Group – 25 September
- NPE Board meeting and AGM – 27 September
- HLS Board – 3 October
- HR Action Group – 4 October
- Meeting with CX HIOWWT – 4 October
- Interview by researcher – 8 October
- Defra visit and tour – 9 October
- Defra visit and tour – 10 October

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

- Open art exhibition – 12 July
- New Forest Show dinner – 23 July
- Hosting Lord Gardiner and Sir William Worsley at NF Show – 25 July
- Meeting with Leader HCC – 20 August
- Partnership Plan Tour – 4 September
- Chairing RMS Steering Group – 4 September
- Queen's Award for Voluntary Service ceremony – 5 September
- Panel session at NPUK members induction – 11 September
- Meeting with NFA – 18 September
- Forest Farming Group – 25 September
- NPE Board meeting and AGM – 27 September

## **6 Recommendation**

**To note the report.**