

NFNPA 549/18

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 15 JUNE 2018

RECREATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGY CONSULTATION

Report by: Nigel Matthews, Head of Recreation Management and Learning

1 Consultation process

1.1 In March 2017 the Forestry Commission, Verderers of the New Forest, Natural England, New Forest District Council and Hampshire County Council asked the National Park Authority (NPA) to lead a joint public consultation on a review of the New Forest National Park Recreation Management Strategy 2010-2030. All six organisations have a remit for managing recreation in the National Park and are represented on the Recreation Management Strategy Steering Group.

1.2 A new and updated suite of focused actions is needed so that, across the National Park and beyond we can achieve a net gain for the working and natural landscape and for the recreational experience, by:

- protecting the spectacular, yet fragile, wildlife-rich landscape that people come to see;
- managing recreation for local people and our visitors.

We also need to use limited resources wisely.

1.3 All this can only be achieved by taking a wide geographical approach to recreation management, stretching from the central areas that have extensive public access and commoning, through the outer areas of the National Park where public access is more restricted (e.g. to rights of way and specific sites) and on into surrounding areas where many people live.

1.4 It is also vital that key organisations continue to work together, especially those on the Steering Group.

1.5 The first stage in the consultation was a 'call for views' Future Forest consultation that ran for eight weeks from 19 June 2017, asking people to prioritise and comment on the topics that had been selected for action in 2010. All the background information, consultation questions and publicity was prepared with the support of the RMS Steering Group organisations. 1,502 individuals and 52 organisations responded.

1.6 In January 2018, Members supported the publication of two reports that resulted from the 2017 consultation: a Findings Report and a 'Next Steps' Report.

- 1.7 The next stage is to consult on draft proposed actions (**Annex 1**). Members had opportunity to input into these during a Members Day in March, and the NPA is an active member of the Steering Group that has led their development. The wider RMS Advisory Group has also commented on them.
- 1.8 All other Steering Group organisations have expressed their support for the proposed actions to be put out to consultation; this meeting gives Members opportunity to confirm the NPA's support.

2 The forward plan

- 2.1 Plans are in place to launch the consultation on 18 June. As in 2017, we have been helped by Hampshire County Council's Insight and Engagement Unit in developing questions which will focus on the actions and their associated examples. We will promote the consultation with partner organisations and will use the NPA stand at the New Forest Show to encourage participation.
- 2.2 The actions will be presented on the NPA website, alongside a range of additional information, including criteria that can be used to judge the merits of different sites, routes and organised activities. These criteria have been taken from the MoU agreed between Steering Group organisations in 2015 (supported by the NPA in September 2015).
- 2.3 Responses will be analysed through the summer and early autumn, with a view to making appropriate improvements to the actions. We also plan to liaise with a range of organisations and gain their agreement to lead and assist with the implementation of specific actions.
- 2.4 Some of the actions will require significant and sustained new partnership working over a number of years. Others are already ongoing (although we hope that even these will be given fresh impetus and focus).

3 Confirming the NPA's support

- 3.1 It is widely agreed that protecting the Forest by managing recreation is one of the greatest challenges facing the New Forest.
- 3.2 The NPA plays a significant facilitation role in helping organisations to agree how best to do this. We also help 'on the ground' through a range of mechanisms (e.g. planning policies, rangers, visitor information and educational campaigns).
- 3.3 By giving explicit support for the draft proposed actions the NPA will confirm its ongoing commitment to joint working – standing alongside the other Steering Group organisations at this important time.

RECOMMENDATION

That Members confirm the NPA's support for the draft proposed actions for an update to the 2010 recreation management strategy as set out in Annex 1 and that these should now be put out for public consultation.

Equality Impact Assessment:

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

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