



# Annual Review 2015 – 2016





## Chairman's and Chief Executive's statement

Ensuring the New Forest flourishes in an ever-changing world is a challenge that can only be met by working closely with all our partners.

That is why it is so important that this past year has seen the beginning of a new era of partnership in the New Forest National Park. This was marked by several joint initiatives that are bringing local groups together for the benefit of the Forest.

For the first time all the key organisations that work to protect the New Forest have committed to a Partnership Plan (see page 13), a list of actions that will have a positive impact on the area by 2020.

We have also reached the halfway point of the 10 year Verderers Higher Level Stewardship Scheme (see page 17) for the Crown lands. Working with the Verderers, Natural England and the Forestry Commission, we are helping to safeguard habitats, support commoning, educate a new generation about the Forest and protect archaeology.

This work is complemented by a £4.5 million Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) scheme 'Our Past Our Future' (see page 16), which launched in 2015. We are leading 11 organisations to deliver more than 20 projects to restore

habitats, teach traditional Forest skills and encourage young people to cherish the National Park.

These joint ventures help us to maximise our positive impact on this special area, ensuring we continue to fulfil our National Park purposes efficiently and effectively.

We will continue to seek partnerships, identify additional sources of income and work creatively for the benefit of the Forest. This will help us to deliver the greatest impact from our Government funding, which was protected for the remainder of this Parliament in last year's spending review (see page 32).

The achievements of the last year would not have been possible without the hard work of our staff, members and partners, so our thanks go to every one of them.

**Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre,**  
Chairman

**Alison Barnes,**  
Chief Executive

**Above:** Environment Minister Rory Stewart (centre) with National Park Authority Chairman Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre and Chief Executive Alison Barnes at Beaulieu Road pony sale yard



**Main cover photo:** Children in woodland near Ashurst learning about the New Forest on our autumn wild-play day

**Cover photos left to right:** Pony near Hatchet Pond © Alex Kerslake, Hedgelaying at Linwood, Silver-studded blue butterfly

**Current page:** Little egret at Lymington Marshes © Alex Kerslake

# About the New Forest National Park Authority

## Our vision

The Vision for the National Park in 20 years' time is of an area which has a unique and immediately recognisable sense of place, where:

- tranquillity and a feeling of naturalness pervade large parts of the Park
- the mosaic of distinctive landscapes and habitats are all of the highest quality and a great variety of wildlife is able to flourish
- there is a strong sense and understanding of the heritage and living culture of the Forest
- all visitors can gain inspiration, health and well-being and enjoy the extensive areas of land with open access
- the far reaching consequences of climate change are taken into account in all policies and future plans
- people live and work sustainably and contribute to the care of the Forest
- local, regional and national organisations recognise the value of the National Park and there is a shared understanding of its role within the wider area
- everyone contributes in appropriate ways to keeping the National Park a special place for present and future generations.

## Our mission – National Park purposes

As guardians of a national park the New Forest National Park Authority has statutory purposes and socio-economic responsibilities as specified in the Environment Act of 1995:

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area
- To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Park by the public.

Working in partnership with other organisations it is also the Authority's duty to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of the local communities within the National Park.



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# Our Authority board members

National Park Authority members have overall responsibility for making decisions. They are responsible for setting policies and priorities, ensuring efficient and effective use of resources, and that money is well spent. It is their job to represent the interests of the National Park and to balance out any conflicting pressures.

## Local authority appointees



David Harrison,  
Chairman of the  
Resources, Audit  
and Performance  
Committee



Edward Heron,  
Deputy Chairman  
of the Authority



Gordon Bailey



Richard Frampton



Penny Jackman



Julian Johnson



Chris Lagdon



Keith Mans



Leo Randall,  
Deputy Chairman  
of the Planning  
Committee



Barry Rickman



Ken Thornber



Pat Wyeth,  
Chairman of  
the Planning  
Committee

## Secretary of State appointees



Oliver  
Crosthwaite-Eyre,  
Chairman



Phil Marshall



John Pemberton



Marian Spain,  
Deputy Chairman  
of the Resources,  
Audit and  
Performance  
Committee



Judith Webb



Position to  
be filled in  
March 2017

## Parish appointees



Sally Arnold



George Bisson



Harry Oram



John Sanger

Our 22 members do not represent any particular political group. Driven by the National Park purposes and duty, they work with officers to establish and then deliver our work programme, with operational aspects delegated to officers.

- 12 are appointed by the county, district, and borough councils with land within the National Park
- six are appointed by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- four are selected from the Parish Councils within the National Park.

# How the National Park helped me

Find out how we've helped people protect the National Park using traditional rural skills, enjoy the area through volunteering and prosper thanks to our support for rural businesses.



'Volunteering helps other people out, keeps me busy and gives me something to look forward to. I've done all sorts of volunteering with the National Park in the past year, including helping visitors to the New Forest Show and launching their Volunteer Fair. Volunteering is great – anyone interested should definitely give it a go. It makes you believe in yourself and helps you realise your own potential in life, it certainly did for me.'

Karl Epps, award-winning volunteer



'The New Forest is well known for its beautiful scenery and special habitats, but the area is also renowned for the character of its buildings. The building conservation team at the National Park do an excellent job ensuring that our traditional buildings are protected. Personally I found their advice and guidance was invaluable when planning and undertaking a renovation of a cob cottage in Woodgreen.'

Kevin Stubbs,  
traditional building skills expert



'At Paws Deli we use the very best local ingredients to produce healthy pet treats, baked by hand in our cottage in the beautiful New Forest. We are proud members of the New Forest Marque, a local produce scheme supported by the National Park, which provides practical support to help rural businesses thrive. We were even lucky enough to win an award from the National Park to celebrate our achievements, which was a real thrill!'

Alison Landymore, small business owner  
(right centre)



'I've been on several rural skills training courses run by New Forest Land Advice Service over the last year. I've learnt skills including tree surveying and safe use of pesticides. I've learnt from experts and really increased my knowledge of how to look after land and care for woodlands, really helpful in my role as a young commoner in the Forest. Plus the courses are subsidised, so they're a lot cheaper than they would be normally – meaning I can go to even more of them!'

Julian Pothecar, young commoner



PROTECT

## Protecting through planning

**'Our role as the planning authority helps us to protect the National Park by placing a strong emphasis on maintaining the local character of the area through our policies; through working with communities to define what makes their area special; and by providing detailed guidance to people before submitting planning applications. In the last year 84 per cent of applications were approved, showing that development, where appropriate, can help the area thrive as a living, working Forest.'**



Pat Wyeth, Chairman of the Planning Committee

# Celebrating good design

The New Forest is renowned for its natural beauty and free-roaming ponies, but the unique character of its buildings is less widely recognised.

So to celebrate the range of good building design in the New Forest, we launched a Building Design Awards last summer.

Over 40 people nominated more than 20 separate schemes, celebrating high quality development and recognising the contribution that excellent design makes to the built environment of the New Forest.

At the end of November 2015 an assessment panel made up of five members of the National Park Authority's Planning Development Control Committee met to consider the nominated schemes and chose three high quality winners.



Poulner Baptist Chapel



Southview



Cherry Tree Cottage

## Winners of the 2015 Building Design Awards

### • Best Extension

Poulner Baptist Chapel, Hangersley

### • Best Larger Development

Southview, Gosport Lane, Lyndhurst

### • Best Individual Building

Cherry Tree Cottage, Woodgreen

## High Court action on enforcement cases

Two men who consistently breached National Park planning regulations were ordered to remove their unlawful mobile homes by a Deputy High Court Judge.

The two separate cases represent the Authority's longest running enforcement investigations with one stretching back to before the National Park was created in 2005, following a series of unsuccessful challenges and appeals by the owners.

Both men were warned that their assets would be seized and they risked being sent to prison if they did not comply with the orders to clear their land – one at Fordingbridge and one at Landford.

Pat Wyeth, Chairman of the National Park Authority's Planning Committee, said: 'Both owners have had ample opportunity over the years to comply with the enforcement notices and to remove the mobile homes. Their continuing failure to do so has had a very harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area as well as being an ongoing source of concern for the local communities.'

'This ruling sends a clear message that it is unacceptable to ignore the requirements of an enforcement notice and that such overt breaches of planning control will not be tolerated in the National Park.'



PROTECT

## Preserving forgotten archaeology

We are leading the way with a cutting-edge project to record and protect thousands of archaeological sites for the future.

Above: Heritage mapping in the New Forest

This year 433 sites and features were identified, including some of the best preserved Bronze Age barrows in the New Forest.

The project is funded by the Verderers of the New Forest Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) Scheme, a 10-year agreement with Natural England worth £19m. The scheme is held by the Verderers of the New Forest and managed by them in partnership with us and the Forestry Commission.

Many of the archaeological sites discovered so far were hidden under dense forest and thick heather until HLS archaeologists used a plane to fire harmless laser beams onto the ground to build a 3D map of its surface.

Heritage mapping highlights from the last year include:

- More than 2,000 hectares (2,800 football pitches) surveyed by archaeologists and volunteers
- Over 400 sites catalogued and recorded to protect them in the future
- Volunteers contributed more than 320 hours to the project
- A public exhibition on heritage mapping in the New Forest attracted nearly 20,000 people
- Providing archaeological guidance on 14 wetland restoration consultations, resulting in 208 sites being recorded.

## Did you know?

Previous finds in this project include prehistoric field systems, an Iron Age hill fort and World War II bomb test sites.

## Making housing more affordable

Work is almost complete on an innovative scheme to help make more affordable homes available to local people in the New Forest.



Brangore affordable homes under construction.

Once completed, two homes at Brangore will be let out to local people. The rent will be set at an affordable level, according to national criteria, and the money raised will be used to help fund similar schemes and our wider work caring for the National Park.

It's the first time a National Park Authority has become a landlord in this way to help with the issue of affordable housing and one on which we hope to expand.

The land was generously donated by National Park Authority Member Richard Frampton and the building costs have been met through developer contributions collected on earlier housing schemes elsewhere in the Forest.



'Part of a National Park's remit is to seek to foster the economic and

social well-being of our local communities. So although this is a relatively small development, we hope it will inspire other landowners to come forward with similar sites suited for small scale affordable housing projects.'

Steve Avery,  
Executive Director of Strategy and Planning



3.6km  
of electricity  
pylons could be  
undergrounded

Left: High voltage pylons near Hale  
© National Grid

## Improving the view for you

The New Forest has been chosen as one of four protected landscapes to benefit from a share of £500 million from National Grid to reduce the visual impact of sections of high voltage overhead lines.

Undergrounding the stretch of pylons across Hale Purlieu will now be subject to a detailed technical feasibility study by National Grid and consultation with the local community before an Environmental Impact Assessment is submitted to the statutory consultees as part of a planning application. If the undergrounding goes ahead it will greatly improve the views across Hale Purlieu by removing the pylons.

# New era of partnership in the New Forest National Park

For the first time all the key organisations working to care for the New Forest have put their names to a Partnership Plan for the National Park.

The Partnership Plan is an update of the original 2010 National Park Management Plan, with more than 50 groups and organisations contributing and signing up to a list of actions they have committed to undertake by 2020.

Actions range from measures to protect the natural and cultural environment, educating young people about the New Forest, and improving traffic and transport, to increasing affordable housing, tackling fly-tipping, improving walking and cycling routes and supporting the local economy.

The Plan was produced jointly by all the main organisations with interests and responsibilities in the National Park, including:

- Environment Agency
- Forestry Commission
- Hampshire County Council
- Natural England
- New Forest District Council
- New Forest National Park Authority
- Test Valley Borough Council
- Verderers of the New Forest
- Wiltshire Council.

The final Plan is the result of comprehensive public consultation, with more than 100 responses received, many of which helped shape the Plan.

The main partners will continue to meet regularly to push forward with the actions and a joint report will be published annually to show progress.



Developing a 'Green Halo' for the New Forest

The New Forest National Park is at the heart of a natural network or ecosystem that contributes to the area's world class environment. There is a 'Green Halo' of opportunity that underpins our work with local organisations to ensure the area flourishes.

This vision of a 'Green Halo' for the National Park involves bringing together key players across sectors to think about how we work together to secure investment to improve the quality of the area.

The natural environment provides us with a range of benefits or 'ecosystem services' which include food, water, materials, flood defence, carbon dioxide storage, recreation opportunities and health benefits.

Opportunities to enhance our area rely on the quality of our place and on taking joint responsibility for looking after it. The pressures of climate change, demand for infrastructure and housing make this a pressing and important conversation. We'll work with businesses, communities, landowners, developers, utility companies and local authorities to understand and agree what to protect and enhance, where and how.

A number of tools are emerging to help us secure a world class environment and world class economy across the 'Green Halo'. This could be through planning policies, encouraging volunteering or any other tool available to local organisations.

New Forest National Park Authority Chief Executive Alison Barnes said: 'Over half of this unique landscape is of international importance for wildlife; it also represents a recognisable asset for the growing population living in villages, towns and cities in and around the National Park.

'We are working with others to map these assets within and around the National Park, collect evidence about their current state and determine their value and benefits to the populations living and working here. This will enable us to define an economic rationale for investing in providing and maintaining these natural assets.'

Hurst Castle © Alex Kerslake



## New Forest Marque

It has been a successful year for the New Forest Marque, with membership growing and prestigious awards for local producers. We support this produce scheme to promote authentic New Forest fare, while encouraging people to shop locally.

30+

Businesses joined the New Forest Marque in the last year

Despite funding constraints which mean the Marque is currently without a paid officer, membership grew to a record high of 160 businesses in the last year.

As well as an increasing quantity of members, the Marque can also boast members of the highest quality, as shown by some of the awards won by them in the last year:

- **Cobley Wood Farm** won two golds for its pork and marmalade sausage and traditional sausage at Hampshire Sausage and Pie Competition
- **Lisa's Larder** won Best Farm Shop at Hampshire Life Food and Drink Awards
- **Lyburn Cheese** received bronze medals at the World Cheese Awards. Its Stoney Cross cheese was voted one of the top 50 foods in the world at the Great Taste Awards.



## Supporting commoners and wildlife

The New Forest Land Advice Service supports commoners and rural businesses with advice on land management and nature conservation, as well as access to training courses and grants.

Over the past year this has included:

- Helping around 150 commoners apply for crucial funding from the new Basic Payment Scheme (BPS). The BPS is designed to support agriculture as part of the European-wide Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and replaced a previous scheme in 2015.
- Beginning four projects as part of the Landscape Partnership Scheme to teach 35 rural skills courses a year, restore private woodland and 4,000m of hedgerows and help 30 landowners to manage their wildlife sites for nature.
- Launching a new grants scheme with the National Trust to provide commoners with much-needed funds to support their traditional way of life.
- The end of the three year Community Wildlife Plans project, which helped over 200 people across eight Forest communities to conserve their local green spaces for wildlife.

The New Forest Land Advice Service is funded by the New Forest National Park Authority, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and the Verderers.



'It's been a really good year for the New Forest Marque, with the scheme growing bigger than ever and some impressive achievements from our members. Added to that, we've increased the level of expertise on our Board of Directors and our annual Christmas fair was the most popular yet, so we continue to go from strength to strength.'

Jane Overall, New Forest Marque Chairman

# The New Forest National Park – a world capital for wildlife

The New Forest is full of rare and unusual species that rely on the area's internationally-important habitats to survive. We work with our partners to nurture these species and conserve them for future generations.



New Forest cicada  
© Jaroslav Maly

The New Forest contains the largest unspoilt area of lowland heathland in the UK and provides perfect habitat for reptiles. This includes the elusive smooth snake, Britain's rarest reptile.

The smooth snake is a very secretive creature, choosing to hide out of sight and bask within heather vegetation where it is well camouflaged. Its behaviour and distribution have been difficult to study and understand, so our £20,000 grant for the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust (ARC) is funding work to record smooth snakes and find ways to conserve them.

Newts are another unusual species whose habitat can often be under threat from human activity. So it was good news in 2015 that a pond restoration project in Lover aiming to benefit wildlife saw newts return to the site soon after restoration. The project received funding from our Sustainable Communities Fund and saw around 30 volunteers successfully restore the pond to its former glory.

Another group of rare water-dwellers are triops – a scarce species of small crustaceans also known as tadpole shrimps. Older than dinosaurs, they breathe through their feet and their eggs can lie dormant for decades.

Living in only two places in the UK, these bizarre creatures can be found in just one of the New Forest's estimated 1,000 ponds. The prehistoric crustaceans are one of the oldest species in the world, having been around for 360 million years. Our work with the Freshwater Habitats Trust to improve New Forest waterways supports similar habitats for triops and other species.

Animals do not have a monopoly on the bizarre in the New Forest. Many of the 2,700 species of fungi found in Britain are present in the National Park, making it one of the best locations for fungi in Western Europe. This includes many rare species that depend on woodland habitat, including the nail fungus. The spores of the nail fungus are ingested by grazing ponies, and are passed out with

their dung. The spores germinate and form the nail fungus, the fruiting bodies of which become visible after the dung has had time to weather.

We work with the Forestry Commission and other groups to encourage people to enjoy looking at fungi in the Forest, but to leave it where it is rather than picking it. This allows others to enjoy it and protects the National Park's fragile ecosystem.

Other species are so rare they may even be extinct, which is certainly true for the New Forest cicada. Sightings of this cicada, the only one native to the UK, date back to 1812 in the New Forest, with the last unconfirmed sighting in 2000.

Spending up to eight years as a nymph underground, the cicada then surfaces to reproduce and die within six weeks. We have supported the New Forest Cicada Project in their search for evidence of the species.

As one of the most important areas for wildlife in Western Europe, the New Forest has many designations recognising its local, national and international importance for biodiversity.

The mix of heathland and mire, ponds, coastal, grassland and woodland habitats across the New Forest are not found anywhere else in lowland Britain. This is why so many unusual species flourish, and why it is so important that our work to protect their habitat continues.

Did  
you  
know?

Triop eggs are sometimes called living fossils as they can survive incredibly high temperatures and can still be viable after 27 years.



Nail Fungus © Clive Chatters



Triop © John Cuthbert



**Above right:** Angela Peters, New Forest Land Advice Service, checking for smooth snakes

**Above left:** Ben Limburn from ARC with a smooth snake



## Working with partners to preserve the landscape

In October 2015 a partnership scheme we developed to conserve the New Forest's unique heritage, landscape and wildlife for future generations received £2.8m, thanks to National Lottery players.

The grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) is funding a visionary project to restore lost habitats, develop traditional Forest skills and inspire a new generation of people to cherish and care for the National Park.

We are leading the five-year Landscape Partnership alongside 10 key partners, who will contribute their own funding to increase the pot to more than £4.3m. In total, the scheme is made up of 21 projects that have already made good progress:

### Practical conservation

- Volunteers have helped to plant 5,000 trees at the National Trust's Foxbury reserve, as well as helping to remove scrub at other sites to improve them for wildlife
- Over 300m of hedge has been restored to provide corridors for wildlife, with 45m of this laid as part of a hedgelaying course.

### Research

- Initial surveys have been undertaken of industrial archaeology sites and graveyards
- Hundreds of library items have been digitised at the New Forest Centre, which will help increase knowledge and understanding of the Forest by creating an online gateway for anyone to access the Centre's archive
- Partnerships have been sought with community heritage groups to give them training and support.

### Training

- Courses have begun to teach topics including traditional building skills, sustainable land management, cattle breeding and animal management.

### Volunteering

- More than 50 potential volunteers were signed up at the New Forest Volunteer Fair
- In the first three months of the scheme 209 volunteer days were recorded.

Find out more at [newforestnpa.gov.uk/landscapepartnership](http://newforestnpa.gov.uk/landscapepartnership)



**'I've been working in the Forest for 10 years now, so it was good to be able to teach rural skills to commoners and other landowners on this course. It's important to pass these traditional skills on because the way you manage a hedge has a huge effect on the wildlife that relies on it.'**

Andrew Birnie,  
hedgelaying course tutor

**Above:** Volunteers at an Our Past, Our Future hedgelaying course in Linwood



**Our Past, Our Future**  
Working together for the New Forest

## Making the Forest fit for the future

We work in partnership with the Verderers, Natural England and the Forestry Commission to run the New Forest Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) scheme. It is a rare opportunity to protect the New Forest's historical sites, commoning tradition and fragile habitats for future generations. The £19m scheme began in 2010 and has had another successful year working to ensure the Forest flourishes in the future.



### Supporting commoners

In the last year the HLS scheme has provided crucial support and grants to hundreds of commoners through grants and specialist land management advice.

The scheme also contributes to the cost of micro-chipping New Forest ponies when they are sold at Beaulieu Road Salesyard, and supplies reflective collars for ponies and cattle.



### Restoring wetlands

Some Forest streams were first straightened by the Victorians to form deep drainage channels for intensive agriculture and forestry, with harmful results for the Forest's environment.

During 2015 another 500 hectares (460 football pitches) of wetland restoration work took place across 12 sites to restore streams to their natural meanders. This reduces erosion and flood risk, while improving internationally important habitats and grazing for commoners' livestock.



### Tackling invasive non-native plants

The HLS scheme funds work to remove invasive non-native species from the New Forest. Plants such as Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam and Parrot's Feather can cause great harm by crowding out native species.

In the last year Parrot's Feather has been significantly reduced at a number of sites to benefit wetlands and the native species that rely on them. Rhododendron was also cleared from 56 hectares (73 football pitches). By 2020 Forestry Commission land in the New Forest should be clear of all significant areas of rhododendron.

Find out more at [hlsnewforest.org.uk](http://hlsnewforest.org.uk)



### Inspiring young people

Around 3,000 schoolchildren visited the New Forest to learn about the area last year, ranging from river and habitat studies to the impacts of tourism.



### Preserving our history

Archaeologists have identified 433 sites and features over the last year, including some of the best preserved Bronze Age barrows in the New Forest. Nearly 20,000 people visited a temporary exhibition in Lyndhurst explaining the high tech laser mapping process that has helped uncover forgotten archaeological sites in the Forest.

### Images clockwise:

Foal and mum © Natasha Weyers

Fletchers Thorns near Brockenhurst, where wetland restoration 'achieved significant nature conservation and ecosystem service benefits in a very short period of time.'

Independent report by River Restoration Centre, 2015

The invasive parrot's feather plant at Hinchelsea Bog before treatment

Volunteers recording archaeological sites

Children on a school trip to the New Forest

ENJOY

## Understanding through enjoyment



**'As well as working to conserve the New Forest, we also encourage the public to understand and enjoy the National Park. Over the last year this has included raising awareness about the health benefits of spending time outdoors, the importance of driving carefully and the dangers posed by dropping litter. We hope this will encourage people to care for the Forest to make sure it stays special for future generations.'**

**Leo Randall, Deputy Chairman of the Planning Committee**

# Providing education

This has been a successful year for our education team, who worked with a record-breaking 10,310 children and young people during 2015. The team runs a variety of initiatives to teach youngsters to respect and care for the New Forest, including:

## Wild play days

We are helping children reconnect with nature through our successful wild play days, where children and their parents can enjoy a day of play in the great outdoors.

More than 1,000 people took part in our three wild play events over the last year, enjoying activities including seashore scavenging and toy boat making.

We organised this free event in partnership with Hampshire County Council and Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust.

## Education conference

In June teachers attended a successful conference on the importance of outdoor learning for children.

Teachers from nine local primary schools gathered in Brockenhurst, sharing ideas on learning outside the classroom and how wild play can help children understand their natural surroundings.

## Championing car-free travel

At the beginning of 2016 we launched a children's book and online game that promote the benefits of sustainable travel in the New Forest.

Hythe Primary pupils were the first children to hear and see Furzley's New Forest Adventure during a special assembly and day of workshops.

Copies have also been distributed to 150 local schools, with a range of follow-up activities about sustainable travel in the New Forest on offer from our education team.

The project was funded by the Two National Parks Local Sustainable Transport Fund, which works to promote car-free travel.

## Travel grants make school trips possible

Over the course of the last year we helped 34 schools visit the New Forest on a school trip through our travel grant scheme.

The scheme enables local schools to claim up to £250 towards the cost of transport for an educational trip run by one of 28 providers to learn more about the New Forest.



**'They have so much going on in their lives that it's always a pleasure to go outside and do some simple activities. It's inspired us with some ideas for family days out.'**

Emily Jundi, from Sway, attended a wild play day with daughters Frida, four, and Mabel, two



**'This conference inspired me to find out how approaches like wild play and outdoor writing can make a real impact on children's learning, as well as giving me the chance to share my approaches with others'**

Tamsin Milroy, above right a Year 4 teacher at Highcliffe St Mark Primary School, Christchurch

## Supporting the New Forest Centre

We have continued to provide support to the New Forest Centre in Lyndhurst, helping the organisation have a successful year. The Centre provides visitors with somewhere they can learn about the New Forest and care for it when they visit.

The Centre has seen a 500 per cent increase in visitors to the museum following the introduction of free entrance in February. There were also 54,000 visitors to temporary exhibitions of local art, archaeology and local history in the Gallery over the year. Staff also ran 114 education group sessions for children to teach them more about the special qualities of the National Park.

**Did you know?**

Volunteers spent 3,100 hours working in the Centre during 2015.



ENJOY

## Prescribing the Forest's Natural Health Service

We are working with health professionals to promote the benefits of spending time in the countryside for health and wellbeing.

We brought together representatives from NHS groups, Forest organisations and local charities to work together to enhance people's physical and mental wellbeing and prevent chronic illness, whilst helping to maintain the special qualities of the National Park.

Our approach is supported by Public Health England's national Director of Health and Wellbeing, Professor Kevin Fenton, who visited us this year to discuss our innovative schemes to improve health and wellbeing.

This includes the PEDALL inclusive cycling initiative, started by the New

Forest National Park Authority and now a charity, which uses specially adapted bikes and trikes to take people of all ages and abilities out into the Forest.

Professor Fenton also visited Pondhead Conservation Trust – a community wood being managed by volunteers. We have funded the Trust to host outdoor art sessions led by Sway-based charity Hampshire Art for Recreation and Therapy (hArt) to help improve people's wellbeing.

Other initiatives include our annual walking festival; healthy eating through the New Forest Marque; dementia awareness training for staff; and encouraging confidence and skills through youth projects.

**'I just wanted to say a massive thank you for all your support and encouragement with Amy and her cycling! I have to say she enjoys these sessions immensely and the feedback from our carers is that you and your colleagues are fantastic. So thanks for making such a difference... Amy and I both really appreciate it!'**

Heidi O'Neil, whose daughter Amy Galpin is pictured above with her carer Wendy Saunders Mills on one of PEDALL's adapted cycles at Beaulieu Heath

## Creating a community woodland to celebrate loved ones

More than 300 people came together to celebrate a life event or loved one last autumn by helping to plant a community woodland in Sway.

Naomi Pickett and family from Southampton



**'Our baby Rory was born prematurely in March, but sadly he died the same day. We had a tree planted for our eldest son Toby so when I saw the opportunity to plant one for Rory at the National Park's Family Trees event I signed up. Rory was cremated and we have his ashes at home so it is nice to**

**have a lasting tribute to our baby boy.**

**'The day itself was very well organised and Toby enjoyed looking at the trees to choose one. The Jubilee Playing Fields in Sway is a lovely setting and we'll be back to see how the tree is growing. Having something to mark Rory's life is really comforting.'**

## Celebrating the New Forest through art

Our annual Open Art competition enjoyed a successful third year, attracting a record number of people to view the exhibition of chosen artwork.

We run the competition in partnership with the New Forest Centre in Lyndhurst, welcoming submissions from artists, photographers or craftspeople ahead of a summer-long exhibition.

The competition and the exhibition of artwork are sponsored by ExxonMobil at the Fawley Refinery.

Andrea Hook's painting of Eyeworth Pond near Fritham beat more than 170 other entries to win first prize from the judges.



**'The Open Art competition is a great way for us to work with the National Park Authority and local artists to showcase work which has been influenced by the New Forest. We were thrilled to receive so many entries this year and to welcome so many new artists to the Centre.'**

Hilary Marshall,  
New Forest Centre Manager

Left to right: National Park Chairman Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre; Open Art winner 2015 Andrea Hook; New Forest Centre Manager Hilary Marshall; Alison Jones, Community Affairs Manager with sponsor ExxonMobil at Fawley.



## Clearing the Forest of litter

We have worked closely with New Forest District Council and the Forestry Commission in the last year to encourage people not to drop litter in the New Forest. This included a 'Litter Free Forest and Sea' campaign backed by New Forest West MP Desmond Swayne and New Forest East MP Julian Lewis. Social media updates, and posters placed across the Forest asked people to 'leave nothing but footprints' by using a bin or taking their litter away with them.

The push to reduce litter continued in spring 2016, when around 500 volunteers collected 700 bags of litter across the New Forest as part of the national Clean for The Queen campaign. The tidy-up got communities spending a few hours litter picking together in the run up to the Queen's 90th birthday. Some of the more unusual finds included half a canoe in the forest, engine parts, a rubber duck, and a shopping basket.

These events were complemented by working with our partners to talk to more than 4,200 pupils at assemblies and in individual classes over the last year about why it is so important not to drop litter and the dangers it causes.

The estimated cost of litter removal in the New Forest is over £250,000 per year.

**'Clean for The Queen was a wonderful event, bringing together people from across the Forest to clean up their National Park in time for the visitor season. Reducing the amount of litter in the New Forest also helps to protect wildlife and the free-roaming ponies. We would like to thank everyone who took part and hope that communities and individuals will have been inspired to regularly pick up litter all year round.'**

Alison Barnes, National Park Authority Chief Executive



### Award at New Forest Show

Staff celebrate winning the Maldwin Drummond cup for the best agriculture, horticulture or forestry trade stand at the 2015 New Forest Show. Nearly 3,000 people visited the stand to learn about our work to protect and promote understanding of the New Forest.

## Reducing animal accidents

We have continued our efforts to reduce the number of animals killed on the roads in the New Forest each year.

Our rangers and education officers have spoken to thousands of visitors and residents to raise awareness of the importance of driving slowly and carefully in the National Park. Changing signs have also helped warn motorists of animals on the road, and we have distributed car stickers and information cards for people to display and carry.

Our partners also worked hard to reduce animal accidents. The Verderers and Commoners' Defence Association introduced a police safety camera that caught nearly 10,000 motorists speeding in 2015.

These measures helped to make last year a record low for animal accidents in the New Forest. Despite this positive step, every animal killed is a great loss to the Forest, and to its owner, so work will continue to reduce accidents still further.

**'We appeal to drivers to slow down and drive carefully around the New Forest to help save animals from being killed or injured. The challenge is, of course, to reduce the number of accidents every year, so we will continue to try new ideas and initiatives.'**

Nigel Matthews, National Park Authority Head of Recreation Management and Learning



## Birds and a brew at art installation

At the start of the ground nesting bird season, our rangers joined Hampshire County Council to host coffee mornings to engage with people about how to avoid disturbing these special birds.

The events took place at The Observatory at Keyhaven, near Lymington, an art installation we helped fund that has been a base for a number of resident artists. Its unique design made it a great place for walkers enjoying the sea wall to join rangers for a coffee, chat and the chance to learn more about the area's wide variety of birds.

The Observatory is a project conceived by Sway-based charity SPUD and was designed through a competition won by a young team of architects at Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios.



## Commemorating World War One in the Forest

Our New Forest Remembers World War I project, supported by ExxonMobil at the Fawley Refinery, seeks to tell the story of the New Forest during the Great War.

The project brought together local history groups, volunteers and local residents to piece together what life was like in the Forest during World War One. They scoured thousands of pages of censored letters from Indian troops on the British Library website to find material relating specifically to the New Forest. These, together with personal accounts and photographs have become part of an online archive of the Forest's wartime history at [newforestheritage.org](http://newforestheritage.org). Over 21,000 Indian and New Zealand troops from both nations were treated in Brockenhurst with all accounts indicating a very high level of treatment and care.

These stories and many more formed part of a three month WWI exhibition at the New Forest Centre in Lyndhurst. With support from eight local history groups, the exhibition was a big success, with 11,187 visitors, a live BBC Radio Solent broadcast and many positive comments:

**'Very interesting but also very moving.'**  
**Pete & Ann, Devon**

**'Beautifully exhibited, a wonderful, worthwhile project. Greatly appreciated.'**  
**Robson, Canterbury**

**'Came especially to learn about the Forest during the War, very interesting.'**  
**Weling, Hertfordshire.**

**'The New Forest has one of the largest remaining areas of lowland heath in Europe and has some fantastic coastal habitats. It is particularly important for birds which have adapted to nest on the ground and this coastal nature reserve is the best place to see feeding and roosting curlews, redshanks and lapwings. These species head inland to the heaths to breed so this is a great opportunity to learn about them before they go.'**

Dawn Rayment, 'Greenway' People and Wildlife Ranger

A photograph of two white ponies grazing in a field of tall grass and wildflowers at sunset. The sky is a mix of orange, pink, and blue, and a line of trees is visible in the background. A teal triangle in the top right corner contains the word 'PROSPER' in white.

PROSPER

## Supporting the working Forest



**'The New Forest is a living, working Forest with thriving local communities. This last year has seen us support local people to live and work sustainably, run rural businesses and travel car-free around the National Park. This work ensures that the area continues to thrive and its residents prosper both economically and socially.'**

Marian Spain, Deputy Chairman of the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee

# 10 years supporting sustainable communities

Our Sustainable Communities Fund (SCF) marked 10 years helping people in local communities to live and work more sustainably. The fund has allocated more than £1.6m since 2006, bringing in an additional £3m in match funding to the New Forest.

Many SCF projects involve new technologies and grassroots volunteers to make a real difference in Forest communities. Over the last year successes have included:

## From top:

Derek Tippetts and Dave Dibden from Pondhead Conservation Trust are presented with their award by Gemma Lacey from The Southern Cooperative.

© Jason Allen Photography for CPRE Hampshire

Volunteers restoring a pond in Lover

Beamz prototype wooden bicycle

## Prestigious award for conservation group

Pondhead Conservation Trust was victorious in the annual Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) Hampshire awards. The group won the Community and Voluntary category for its volunteers' work to manage Pondhead Inclosure near Lyndhurst using traditional woodland skills. The charity received £23,000 from the SCF and aims to encourage a greater diversity of wildlife and plant life in the inclosure, as well as making the area more accessible for local people.



## Newts return to restored pond

A project to restore an overgrown pond in Lover achieved instant success in 2015, with a family of newts returning to the site. The pond had become overgrown in recent years, making it less attractive to wildlife. Thanks to a £2,000 grant from the SCF, volunteers successfully restored the pond to its former glory to benefit amphibians, wild flowers and insects.



## New uses for coppiced wood

A feasibility study sought to prove that coppice poles can be used as a sustainable engineering material. Coppicing is a sustainable woodland management practice that involves cutting the tree stump down to ground level to encourage new growth. A £25,000 SCF grant allowed social enterprise Beamz to develop engineering techniques for working with coppiced wood while constructing a wooden bicycle. These techniques offer the opportunity to support existing coppice and bring previously coppiced woods back into management.



# Preparing the New Forest National Park's Local Plan

The planning system is a vital tool in helping us to protect the National Park and to keep our communities and economy thriving.

The first set of dedicated planning policies for the whole of the New Forest National Park area were adopted in December 2010 and helped reduce 1,000 policies down to just 40. This 'Core Strategy' provides the overall vision, strategic aims and objectives and spatial planning policies for the New Forest National Park and is used to guide decisions on planning applications.

## Local Plan Review

The national planning system has changed significantly in recent years and so we are updating our planning policies.

They will take the form of a new 'Local Plan' which sets out the planning framework for the National Park, including the scale and location of new development and the need to conserve the local distinctiveness of the area.

The review process started in summer 2015. We talked to a wide range of people and organisations about how we can best plan for the future of the New Forest National Park. We identified an initial list of issues that we thought the new Local Plan should cover over the next 20 years.

A formal six-week public consultation on the Issues Consultation Document then ran during September and October 2015. As part of this initial consultation, we also launched a 'Call for Sites' – landowners and other parties were invited to put forward land which they would like to be considered for development. Information submitted is being used to inform the next stages in the plan-preparation process.

We are holding a series of workshops with stakeholders to discuss this Local Plan before a full public consultation in autumn 2016. These workshops have included discussions with neighbouring planning authorities about cross-boundary issues; with local business groups to discuss how the Local Plan can support the National Park's economy and communities; and a presentation to the Enterprise M3 Local Economic Partnership Rural Board, forging good relationships with regional decision-makers.

After the consultation process, the proposed Local Plan will be examined by a Government Planning Inspector and we are aiming for the Plan to be in place by mid-2018.

# Recognising the achievements of local people

We teamed up with landowner organisation the CLA for the third time to run our joint New Forest awards.

The awards are presented to local people and businesses that have made an exceptional contribution

to maintaining the unique landscape and way of life of the New Forest. Nominated by the public, the winners were:

- Young Farmer/ Commoner of the Year: **Pete Niccolls, Beaulieu**
- Best Supporter of Local Produce: **Alison Landymore, Paws Deli**
- Sustainability Champion: **Dave Dibden, Pondhead Conservation Trust**
- Rural Diversification: **Mary Montagu-Scott, Buckler's Hard Shipwright School.**



From left to right: Edward Heron, National Park Authority Deputy Chairman; Alison Barnes, National Park Authority Chief Executive; Kerry Dovey, Blake Morgan; Mary Montagu-Scott, Rural Diversification; Alison Slingo, Best Supporter of Local Produce; Pete Niccolls, Young Commoner, Dave Dibden, Sustainability Champion; Iain Curry, CLA Hampshire Chairman.



'Commoning is in my blood and I really do believe that it plays a

crucial role in keeping the New Forest healthy and thriving. It's certainly not an easy way of life though, so I was really pleased to win this award last year in recognition of all the work I've done. I enjoyed meeting the judges, telling them about my herd of Dexter cattle and feeling supported by the National Park and the CLA.'

Pete Niccolls, Young Commoner of the Year 2015

# Promoting car-free travel

Travelling car-free is the best way to fully appreciate the sights, sounds and smells of the New Forest. We have introduced improvements across the National Park over the last year that have made it easier than ever to explore the area without a car.

Plan your car-free journey at [newforestnpa.gov.uk/travel](http://newforestnpa.gov.uk/travel)

Celebrating the opening of the Marchwood to Totton cycle path



## New cycle routes

We helped fund a 2km off-road path joining Marchwood to Eling and Totton to make sure these communities can access the National Park more easily.

This year also saw us commission a much-needed upgrade of the cycle route linking Southampton, Totton and Ashurst with the heart of the National Park. The 3.5km shared route from Lyndhurst to Ashurst and a 1km route within Totton have been made more robust and resurfaced, making them suitable for all bikes as well as pedestrians.

The work was predominately paid for by our £2m cycling fund from the Department for Transport, with additional funding from Hampshire County Council and other groups.

## Sustainable transport on the rise

In 2015, **60,058** passenger trips were made on seasonal buses supported by us compared to **49,870** in 2014. Highlights included:

- The New Forest Tour attracted **34,622** passenger journeys on its three routes during its 11-week season in summer 2015. This contributed an estimated £562,000 to the local economy.
- The Beach Bus attracted **6,436** passenger journeys during its five week season to Hythe, Lepe, Beaulieu and Lymington.
- **8,432** passenger trips were made on Forest Bus Baby, a new weekend service linking Hythe and Moors Valley Country Park.
- The New Forest Travel Concierge gave travel advice to **7,134** visitors and residents from Brockenhurst rail station and campsites during the summer, up from **4,441** people in 2014.



## Inclusive cycling

New Forest Inclusive Cycling was rebranded as PEDALL and now has a standalone website at [pedall.org.uk](http://pedall.org.uk). Over 1,100 participants used PEDALL last year; many would not have been able to experience cycling otherwise. The project makes use of a range of adaptive cycles to help those who would not usually be able to cycle to enjoy the Forest on wheels.

A review of this activity recommended that an independent not-for-profit organisation be formed to grow the project. An application for PEDALL to become a charity has been registered and a board of trustees recruited to take the project forward.



PEDALL inclusive cycling

Garmin cycling sat nav



## Bicycle sat navs

We teamed up with Garmin and local bike hire companies to provide cyclists with free GPS satellite navigation devices to help them find their way along the tracks and enjoy the National Park by bike more easily.

Forest Bus Baby



## Helping businesses grow

We work with the M3 Local Enterprise Partnership Rural Action Group to support and encourage growth of businesses of all types located in rural parts of the Partnership's area. Being a member of the Group has provided a platform to promote the importance of National Parks to the economic wellbeing of the area. It has also encouraged the concept of 'world class environment, world class economy' and helped facilitate investment of EU and Local Growth funding in the forestry and timber industry.

## Share the road

Visitors and residents of the New Forest were encouraged to show consideration to everyone enjoying the National Park, through a new light-hearted film 'Tame Your Wild Side'. The film shows bad behaviour to avoid, before highlighting how positive attitudes towards each other mean a safe and enjoyable day out for everyone.

The National Park is home to a wide range of recreational users, such as

walkers, cyclists, horse riders and motorists. All have to share the Forest's roads and paths, but sometimes this can lead to conflict, which this film seeks to reduce.

The video was created with input from the New Forest Access Forum, which represents key recreation groups within the National Park.

ACHIEVING  
EXCELLENCE

Welcome support for our work



**'We always work hard to deliver the greatest impact from our Government funding, which was protected for the remainder of this parliament in last autumn's Spending Review. This will help us continue working to achieve excellence, demonstrating the relevance of National Parks and the impact we make as an Authority.'**

Edward Heron, Deputy Chairman of the Authority



# Government protection for National Parks

Environment Minister Rory Stewart (centre) with National Park Authority Chairman Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre and Chief Executive Alison Barnes at Beaulieu Road pony sale yard

The Government published an Eight Point Plan for National Parks in March 2016 to ensure the New Forest and other National Parks are conserved for future generations to enjoy.

The Plan kick-starts a programme of activity to safeguard the future of these iconic landscapes by engaging young people, doubling the number of youth volunteers and providing more employment opportunities for all.

This follows Government protection for National Parks' budgets in the last spending review, where over £350 million was committed to English

National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and forests. The National Parks Plan will build on this to secure the future of these protected areas, ensure effective environmental management and grow a strong rural economy.

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Environment and Rural Affairs Rory Stewart MP said in a letter to National Parks announcing the funding: 'This

settlement reflects the huge value the Secretary of State and I attach to the National Parks and how impressed we have been by the impact that the Authorities are having across a whole range of important issues, including: natural capital, ecosystems services, water catchment, rural business and food production and community engagement...'

**'The Government's Eight Point Plan for National Parks will ensure our iconic landscapes are conserved for future generations to enjoy.**

**'It shows how crucial England's National Parks are in helping to improve the rural economy, increasing the number of children connecting with nature, creating a thriving natural environment, delivering apprenticeships and promoting the best of British food.**

**'We are looking forward to working closely with Government to keep the National Park a living, working Forest that is resilient into the future.'**

Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre,  
New Forest National Park Authority Chairman

## Becoming more sustainable

As an organisation we seek to reduce the impact our business operations have on the environment. During 2015-16 our carbon emissions reduced by five per cent due to less gas and electricity usage and fewer air and rail journeys.

We also encouraged staff to reduce the impact of driving for work by installing additional cycle parking for staff. We have upgraded our electric charge points and are replacing a petrol pool car with a fully electric Nissan Leaf, saving 846kg of CO2.

5%

Our reduction in carbon emissions in the last year



## OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS



1

Best trade stand trophy won by our New Forest Show stand



31,385

People following our work on social media

60,058

Passenger trips on seasonal buses supported by us



£5.2m

External funding generated for the Forest

19,442

People found out how to care for the Forest from our rangers



717

Volunteer days organised or supported



84%

Of planning applications approved

718

Planning applications received

10,310

Young people took part in our education sessions about the New Forest



30

Young Commoners helped

## How volunteers help us protect the Forest

Volunteering is a great way to meet people, learn new skills and help keep the New Forest special. Every year we are lucky that dozens of volunteers contribute thousands of hours of their time to our projects, helping us maximise our impact in the Forest.

As well as helping to care for the New Forest, volunteers also find that there are huge benefits for them. They gain useful skills and experience, increase their knowledge of the National Park, make new friends with similar interests, get exercise and have the satisfaction of knowing that they are doing something to help.

The sheer range of volunteering opportunities in the National Park can make it difficult for people to find the right one for them, so our annual New Forest Volunteer Fair has proven extremely popular. This year we brought together organisations from across the region and hundreds of potential volunteers attended

the event to browse the opportunities on offer.

Volunteers are also at the heart of one of the largest New Forest schemes of recent years – the Our Past, Our Future Landscape Partnership. This £4.3m scheme began last year and aims to protect the unique New Forest landscape. There are already more than 100 volunteers signed up to promote understanding of the area, restore lost habitats and develop rural skills

As this scheme develops it will form the core of our work to promote volunteering throughout the National Park in the coming years, helping local people join us in caring for the Forest.



Mike Osborne, volunteer

**'Volunteering has enabled me to visit new areas of the New Forest and carry out surveys into its fascinating history. There has been a real sense of teamwork and not only have we helped record and protect this valuable heritage, but there have been a lot of laughs and fun on the way.'**

Mike Osborne, National Park archaeology volunteer



### Volunteer Fair attracts record crowds

Our popular Volunteer Fair enjoyed its most successful year in 2016 as over 500 people came along to search for their perfect volunteer role among the hundreds offered by the 46 local organisations attending.

The Volunteer Fair welcomed dozens of groups to Lyndhurst Community Centre including the RNLI, Exbury Gardens, Hampshire Scouts, the Forestry Commission and the National Trust.

For many people, volunteering in the Forest is appealing because it helps them spend more time in the countryside and improves their health and wellbeing. Nowhere is this more evident than among our archaeology volunteers, who have spent more than 320 hours trekking hundreds of miles across the National Park in the last year to map and preserve heritage features.



Jacob White, National Trust ranger at Foxbury

**'Volunteers are a key part of our work in the New Forest, helping us undertake practical conservation work and wildlife surveys as part of the Landscape Partnership scheme. Without them it wouldn't be possible to run our regular events – all the help they offer us is invaluable. We signed lots of people up at the Volunteer Fair, so it was a hugely beneficial event for us.'**

Jake White, National Trust Community Ranger

## Working efficiently for the Forest



**'The Authority is incredibly effective at helping deliver projects that benefit our National Park. For every £1 we spend, by working with partners and sharing services, we produce £13 of value. That's a tremendous investment return for the Forest.'**

David Harrison, Chairman of the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee



# Financial Information

We saw a further reduction in our core National Park Grant from Defra of 1.6% this year (equating to £54,000).

The savings were largely achieved through increasing use of shared services (adding archaeology, communications and building conservation and design to this list of expertise shared with local organisations) and other general cost efficiencies. We also generated substantial external partnership funding to ease the impacts on services and delivery; on average for every £1 we contributed to joint projects, it generated a further £13 from partner organisations.

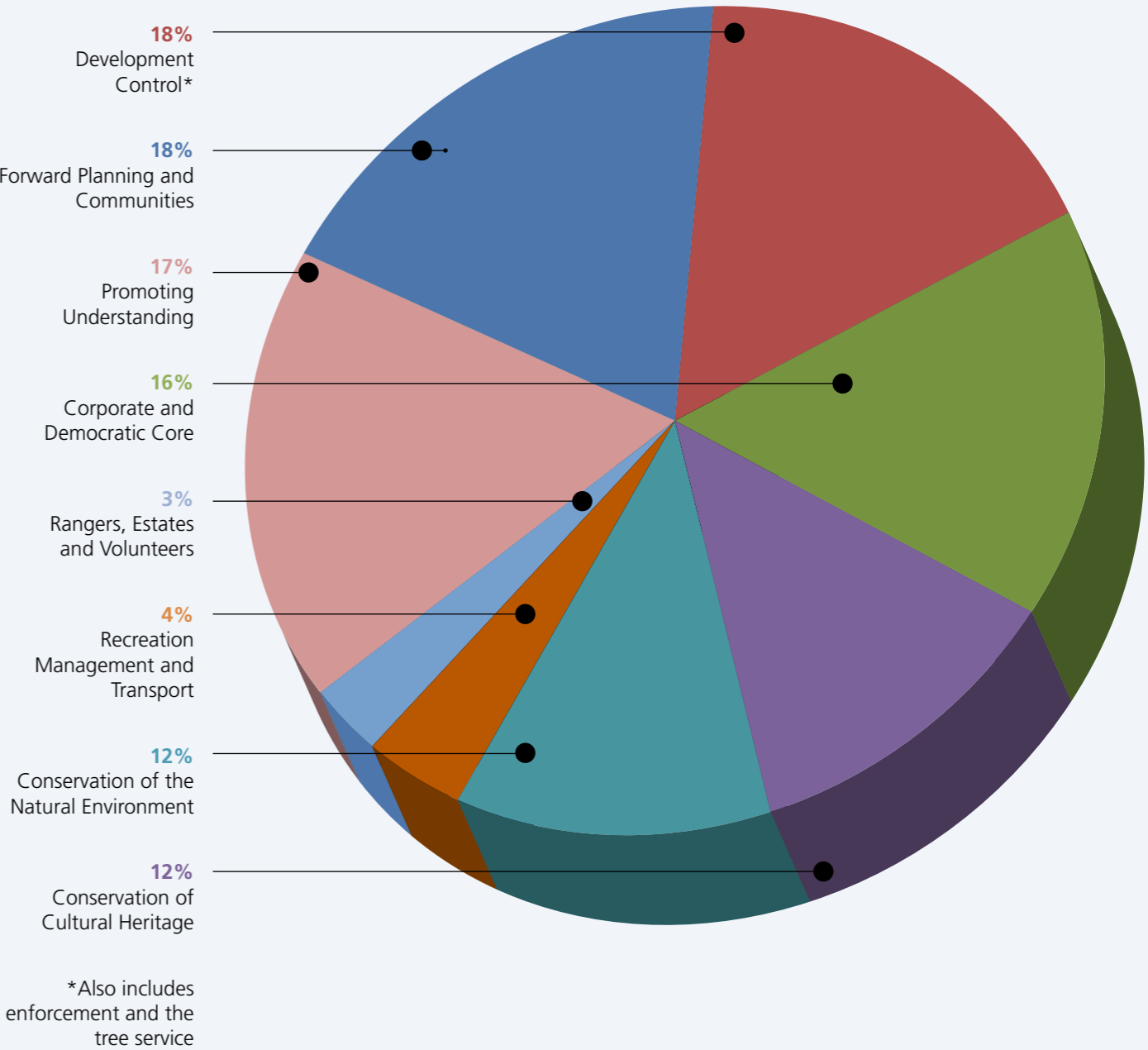
## We received around:

- £3.04 million** from Defra
- £284,000** in statutory fees for planning and related applications
- £328,000** for shared services with other local authorities (trees, ecology, rangers, archaeology, building conservation and design, communications and administration)
- £13,000** on our investments
- £42,000** in other income generation (such as talks, guided walks, New Forest Tour advertising and charging of expert advice)

## Significant external funding totalling £2.7m was secured for the Forest, including:

- £1.17m** New Forest Family Cycling Experiences
- £293,000** Local Sustainable Transport Fund
- £370,000** Our Past, Our Future: Landscape Partnership Scheme
- £62,000** New Forest Land Advice Service
- £44,000** Higher Level Stewardship Scheme
- £40,000** New Forest Remembers – untold stories of WWII project

## 2015-16 Net Expenditure





Pig near Burley by Lara Maskell

Overall winner of our  
Seasonal Snaps online photo  
competition in autumn 2015

# Contact us

We welcome your views and comments about this Annual Review or any other aspect of our performance or services. For regular updates, please sign up to our email newsletter via our website.

## Write to us at:

New Forest National Park Authority  
Lymington Town Hall  
Avenue Road  
Lymington  
Hampshire SO41 9ZG

## Call

01590 646600

## Email

[enquiries@newforestnpa.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@newforestnpa.gov.uk)

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Longslade Bottom  
© Steve Hood