

# Our Past, Our Future

*Working together for the New Forest*

## NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2019

**Our Past, Our Future is a National Lottery Heritage Fund landscape partnership scheme led by the New Forest National Park Authority in partnership with 10 other organisations.**

**Ensuring the New Forest's distinctive landscape survives despite future changes and modern-day pressures.**



The scheme consists of 21 projects that are helping to restore lost habitats, develop Forest skills and inspire a new generation to care for the Forest. Keep reading to find out about some of the key successes since 2016.

Farmers, commoners, landowners, builders, agents and homeowners have had the opportunity to discover forest skills through a series of building and rural skills training courses.

We said goodbye to our two Apprentice Rangers who have gained their Diplomas in Environmental Conservation whilst enthusiastically working with the ranger teams around the New Forest. We have now welcomed this year's Apprentice Rangers, Jake Barnes and Hayden Bridgeman, and wish them success over the coming year.

Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (HIWWT) has had several successful seasons pulling up the invasive Himalayan balsam plant which is choking waterways, with help from their dedicated volunteers and several corporate groups.

The scheme is providing a variety of ways for people to get involved and find out about the National Park. This has included an exhibition and conference on commoning and in autumn more than 1,500 people took part in over 80 expert led walks during the 2018 New Forest Walking Festival.



Top - Walkers enjoying one of the 2018 New Forest Walking Festival walks at Beaulieu

Right - Hayden and Jake who started their apprenticeships in October 2018

Newsletter produced by the New Forest National Park Authority on behalf of the OPOF partners.



# Commoning update

The New Forest remains one of the few extensive lowland commons where commoning rights are still widely practised and a strong commoning culture continues. These rights allow commoners to turn their animals out onto the Forest to graze the land and this grazing still shapes and maintains the New Forest we all know and enjoy.

As commoning is central to the heritage of the New Forest it has been the focus of many activities over the last year.

125 people attended a one-day conference titled 'The Role of Commoning in the Maintenance of Landscape and Ecology' in October at Lyndhurst Community Centre. The conference considered the use and significance of common pool resources from a historical, local, national and international perspective. The conference was chaired by Tony Hockley, Chairman of the Commoners Defence Association and Naturalist Clive Chatters. The conference included presentations from a variety of speakers, with topics ranging from New Forest commoning through the ages to learning lessons from the commoning system in Norway. The presentations

were recorded and can be viewed on the New Forest Knowledge website, see [www.nfknowledge.org/contributions/commoningconference2018](http://www.nfknowledge.org/contributions/commoningconference2018). As well as presentations there were displays from various organisations, including photographs of commoners through the decades gathered as part of the Through Our Ancestors' Eyes project.

Commoning Voices is empowering commoners to tell their stories in their own words, sharing their passion, knowledge and dedication to commoning in the New Forest. This work is being delivered by the National Park Authority in partnership with the Commoners Defence Association and has organised behind the scenes tours for a number of different organisations who regularly talk to people about the Forest and commoning, including the New Forest Tourism Association, local tour guides and National Park Authority staff. Over 10,000 people attended the Commoning Voices exhibition, curated by local commoner, teacher and outdoor learning expert Lyndsey Stride, which was held at the New Forest Heritage Centre from November 2018 to January 2019. The exhibition explained the relationship commoners have with the Forest, one another, their animals and

the public. Visitors could find out about commoning by listening to recorded personal stories from commoners and through photographs and information about key Forest characters and different commoning activities. It has received very positive feedback and is now touring other venues during 2019 to spread the messages further.



Above and left - Commoning Voices exhibition at the New Forest Heritage Centre





## How to Earn Your Badge

### STAGE 1

- Name five commoners animals.
- Commoning Knowledge: Create a poster or car sticker to raise awareness of commoners' animals.
- Explain why feeding or touching ponies or donkeys is a bad idea.
- Identify three New Forest habitats and name at least one plant and animal living in each habitat.

### STAGE 2

- Name five commoners animals and the five New Forest Rights.
- Commoning Knowledge: Plan and record/perform a short report to teach young people about New Forest Commoning and their animals.
- Explain how all New Forest residents & visitors can help the New Forest and commoners animals.
- Identify at least five New Forest habitats and name at least one plant and animal living in each habitat.



A 'Shared Forest Education Toolkit' for primary aged children has been designed by Lyndsey Stride. Year 2 pupils from St Michael and All Angels C of E Infant School in Lyndhurst were the first to receive their Shared Forest Awards for completing the toolkit, and they were presented with their certificates and badges by the Head Agister, Jonathan Gerelli, at the Verderers Hall in October 2018. The toolkit can be downloaded from the NPA website:

[www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/sharedforesttoolkit](http://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/sharedforesttoolkit)

The Shared Forest Business Group grew out of research that showed the need to raise awareness of the role of commoning to people who live and work locally and increase their respect for depastured stock. The aim is to make commuters and regular users of the New Forest's unfenced roads aware of the unpredictable behaviour of animals near the roads and encourage them to drive with due care. The project encourages businesses to use publicity to communicate safe driving messages to employees (including commuters and delivery drivers) and customers using the unfenced roads across the New Forest.



The founding members were high profile businesses in the area, and the group now includes over 60 businesses and more than 3,000 employees, as well as numerous customers.

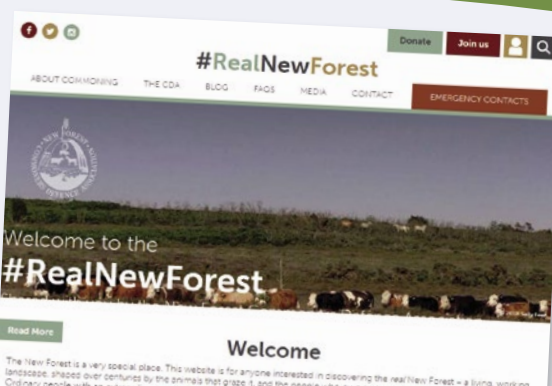
Members sign up to a charter which has 10 things the business can do to join the Forest Friendly Businesses Group.

The members are also provided with stickers for company vehicles, 'Advice for Drivers' leaflets, animal accident hotline cards and safe driver training as part of job inductions. All members have been given certificates and are provided with seasonal updates to continue to raise awareness.



Top - Children receiving their commoning badges at the Verderers Hall  
Above right- Lorry stickers for members of the Shared Forest Business Group

The new CDA website is now live at [www.realnewforest.org](http://www.realnewforest.org) bringing together the outcomes from all of the OPOF commoning work in one place.



## Conserving the Forest Fringe

Forestry England is considering the importance of historic boundaries and how valuable they are in maintaining and protecting the character of the landscape. Historic boundaries include verges and hedgerows, and Forestry England is looking at specific issues such as verge parking, rubbish dumped on the Open Forest and access issues. They are working with eight parishes to lower the number of visual encroachments, reduce environmental damage and tackle infringements.

In 2016 encroachment issues were identified in Redlynch, Bramshaw and Woodgreen parishes and where appropriate were discussed with relevant landowners. Some were rectified by the landowners. Where this was not possible practical works were implemented which included installing 275 dragons' teeth posts and 300 metres of ditch and banks in Nomansland.

The project worked with Elingham, Harbridge and Ibsley Parish Council. 100 dragons' teeth and ditching were installed at Toms Lane, Linwood. This has helped stop parking encroachments from properties and allowed 400m of verge to recover.

Ashurst and Colbury, Netley Marsh and Denny Lodge parishes were looked at in 2018. Various encroachments were removed and 200 dragons' teeth were installed at Woodlands Road, Ashurst, to protect 400m of verge.

Two further parishes will be the focus during 2019. A recent guided walk along the Sway parish boundary was attended by over 30 residents and parish councillors who found out about how to identify encroachments and other boundary features and learn why the designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) verges and grazing is important.

Advice is given to residents and contractors to ensure that verge parking, fencing

Right - Before and after work to prevent verge encroachment at Woodlands Road, Ashurst



encroachments, storing building materials and in some cases widening entrances do not end up damaging the Forest fringe. Leaflets on 'Accessing your Property', 'Boundaries in the New Forest' and 'Getting Building Work Done' have been produced and are a useful tool for giving advice. Forestry England is now seeing some positive outcomes because of this advice and a greater awareness of the issues by local communities.

## Heritage on my Doorstep

The National Park Authority is working with local history groups and parishes to help them research and find out more about their local heritage. The groups have been trained on a range of topics and techniques including oral history recording, mapping, website development and survey methods such as geophysics. Expert advice and funding have also been provided to help with book publications, websites, interpretation and research.

Friends of Hurst Castle has begun work on recording areas of the castle as part of a wider project to allow the public to access areas which are currently inaccessible. Volunteers from Friends of Hurst have been trained to record various rooms and undertake photogrammetry of features and structures in the castle. This will allow them



to play an integral part in the ongoing care, management and interpretation of the castle.

Milford-on-Sea Historical Record Society will be celebrating the bicentenary of the death of Admiral Sir William Cornwallis, Milford's most distinguished resident. The group is working on numerous projects for 2019, see [www.milfordhistory.org.uk](http://www.milfordhistory.org.uk). The National Park Authority is supporting two of these: an exhibition at St Barbe Museum and Art Gallery titled: 'Command of the Seas! The Navy and the New Forest against Napoleon', and a heritage trail from Milford-on-Sea into the heart of the New Forest. The exhibition will feature the three admirals who all lived in Milford at that time: Admiral William Cornwallis, Rear Admiral John Peyton and Admiral Robert Man. The heritage trail will allow residents and visitors to explore the people, stories and areas identified in the exhibition; from Milford-on-Sea to Buckler's Hard, via Hurst, Lymington, Lepe and some New Forest inclosures.



## Prehistoric past revealed

A week-long excavation was carried out in a field in East End, near Beaulieu, after aerial and geophysical surveys had shown what was thought to be a Bronze Age barrow. The dig took place with the help of 26



volunteers and support from Bournemouth Archaeology. The dig revealed four potential Bronze Age cremation burial urns which were excavated and will be analysed further in lab conditions. The urns were domestic pots that contain cremated human bone that were placed in small pits, so this suggests that the site was a place of memorial for people in the New Forest around 3,000 years ago. The dig did not find any evidence of the barrow's mound or any burial activity in the middle, which may be the result of the barrow being ploughed out or destroyed by the later field boundary ditches that run through the site. However further evidence was also found below the level of the urns that points to even earlier human settlement of the site. This included two Neolithic flints from around 5,000 years ago and geophysical surveys show that there may have been two entrances to the site, possibly indicating an older Neolithic monument. Further research will take place to fully understand the finds, which may prove to be an incredibly important part of the New Forest's prehistoric past.



Top - Volunteers at Park Farm excavation near Beaulieu

Above - Burial urns found at the Park Farm dig

Opposite - Volunteers surveying the NAAFI at Hurst Castle



## Better Boundaries

Hedgerows and verges are our last remaining wildlife corridors, providing important connections between areas of habitat and protection for small mammals to move from place to place away from predators. They also provide warm, sheltered conditions for insects such as butterflies and moths, and foraging routes and flight lines for birds and bats. The margins along a hedgerow are very important for wild flowers and other wildlife.



Over the last three years the New Forest Land Advice Service has worked with nine landowners in the north west of the Forest to restore and create 4km of hedgerows and other boundary features. The work focused on where there were opportunities to join up isolated habitats by creating wildlife corridors across farmland. This work has included hedgelaying, coppicing and planting up gaps using traditional techniques. The before and after pictures show some of these new wildlife corridors that now connect isolated pockets of habitats for the benefit of wildlife. Wildlife surveys at these sites have recorded an increase in the use of these corridors by many species, including bats, so landowners can clearly see the benefits of the work.

Top - Farmland boundary in Hyde identified for restoration  
Middle - Boundary after planting  
Right - Boundary one year later



A hedgerow in Hyde (Above) before and (Left) after management

A hedgerow needs to be maintained by trimming back, replanting as necessary, hedgelaying or coppicing to keep it thin and bushy. If neglected the hedgerow can become overgrown with tall trees and gaps. Therefore, as well as practical restoration work, the team has run a number of courses on the importance of hedgerow management.

The value of this work was recognised by Hampshire Campaign for the Protection of Rural England who shortlisted the project as a finalist for their Rural England Countryside Awards, Making Places category.

The funded work has now been completed but the Land Advice Service will continue to advise the landowners on future management of their hedgerows and encourage others to do the same.





## Nature's Stepping Stones

The Land Advice Service has been working with 20 landowners helping them to restore and enhance their Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs), which are recognised for their valuable 'open' habitats such as grassland, heathland and wetlands.

Work has involved willow, birch and gorse clearance on a variety of typical New Forest special habitats, including damp acid grasslands, wet meadows and valley mires. Scots pine trees have been removed from areas of former heathland to extend and connect areas of this precious and rare habitat. Work has been undertaken by contractors using chainsaws and volunteers using hand tools. Several sites have also had new stock-fencing erected which has enabled the Land Advice Service to help reintroduce seasonal grazing with traditional breeds of cattle to manage and further enhance the sites for wildlife in the future.

The before and after photos illustrate the restoration of wet meadows in Emery Down. Substantial amounts of willow scrub were cleared from the neglected meadow SINC and seasonal grazing with dexter cattle, a traditional breed, was introduced in autumn. The grazing will enhance the condition of the meadow so that wild flowers can expand their range. It will also lead to further areas of herbs such as ragged robin and lesser spearwort



Above left - Overgrown SINC in Emery Down

Above right - Restoration in progress at a SINC in Emery Down

being established, along with an increase in the abundance of invertebrates. The site's ecology is being monitored with the help of volunteers, along with a selection of the other project sites.

Nature's Stepping Stones will be running for another year and will be working with more landowners on a further 10 sites.

## Woodlands managed by traditional 'horse power'

The Land Advice Service is helping private landowners to care for their woodlands so they are better for wildlife and more economically viable. 56 hectares of privately owned woodland has been restored by removing non-native species such as rhododendron, coppicing and opening up tracks.

Some of the small private woodlands in the Forest are not accessible to big heavy machinery as they don't have pathways or large tracks through the trees that would sustain the weight and width the equipment requires. These heavy vehicles can damage the delicate infrastructure and biodiversity of the forest floor which thrives in these small areas. Therefore, in one of the smaller woodlands in Pilley, heavy horses were bought in to take out the felled timber. The horses are able to weave between the trees, and work on a slope therefore only have a minimal impact on the forest floor. The work was filmed and can be watched on the NPA's YouTube channel.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=324HO-vetNM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=324HO-vetNM)

Below - Horse logger Toby extracting timber from woods in Pilley





## Wild play in Sway

The NPA has been working closely with Sway Parish Council to develop a wild play site at Stanford Rise in Sway. A number of play features have been installed including a log clambering circle, wooden tunnel, carved balancing snake and log benches that were made by a local wood sculptor, and mini beast hotels that have been constructed with the help of local pre-school children. Fruit trees and wild flowers have also been planted on site by local volunteers.

The site will be maintained and promoted by the landowner and local community champions have volunteered to help with the site; one has set up a 'Friends of Stanford Rise' Facebook group for the site, arranged tree planting and coordinated the local community to water turf that was laid during installation.

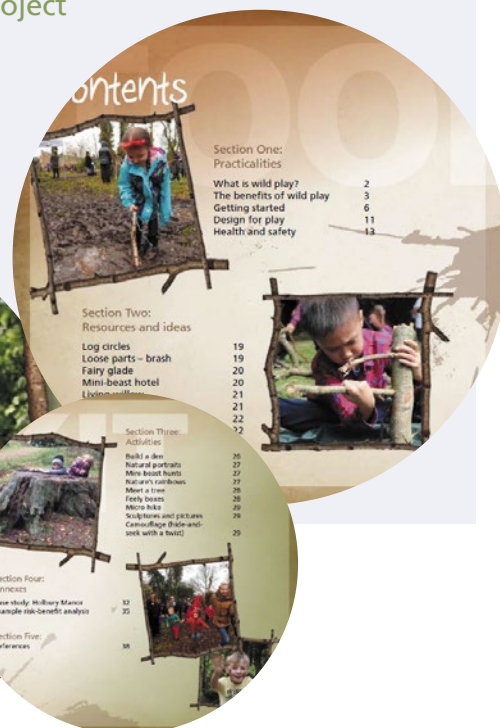
The NPA has published a 'Wild Play Toolkit' for parish councils, groups, organisations and individuals who would like to develop wild play opportunities within their



Above and bottom left - Wild play features installed at Stanford rise in Sway



community. The toolkit is a guide through the process of setting up a wild play site or event, including site identification, general resources, activities, community engagement, health and safety and insurance considerations to be aware of. The toolkit can be downloaded from the NPA website at [www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/wildplayproject](http://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/wildplayproject)



With grateful thanks to our funders:



To find out more about the 21 projects or volunteering for the scheme, visit [www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/landscape-partnership](http://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/landscape-partnership) or contact us at: [Ourpast.ourfuture@newforestnpa.gov.uk](mailto:Ourpast.ourfuture@newforestnpa.gov.uk)