

NFNPA 583/19

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 10 OCTOBER 2019

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

Report by: Alison Barnes, Chief Executive

Summary:

This report covers the period since the Authority meeting on 11 July 2019. The report has been formatted to accord with the 'Protect, Enjoy, Prosper and Achieving Excellence' themes from the 2018-21 Business Plan, summarised below:

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

Recommendation:
To note the report

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Equality & Diversity Implications:

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

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My report for the second quarter of the 2019/20 financial year shows important progress across our themes of Protect, Enjoy and Prosper.

The adoption of our Local Plan at the end of August was a significant milestone and subsequent training with over 70 councillors from parishes across the National Park has been very positively received.

This quarter saw publication of the much anticipated Landscapes Review on 21 September. The Review, undertaken by a panel chaired by Julian Glover, asked 'what does the nation need from our protected landscapes?' The Report emphasises the role of National Parks in leading nature recovery and the response to climate change, the huge potential of National Parks to improve the physical and mental health of the population and highlights the challenges facing communities living in National Parks, especially the issue of affordable housing. The report also challenges aspects of current governance and funding arrangements and calls for much closer collaboration between National Parks and AONBs and the numerous stakeholders who have an impact on the designated landscapes either through their actions or decision making.

It was pleasing to see the report highlight the importance of commoning in maintaining the extensive wildlife-rich landscape in the New Forest and that our affordable housing scheme at Bransgore, innovative health and wellbeing and volunteering programmes were recognised.

There has been some good progress with landscape enhancements across the Forest this quarter; three National Grid-funded Landscape Enhancement Initiative projects are underway. Woodland management, a new wild play area and improvements to the footpath, car park surfacing and fencing are in place at Holbury Manor, Fawley. Landford Bog has just been awarded a grant of nearly £28,000 to replace fencing which will enable grazing management of the site for wildlife. We're waiting to hear if a £200,000 grant has been awarded to help remove rhododendron, improve paths and tracks and renovate three Scheduled Ancient Monuments at the 1000 acre nature reserve we helped secure with the RSPB at Franchises Lodge.

We are looking at the landscape as a whole in our 'New Forest: Special By Design' project. This is a partnership project that will examine how a wide range of signage, infrastructure and even digital communications can better reflect the New Forest's sense of place, to encourage greater pride and care.

In line with the Glover Report theme of increasing engagement in National Parks, there has been a wealth of activity in the New Forest to mark the 70th anniversary of National Parks with the Year of Green Action. Our rangers have had over 8000 face to face contacts this quarter and 4000 visited our stand at the New Forest Show, providing opportunity to learn about the richness and importance New Forest wildlife and the practice of commoning that supports it. A new Young Environmental Champion category in our National Parks Awards with the CLA was won by wildlife volunteer Dominik Reynolds. The awards were presented by National Parks Minister Lord Gardiner, who also spoke at a joint reception on our stand to celebrate the anniversaries of 70 Years for National Parks and 100 Years for Forestry England.

Our education work is a recognised strength, accounting for some 10,000 of the 100,000 children highlighted as benefitting from education programmes in National Parks in Glover's report. Our travel grants continue to be a vital mechanism in helping schools access learning in the Forest; in just two months this summer 400 children benefited from these. We have also reached the milestone that over the past 10 years 95 students aged 15 to 25 have joined us for placements or work experience.

The four-year Our Past Our Future Landscape Partnership scheme is now in its last year. Successes include 19 new and young commoners receiving mentoring support from experienced commoners; 21 private woodlands being managed for wildlife; three wild play sites established across the Forest and a volunteering programme involving hundreds of people - there are many reasons to celebrate. We are giving some thought to how we may continue some of the projects and how to celebrate the conclusion of the scheme.

Our Partnership Plan Tour in early September in the north of the Forest was a very important opportunity for us to come together to reflect on progress towards the current plan and to discuss what should be the areas of focus for our new Partnership Plan, which will be updated in the coming year. Further opportunity to reflect on 70 Years of National Parks in the UK and look to the future was provided by the National Parks UK Conference 'New Horizons' in the Yorkshire Dales National Park in September attended by two of our Members. The exchange of ideas at these events and the recommendations of the Landscape Review show we have a vital role to play in bringing people together to ensure our protected landscapes thrive for future generations.

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

The Scheme is entering its final year. Many of the 21 projects were due to end at the beginning of 2020, however underspend has allowed some funding to be reallocated and 12 of the projects have now been extended to Spring/Summer 2020. This is still within the current scheme timescale as the grant expiry date is end November 2020. The projects that have been extended are Working Woodlands (NFLAS), Natures Stepping Stones (NFLAS), Rural Skills (NFLAS/CDA), New Forest Invasive Non-Native Plants (HIWWT), Monitoring Biodiversity (HIWWT), Rediscovering Our Archaeological Heritage (NFNPA), Historic Routes (NFNPA), Heritage on my Doorstep (NFNPA), New Forest Connects (NFNPA), Shared Forest (CDA), Through our Ancestors Eyes (CDA), and Wildplay (NFNPA) This includes extensions to a number of project officers' contracts to allow them to undertake further work.

Some highlights from the past quarter:

- A wild play site has been built in Ashurst and was officially opened during an event in the summer. All three wild play sites are now completed and a wild play toolkit is available on our website to help others to set up sites, see <https://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/conservation/landscape-partnership/projects/wild-play/>
- Rediscovering our Archaeological Heritage project has recorded and restored a number of monuments in Lyndhurst churchyard including 60 gravestones that had been laid down to form a footpath. These have now been lifted, recorded and made into two seating areas in the churchyard with the additional help of LEADER funding.
- After the success of last year's excavation at Park Farm, Beaulieu (<https://nfknowledge.org/contributions/park-farm-barrow/>) the Rediscovering Our Archaeological Heritage project returned with volunteers for a further two-week excavation during September.

- Over the summer volunteers have been working with Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust to control Himalayan balsam along the Cadnam River, the Avon Water and the Lymington River and its tributaries. The hard work in previous years has made a huge difference as at some sites the balsam has almost been eradicated.
- Two of the OPOF Landscape Partnership Scheme's projects were put forward as finalists in two of the categories for this year's CPRE Countryside awards: the New Forest Non-native Plants project run by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and the project at Foxbury run by the National Trust. The New Forest Non-native Plants project came second in the public's vote for the Hampshire's Choice Award, narrowly missing out on winning by approximately 20 votes. However it's testament to the great work of the volunteers that the project was recognised.
- The 2019 New Forest Knowledge Conference will be in Lyndhurst and will be on the built environment in the New Forest in response to the revised Pevsner released in 2018. The focus will be on how buildings and structures have shaped and themselves been shaped by the Forest. Speakers include independent researchers and representatives from the University of Winchester, New Forest District Council and New Forest National Park Authority. It will be held on Friday 1 November from 9.45am to 16.30pm at Lyndhurst Community Centre. Tickets are £20 with lunch included. For more information, to see the complete programme and to purchase a ticket, visit: <https://nfknowledge.org/2019/08/02/built-environment-conference-1-nov-2019/>

Over the final year of OPOF we will be evaluating the scheme (looking at successes and weaknesses), planning a celebration event at Foxbury next spring to look more at what has been achieved and we will also start to plan for the future. In terms of legacy, some of the projects come to a natural end but will have a lasting legacy, including tangible outputs such as practical work to habitats, structures or buildings, and production of interpretation materials, but also intangible outcomes such as skills development which will have a lasting benefit for those involved after the end of the scheme. Results of some projects will be incorporated into core work of the partners for example now that the access, infrastructure and conservation work has been completed at Foxbury the site will continue to be managed by the National Trust staff and volunteers and will continue to be used by groups in order to take the pressure of the rest of the Forest. Many of the OPOF projects could be continued and/or expanded if more resources were available e.g. habitat restoration work, archaeology, events etc, and there may be opportunities for another partnership project in the future.

New Forest Land Advice Service (NFLAS)

The Commoners Mentoring Scheme, a partnership between NFLAS and the Commoners Defence Association and funded via OPOF as part of the Rural Skills Project, has now come to an end. In total 19 young and new future commoners have been mentored over a three year period, learning about the commoning ways of life, livestock handling and integrating with the community through their time with their mentors. A mentor scheme social in December, for all participants, will include time to discuss if and how we can continue with this scheme without the funding we have had from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Back-up grazing

Following months of positive working with the estate team at Exxon Mobil we have identified grazing opportunities on their untenanted land around the Fawley area and a four hectare site adjacent to Southampton Water is now being fenced (the contract has been awarded to a young commoner), and other necessary infrastructure put in place, ready for grazing by a young commoner. NFLAS will be continuing to work with Exxon Mobil on the remainder of the sites we have identified in order to introduce grazing where appropriate and enhance wildlife habitats where possible. This includes an area of a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and several Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs). On one of the larger SINCs under their ownership, over 40 hectares in size, Exxon Mobil has followed our advice and commissioned and paid for an ecological survey of our design which will help guide our restoration and management recommendations for the site. We hope to work with them to implement beneficial management on this and other sites over the coming years.

The Working Woodlands Project has used extra funding which we were awarded from ClifBar (via National Parks Partnerships) to bring working horses into Pondhead Inclosure to move timber around the woodland where required. We worked with the Pondhead Conservation Trust to run an open day for local people to see the horses at work and learn more about how the woodland is managed. Pondhead Inclosure is one of 21 woodlands in the Working Woodlands project which is working with landowners and other woodland managers to introduce and enhance wildlife conservation management in their woods whilst making the most of any economic value to be found from any timber removed.

New Forest Catchment Partnership

The Catchment Partnership continues to deliver work through the 'Living Waters' workstream of OPOF Landscape Partnership Scheme. Further expansion of rainwater harvesting on a holding has taken place, work with volunteer water quality testing continues and new or improved habitats have been created adjacent to the Hartford Stream. Following installation of an eel pass to bypass obstructions on the Hartford Stream earlier in the year, we were excited to hear recent monitoring has shown it to be

successfully assisting the migration of 'glass eels' (background to migration and terms here https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WBRnNk_uo9Y). An exhibition and event to celebrate the success of the Living Waters work is being planned.

The Partnership has been successful at securing funding through Defra and the Environmental Agency's Water Environment Improvement Fund (WEIF) which was used to undertake walkover surveys across the length of the Bartley Water and Fletchwood stream during the summer period. The walkover assessed amongst other issues water quality, flood risk, non-native invasive species and opportunities for natural flood management, as well as where improvements in land management could support water quality. The result will be used to identify actions which will then be the subject of further bids for funding.

WEIF funding was also secured for a two-year project to address nutrient and sediment pollution from nurseries and soft fruit producers in New Forest (these are diffuse sources and do not imply the operations are acting inappropriately). The project will build on previous work with local nurseries to carry out further assessment of the efficacy of interventions and use the results to develop best practice approaches which will then be applied to five new sites.

We communicated the work of the Catchment Partnership, and in particular activity around the Beaulieu catchment and Hartford stream at the New Forest Show and were grateful to the Beaulieu Estate for their support in providing space on their stand. As well as videos relating to the New Forest wetlands the stand featured information boards and a display of some freshwater plants of importance locally. Over 500 families and children took the opportunity to make a pipe-cleaner dragonfly as a reminder of their visit.

The period also is as a co-host deliver a Partnership meeting, liaison meetings with the Environment Agency and Southern Water, and the production of our summer/autumn 'Water News' catchment newsletter. We are planning our annual Water Forum event for later in November with the theme of 'Wilder for Water'.

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

There are currently three LEI funded projects in the National Park at various stages of development. The first, Warren Copse at Holbury Manor, Fawley (owned by Fawley Parish Council) is in the second year of funding and good progress has been made with woodland management, the establishment of the wild play area, footpath improvements and also improvements to the car park surfacing and fencing. Over the summer period carved waymarkers were introduced to the footpath trail, with carved owls and acorns.

The second project at Landford Bog has just been awarded a grant of nearly £28,000. Work will be carried out on the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust owned site to replace the dilapidated perimeter post and wire fencing so that grazing animals can be re-introduced.

This grazing is essential to manage the site. Further work will take place over the next few years to remove invasive plant species and construct a timber walkway over a particularly wet part of the site to improve access and also protect the ground from damage and compaction.

The third project at the RSPB reserve at Franchises Lodge, Hamptworth, is currently awaiting final approval from National Grid. A full application has been made and is currently being examined by National Grid and OFGEM. If the grant application is successful the LEI will be funding £200,000 towards rhododendron removal, improvements to paths and tracks and also the renovation of three Scheduled Ancient Monuments.

It is hoped that the funds for Landford Bog will be released in October 2019 so that fencing operations can start swiftly. National Grid's decision to fund Franchises Lodge is hoped to be forthcoming over the Autumn.

On all three projects the LEI grants fund up to 75% of costs with the remaining 25% being funded by the landowner, either by volunteer hours, cash, management time, provision of materials or expert advice. Other grant funding can also make up the 25%.

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 146 applications in the period 1 July to 25 September and in the same period determined 176 applications with an approval rate of 85%.

12 Appeal decisions have been received; 10 were dismissed and two were allowed.

A training session was held for Parish and Town Councils on 4 September which was well received.

We are pleased to welcome Ian Burrige to the Development Management Team as a Planning Assistant.

Ecology

During the period the Ecologist has received over 55 consultation or requests from Authority case officers for input to the planning process. We also received over 35 requests from New Forest District Council officers as part of our shared ecology service. Time has also been spent on major applications such as Fawley Waterside and the District Council's Local Plan where sites such as Durley Farm/Hounsdown Meadows and land at Snails Lane have required special care and attention.

We have continued to liaise with local charity Hampshire Swifts, www.hampshireswifts.co.uk, to promote the conservation of swifts in built developments

and opportunities for swift boxes and integral bricks within new development. We have helped identify a possible retrofit scheme in a strategic position in the National Park and requested provision for swifts in new developments when planning responses have been made. Hampshire swifts are working in partnership with Minstead Trust to build swift boxes which seems to offer useful community, as well as wildlife benefits, for the National Park.

Trees

Since the last report, the Tree Team has completed the following statutory functions along with advice to the general public, internally and other external bodies:

- 171 tree work applications received.
- one Tree Preservation Order was made where it was considered that the premature removal or extensive pruning of the trees would result in the loss of an amenity to the local environment.
- 54 Development Management consultations provided.

Planning Enforcement

As of the end of September there were 145 live planning enforcement cases at various stages in the process, ranging from awaiting compliance and potential prosecution, appeal determination right through to new cases awaiting initial site and background investigations. Approximately 260 new cases have been opened during 2019 alone, exceeding last year's (237) number already with three months still to go. This in part reflects greater attention to compliance checking and a general rise in complaints about potential breaches from residents. Common themes for complaint include use of out-buildings/annexes/shepherds huts as separate residential / holiday accommodation, use of land for camping, woodland used for recreational meeting places and works to listed walls and walls/historical buildings of heritage value.

There has also been a number of complaints relating to the use of stabling for private liveries and use of agricultural barns for non-agricultural related storage.

Policy

The New Forest National Park Local Plan 2016 – 2036 was formally adopted at the full Authority meeting on 29 August 2019. This follows four years of public consultation and evidence gathering, as well as a 14-month independent examination by the two Government-appointed Planning Inspectors. Upon adoption the new Local Plan policies replaced in full those contained in the previous Core Strategy (2010) and became the basis for planning decisions made within the National Park. All statutory and other consultees have been notified of the adoption of the Local Plan and where copies can be inspected. The new Local Plan document is also available on our website.

Following the formal adoption of the Local Plan, a training session was held with local town and parish councillors in early September on the new Local Plan policies. This event was attended by over 70 councillors and was helpful in enabling an open discussion of the new policy approaches and the Parish Councils' role in the planning process.

The local referendum of the Hythe & Dibden Neighbourhood Plan will be taking place on 29 October. This is the first Neighbourhood Plan in the New Forest to reach this stage and follows the independent examination of the draft Plan earlier this year. If more than 50% of those voting in the referendum held later this month vote in favour of the Plan, the National Park Authority and New Forest District Council will bring the Neighbourhood Plan into effect. Separately the draft New Milton Neighbourhood Plan has also been published for a final six-week period of consultation, closing on 21 October 2019. All representations made during this consultation will be considered by the independent examiner.

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

Archaeology

Over half the scheduled monument management plans for sites found on Forestry England Land have now been created and signed off by FE and Historic England. All sites have now been visited and assessed. Eight scheduled barrows have undergone geophysical surveys to assess their conditions and confirm their locations, informing land management approaches.

Work has been completed to record and lift gravestones in Lyndhurst graveyard and convert these into benches. (See OPOF report above, Protect 1)

Community led projects

The Western Escarpment Conservation Area Steering Group met in Hyde in early September 2019. The Steering Group discussed the new Local Plan policies on design and conserving local distinctiveness; as well as reviewing recent appeal decisions where the Planning Inspectorate had supported the Authority's decisions to protect the character of the Conservation 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

Each year during this quarter, we are joined by a group of work experience students, and

this summer we received 10 young people from local schools and colleges, most experiencing the world of work for the first time. All commented on the warm welcome they received from the many staff who gave up their time to introduce the students to their work, and each left us at the end of their placement visibly more confident. As always, the parents of the younger students also expressed their gratitude; many are struck by the enthusiasm of staff for their work, and the sense of commitment shown by colleagues.

By the end of September, 95 students aged between 15 and 25 will have joined us for placements or experience over the last 10 years.

This summer has also seen two Young Volunteers assisting with events, with another ready to join us shortly. Our Young Volunteer Scheme enables young people aged below 18 to participate in certain volunteer activities with parental consent and support from our staff.

The Travel Grant Scheme has enabled 400 pupils to visit the education providers in the National Park in just two months.

Education Visits to Bolderwood, Whitefield Moor and the Reptile Centre kept the education team busy in July and September, with nearly 600 pupils learning about the special qualities, history and wildlife of the New Forest.

The quote of the quarter has to be from six year old Karl from the centre of Bournemouth, at the end of his first visit to the Forest: 'This is the best day of my life!'

Public and community events / rangers

Rangers have had another busy summer engaging with local people and visitors promoting responsible behavior and use of the Forest. They engaged with 8,265 people through face to face contacts during the period of this report July-September.

Rangers continued to work closely with Forestry England and HCC staff to deliver joint educational campaigns such as Keep Your Distance, BBQ code and responsible dog walking.

The mobile information unit was taken to a diverse range of events including NPA led Fun in the Forest sessions, joint Wild Wednesday's at the Reptile Centre, Marine Wonders at Lepe Country Park and community events such as Burley Show, Pondhead Open Day and New Forest Marathon. The late summer sunshine attracted over 1,000 people to the Lymington-Keyhaven Open Day organised in partnership with HCC and Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust.

Our partnership with Camping in the Forest and Forestry England continued with our four Seasonal Rangers delivering 62 engagement sessions (32 dusk walks, 30 Explorer activity sessions) to 1,673 people across all CitF campsites. Sessions increased visitors understanding of the special qualities of the National Park, encouraged responsible

recreational use and promoted the 'Keep Your Distance' campaign around New Forest livestock. £345.94 was raised through donations for the New Forest Trust.

On 24 July, our People and Wildlife Ranger, Dawn Rayment attended the opening of the improved accessible walking route through Butts Ash Wood in Hythe. 900 m of footpath has been resurfaced enabling it to be used throughout the year as part of the Green Way recreational mitigation project.

We were pleased to welcome our two Apprentice Rangers back to the National Park Authority for their placement with us after gaining experience with National Trust, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, HCC and Forestry England in the past year. It has been a pleasure to see their knowledge, skills and confidence grow over their apprenticeship and we were thrilled to celebrate Hayden being successfully offered the Assistant Ranger role for HCC at Lepe Country Park, a role she believed she wouldn't have achieved without the opportunity of the New Forest Apprenticeship.

Chris Marshall, Coastal Ranger partnered up with HIWWT on Wightlink Ferries to deliver public engagement sessions on the crossing from Lymington to Yarmouth. Based around the Secrets of the Solent Project these sessions raised awareness about the sharks and skates found in British waters and encouraged families to get involved in the Shark Trust Citizen Science surveys, whilst raising the profile of the New Forest National Park coastline and marine environment to 123 passengers.

Communications

To mark the 70th anniversary of National Parks, Defra has declared 2019 as a 'Year of Green Action' (YoGA). Over 30 activities have been organised to date including a film competition, Big Green Weekend of sustainability activities; green grants for schools and youth organisations; and the Big Pedall Rideout for hundreds of people with disabilities. National Parks Minister Lord Gardiner attended a reception and cut a cake to celebrate the Year of Green Action, 70 years of the National Parks and 100 years of the Forestry Commission (now Forestry England). He also presented a new category for the annual National Park Awards with the CLA – wildlife volunteer 19-year-old Dominik Reynolds was the winner of the new Young Environmental Champion award. All the activities are on our website: www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/communities/get-involved/year-of-green-action-in-the-new-forest/year-of-green-action-events-and-activities/. Defra Senior Policy Advisor Tracy Foster who heads up the YoGA commented on an update of our activities: 'This is brilliant and very exciting'. At the end of the year we will be able to estimate how many people took 'Green Action' as a result of the activities.

This year we are focusing much of our communications on wildlife - explaining how special the Forest's species and habitats are and how the Forest needs to be managed to help them thrive.

The New Forest Show theme was wildlife, incorporating the work of the Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) scheme. The stand featured HLS celebration exhibition panels and

infographic; interactive models showing how restoration of wetland has worked to slow the flow of streams; a 'micro Forest' quiz of photos of close-ups of small species which have been the focus of HLS work; an activity to make bug hotels; large carvings of HLS species; display panels about commoning and the HLS Verderers Grazing Scheme; and a very popular virtual reality experience 'In the eyes of the animals'.

- Over 4,000 people attended the stand (approx. 1,000 more than last year)
- VIPs welcomed to the stand included Defra Minister Lord Gardiner; Hampshire County Council Leader Cllr Keith Mans; Dr Julian Lewis MP.
- 72% of those surveyed said they learnt more about New Forest wildlife
- 67% said the activities encouraged them to do something positive for the environment.

Social media posts about the stand content reached 103,000 and had over 5,300 online engagements (likes, comments, shares).

An HLS ranger has been appointed and one of our NPA ranger vans is being kitted out with wildlife information and activities to take to events, talks and outdoor spaces around the National Park over the coming months.

We marked National Wildlife Day on 4 September with posts on Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook about wetland restoration and lapwings. They achieved a reach of over 6,500 with 175 engagements. World Rivers Day on 19 September featured a wetlands video with TV presenter Simon King which was produced in 2017. The Facebook post achieved a reach of over 3,300 people with 127 engagements. The video has been watched by 68,000 people since it was first promoted in May 2017.

Our communications campaign with partners to tell people about the Forest's rare ground-nesting birds and how they can help protect them during the nesting season ran from February to August. The campaign focused on dog walkers, asking them to keep themselves and their dogs to the tracks to avoid disturbing nests. The campaign included video interviews with partners, features, press coverage, website content, webcams and social media. Content included Date With Nature webcam highlights and events at the Reptile Centre; World Curlew Day; Earth Day; and Discover National Parks fortnight. Reach was over 300,000; engagements over 22,300; video views over 68,300.

A special wildlife issue of Park Life has seen over 15,000 copies distributed with the Lymington Times and a further 10,000 at community outlets and events. Among the feedback was a message from Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust Chief Executive Debbie Tann: 'Just wanted to congratulate you on the spring/summer edition of Park Life... Really great to see the strong focus on wildlife and partnerships. Good stuff!'

Promotion of the Our Past Our Future scheme has continued apace as the projects come to an end. We launched the Walking Festival with dozens of walks led by experts. As part

of the Year of Green Action we extended the annual festival by a week to encompass three weeks and include the school half term holiday with additional walks targeted at families. The Shared Forest project's education toolkit received additional promotion to encourage greater take up by schools. Nearly 3,000 children and young people have learnt about commoning and the New Forest over the past three years thanks to the Shared Forest project, with over 400 pupils having received their New Forest badges since the toolkit's launch in October 2018. As part of the Wild Play project we helped organise and promote the launch of the Sway and the Ashurst wild play sites as well as wild play days throughout the summer, one of which welcomed 800 people. We promoted a new national partnership with Clif Bar energy bars which is supporting the Working Woodlands project with a £10,000 donation. Clif Bar's director visited Pondhead Community Woodland to see horse logging at work as part of the project and a photographer covered the work for The Telegraph.

The Glover Report into the future of designated landscapes was published on 21 September and we issued our response which was picked up by several regional media. Alison Barnes was interviewed live on national BBC News Channel on the day the report was launched.

We designed the Local Plan, working with the policy team to source a large number of specialist planning photographs to illustrate the policies.

To help promote the review of the Partnership Plan, we produced an annual update report and a 'primer document' to inform stakeholders of the importance of the Plan and how the review process will take place. We also produced a small exhibition at the New Forest Show to tell people about the review and supported the Tour of Partnership Plan projects.

Working with the concierges, we have had a busy summer promoting the New Forest Tour and answering customer enquiries.

Other press releases, web pages, videos and social posts focused on the adoption of the Local Plan; Keep Your Distance campaign to ask people not to feed or pet Forest stock; the appointment of new Authority members; the New Milton Neighbourhood Plan consultation; an archaeological dig at Matley which revealed what is believed to be a neolithic settlement; Bird Aware Solent partnership; the Big Green Weekend; and the rededication of the Canadian Cross Memorial.

Campaigns we are currently planning with our partners include the animal accidents reduction campaign and we have organised a programme of 10 locations across the Forest for the animal silhouettes to raise awareness of the number of animal deaths on the road. A social media campaign and photocall are also planned.

New accessibility standards are being introduced by Government for public sector website and apps. We have worked with our web developers to undertake a thorough audit of the NPA website, Access Forum, Green Halo and HLS websites to check how our sites comply and are now working to implement some changes.

2.2 Enabling high quality and beneficial experiences of the National Park

Interpretation projects

The 'New Forest: special by design' project has started, jointly funded with the Verderers, Forestry England, Test Valley Borough Council, Hampshire County Council and the CDA. The objective is to identify how a wide range of signage, other infrastructure and even digital communications such as social media and websites can better reflect the New Forest's sense of place, and thereby encourage greater pride and care. We have arranged workshops for 8 October for local stakeholders. We also arranged a familiarisation day for the consultants: Peter Anderson Design and Thinking Place. This involved attending the Verderers Court, visiting popular sites such as Bolton's Bench, Lepe and Bolderwood, visiting a commoner's holding and seeing places where urban development is close to the edge of the National Park e.g. Dibden. A further two days of site visits are being planned for the consultants on 14/15 October. A member's day will be arranged around this project once initial concepts are provided by the consultants.

We helped deliver engaging activities at this year's New Forest Show, where our theme was the biodiversity dependent on careful management of the Forest and the Year of Green Action. When surveyed 88% scored the stand five or six out of six overall and 72% learnt something or lots about wildlife at the stand.

Community interpretation included continuing to work with Lymington and Pennington Town Council (Pennington Common panels), East Boldre Parish Council (Oral history project) and Avon Tyrrell (Restoring lost landscapes interpretation)

Historic Routes project

Following input from members of the Steering Group and further development we now have six shortlisted suggested trails, all within Hampshire. From these the final five will be selected.

Volunteer researchers have completed their initial historical research into these trail areas and have produced historical summaries for each of them. Rights of way surveying is 89% complete, with the remaining routes allocated, to be surveyed in the coming weeks.

Current volunteer numbers are positive with 41 fully signed up (18 listed as Volunteer Surveyor, 18 as Researcher). There are three expressing interest in being guided walk leaders.

All parishes, that have suggested trails within their area, are kept informed of project progress via their parish liaison. The aim now is to make the final selection of the five trails and then work closely with HCC regarding any right of way enhancements.

Health and Wellbeing

Work to engage with young people in the National Park and surrounds continued during this quarter. 268 young people and 30 leaders undertaking National Citizen Service (NCS) benefited from a programme of sessions designed to help them enjoy, understand and play a part in caring for the New Forest. Organised by the NPA, sessions were delivered through partnership with Blackwater Conservation Group, RSPB, Pondhead Conservation Trust, New Forest Heritage Centre and Forestry England. Some key outcomes included 120 hours pulling Himalyan balsalm, 120 hours removing rhododendron and 28 hours practical woodland management. Two groups chose the New Forest as a focus for their 'social action' project which included two coastal litter picks collecting 10 bags of rubbish and 1000's of nurdles, volunteering at Lymington & Keyhaven Reserve and fundraising events raising £295.63 for The New Forest Trust.

Rangers ran a Scarf session at Lepe which helped enable young people with additional needs to access the beach in a safe and fun way whilst allowing their siblings and parents to have the time and space to engage in activities in the Park that is not often achievable when they are constantly having to take on the carer role.

We organised an English National Parks and Health and Wellbeing Task and Finish Group meeting in July. This national group will meet again in October and is tasked with defining the offer that National Parks in England collectively have with regards the nation's health and wellbeing. We also chaired a meeting of the National Park health leads in September. The three areas of national focus are proposed as:

- drawing on the **restorative** benefit of National Parks through social prescribing in partnership with the NHS;
- providing **preventative** health in practice where mental and physical health is supported and enhanced; and
- acting as hubs for **excellence** in the 'natural health service'.

For the New Forest the specific offers we can develop are:

- Walking – including our ongoing support for the Walking for Health programme
- Cycling – especially our work with PedAll for inclusive cycling
- Nature connection – benefiting people through contact with the National Park, including through wild play, youth work and nature walks
- Volunteering – looking at ways in which the health benefits of this can be increased

PEDALL

PEDALL has been busier this summer than last as we have widened our rider profile beyond young people and now have a number of care homes riding regularly. We are undertaking an evaluation with Colten Care on the effects of cycling with dementia patients. There have been very positive results so far. We led out the Lymington Carnival with riders from Colten Care.

We now have more riders over 25 years old than under 25 (lottery targets are for under 25), although we are still meeting our lottery targets, which means we are delivering considerably more rides than anticipated. We are continuing to fundraise for new bikes as the increased number of rides means the bikes require more maintenance and some need replacing.

The NFNPA staff took part in a Discovery Day at PEDALL and we also welcomed the NFNPA members on a PEDALL ride from Burley yard and are grateful for all of interest and support offered to the project.

We are starting work trying to secure continuation funding for when the current Reaching Communities Lottery grant ends in August 2020.

Volunteering

Through the OPOF Scheme, volunteers have been taking part in archaeological excavations, clearing scrub from meadows, reseeding a wildflower meadow, archiving historical documents, removing invasive plants such as Himalayan balsam and undertaking surveys of the flora and fauna in the New Forest. The scheme has now recorded over 58,000 hours of volunteering and more than 100 volunteers have given at least 100 hours each.

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

Following the support given by NPA members at the July Authority meeting for the 22 recreation management actions drafted by the RMS Steering Group, officers have met with New Forest District Council (July) and Hampshire County Council (August) councillors; we hope they will formally endorse the actions. All other organisations on the RMS Steering Group have given their support to the actions.

Most of the actions are now progressing, often involving joint working between multiple organisations, including:

- research and coordination between local planning authorities
- dealing with illegal recreation-related activities

- reducing harmful verge parking
- managing events and organised activities
- enabling health and wellbeing benefits.

Land Use Consultants will be helping us to progress feasibility work on a Local Development Order as approved at the last Authority meeting. This will be a substantial and important piece of work to establish a rationale and criteria for where and how much car parking should be provided, set within a wider spatial plan for recreation facilities. The overall aim will be to protect wildlife and the working Forest and provide a better experience for people.

Educational campaigns

As reported elsewhere, the seasonal rangers who spent the spring raising awareness of the risks of disturbing ground nesting birds moved on to engaging with people staying at Forest campsites through the summer. This includes stressing the importance of keeping away from ponies and cattle (especially when young animals are nearby) and keeping dogs under control.

Plans for a winter campaign to reduce animal accidents on Forest roads are well advanced. Bold signage will again be added to high risk routes, the wooden silhouettes will again tour prominent locations and we'll be using #add3minutes to encourage drivers to take extra care on their regular commutes across the Forest.

The number of cycle sportive events this year is similar to recent years and despite improved event planning and management, pockets of local disquiet remain. The Cycle Event Organisers' Charter continues to set very high standards for these events and is routinely used by the Safety Advisory Group as they look at event plans.

Having worked through the practicalities during the summer, we plan to formally launch the Professional Dog Walkers' Charter this autumn.

Access and Rights of Way

The New Forest Local Access Forum is recruiting for three new positions following the departure of Rachel Pearson, Hallam Mills and Nick Tomalin. We're looking for members to represent Farming, Estate Management and Landowning & Conservation.

Path improvements have started on the Lepe Loop. The first stage of the surface improvements has finished with great results. Future works include replacing gates, some interpretation and the addition of 18 new signposts.

Natural England have chosen the England coast path route from Calshot to Gosport and are awaiting representations and objections.

A volunteering partnership with Hampshire County Council has created a working party to tackle overgrown vegetation issues on the rights of way network. NFNPA and HCC staff will be out on Saturday the 5 October for their first joint volunteer work party. We are providing staff time and power tools (only for use by staff and trained volunteers).

3 Prosper

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

Green Halo Partnership

Work has continued to encourage the 4 Local Enterprise Partnerships local to the National Park to collaborate on a common baseline for their Local Industrial Strategies. For the first time the Solent LEP has included a call for projects to enhance natural capital in their latest funding programme, the Solent Prosperity Fund

The NPA and Green Halo partners worked with the LEP to present a Natural Capital Masterclass for local businesses in September.

Sustainable Tourism / business

We continue to support the work of the New Forest Business Partnership (NFBP) and the DMO through attendance at the Go New Forest Advisory Board meeting. Round-the-table updates were provided. Accommodation providers and attractions reported an average season; one of the holiday parks reported more positively. Discussion took place around a Food & Drink Festival for the shoulder season. The 2019 Brilliance in Business Awards are currently open for application, where we sponsor the Sustainable Business Award.

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

Sustainable Transport

The New Forest Tour summer season was successful. Early indicators suggest slightly fewer passenger journeys than 2018, but more than 2017. On average, there were three times as many rainy days in the 2019 season compared to 2018, which will partly explain the reduction. Final reports, reflecting feedback from customers, are in the process of being compiled.

Passenger numbers are yet to be disclosed for the extended Bluestar 9 service to Lepe. For the first time, this service is being continued over the winter season on Sundays.

Two meetings are scheduled with the transport operator, Go South Coast, to debrief on the season and plan for 2019. The first meeting is on 10th October and will include Tour

drivers, with the aim of discussing areas for improvement for next year. The outcomes will feed into the second, more strategic meeting, scheduled to take place later in the month.

The two Sustainable Travel Ambassadors (STAs), Agnes and Katie, received very positive feedback from customers and the public during their time based by the cargo bike at Brockenhurst Train Station. They were double-staffed at busier periods. The 'roaming role' worked well, enabling the STAs to board the Tour and engage with drivers and customers alike, as well as hopping off to visit and promote the Tour to local businesses en route. The STAs led an effective, innovative and popular social media campaign demonstrating sustainable travel and experiences in the NFNPA.

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

Affordable Housing

The newly adopted New Forest National Park Local Plan (August 2019) includes a range of policy approaches aimed at increasing the delivery of affordable housing for local communities. This includes: (i) the allocation of housing sites, where a proportion of on-site affordable housing will be required; (ii) a strengthened policy on rural exception sites, which confirms that all dwellings on such sites must be affordable; and (iii) policy provision to require affordable housing from smaller sites within the National Park – either through on-site provision or financial contributions towards off-site provision. These mechanisms should deliver an increase in affordable housing delivery for local people.

The current potential affordable housing schemes in Copythorne and East Boldre have not progressed since the last report, partly due to personal reasons of the landowners.

The Burley scheme (two new affordable homes) is progressing. Detailed construction drawings have now been examined by the Council's building control service and approved under the Building Regulations. Negotiations are continuing with third parties to secure access across the Council's car park and it is hoped that these will be concluded very soon.

Sustainable Communities Fund

Following the success of the mini-grant scheme as part of the Year of Green Action, an additional grant was offered to a small selection of groups whose applications showed clear evidence of the involvement of young people in the planning of their project and who wished to further develop their green action projects. These projects were featured in a display as part of our stand at the New Forest Show with visitors asked to vote for their favourite project. Over 800 votes were received and projects received a share of £2,500 depending on the number of votes each project received. The successful projects include improvements to the outdoor learning environment at Lymington Junior School and Orchard Infant School, opportunities to rewild the school grounds at Southlands,

development of a kitchen garden at Moyles Court, and improvements to recycling and energy efficiency at South Baddesley Primary School.

Reducing Plastics

During this quarter there has been several opportunities to reach out to wide audiences to think about practical ways in which we can all reduce our use of plastics. The annual Marine Wonders event at Lepe was one of them which led to this great feedback from a parent:

My five year old daughter took part in a very simple but very effective game showing children what effects plastic can have on marine life. This has really stuck with her and since this day she picks up any piece of plastic she can find on the beach and puts it in the bin.

She also wanted to do some more recycling at home so we have signed up with a private company that you can send plastic to that the local council wouldn't always recycle, she has chosen crisp packets (you can't mix the type of plastic so have to choose one type). She also asked her school to collect and give her the empty packets from packed lunch. The school were so happy with the idea they have also signed up to the company to recycle as much as they can and to teach the children.

I just wanted to share this with you so you guys know how much of a good job you are doing at raising awareness and how much difference you are making in teaching our kids. Thank you.

Staff members are also making more informed decisions about the resources used in the workplace, their own food and cosmetic purchases and actively looking for alternatives whenever possible.

4 Achieving Excellence

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

Human Resources

As at 27 September 2019:

	Headcount	Variation from previous report	Full Time Equivalents	Variation from previous report
Core funded	63	-1	54.36	-0.5
Funded by external projects	17	-5	14.53	-5.5
Total	80	-6	68.89	-6

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

Name	Job title	Contract type	How funded
Maria Court	Communications Officer	Temporary	Core
Emily Dee	Building Design and Conservation Officer	Permanent	Core
Ian Burridge	Planning Assistant	Permanent	Core

Recently we said goodbye to Beki Mole (Communications Assistant), Craig Daters (Ranger), Vicki Gibbon (Member Services Administrator), Lisa Crouch (Building Design and Conservation Officer) and all our Seasonal Rangers / Travel Ambassadors - we thank them for all their hard work and wish them well in their future ventures.

Recruitment is currently underway for:

Job title	Contract type	How funded
Member Services Administrator	Permanent	Core
Seasonal Assistant Ranger x 2	Temporary	Project Funded
Communications Assistant	Temporary	Core & Project Funded
Communications Administrator	Temporary	Project Funded

Information Requests

So far in the first two quarters of this year we have received 17 information requests compared to 34 last year. Last year's higher number was partly down to a number of requests in relation to the Local Plan. The majority were about planning and enforcement matters, and the rest related to spending and land ownership.

Complaints

In the first two quarters of this year we have received 13 complaints compared to only seven last year. All are about planning and enforcement matters. One was partly upheld, and one is still being investigated and yet to be responded to; the rest were not upheld.

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

Team New Forest

More than 40 representatives of New Forest organisations came together on 3 September for this year's Partnership Plan tour in the north of the New Forest. They

visited successful projects that feature in the Partnership Plan and learned more about the experiences and challenges partners often face when implementing them.

The day included a walk to ancient barrow mounds in Franchises Lodge nature reserve, a visit to Foxbury educational center, as well as a previous airfield site where Open Forest products are now stored.

Next year's event will take place on 1 September 2020 and after having visited the south and north of the National Park, the next tour's theme will be 'the heart of the New Forest'. A review of the State of the Park report, which was last published in 2016, has been concluded and will be published in due course. The revised report gives an update on the headline indicators and identifies trends and gaps in data. This will be an invaluable source of evidence for the review of the Partnership Plan which is now underway.

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

ICT Services

Following a working environment test of all the shortlisted printers, four Kyocera Multi-Functional Devices, one being high volume, were installed late September along with the printer server being migrated to 2016 server. Migration of the current planning data base and application servers was completed at the end of August. These recent server migrations leave us in a strong position with only 5 servers left to complete the migration of all the Authority's 2008 servers by the end of the year.

Intune is in the process of being set up for new mobiles and mobile device access. Microsoft Dynamics is being looked at as a customer relationship management system, initially for the volunteer database. A demonstration was arranged to highlight the scope of this software which could be used in many other areas (marketing, donations).

The new intranet was launched at the end of August, with much of the content and design based on feedback from the intranet staff survey held earlier in the year. A phased introduction to some short online cyber security courses has commenced, the first area to be rolled out relating to phishing. A new electronic signing in system has been introduced to the Reception area allowing visitors to sign themselves in, produce a visitor label and send an automatic email alert to the host.

5 Members

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

- New Forest Show – 30 July to 1 August
- Planning Committee – 20 August
- Authority Meeting – 29 August
- New Forest Access Forum – 2 September
- Consultative Panel – 5 September
- Resource, Audit and Performance Committee – 9 September
- Planning Committee – 17 September

5.2 Forthcoming activities include:

- Planning Committee – 15 October
- Resource, Audit and Performance Committee – 4 November
- Planning Committee – 19 November

5.3 Chief Executive's engagements

- NPP Big Ideas Session – 16 July
- National Parks Big Picnic, Exmoor– 17 July
- Health and Wellbeing Task & Finish Group – 19 July
- Business South Board Meeting – 25 July
- New Forest Show – 30 July-1 August
- National Park Officers' Video Conference – 20 August
- HCC 'Story for Hampshire' consultant interview – 23 August
- Meeting with NFDC Chief Planning Officer – 23 August
- Partnership Plan Tour, 3 September
- Meeting with South Western Railway – 4 September
- Health and Wellbeing Task & Finish Group – 4 September
- Attended Friends of the New Forest Council Meeting – 4 September
- Meeting with Cisco – 5 September
- HIOW CX Meeting – 6 September
- Resources, Audit and Performance Committee – 9 September
- Meeting with member of Southern Regional Flood and Coastal Committee – 11 September
- ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability Meeting – 12 September
- Meeting with Executive Director Business South – 13 September

- NPUK Conference – 17-19 September
- Speaker at Southern Policy Centre Conference – 20 September
- Senior Leadership Team Awayday – 20 September
- Green Halo Steering Group – 23 September
- St Georges Leadership Fellows Conversation – 23-24 September
- Meeting with Founder of the Mentoring School – 25 September
- Our Past, Our Future Meeting – 25 September
- Telephone discussion with Defra – 25 September
- Business South pre-conference dinner and Annual Conference – 30 September – 1 October
- HLS Board – 2 October
- Solent Leaders dinner – 2 October
- Place Story for Hampshire Steering Group – 3 October
- Charity launch – Olivia Inspires – 3 October
- Meeting with National Trust – 7 October
- Tour of the National Park with Chief Executive, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust – 8 October
- Special by Design workshop – 8 October
- Meeting of HIOW CX Sub Group on Diversity and Inclusion – 9 October
- Attending National Park Access Officers' Meeting – 10 October

5.4 Chairman's engagements

- Charing Forestry England Housing Review – 2 September

6 Recommendation

To note the report.