

**NFNPA 587/19**

**NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

**AUTHORITY MEETING – 18 DECEMBER 2019**

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT**

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

**Summary:**

This report covers the period since the Authority meeting on 10 October 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><b>Our priorities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Protecting and growing the natural capital across the National park Landscape, connecting with surrounding areas to ensure habitats and wildlife are sustainable.</li> <li>* Ensuring new development is sympathetic and in keeping with the National Park, promoting high quality design and environmental net gain.</li> <li>* Conserving the historic and built heritage; supporting local culture with continued focus on commoning.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Our priorities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Helping more people to understand and value the things that make the New Forest National Park unique and special.</li> <li>* Enabling high quality and beneficial experiences of the National Park.</li> <li>* Facilitating a partnership approach to managing recreation to achieve a net gain for both the working and natural landscape as well as for the recreational experience.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Our priorities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Supporting a distinctive and prosperous local economy where natural capital is an integral component of doing business.</li> <li>* Promoting connectivity across the National Park through sustainable transport and information and communication technologies.</li> <li>* Supporting the social wellbeing and sustainability of New Forest Communities.</li> </ul>
<b>Achieving Excellence</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Maintaining and enhancing a capable, motivated team that delivers high quality service.</li> <li>* Championing the National Park and brokering partnership to achieve collaboration for the benefit of the New Forest and its communities</li> <li>* Identifying new resources and using them alongside our existing resources, effectively and efficiently.</li> </ul>		

**Recommendation:**

**To note the report**

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**Equality & Diversity Implications:**

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

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Volunteers are at the heart of the work of the NPA and many organisations in the New Forest and we have seen a number of working parties in the last few months helping to restore habitats as the winter window for practical conservation works gets into full swing. Work to instate grazing and management of 10 woodland sites as part of the Our Past Our Future has also progressed, as have a number of projects to maintain and enhance the water catchments of the New Forest.

The whole of the New Forest open Crown Lands (over 23,000 hectares) have now been surveyed with LiDAR scanning and assessed, with over 1,000 volunteer days undertaken – a great achievement as part of the Higher Level Stewardship scheme. Volunteers also helped with a two-week geophysical survey of a field near South Baddesley School, in collaboration with students from Bournemouth University, which has led to the discovery of a number of new archaeological sites.

We hope to recruit more volunteers both for the Authority and the 50 organisations planning to attend the Volunteer Fair on Sunday 26 January, with the Fair marking its 10th anniversary.

Part of the importance of volunteering to life in the New Forest is how it helps improve people's physical and mental wellbeing. We have also seen this with the Walking Festival in October, this year running for three weeks to help people discover the New Forest's landscapes and wildlife and to mark the Year of Green Action. Around 70 guided walks saw over 1,600 people taking part – up 15% on last year. Over 220 children from local schools were able to take part in the Festival thanks to our travel grants and free activities provided with Woodlander Hoburne Bashley. The partnership to get more children out into nature was promoted on BBC South Today. Our Family Tree seed planting event also took place at Hoburne Bashley, with over 100 people welcomed (despite very wet conditions) and taking planted tree seeds home to care for ready for planting in 2020; a further reach of 20000 was achieved through posts on social media. Our education team also taught 1400 students from 11 groups this quarter, from infants to post-graduates and our travel grant has enabled over 2600 children visit the National Park over this financial year, including many who would not otherwise have had the opportunity to do so.

Since September our engagement with communities through our planning service saw us determine 103 applications with an approval rate of 82%, receive 152 tree work applications and support the Hythe and Dibden Neighbourhood Plan referendum and examination of that of New Milton, which is likely to go to referendum early in the new year. We have seen a large increase in enforcement cases this calendar year with 305 new cases so far, exceeding last year's (237) number already with one month still to go.

We are pleased to welcome our new building conservation team members which brings our resource back to capacity and will enable a new focus on buildings at risk and conservation area character appraisals. Courses for builders, agents and home-owners on traditional building skills have proved popular in the past few months, providing people with skills to look after their local natural and built heritage. As part of the Our Past Our Future scheme, our built environment was also the focus of this year's New Forest Knowledge Conference which was attended by 130 people and received excellent feedback.

We launched the Building Design Awards with a new category of 'best green building' to mark the 70th anniversary of National Parks and the year of green action and were delighted to support the Brilliance in Business Awards with the New Forest Business Partnership, with New Forest Aromatics winning our Contribution to the National Park Award.

The all-important campaign #add3minutes was launched in Godshill as the clocks went back. The near life-sized silhouettes of animals with numbers of deaths this year on them are again on tour, being located strategically at locations where there is maximum opportunity for them to be viewed and messages communicated. They spent half term at the Beaulieu Visitor Attractions ticket hall coinciding with their 50th Firework display, where we worked with CDA to engage the public and hand out animal accident cards; Wave 105 were also broadcasting and asked everyone there to #add3minutes to their journey home.

As we look to next year we are continuing our campaign to raise awareness of the New Forest's wildlife through an interactive e-Christmas card on the theme of '12 days of wildlife Christmas'. Action for nature and climate will be key themes for us to develop alongside our response to the Glover Review; our focus with partners and communities will be the development our Partnership Plan for 2020-25, arguably the most important such plan yet. We have firm foundations to build on with the excellent work of staff, members and through collaborations with partners and communities in 2019 and I look forward to continuing this with determination together in 2020. A very Happy Christmas to all and here's to a New Year that is the best it can be for the New Forest.

## **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*

Some highlights from the past quarter are outlined below.

- Volunteer working parties to help restore habitats are now well underway for the winter practical work season at a number of privately owned sites across the forest. Grazing introductions and ongoing grazing regimes at Nature Stepping Stones (NFLAS) sites are progressing well and showing good results. Site management plans are being prepared to ensure legacy for these sites post OPOF. Through Working Woodlands (NFLAS) 10 woodlands are being actively managed this winter removing invasive species, restoring hazel coppice and general thinning work using local contractors and supplying timber to local businesses. Relationships between landowners, contractors and local timber business are becoming established and in some cases work is being carried out for the value of the timber.
- The New Forest Knowledge conference on the 'Built Environments of the New Forest: Past, Present and Future' was attended by 130 people and received excellent feedback. A report is currently being produced. It is hoped that the conference will continue after OPOF funding ends in 2020.
- Opportunities to 'Discover Forest Skills' have continued during this quarter including rural skills courses for farmers and commoners (NFLAS), and traditional building skills courses for builders, agents and home-owners. This has provided people with skills to look after their local natural and built heritage and also to support a sustainable landscape.
- The final year's pairings through the commoning mentor scheme have been completed, with a total of 23 people mentored through the programme. A final social event is planned for December which will bring all the mentors and previous mentorees together to share experiences and look to the future.
- The year three apprentices Jake and Hayden completed their placements and gained their qualifications in Environmental Conservation. Hayden has been successful in gaining full time employment with Hampshire County Council as a

warden at Lepe Country Park in the New Forest. The two new apprentices (Beck Sheehan and Jacob Leigh) started their positions in October.

- The Historic Routes & Past Pathways project has now agreed the five routes to be progressed, groundwork is due to start shortly with the aim of finalising the trails spring / summer 2020.
- New Forest Knowledge (NFK) website continues to receive on average 6,000 hits per month and a leaflet promoting the website has been produced. James Brown recently ran a training session at Lymington Library to encourage NFK website usage and additional training sessions at the NFNPA, Netley Marsh History Group and Eling Tide Mill are planned.
- The Commoners Voices exhibition from 2018 has been adapted to enable it to be toured around various locations during 2019 as an extension to the original project. To date the touring commoning exhibition has been at Lymington Town Hall, Spudworks, the New Forest Show, Mottisfont Abbey, Ringwood Meeting House & History Centre and Hengistbury Head Visitor Centre. The exhibition will be at Moors Valley Country park from November till after Christmas. In addition and to ensure legacy of the commoning voices exhibition, the exhibition content will be further adapted to make eight panels that would be suitable to attach to a commoners trailer so that they can be used at outside events such as road safety days, shows and fairs etc. in the future.
- The Walking Festival ran for three weeks (12 October – 3 November) to celebrate 2019 being the Year of Green Action, with the aim to help more people discover the National Park's landscapes and wildlife. We and other partners lead 70 walks including regular contributors such as Forestry England and the National Park to new organisations such as the RSBP at Franchises Lodge and Bird Aware Solent. Over 1,600 people took part which was a 15% increase on 2018. One new development was the partnership between Woodlander at Hoburne Bashley and the our education team. Through this partnership over 220 children from local schools were able to participate in the 2019 Walking Festival by providing a travel grant and free activities. A five-minute piece was included on BBC South Today on 22 October.
- A series of social media posts have been used to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Lottery. This included pieces on wild play, habitat restoration, archaeology and heritage and the Verderers Hall renovations with a total reach of over 35,000.

An end of Scheme event is being planned for 29 April 2020 at Foxbury. There will be optional pre-arranged event tours (2pm – 5.30pm) followed by a celebration BBQ. Invitations will be sent out in the New Year and will include all those that have had some involvement in the scheme such as OPOF partners, members, councillors, funders, volunteers and stakeholders who have directly been involved in the projects such as parish councils, landowners, interest and community groups, apprentice rangers, mentors and mentorees.

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

This is now the last winter season for the NFLAS habitat restoration projects as the projects end in the summer and project officers leave. Therefore there is a lot of practical work being delivered on private land across the Forest through the Working Woodlands and Nature's Stepping Stones projects. Grazing has been introduced onto several new sites including SINC's at Foxhills School near Ashurst and a meadow near Sway.

The work with ExxonMobil at Fawley, to survey their untenanted land and introduce grazing to appropriate areas to support young commoners, is going well with the first site now fenced this quarter and a livestock handling facility built. NFLAS hope that more sites will follow and ecological surveys are being carried out on potential sites.

The work we are doing to assist farmers in improving water quality and use water more efficiently on their farms is continuing. We now have examples of where we have advised, facilitated and delivered a variety of measures including yards concreted, drainage improved, roof constructed over manure pile and water tanks installed to collect rainwater.

### *New Forest Catchment Partnership*

During the period meetings have been held of the Catchment Agri-Environment sub-group which has been successful at bringing together officers from a range of bodies (Environment Agency, Hampshire and IOW Wildlife Trust, New Forest Land Advice Service, Natural England). Current joint projects include guidance for equine owners and applications on behalf of local landowners for Catchment Sensitive Farming grants.

The Partnership is also liaising with the Environment Agency to identify issues and opportunities for Natural Flood Management in the Bartley Water and Fletchwood tributary, as well as how to address potential sources of diffuse pollution. This follows the detailed walkover survey the partnership undertook of the sub-catchment earlier this year.

After over seven years of successful activity, the Catchment Partnership is reviewing its stakeholder analysis and related Communications and Engagement Strategy to take advantage of new opportunities and potential partners. The partnership is undertaking a refresh of its website resources and published its autumn newsletter which contains a range of articles including news of the successful work for migratory eels on the Hartford stream in Beaulieu. Members can view and sign up for the newsletter here

<https://freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/projects/catchment-projects/new-forest-catchment-project/new-forest-water-news/>.

Preparations are in hand for the Partnership's annual Water Forum which is due to take place on Wednesday 29 January 2020 and has the theme 'Wilder for Water'.

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

The first of the three LEI funded projects, (£35,000) at Warren Copse, Holbury Manor, Fawley (owned by Fawley Parish Council), continues to perform well, with the local conservation volunteers helping to look after the woodland with ongoing management of the hazel coppice. The wild play site continues to give pleasure to local young families and the new timber waymarkers have proved popular, with carved owls for the short toddler trail and acorns for the longer trail within the woodland. More footpath improvement within the woodland is planned in the next few weeks, weather and ground conditions permitting.

The second of the LEI projects at Landford Bog (owned by Wiltshire Wildlife Trust) has progressed, with National Grid having sent the first tranche of the total £28,000 funding to the NPA. This first instalment is sufficient to fund the renewal of the perimeter fencing which will allow for the re-introduction of conservation grazing which is an essential part of the management of the site. Other elements of the improvements will follow in year two and three of the project, including the removal of invasive and non-native plant species, construction of a timber walkway and the introduction of log dams to increase the wetness of the bog which has been suffering from drying out.

Franchises Lodge at Hamptworth, owned by the RSPB, is the third LEI project. The full application is still under consideration by National Grid and OFGEM and we hope to hear in December or January if the bid has been successful. The application for £200,000 will pay for rhododendron removal, improvements to paths and tracks and also the renovation of three Scheduled Ancient Monuments (bronze Age barrows).

On all three projects the LEI grant funds up to 75% of the project costs with the remaining 25% being funded by the landowner, either by volunteer hours, management time, cash, provision of materials or expert advice.

#### **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 122 applications in the period 26 September to 27 November and in the same period determined 103 applications with an approval rate of 82%. We are dealing with a number of significant planning proposals that include Fawley Waterside and the replacement of Holmsley Bridge.

Eight appeal decisions have been received. Seven were dismissed and one was allowed.



A meeting for planning agents was held on 9 October which was well received.

A consultation on updated local validation requirements is currently taking place and closes on 31 December.

### *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:

- 153 tree work applications received.
- Six unauthorised cases of works to tree protected by Tree Preservation Orders or Conservation Areas have been investigated with no further legal action being pursued.
- No new Tree Preservation Orders have been made but four TPOs which are on the boundary with New Forest District Council have been reviewed and will be amended to avoid any confusion for the trees' owners or applicants.
- 32 Development Management consultations provided.

The Tree Team took part in this year's Family Tree event on Saturday 9 November at Hoburne Bashley, New Milton, where families are invited to celebrate a birth, marriage, civil partnership or life of a relative this year with the planting of native trees from seed in woodland or in their own garden. They were invited to plant a tree seed to celebrate a loved-one and received a care and seedling certificate. Activities such as pencil making, origami pot making and mulch bombing also took place.

The attendees collected and planted tree seeds (oak, beech, sweet chestnut, field maple, birch etc) with the view of taking two home to look after and grow on so that in the coming years they can be planted at another family trees event or planted in their garden. Collection of local seed is more sustainable than sourcing trees from elsewhere, they will be of local prominence and some taken from the more significant mature trees from the New Forest such as the Knightwood Oak.

Notification of exempt works was issued for pruning one of the oldest trees in the New Forest, the ancient Yew tree at St. Nicholas Church in Brockenhurst. This just happened to be carried out by one of the oldest tree surgery companies in the New Forest, Barnes Tree Surgeon established in 1963 and is now run by the third generation Jamie Barnes. The minor pruning was carried out in order to clear branches from the church roof.

### *Planning Enforcement*

As of the end of November there were 140 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 305 new cases have been opened during 2019 alone, exceeding last year's (237) number already with one month 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 include use of outbuildings, annexes and shepherds huts as separate residential / holiday accommodation, use of land for camping, creation of tracks, and works to listed buildings and historical buildings of heritage value.

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

Having exhausted all available routes of education, pragmatic discussions and negotiation there is likely to be a batch of planning related enforcement notices issued in the next three months.

### *Policy*

Following our decision to accept the invitation to become a member of the Partnership for South Hampshire in the summer, officers have attended a number of meetings of the Partnership. This includes the Water Quality Working Group – made up of the local planning authorities in South Hampshire, Natural England, the Environment Agency and Southern Water - which is progressing work to address the current requirement for 'nitrate neutrality' in new residential development.

The team also continues to support the Neighbourhood Plan-making process within the National Park. Following a positive result in the referendum held in October 2019, the Hythe & Dibden Neighbourhood Plan is being presented for adoption and is the subject of a separate report. The draft New Milton Neighbourhood Plan is currently being examined and will hopefully proceed to its local referendum in early 2020. The team is also working with Test Valley Borough Council and Wellow Parish Council on their emerging Neighbourhood Plan, which is at an earlier stage in the Plan-making process.

A number of important areas of evidence base work are ongoing. Following the decision to introduce the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) within the National Park, we have appointed the specialist consultants Three Dragons to undertake viability testing. Three Dragons is due to complete their evidence gathering in time for an update on CIL to be provided at the full Authority meeting in March 2020.

We have also been working with five neighbouring planning authorities, Natural England and the consultants Footprint Ecology on gathering evidence into the impacts of planned housing development on visitor numbers to the New Forest's protected habitats. This research will be finalised in early 2020 and will form the basis of cross-boundary work to develop a strategic approach to mitigation. In the shorter term, we have updated our own Mitigation Scheme (with the input of Natural England, the RSPB and the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust) and this is the subject of a separate report.

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

### *Archaeology*

November saw the final LiDAR survey undertaken across the New Forest open Crown Lands as part of the HLS scheme. In total, over 23,000 hectares have now been assessed and surveyed, with over 1,000 volunteer days undertaken. All of this was done within the proposed time frame of the HLS scheme.

A two-week geophysical survey of a field next to South Baddesley School, in collaboration with students from Bournemouth University and local volunteers, has led to the discovery of a number of new archaeological sites. These include Iron Age enclosures, pre-historic ring ditches and medieval field systems. Covering just over nine hectares, it is hoped that the survey will be completed in the New Year and that there may be an opportunity to investigate these features further in the future.

A number of archaeology orientated guided walks were undertaken as part of the Walking Festival. Around 30 people took part over three walks which focused on Heywood Sumner, Second World War bombing ranges and the role of Indian soldiers in the New Forest during the Great War.

### *Community led projects*

Our Building Design & Conservation officer resource is now back to capacity and the team will be working proactively with local communities in the New Forest in 2020 on projects including Buildings at Risk and a focused review of identified Conservation Area Character Appraisals.

## **2 Enjoy**

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

#### *Education*

The Education team taught 1,400 students from 11 groups between October and December this year. The groups ranged from infant pupils to post graduate university students, and from sessions on conservation designations to coastal processes. Teacher and tutor evaluations from opposite ends of the education spectrum are testament to the versatility and professionalism of Amy Moore and Chris Marshall.

First Rebecca Mayman of William Gilpin Primary School:

'The pitch, pace and organisation was perfect - the children learnt masses.'

And from Andrew Haggard of Greenwich University:

'Your walk and talk was just the right level for our students, introducing them to the complexities of managing the environment.'

The team contributed to the 2019 Year of Green Action by supporting Simon Hemsley of Woodlander Hoburne Bashley in a partnership project to provide free Schools Guided Walks during the New Forest Walking Festival. Over 220 children enjoyed 'walks through time' around Wilverley, all led by Simon, with NFNPA staff providing back up. One of the social media promotional posts had a reach of 14,000 and 450 engagements (likes, comments and shares). BBC South Today also featured Hoburne Bashley woodland's involvement and ran a piece about getting children out into nature with a visit from Brockenhurst Primary School.

The 2019-20 Travel Grant has now closed, as all the funding for this financial year has been allocated. To date, the grant has enabled over 2,600 children to visit the National Park; the final total will be higher, as a number of schools have already applied for support for visits in the spring term. The grant, though only a maximum of £150 per school, often makes the difference between a school being able to visit the National Park and being unable to afford it. In the words of Michele Semple of Somerford Primary School: 'It made a huge difference to our parents as we have a large proportion of disadvantaged families'. Ms J. Morris of Lymington Infant School said simply: 'Thank you; it enabled the visit to go ahead.'

Finally, from a grateful letter written by Linda Bate of Youth in Romsey, an organisation which supports children and young people from less advantaged backgrounds: 'Without the support of yourselves and Minstead, this trip would not have been possible, but we managed to take 24 children... into a completely new environment. It was such a great adventure for them, so again, many thanks.'

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

The October Wild Play day was very successful with over 650 people coming to Holmsley Campsite to enjoy time outside and take part in natural play, run by a wide range of partner organisations.

This year's Family Tree event took place at Hoburne Bashley. We welcomed over 100 people to the woodland where they enjoyed ranger and tree team activities and planted native seeds. Many people took planted seeds home with instructions to care for the tree and to either plant in their garden or bring back in 2020 to plant at a Family Trees site. The event was promoted on social media with a reach of 20,000 and over 500 engagements.

Rhianne Waylen and Erika Dovey took up the posts of Seasonal Assistant Rangers in September to spend the winter educating the public about the Higher-Level Stewardship Scheme; including the key micro-species it has benefitted and celebrating the projects it had undertaken. They are attending events at a variety of locations such as guided walks

in the New Forest, tourist attractions and historical landmarks. Furthermore, providing a presence in the New Forest using the mobile information unit, literature and models. The Seasonal Rangers have engaged with 267 individuals across nine events from October 2019 to November 2019. Currently, there are 32 events planned until the end of February 2020 when the post ends.

Our coastal ranger attended a Duke of Edinburgh Award ceremony at the Paediatric Nephrology unit at Southampton Children's Hospital supporting the PEEER Project: **P**atient **E**mpowerment, **S**elf **E**steem, **E**mployability and **R**esilience. It is the first hospital in England to offer D of E. We have offered practical conservation in partnership with Hampshire County Council, a beach clean as part of the service requirement and natural art sessions to achieve the skills criteria. As well as the D of E achievements, patients' health and wellbeing has also benefited as they have reported the sessions have addressed mental health and low self-image issues.

### *Communications*

We launched the Walking Festival with 65 walks led by experts and partner organisations over three weeks, with many walks having a wildlife theme. Over 1,600 people attended, up 15% on last year.

There were over 140 entries to a 'micro forest' photography competition, with a campaign highlighting tiny creatures which benefit the Forest's ecosystems. The entries will be judged by our wildlife team and the winners promoted to increase people's understanding of rare and unusual species in the National Park.

Social media posts about bats, spiders, toads and devil's fingers fungi for Hallowe'en achieved a reach on Facebook of over 35,000 and engagement of over 2,000. The posts included messaging about the national park's special qualities and caring for the Forest.

Two seasonal rangers have been appointed to promote the work of the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme in the community. Rhianne Waylen and commoner Erika Dovey have been employed as seasonal rangers and are now working to raise awareness about New Forest wildlife and HLS achievements. The NPA ranger 'mobile unit' van has been kitted out with interpretive materials, activities and information. A programme of community talks and events is being undertaken, telling the HLS story through six key species (what HLS is doing to help them and what individuals can do to help New Forest wildlife – keep dogs on leads, volunteer etc). Events include Exbury Christmas market and guided walks in the Forest.

We marked the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Lottery with social media posts highlighting the achievements of Our Past, Our Future projects funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund reaching over 35,000 people. We also promoted the latest series of OPOF building skills courses which have been hard to recruit to but, with targeted ads and social media promotions, one course in particular was oversubscribed.

We have also been working with the other National Parks on a UK communications strategy and planning for Discover National Parks fortnight in spring. We have helped promote campaigns with sponsors Columbia, Clif Bar and Forest Holidays. The Forest Holidays promotion has to date raised around £45,000 for national parks.

Other communications work included press releases about a farewell to Frank Green and archaeology achievements over the years; 100 volunteers devoting over 100 hours each (and some devoting many more!), adding up to over 32,000 hours donated to helping the New Forest; our statement about the Glover Review; launch of the Building Design Awards, with a new category of 'best green building' to mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of National Parks and the Year of Green Action; arts projects with SPUD, Forest Forge and Coda as part of the Our Past Our Future scheme; the Brilliance in Business Awards with New Forest Business Partnership; and New Milton Neighbourhood Plan consultation.

Some communications can't be issued until after the purdah period. Work to come includes preparation for the Volunteer Fair, the Essential Guide and Pocket Guide visitor publications, celebrating the achievements of OPOF projects and a new online tree map.

We are now providing communications support to the New Forest Trust and to the Commoners Defence Association through their Our Past, Our Future projects, bringing funding into the team and strengthening partnerships.

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

### *Interpretation projects*

The Commoners Voices exhibition has travelled from Mottisfont to Hengistbury Head Visitor Centre and Ringwood Meeting House. It have been very positively received with many thousands viewing. We are looking at how it can continue to tour in 2020 as several venues would like it to return, for example the National Trust at Mottisfont is keen to have it back because it shows the links between the areas they manage and the wider Forest. Lyndsey Stride has given talks about the project to Ringwood Meeting House trustees and to the World Horse Welfare Conference run by the Royal Geographic Society.

We have been pleased by the level of consensus among partner organisations about the need for a more coherent and consistent approach to signage and interpretation, face to face communication, websites and social media etc. The 'New Forest: Special by Design' project aims to help multiple organisations better communicate the New Forest's sense of place and engender a greater sense of pride and respect for it. The consultants are currently drafting their proposed 'approach to communication' for the steering group.

### *Historic Routes project*

The Steering Group has selected the five trail locations to progress. These include Rockford Common, Lepe to Fawley, Fordingbridge & Hyde, Marchwood (Carters Lane)

and Totton and Eling & Netley Marsh (Tatchbury Mount). Rockford Common trail gives us the option for a disabled access route via the surfaced tracks.

We are now working to contact landowners to gain their engagement in the project. Contact has been made with National Trust, Exbury and the Cadland Estates with all being positive towards the project.

With the weather drawing in the rights of way surveying has slowed. 95% of selected routes have been completed with only a handful left to do, none of which are included in any of the suggested trails.

Current volunteer numbers are positive with 40 fully signed up (17 listed as Volunteer Surveyor, 14 as Researcher). There are 14 expressing interest in the other roles soon to be on offer. All parishes, that have suggested trails within their area, are kept informed of project progress via their parish liaison.

A meeting with HCC Access Team regarding any rights of way enhancements did flag up the potential for long delays with any suggested groundworks. This has cast doubt on a completion date of April 2020. Suggested enhancements are being discussed, once agreed a more accurate completion date can be suggested.

### *Health and Wellbeing*

We have worked with the NHS, West Hampshire Clinical Commissioning Group and NFDC to develop thinking on how people can be 'socially prescribed' time in nature or helping nature in the New Forest. The NHS has committed to supporting new link workers, employed by clusters of GP surgeries, and the new link workers have been learning about and actively engaging people with the New Forest and opportunities in nature such as art, walking, cycling and volunteering. We delivered training to this group on 6 November.

We are also discussing with Public Health England and Health Education England two projects for 2020, a collaboration on hosting a Fellowship on children's health and wellbeing and greenspace and also two pilot social prescribing initiatives, one on nature connection for health and one on cycling for health (PEDALL).

Walking for Health, which the NPA supports, has had a very successful second quarter, with 425 walkers walking 2,219 hours between July and September. Walks have a real impact not only on mental and physical health but also on general wellbeing.

### *PEDALL*

Our riders have been enjoying the changing seasons and the beautiful autumnal colours. The number of rides has reduced slightly which has allowed us to spend time working on the bikes including replacing some that have become uneconomical to repair. We are continuing to fundraise through Friends of PEDALL to cover the cost of replacement bikes.

PEDALL project includes a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation element which is provided by Envoy partnership. The Year 2 evaluation report includes some fantastic results including a measure of social and economic return on investment. The project creates a forecasted social and economic return on investment (SROI) of £299,000, or around £3.40 for every £1 invested (operationally). We will be using data from this evaluation report to support our future funding applications. The current PEDALL funding finishes in August 2020 and we are aiming to secure continuation funding.

### *Volunteering*

The 10<sup>th</sup> Annual New Forest National Park Volunteer Fair will be on Sunday 26 January 2020, in Lyndhurst Community Centre. It will highlight over 50 different groups which offer hundreds of opportunities to volunteer. People can turn up anytime between 10.30am and 4pm.

## **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*

At the time of writing, the 22 recreation management actions drafted by the RMS Steering Group have been endorsed by all but one of the organisations on the Steering Group; we hope to receive confirmation from Hampshire County Council very soon.

Good progress is being made on most of the actions including the following highlights.

- The results of the research by Footprint Ecology (to be published early in 2020) will be invaluable both to inform the benefits of a strategic approach to habitat mitigation by local planning authorities and to ensure an evidence-based approach to wider recreation management work.
- Forestry England (FE) is developing an 'enforcement policy' and has been successful in working with the Police and District Council enforcement officers to deal with instances of fly-tipping, overnight parking and instances of out of control dogs. FE will soon also be more proactive with regard to vehicles parked on verges and in gateways.
- Land Use Consultants has started its work on a Local Development Order that we hope will establish criteria and thresholds for changes to where and how much car parking should be provided across the open Forest. The Footprint Ecology data will greatly help our understanding of the fluctuating demand from different user-groups for parking in different parts of the New Forest at different times of year and in different weather conditions. The overall aim will be to protect wildlife and the working Forest and provide a better experience for people.



Officers have had two opportunities to compare our recreation management work with that of other countryside sites. One was at a conference in Dartmoor on 'trends in recreation' organised by the Outdoor Recreation Network; the other was during a visit to the New Forest by Access Officers from other UK national parks. Although there will always be things we can learn from others, on both these occasions we were encouraged to find that in many ways we are 'in the lead'.

### *Educational campaigns*

We launched the animal accidents reduction campaign at 5.00 pm on a Thursday evening at the western approach of Roger Penny Way to coincide with the clocks changing and drawing attention to the fact that these are the peak times of day, week and year for accidents and that this road is one of the worst.

Near life-sized silhouettes of the animals, with numbers killed shown on them, are being displayed around the Forest. The bold signage shows up well in the dark as regular commuters travel during the evening, attracting the attention of both local residents and visitors to the area. Among the areas where the silhouettes were displayed were at the main entrance to Brockenhurst College for all students and visitors to see and to be part of the College's 'Be safe' week and the ticket entrance at Beaulieu Visitor Attractions. This latter display was seen by tens of thousands of visitors over the 50<sup>th</sup> firework celebrations and half term. We and the CDA greeted and engaged with visitors at the fireworks and hand out animal accident emergency cards. Wave 105 who did the music for the fireworks also talked about the dangers and at the end of the event asked everyone to #add3minutes to their journey home. Beaulieu also issued a press release with photos of their staff with the silhouettes. The display then moved to Lymington Town Hall and on to Exxon's site, and they also issued a press release. The next locations are: Lyndhurst (opposite the Fire Station) during the Christmas Lights Fun Days; NFDC offices, Lyndhurst, to be seen by those collecting their new parking clocks and animal accident card which is given away with all clocks; Sandy Balls Holiday Centre; Bramshaw Golf Course; Ramboll offices, Netley Marsh.

The joint press release was picked up by Southampton & Bournemouth Echo, Lymington Times, New Milton Advertiser, Spire FM, and Salisbury Journal. Radio interviews were given to Forest FM and Wave 105, which ran the piece throughout launch day.

In the first few weeks of the three-month campaign the social media reach is over 45,000 with 7,000 engagements.

A recent count by rangers showed that the highest ever proportion (48%) of ponies adjacent to high-risk routes were wearing collars; this is encouraging, especially since many ponies are not caught at drifts.

We are currently liaising with multiple partner organisations to review and plan ahead to next year, both for the Spring Clean litter pick and for engagement to reduce disturbance

of ground nesting birds. The latter includes the recruitment of seasonal assistant rangers for which adverts will be out in January, hence the need to plan ahead.

We have met with the new local coordinator for UK Cycling Events and are confident that they will continue to improve the management of their sportive events. Other event organisers are already setting dates for 2020 and engaging with the Safety Advisory Group and Forestry England to ensure they have effective event plans and permissions well in advance – which then enables information to be shared with parish councils in good time.

### *Access and Rights of Way*

We are developing a new National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative project which is focused on landscape and public access in the Waterside area. We are seeking funding to support three of the historic routes chosen by the Historic Routes and Past Pathways project. These routes would be significantly uplifted in terms of their landscape character, wildlife value and access infrastructure.

## **3 Prosper**

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

#### *Sustainable Tourism / business*

In collaboration with Go New Forest, we are exploring ways to involve local businesses to incorporate/improve existing sustainable practices into their business model and operating procedures. The Brilliance in Business Awards ceremony took place on 28 November in Beaulieu. The Contribution to the National Park Award, which we sponsored, was presented to New Forest Aromatics.

### **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. Although it experienced a 12% drop in patronage, numbers were higher than 2017. Disregarding the three rainy weeks in August, patronage in 2019 was on a par with that of 2018. Unsurprisingly, there is a correlation between weather and popularity of the Tour.

A worthwhile meeting took place on 14 November with the Tour operator's drivers and supervisors. Operational matters were discussed with input and suggestions for the next season. We met with the management team on 29 November to decide the strategic plan

for 2020. All three routes will continue for the same duration of nine weeks in the summer.

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

#### *Affordable Housing*

The new 'Hampshire Homes Hub' (HHH) initiative has been launched and will fully take over from the 'Hampshire Alliance for Rural Affordable Housing' (HARAH) in April 2020. Action Hampshire, who have been running HARAH over the last 15 years, have recently been successful in securing a grant of £150,000 from the Government Agency Homes England to continue to support local communities across all of Hampshire to develop affordable homes.

The New Forest NPA, along with the South Downs NPA and every single authority in Hampshire, will continue to be a member and benefit from a range of services, including access to expertise such as running housing need surveys and community consultations.

#### *Sustainable Communities Fund*

Funds of £2,000 have been allocated to Emery Down Almshouses to renovate the Grade II listed boundary wall and railings in front of the cottages. The cottages reflect the burgeoning Arts and Crafts movement of the time and the boundary wall is a low brick wall with cast iron railings in an alternate spear and fleur-de-lys pattern, with a similarly designed pedestrian gate. Renovating the wall and railings will safeguard its future and the significant heritage interest these contain and is in addition to repairs required to rectify accidental damage involving a car.

In May, funds of £2,000 were awarded to New Milton Town Council working in partnership with Milton Heritage Society to provide a new heritage centre within the derelict Station Master's House in the town. Enough match funding has now been approved through grants and offers of support from local businesses to enable New Milton Town Council to agree terms with South Western Railway and start the refurbishment early next year. The centre will raise awareness of the parish's local history, including the northern part that sits within the National Park boundary, and bring together local history information, maps, censuses, media articles and photographs for residents and visitors to view and study. An education space will be available for local schools and groups to book and use, and local history volunteers will be on hand to help as and when required.

## Reducing Plastics

As part of the Year of Green Action seven NPA staff participated in the Big Microplastic Survey: a citizen science project run through Portsmouth University. The survey, led by the Coastal Ranger, was conducted at Lepe Beach and the data collected will be used to contribute to the research being carried out to find where nurdles and microplastics are being washed up on our beaches and then to hopefully identify where they are being manufactured. Following on from staff discussions and conversations outside this organisation, other national businesses have been in contact to arrange further surveys and look at ways companies such as Utility Networks can reduce their waste plastic packaging and advise their staff on more sustainable products and practices.

At the other end of the spectrum a session was held at St Barbe's MY Museum Children's Club (MC2) to encourage 6-11 year olds, and their parents, to look at the difference they can make at a local level through understanding the impacts rubbish has on our marine environment and looking at alternative options to plastic in a viable and sustainable way. At the National Parks UK Education Conference the Coastal Ranger ran a workshop to challenge all UK National Parks to think about their use of single-use plastics and plastic waste and how we can change our behaviour and practices to influence other organisations, businesses and communities.

## 4 Achieving Excellence

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

#### Human Resources

As at 30 November 2019 the total staff headcount was 83 or 72.70 full-time equivalents (FTEs).

	<b>Headcount</b>	Variation from previous report	<b>Full Time Equivalents</b>	Variation from previous report
Core funded	64*	+ 1	55.86*	+ 1.50
Funded by external projects	19	+ 2	16.84	+ 2.31
<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>+ 3</b>	<b>72.70</b>	<b>+ 3.81</b>

\*Of the core funded roles, one staff member (1 FTE) is working in shared services, 26 are part-time and two are on a fixed-term contract.

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

<b>Name</b>	<b>Job title</b>	<b>Contract type</b>	<b>How funded</b>
Rhianne Waylen	Seasonal Assistant Ranger	Seasonal	Project funded
Jakob Leigh Beck Sheehan	New Forest Apprentice Rangers	Fixed-term, one year	Project funded
Sally Knott	Senior Building Design and Conservation Officer	Permanent	Core funded
Lisa Reynolds	Communications Assistant	Fixed-term, one year	Project funded

Congratulations also to Denise Allen who was appointed Member Services Administrator.

Recently we said goodbye to two New Forest Apprentice Rangers (Hayden Bridgeman and Jake Barnes) who successfully completed their apprenticeships. We wish them well in their future careers. We also said goodbye to Frank Green (Archaeologist) and wish him well in his retirement.

Recruitment is currently underway for:

<b>Job title</b>	<b>Contract type</b>	<b>How funded</b>
Communications Administrator	Fixed-term	Project funded
Planning Officer	Maternity cover	Core funded

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

##### *Team New Forest*

Following the successful partnership event in September and consideration of the State of the Park report at the Authority meeting in October, preparations for the Partnership Plan review are on course. In the next couple of months, the executive leadership team will work with members and staff to identify a number of key priorities for the next Partnership Plan which will then be shared and discussed with external organisations.

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

##### *ICT Services*

The planning interactive map has now gone live on the website. In addition to being able to see whether a location is within the NPA boundary, the map shows a number of useful

layers which can be switched on and off. From the planning application layers, users can select an application, link through to Public Access and view any uploaded documents relating to it. The interactive tree map has now been expanded to include tree work applications along with TPOs.

Earlier in the year we were approached by Bracknell Forest Council to share our experiences in developing SharePoint and an intranet totally in-house. Being particularly impressed with our intranet, ICT were invited to visit Bracknell Forest Council last week to give a demonstration to their intranet project group.

A new planning scanner has been installed, and a second Microsoft Dynamics workshop is being arranged.

## **5 Members**

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

- 21 November – members day – State of the Park report
- 10 December – members day – Fawley Site Visit

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

- 21 January 2020 – Planning Committee Meeting
- 23 January 2020 – Authority meeting

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

- 10 October – Access Officers meeting
- 11 October – New Forest Leadership Group meeting
- 21 October – SE FWAC meeting
- 22 October – Health & Wellbeing Task & Finish Group
- 24 October – HIOWWT Wilder Conference
- 29 October – NPP Big Ideas session and AGM
- 30 October – NPE AGM and Board meeting
- 1 November – HIOW CX meeting
- 4 November – Resources Audit and Performance Committee
- 4 November – Meeting with Business South
- 6 November – Meeting with Chief Executive, NFDC
- 7 November – Place Story for Hampshire Steering Group

- 8 November – Wildlife roundtable discussion
- 9 November – Co-facilitate Test Valley Citizens' Assembly
- 10 November – Remembrance Day attendance at Lyndhurst
- 12 November – Hampshire Rural Forum Steering Group
- 13 November – Defra progress meeting
- 14 November – ENPOG meeting
- 15 November – Beaulieu Dinner
- 19 November – meeting with National Capital Research
- 20 November – meeting with new Chair of New Forest Marke
- 21 November – members day – State of the Park report
- 22 November – telecon with Defra
- 22 November – site visits with Southern Regional Flood & Coastal Committee
- 26 November – Hampshire Partnership 2050 workshop
- 27 November – Waterside Steering Group call
- 3 December – St Georges conversation
- 9-11 December – NPO Awaydays
- 13 December – Verderers tour of stock
- 16 December – Business South Board meeting
- 17 December – Green Halo Steering Group

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

- 21 October - Charing Forestry England Housing Review
- 30 October - National Park England board meeting and AGM – London

#### **6 Recommendation**

**To note the report.**