

# Park Life

News from the New Forest National Park Authority



Autumn/Winter 2019

FREE!



## Commoning for the future

Life for young commoner Daisy Slocombe can sometimes 'run at 300 mph'. 'I love the drift season,' she said. 'Rounding up the ponies in autumn is amazing.'

This essential part of the commoning calendar is not for the faint-hearted. Commoners pull together on horseback or on foot to round up their ponies and give them essential marks and checks. Now's also the time to put on new reflective collars and cut tails to show which district of the Forest their owner lives in.

'It's fast-paced and turns into a bit of a stampede,' said Daisy, who's been turning her own animals out onto the Forest for the past four years. 'My non-commoning friends think I'm some sort of cowgirl!'

But it's not all exhilaration for 20-year-old Daisy, who's experienced the harsher realities of commoning first-hand. 'The animal accidents are tough to deal with. I'm lucky enough to have never received the dreaded call from the Agister, but I know plenty of people who have,' she said. 'Livestock can be really unpredictable. I'm very aware of the animals but once even I had to slam my breaks on when a pony suddenly ran into the road in front of me.'

It was also touch and go when she came across a cow in serious difficulties trying to give birth on the Forest. 'My phone had died so I had to gallop home and fetch the local agister (Mike Lovell) who then showed me how to clamp the calf and pull it out. I learn a lot of things

'My non-commoning friends think I'm some sort of cowgirl!'

from Mike, he teaches me what to do and what not to do!'

Daisy was born and raised in the Forest. Her Dad, Uncle and previous ancestors all grew up here, and previous generations turned stock out. Surprisingly, she can recognise one of her ponies among a herd from a quarter of a mile away. As she pointed to her filly, she said: 'She's branded, not handled, although I'm lucky enough to have a riding pony who is Forest bred. I drift Betty and race her in the Point to Point.'

Forest grazing rights are attached to the 'occupation' of parcels of local land recorded in the Verderers' Atlas: Each commoner must have sufficient 'back-up' land, with and without rights, to support all of their animals that may graze the Open Forest during the year.

'It's a time-consuming way of life, and it occupies my thoughts most of the time, but most of us have other full or part-time work,' explained Daisy who has a job in a local hotel and is off to university in 2020. 'We do it because we love the Forest and want it to stay looking how it is. Without commoning and the animals grazing, the landscape would just be an overgrown mess.'

## Thousands join Year of Green Action

Thousands of people in the New Forest have joined in a nationwide Year of Green Action to improve the natural world and mark the 70th anniversary of National Parks.

The year of events and activities kicked off with record numbers attending the Volunteer Fair in Lyndhurst in January. Over 750 people found out about volunteering opportunities from 50 New Forest organisations.

National Parks 70 1949-2019



Deputy Surveyor Bruce Rothnie, National Parks Minister Lord Gardiner (centre) & New Forest NPA Chief Executive Alison Barnes celebrating the 70th anniversary of UK National Parks, and Forestry England's centenary

Digging up the past



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Photo competition



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Wildlife in focus



6 & 7

What's on



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## Commoning for the future

This year, the New Forest National Park Authority and CLA presented Daisy with the Young Farmer/Commoner of the Year Award, recognising her incredible work alongside the Commoners Defence Association (CDA) and on the Young Commoners Committee. She produces newsletters for fellow young commoners and goes into schools to educate children about the New Forest.

'Communicating what we do is one of the hardest parts of the job,' said Daisy. 'We want to work with people, not against them. The public needs to know that feeding the animals is not OK, and that livestock can bite or kick. We really need the public's help to keep the Forest as it is, and to keep our animals safe and happy – for example by everyone staying within speed limits and keeping their dogs under control. I think it is important to first of all educate people, of all ages, on the benefits of commoning and to allow them to understand that these animals aren't just grazing for the sake of it, they're doing a very important job, which we must all maintain.'

As well as support from the public, Daisy believes encouragement from the commoning community is crucial. 'I'm learning so much from others,' she said. 'We look out for each other and work

together. We're like a big family. I know far from everything. I get told if I'm doing something wrong, but then I get shown the correct way and that's the only way I'll ever learn!'

Something else helping young commoners is the Verderers of the New Forest Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) scheme. 'This is incredibly important as it funds things such as reflective collars, and back-up grazing should we need to bring livestock off the Forest. It makes it much easier for young commoners, like myself, to stick with it and continue the tradition which is so expensive. We're lucky this scheme helps make commoning more accessible for us.'

She added: 'I hope to get my trailer licence in the next year, which I'll be able to do through the HLS scheme. Providing I pass, I'll have a lot more independence and won't need to rely on family members.'

Daisy's hopes for the future are to see many more young people get into commoning; to build up her stock 'with lots of filly foals' and to see the New Forest continue to thrive.

'Commoning is an ancient way of life,' she said. 'It's a very old tradition with modern day pressures, and we need everyone's support for it to survive.'

## Thousands join Year of Green Action



National Park Award winners 2019 with Lord Gardiner

National Parks Minister Lord Gardiner attended the National Park stand at the New Forest Show in July and cut a celebration cake. He then handed out the National Park Awards to winners in categories ranging from Young Environmental Champion to Young Commoner and Rural Diversification.

Other highlights throughout the year included:

- National Park and Forestry England staff worked with commoners and filmmakers on a major new BBC Four documentary 'New Forest: a year in the wild woods' exploring the landscapes, history and wildlife that make the New Forest one of the UK's most important ancient woodlands. It was broadcast in January and again in September.
- 4,000 people attended our stand at the New Forest Show and 67% said the green activities on the stand such as creating bug hotels had encouraged them

to do something positive for the environment. 72% of those surveyed said they had learnt more about New Forest wildlife.

- Two new wild play areas were launched – at Ashurst and Sway – to encourage children to connect with nature.
- 43 schools and youth groups bid for Green Action Grants. In total £6,300 was awarded to establish wildlife gardens and composting areas, build bug hotels and raised beds, and buy tools and litter picking equipment.



- Over 1,200 people joined in the Great British Spring Clean in the New Forest in March with 50 litter picks across the Forest and coast.

New Forest National Park Authority Interpretation and Outreach Manager Jim Mitchell said: 'It's been heartening to see people of all ages take positive action to improve the environment as we mark the 70th anniversary of national parks in the UK.'

'The New Forest National Park is a world capital for wildlife but is under great pressure due to climate change, 15 million day visits a year and thousands of new homes planned close by. It's imperative that we all do our bit to protect this fragile landscape so it thrives into the future.'

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**D**rivers are being warned to be extra careful this winter as accidents peak at commuter times in the darker nights.

Forest organisations are appealing to people to drive slowly and to just add three minutes to their journey - the extra time it takes to drive some of the most dangerous routes in the Forest at 30mph rather than 40mph.

There were 63 animals killed last year on Forest roads. Most of the accidents are caused by local people on regular trips, with four main roads seeing the most accidents:

- Lymington — Beaulieu — Dibden Purlieu
- Brockenhurst — Sway
- Burley — Picket Post
- Cadnam — Godshill

Five near-life-size animal silhouettes are again going on tour to prominent locations around the New Forest. They show the number of ponies, cattle, donkeys, pigs and sheep killed last year and provide an eye-catching reminder that winter is the most dangerous time of the year as the evenings become darker.

Nigel Matthews, of the New Forest National Park Authority, said: 'To reduce the accidents, many things are done by several organisations all year round. At this peak time for accidents there will be prominent road warning signs, the mobile police speed camera van out in the Forest day and night, and a social media campaign urging drivers to slow down and #add3minutes to their journey.'



**'Failing to report an accident with a commoner's animal can lead to prosecution.'**

# #add3minutes



Sue Westwood, Clerk to the Verderers, said: 'Drivers should be aware that they are very likely to encounter animals on the Forest's roads, day and night. Animals don't have road sense so please help avoid accidents by driving slowly and carefully.'

'Failing to report an accident with a commoner's animal can lead to prosecution. The Verderers offer a reward of up to £5,000, payable to anyone providing information which leads to the successful

prosecution of a driver responsible for a hit and run accident.'

Tony Hockley, Chairman of the Commoners' Defence Association, whose members own the animals, said: 'Local people let their animals graze the New Forest to protect the landscape — it's their grazing which helps maintain one of the best places in Britain for nature and for people to enjoy.'

'It's vital that the animals remain free to roam widely,

which means they'll be using the roads and verges. We all need to drive carefully, especially at night.'

People have worked hard together to reduce the number of accidents by 40% over the last 10 years, but one accident is too many.

- **Report all accidents involving a pony, cow, donkey, pig or sheep to the Police on 999 (emergency) and 101 (non-emergency).**

## Young people inspired by the Forest



Young people learning about the New Forest

**M**ore than 500 young people from all over Hampshire spent a fun and educational day in the New Forest National Park as part of their four-week National Citizen Service.

Rangers at the New Forest National Park Authority led summer activities for groups of 15 to 17-year-olds who'd signed up to the nationwide voluntary personal and social development programme. Topics included woodland and heathland management; commoning; recreation; invasive species; protected landscapes and health and wellbeing.

Craig Daters, New Forest National Park Authority ranger, said: 'They particularly enjoyed the practical tasks which included a total of 240 hours pulling up invasive Himalayan balsam and

rhododendron plants; 75 hours transplanting and cutting hazel poles for charcoal production; and 28 hours helping to thin out woodland.'

The NPA worked with other organisations including Forestry England, the New Forest Heritage Centre, RSPB, Blackwater Conservation Group and the Pondhead Conservation Trust — who were all keen to share their time, passion, knowledge and skills with the young people.

Liam Cooke, NCS Curriculum Coordinator said: 'Our participants gave outstanding feedback

on the professionalism and enjoyment of these sessions. The New Forest National Park Authority had a hugely positive impact on the hundreds of young people they educated, supported and developed over the course of the NCS programme, and we look forward to working with them again.'

Craig added: 'Our sessions are unique and offer an unrivalled opportunity for hundreds of teenagers who live across Hampshire to enjoy, understand and play a part in caring for the New Forest.'

To register your interest for next summer, please contact Gillie Molland, lead ranger at gillie.molland@newforestnpa.gov.uk

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Frank Green Credit: Barry Whitcher

**'It has also been such a great joy working with our volunteers'**



Frank Green at Buckland Rings, an Iron Age hill fort at Lymington

# National Park's own 'Indiana Jones' hangs up his hat

**'How would I define archaeology? I suppose you could call it studying other people's rubbish!' laughed Frank Green, the New Forest National Park Authority's lead archaeologist who's now retiring after digging up the past for most of his life.**

Frank has worked in Hampshire for nearly 45 years and has been a driving force within the National Park for the past 13. Using the latest resources, technology and people power he's thrown up some fascinating insights into who has lived here and how the land was managed.

'It's a very pro-active job', he said. 'You're always achieving things. You're getting outcomes which could be recognised for hundreds of years.'

Frank and his team not only advise on the right archaeological approach during building and conservation work, but also protect the New Forest's rich and varied history and culture. The Authority receives hundreds of planning

applications each year and each one is assessed for any potential impact on archaeology.

As he steps into active retirement, Frank has a list of stand-out memories from his time in the Forest. 'Radiocarbon dating is one of them,' he said. 'This method has revealed that some places in the Forest date back further than we thought. Using other scientific dating techniques, we've found some deposits going back up to a million years. That means we're not dealing with humans but their predecessors.'

Another high point has been the use of geophysical surveys which reveal what can't be seen on the surface – turning up a lot of new data about the area without needing excavation.

'It's also been such a great joy working with our volunteers,' said Frank. 'I'm immensely grateful to all the people who've come forward to help us. And I've loved meeting colleagues across all the other national parks.'

Frank's love affair with artefacts began long before the nation's interest in Indiana Jones. He was just four when he had his first archaeological encounter in his parents' garden. 'I started finding clay tobacco pipe fragments in the ground, thinking they were sticks of chalk,' he said. 'My grandfather explained what

they were and that these pipes were once given away free in bars.'

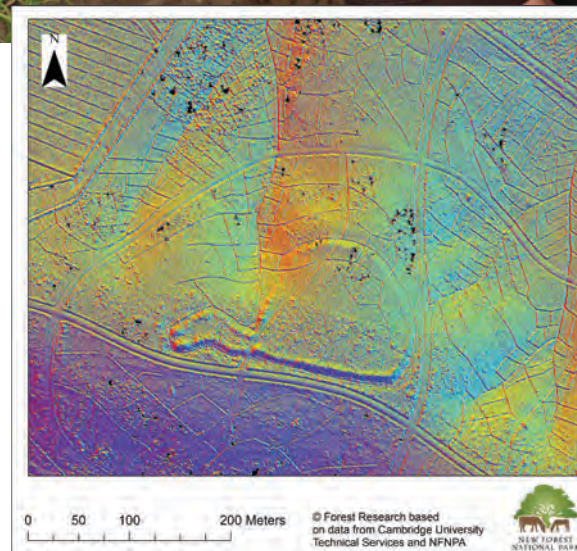
When he was six, Frank's mother 'carted him off to the British museum' on visits to London where his father worked. He never found it a chore; in fact, the bug had already bitten, and by the time he was 13 he'd seen much of Egypt 'but it was all too glitzy' and he preferred the archaeology at home.

Little wonder. After studying pre-history and archaeology at Sheffield University he moved to Southampton University and worked on botanical material from the Mary Rose and similar projects 'some of which I'm writing about 40 years later in my retirement,' he said.

Over the years Frank specialised in environmental data as well as botanical and organic materials, and building conservation – all the way ignoring his father's advice to 'get a proper job'.

'In the '50s and '60s not many people worked in archaeology,' explained Frank. 'There were very few courses. Now things have moved on apace, and there are so many more resources available.'

The New Forest was the first national park, for example, to obtain complete Lidar coverage, using lasers from an aircraft to scan and map the terrain below.



Iron Age hill fort Lidar image

Lidar (Light Detection and Ranging), is a technique that can 'see through' vegetation to reveal previously unknown landforms, such as medieval field systems. It's identified more than 3,000 archaeological sites in the New Forest which can now be protected.

The team has also been exploring new levels of identification. Along the coast, for example, due to sea level rising, preserved timber and underground structures have been discovered. 'A Neolithic forest in Beaulieu... a timber causeway off Calshot.... Potentially there's a lot more prehistoric material which has been preserved by rising seas,' said Frank.

Despite the changing times and tides, one constant through the years is that archaeology is an analytical process. 'This is one job you can get away with over-analysing everything,' said Frank. 'We have to ask lots of questions and never take anything on face value. Every job needs at least two to three confirmatory pieces of evidence.'

'This is especially true in the New Forest where there are many folk tales which aren't necessarily supported by evidence. Archaeology helps you pull apart these tales.'

Frank describes the New Forest as a man-made landscape with a clothing of nature. 'Everywhere has been subject to human interference and human change,' he said. 'The landscape is stuffed with archaeology. But finding nothing is also significant. We'll then ask: "Why did no-one settle here? What was happening in the past to prevent it?"'

All the digging and monitoring is the study of everything to do with man's past. 'It's not just about finding nice things either but looking at objects thrown away or lost.'

'With these things we can find out more about lifestyles, cultures and religions and how people have managed the landscape. In a way it's a study of people through possessions and what they have left behind. Through these, we find that our ancestors are often not so different from us.'

As for a legacy, Frank would like his to be 'making all this information accessible to a much wider audience'.

'The more people know and understand what's out there in the Forest, the more they can help protect it.'



Archaeology volunteers excavating near Beaulieu in 2018





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# Wildlife in focus

## Coastal wintering birds



By Nigel Matthews – Head of Recreation Management and Learning

‘The birds are particularly wary of dogs that stray from well-used paths’

During the winter months, the New Forest National Park’s 26 miles of coastline becomes a mecca for thousands of birds visiting from Europe and beyond.

About 25,000 Brent geese alone fly from northern Russia to overwinter across the Solent – that’s 10% of the global population. You’ll see them feeding in small groups or large

flocks on the shore or in fields just inland. You can see many other species at Lymington-Keyhaven Nature Reserve with big flocks of lapwing, dunlin and black-tailed godwit, as well as wigeon and teal.

It was good to see that some pairs of curlews managed to find sufficiently undisturbed locations to raise young in 2019. They spend the winter on the coast,

Curlew



Brent goose  
Credit: Nigel Matthews

either locally or elsewhere in Europe.

These coastal wintering birds are vulnerable. Hemmed in by growing industry, urban and intensively farmed areas to the west and east, they frequent the remaining areas of saltmarsh, mudflat and coastal grazing marsh.

When the tide is right these vital habitats provide a wealth of eelgrass, shellfish, worms and crustaceans for the thousands of waders, ducks and geese.

However, the twice-daily tidal cycle and the fact that many birds can’t feed when it’s dark means that the time-slots when feeding is possible are very restricted.

The birds are particularly wary of dogs that stray from well-

used paths – an off-lead dog on the foreshore can create mass panic, lost feeding or roosting time and a waste of flying energy searching for somewhere safe to land.

We can help make a difference maintaining these ‘restaurants and runways’ for the birds by keeping our distance, staying on the main tracks in winter, and causing minimal disturbance.

It’s vital that the birds are in tip-top condition so they can cope with bad winter weather. In spring, most then fly hundreds or thousands of miles to their breeding sites, so it’s all the more important that they have enough fat reserves for the journey and to enable them to lay eggs when they arrive.

## Secrets of the micro-forest



Zoom in for a closer look and you’ll discover some amazing wildlife species in the New Forest National Park.

The smaller species, which often go unseen, have an equal part to play in keeping the New Forest’s site of special scientific interest (SSSI) in good condition and one of the most ecologically-important areas in Europe.

We’re celebrating the 10th year of the Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) scheme, which is helping teeny wonders to thrive, including:

### Nail fungus



Resembling a white nail head with tiny dark spots, the fungus lives on fresh pony

dung – (but not cattle’s as it’s too runny!). The New Forest National Park is the only place in the UK where this fungus is found. Mycologists come from far and wide to see it, and it flourishes in autumn – often right until spring.

Nail fungus only exists thanks to the commoning tradition, which the HLS scheme supports and helps to fund.

### Sundew

Sundews are some of the most fascinating plants in the New Forest as they are carnivorous. At about one centimetre tall, they’re found in nutrient-poor wet soils and the sticky scarlet hairs that cover the leaves are a perfect trap for small insects. This prey provides the nutrients that the plant is missing.

The New Forest’s wet heaths, mires and bogs, where sundews can be found, are internationally important. HLS wetland restoration is aiming to improve different units within the SSSI so they are in a ‘favourable’



condition. Unfavourable conditions are usually the result of artificial drainage; tree and scrub encroachment and non-native invasive plant species.

### Silver studded blue butterfly

The New Forest is one of the strongholds for this heathland speciality. Much of its habitat has been lost beyond the Forest, and it’s only found in a few other places in the UK.

They like an area where the heathland is short, as well as plenty of young heather. This is helped by grazing, burning, and restoring areas of ancient heathland by removing conifer plantations as part of the HLS scheme.

### Tadpole shrimp

The New Forest is one of only of two places in the UK where these survive. At 360 million years old they’re older than the dinosaurs.

Also known as triops, this rare species breathes through its feet and can lie dormant for decades in temporary ponds. Pond edges lightly poached (trodden) by livestock turned out onto the Forest are important for their life cycle. The HLS also funds specialist surveys of under-recorded and rare species, including tadpole shrimp.



### How can YOU help protect these important species?

- Stick to the paths – enjoy the Forest’s wildlife without inadvertently harming it
- Keep dogs out of ponds, streams and bogs. Their movement can stir up sediment and the flea treatments from their skin can transfer into the water, causing damage to freshwater plants and animals
- Keep your distance from livestock
- Volunteer in the New Forest National Park. There are plenty of opportunities including surveying and monitoring wildlife habitats, and practical conservation such as clearing scrub and invasive plants. More information at [newforestnpa.gov.uk/volunteering](http://newforestnpa.gov.uk/volunteering)



Southern damselfly  
Credit: Colin Perry

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## Woodlands for all

Wildlife is thriving and the local community is enjoying the improved woodland at Warren Copse in Fawley.

Wildlife habitats are being restored and local accessibility improved, thanks to the National Lottery Heritage Fund’s Our Past Our Future landscape partnership scheme, and funding from the National Grid’s Landscape Enhancement Initiative.

The New Forest National Park Authority and New Forest Land Advice Service has been working with Fawley Parish Council and the Warren Copse and Holbury Manor Conservation Group, organising access improvements and giving land management advice to make the area better for wildlife.

A team of eager volunteers has been coppicing and thinning the trees, allowing more light onto the forest floor which lets plants such as bluebells and wood anemones to regenerate naturally.

This lighter habitat also attracts many other species, such as butterflies, insects and birds to this site of importance for nature conservation (SINCO).

Sarah Kelly, Landscape Officer for the New Forest National Park Authority, said: ‘Logs have been recycled and used to create a wild play site here – for children to discover and connect with nature.’

Interested in volunteering in the New Forest? Contact Richard Austin on 01590 646661 or [richard.austin@nflandadvice.org.uk](mailto:richard.austin@nflandadvice.org.uk)

Find out more about the Our Past, Our Future landscape partnership scheme at [newforestnpa.gov.uk/landscapepartnership](http://newforestnpa.gov.uk/landscapepartnership) and National Grid’s Landscape Enhancement Initiative at [lei.nationalgrid.com](http://lei.nationalgrid.com)



‘Logs have been recycled and used to create a wild play site here - for children to discover and connect with nature’

Understanding wildlife and the natural world encourages them to protect and preserve the local environment, making them better future custodians of the New Forest.’

Some of the timber from the cleared trees has been re-used and carved to create beautiful waymarkers and wildlife sculptures. Two woodland trails take local residents on a quiet nature journey through dappled light, while improved footpaths and wider timber bridges means the trails are now accessible in all seasons.

‘It’s lovely here at any time of year,’ said Sarah. ‘From the bright green flourish of spring to the lovely smell of fallen leaves in winter.’

Steve Postlethwaite, clerk to Fawley Parish Council said: ‘The National Park Authority, in partnership with others, has enabled a lot of improvements to happen at Warren Copse, yet it still looks

rural. Not only has it greatly benefited the woodland, it’s instilled a real pride and sense of ownership in the local community who live just outside the National Park boundary. The work here reinforces that our natural spaces are worth looking after. If we are to fully enjoy them, we need to continue to invest in their maintenance.’



Warren Copse Owl waymarker



Bug hunting at Warren Copse

# Wildlife in focus

## Verges going greener



Mill Lane Burley – residents’ own measures before work



Mill Lane Burley – May 2019

As verges go, the ones we have in the New Forest are pretty special. So special that they’re among the most important in Europe and are a separate designated feature of the New Forest’s Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

For several years now a programme has been underway to restore miles of verges back to their original green roots, after years of erosion caused by vehicles parking or driving on them. But what’s so great about these strips of grass which hug the National Park’s roadsides? And why is it important to protect them?

You’d be forgiven for not noticing these forest edges as you travel through the National Park. They often look like muddy or grassy areas that simply link the forest to the road. In fact, these verges are incredibly important habitats supporting many different animals and plant species such as chamomile, harebell, small fleabane and pennyroyal. Not only that, they’re an important part of the New Forest landscape, softening the visual impact of roads and buildings, as well as providing food for the free-roaming livestock.

Thanks to the New Forest Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) scheme, hundreds of verges have been carefully restored over the last few years by working with local communities and encouraging people to avoid parking on them. Many more areas are currently on the programme after being identified as needing work.

Jayne Albery, Forestry England’s HLS Verge Restoration Officer said: ‘The New Forest is a nationally-important area for conservation, and that



Jayne Albery HLS Verge Restoration Officer

includes its verges. Over the years many of them have become informal parking spots or stopping areas. This can really damage the Forest as the vegetation gets worn away, tree roots exposed and the ground impacted. Over time this starts to reduce the footprint of the Forest, gradually eroding and reducing it. This is why it’s particularly rewarding to see our verge restoration work starting to reverse this decline.’

The first stage in restoring any verge across the Forest is for Jayne to consult widely with parish councils, the public, commoners and verderers. Operational site assessments are carried out, with biodiversity and heritage taken into account. She also looks into why people are using verges and assessing the impact if they can’t be accessed.

‘We know that some are unauthorised parking areas which dog walkers and other visitors might have become used to parking on,’ she said. ‘Others might be parking spots outside properties or where residents close to the Forest leave their vehicles.’

By working with local communities Jayne has been able to come up with plans that still provide ample parking but also avoid damage to the Forest.

She said: ‘We ask those enjoying time here to park in one of our 130 designated car parks in the Forest, and residents within their own property. A lot of improvements have been made by working with communities in this way to avoid further erosion taking place.’

In some cases physical restoration of the verges may include installing ditches and banks or dragon’s teeth (small chestnut posts). With these protections in place the damaged verge can then be left to recuperate untouched and vegetation gradually returns. ‘We have to be mindful at all times that the New Forest is a SSSI. So when doing any earth works as part of restoring these verges we don’t bring soil or seeds in from other areas,’ said Jayne. ‘This ensures we don’t inadvertently bring in any pests or non-native species, and also helps to keep disruption to a minimum.’ The area is then monitored frequently to measure the effectiveness of the work and to see if any minor changes are needed.

‘I’m really pleased the HLS scheme has allowed us to carry out this restoration work,’ said Jayne. ‘Thanks must go to everyone for their understanding and co-operation. With everyone’s help we’re protecting one of the last strongholds for a large amount of plant and animal species.’



Pennyroyal mint flowers and small fleabane seeds  
Credit: Clive Chatters

To see where verge restoration works have taken place, or are planned in the future, go to [hlsnewforest.org.uk/verges](http://hlsnewforest.org.uk/verges)



# New planning guidelines adopted for the New Forest National Park

**A** new 'Local Plan' has been adopted to guide planning decisions in the New Forest National Park, containing stronger policies to protect the environment.

The New Forest National Park Authority's revised suite of planning policies includes guidance on the scale and location of new housing, as well as protecting the natural and built environment and meeting community needs.

The policy review, which began in 2015, included several rounds of consultation with the public and a wide range of organisations. It also came under independent examination by the Secretary of State to ensure it was justified and supported by robust evidence in areas such as sustainability, wildlife habitats and housing land availability.

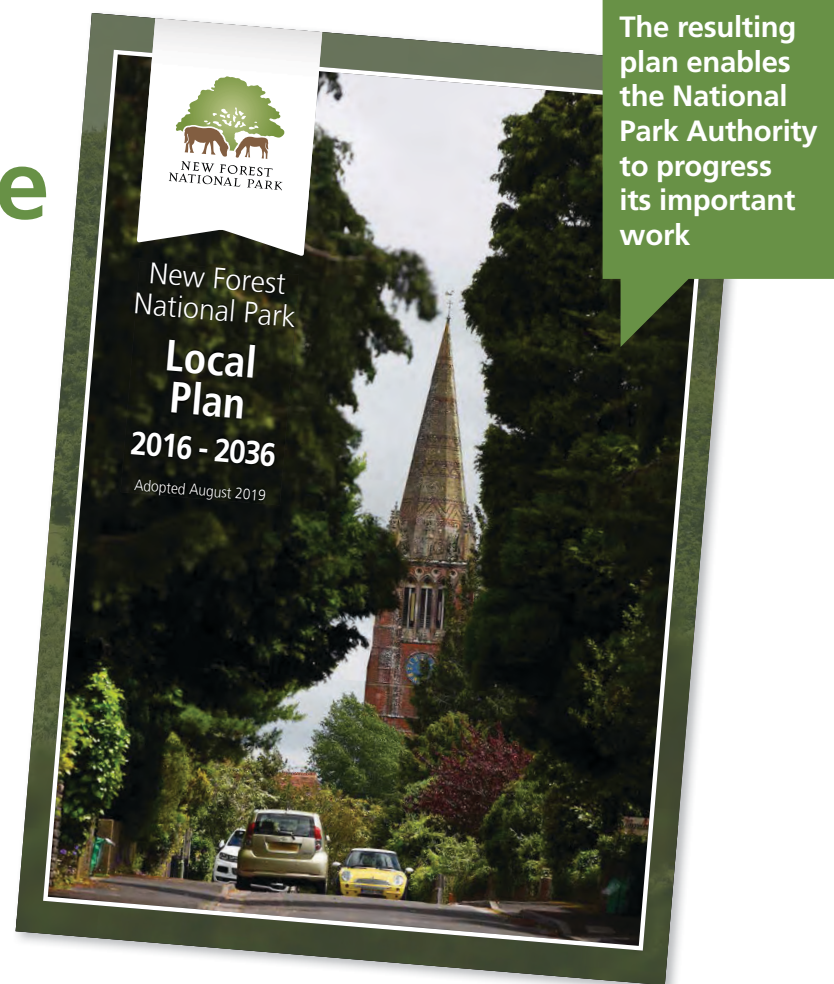
The resulting Local Plan enables the National Park Authority to progress its important work conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area.

The Plan also includes new policies in several areas, including more support for affordable housing and commoners' dwellings; safeguarding areas of tranquillity; and protecting the Forest's landscape character, trees and historic environment.

Existing planning policies to protect, maintain and enhance nationally, regionally and locally-important sites and features of the natural environment – including habitats and species of biodiversity importance, geological features and the water environment – are retained in the new Plan.

The limited development planned for the National Park focuses on meeting the needs of local people, ensuring the area remains a living, working landscape. This will happen through:

- restricting the size of new homes to ensure developments address identified local needs for smaller one-to-three bedroomed properties
- a small increase in housing development from the current average of around 25 homes a year to 40 per year. Most will be on sites which have existing planning consents, on brownfield sites or 'windfall' development which becomes available unexpectedly
- a lower site size threshold for new developments (three dwellings or more) to make provision for affordable housing. It also proposes keeping the existing policy that all homes on 'rural exception' sites should be affordable
- allocating a few sites for new housing for the first time since the National Park was designated in 2005. On these new housing sites we will be seeking a significant proportion of affordable housing to meet local housing needs
- restricting any developments of care homes to cater for local people, rather than external demand
- a new policy on major development within the National Park, ensuring a high bar is set and requiring robust justification for any such proposals.



The resulting plan enables the National Park Authority to progress its important work

Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre, New Forest National Park Authority Chairman, said: 'Our planning policies play a key role in protecting the National Park's special qualities and wildlife, supporting the local economy and conserving the distinctive New Forest character of our villages and rural areas.'

'This updated Local Plan is an extremely significant step for the Authority and allows our planning service to continue its important work in helping to protect and enhance the Forest for future generations.'

The new Local Plan can be viewed at [www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/localplan](http://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/localplan)



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# ON THE MARQUE

Celebrating the best of New Forest produce

## New chairman for New Forest Marque

**'Our members play a big part in supporting the beautiful Forest ecosystem'**

Local produce scheme the New Forest Marque welcomes a new chairman, Dan Parsons.

Dan is a Winchester-based company director and brings with him first-class business acumen, a lifelong passion for traditional crafts and a love of the Forest.

He has a background in finance and has set up several

new companies. His depth of experience and knowledge has helped businesses to evolve and prosper. Dan said: 'I'm incredibly privileged to be appointed as the chairman of such a fantastic organisation. There's a wealth of skill across the Forest region, a rich variety of incredible members and a team of great people to work with.'

New Forest Marque Manager Claire Lee said: 'Dan's role will be as a key ambassador for the Marque with members, the public, local organisations and the media. He'll provide strong leadership and work with the Board to identify opportunities for further growth and sustainability.'



'Our members play a big part in supporting the beautiful Forest ecosystem while preserving rural skills and traditions vital maintaining a vibrant rural economy.'



Celebrating its 15th anniversary this year, the New Forest Marque was created to support commoners and New Forest smallholders and is dedicated to championing true local produce.

With 150 members, it proudly represents many areas of New Forest business, including food and drink; hospitality and retail; craft; art; trees and education.

## Wyrd and wonderful New Forest gin



**G**in making. Is it an art or a science?

A blend of both, according to Mark Williams who describes his small-batch craft gin as having 'a true taste of the New Forest'.

Working from his distillery at the New Forest Enterprise Centre in Totton, he's surrounded by warm aromas and flavours such as juniper, coriander, cardamom and sweet orange. Getting his blend of 12 botanicals and New Forest spring water just right has resulted in the award-winning Wyrd gin.

It didn't happen overnight. Mark spent 18 months tweaking, tasting and perfecting, drawing on his 30 years in chemistry and food science, and keeping his long-term dream of owning a distillery bubbling near the forefront of his mind.

Mark and his wife Kay had visited Oban distillery in Scotland 20 years earlier, and back then mused that 'they should do something like this'. Finally, in 2018, opportunity presented itself.

The Anglo-Saxon word 'wyrd' (pronounced weird)

was a perfect fit for their new venture. 'We loved the word as soon as we stumbled across it,' explained Mark. 'The term is used to describe the deep sense of personal destiny and connectivity to all those events and experiences around us, whether through fortune, fate or chance.'

A little of all three helped steer Mark to where he is now, as well as a lot of hard graft and a skill for balancing flavours.

The distiller's job of blending alcohol, water and botanicals is to create a rounded and

balanced spirit that delivers great flavours.

'You need to constantly taste the spirit as it emerges from the still, making sure only the sweetest part (known as the 'hearts') is drawn off, discarding the harsh 'heads' and the bitter 'tails' explained Mark. 'While there is a science behind gin making, and my chemistry degree and experience in flavours in the food industry has come in handy, the actual distilling is an art. You can't replace the sensitivity of the human nose with a machine. Even the 'big boys' (the larger gin companies) employ master distillers to ensure the product tastes as it should.' Using a traditional copper still, and a vacuum still to distil the more delicate ingredients, Mark has created a classic dry gin with a flavour that 'doesn't hit you all at once but builds on the palate as you taste it'.

Wyrd gin starts with a burst of citrusy notes, followed by hints of aromatic pine from the juniper, and finally a warming spice and peppery finish.

'One of our ingredients is gorse from the Forest,' said Mark. 'Once it's flowered it produces fresh, pea-green coloured shoots which add a slight minty/peppery note to the spirit as well.'

'And we distil our gin using New Forest spring water – produced at South Gorley in the west of the Forest.'

Each batch of gin takes around three to four weeks to reach readiness, which includes resting time for

the flavours to settle and harmonise.

Despite only being brought to market in spring 2019, Wyrd gin has already won praise from customers as well as formal accolades for Mark and Kay's trophy shelf. It scooped a Bronze medal in the International Wine and Spirits Competition 2019, and two stars ('Outstanding') in the 2019 Great Taste Awards – claiming its commendable position amid only a select few of the 600 other gins on the UK market.

There's also a damson gin, infused with the fruits for around three months, to develop a beautiful colour and flavour. Mark and Kay are looking to expand their range of gins, including even more ingredients sourced from the New Forest area.

Batches are purposely kept small at around 200 bottles at a time. Each bottle is personally signed off by Mark and comes with the accreditation of the New Forest Marque – the sign of true local produce.

'Being a member of the Marque is extremely important to us. It's about building partnerships and supporting each other. You can't do everything on your own,' said Mark. 'I love living in this area and we aim to support it and the people who work and live here.'

'I'd like to thank everyone who has helped us along the way with their support and advice. It's been a really rewarding journey, made even better by the pleasure our customers take in the product we've created.'

**Wyrd gin is stocked in outlets around the New Forest and surrounding area and at [www.wyrdsprits.com](http://www.wyrdsprits.com)**



Mark Williams



# It's planting season

By Nik Gruber, Senior Tree Officer New Forest National Park Authority

A popular Chinese proverb says: 'The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now.'

The traditional planting season for most trees and shrubs is between November and March. If you're thinking about planting a tree on your property, now's the time to do it.

Why not consider a British native such as oak, beech, holly, birch or yew, which are all typical of the New Forest?

Over the years, trees have been used for many

things in the Forest. They provide us with shelter, fodder for cattle, food for humans, and charcoal for fire. They are havens for wildlife, and the fascinating world of fungi depends on them too.

Trees also play an important role in combating climate change by capturing harmful carbon emissions from the air around us.

The New Forest National Park is lucky to have a variety of different soils which are able to support a diverse range of trees.

There's acid heathland with occasional pockets of clay in the open Forest;

deep loamy alluvial soils along river valleys and the sandy gravel coastal environment.

Most common native trees will grow in people's gardens as well as on the open Forest. It's a case of choosing the right size and species of tree for the right location, so, for example, take soil types and proximity to buildings into account. If you're thinking of adding one to your property, just make sure that ground preparation, planting and aftercare is properly planned. If in doubt, please seek professional advice.



Trees also play an important role in combating climate change

## Tree service highlights

In the 2018/19 year, within the National Park boundary, the team has:

- dealt with 604 tree work applications
- made 10 Tree Preservation Orders
- responded to 245 planning consultations
- The team offers advice and support on all tree matters, including pests, diseases, fungi and biosecurity

One of the more unusual requests the tree team has received recently is identifying a Chilean larch in Bolton's Bench cemetery.

The request came from an author from Chile, who was writing a coffee table book called Chilean Trees Around the World.

Rodrigo Fernández Carbó was intrigued see if the rumours of this tree, so unusual for a small English village, were true.

Nik Gruber, Senior Tree Officer for the New Forest National Park Authority was first on the case, confirming that the 'strange tree' indeed originated 12,000km away in Chile.

The Chilean larch had been quietly growing in Bolton's Bench cemetery for more than 100 years – probably planted when the cemetery was created in 1885.

Nik's knowledge, photographs, and even Nik himself featured in the book.

Nearby, another Chilean native – a monkey puzzle tree – stands in Lyndhurst High Street within the garden of Forest Cottage and is thought to be even older at around 170 years old.



Chilean larch at Bolton's Bench cemetery

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# Step out on a New Forest walk

The National Park is a wonderful place to walk during autumn and winter. These cooler months have a beauty of their own, bringing different sights, sounds and smells to the Forest.



There are many New Forest walks to choose from, taking you into the woods, onto the coast, over heath or past rivers and streams.

Getting outside in the fresh air for a walk has many benefits. It helps with heart and lung fitness, joints and general mobility. It's also been proven to reduce stress and

anxiety and improve mental wellbeing. For some, it also provides an opportunity to be social, and for others a chance for some tranquil 'me time'.

We're lucky to have many flat, accessible routes in the New Forest, allowing walkers of all ages and abilities to enjoy its changing landscape.

If you're stuck for inspiration you can visit our free online walking route finder for 27 of the best New Forest walks. Or download the free walking routes app. More information at [newforestnpa.gov.uk](http://newforestnpa.gov.uk)

## Walking festival returns for bumper year

Smugglers' trails, wild play activities and fascinating wildlife are just some of the treats awaiting walkers in this autumn's extended New Forest Walking Festival.

You can enjoy dozens of guided walks led by knowledgeable local experts who take you 'behind the scenes' in the Forest to reveal the area's history, heritage and wildlife.

This year, it runs for three weeks from Saturday 12 October to Sunday 3 November, which includes half term week. It's run by the New Forest National Park Authority with support from Forest organisations and businesses.

Many of the walks are free or discounted thanks to the festival being supported by the £4.4m National Lottery Heritage Fund Our Past, Our Future landscape partnership scheme.



For full details, including booking, visit [newforestnpa.gov.uk/walkingfestival](http://newforestnpa.gov.uk/walkingfestival)

## EVENTS CALENDAR

OCTOBER 2019 - APRIL 2020

### OCTOBER

#### Autumn Wild Play Day

Wed 30 October, drop in between 10am – 3pm

Holmsley Campsite, Forest Road, Burley. BH23 8EB

Discover fun ways to explore, play and get creative outdoors, from your back garden to the New Forest woods, streams and heaths. Create some forest art, explore with scavenger hunts and much more. Wear old clothes and don't forget your wellies!

Suggested donation £1/child. Parking is free. Suitable for all ages (children must be accompanied by an adult). No booking required. Enquiries: 01590 646600



#### New Forest Walking Festival – Year of Green Action

Sat 12 October to Sun 3 November.

Locations across the New Forest

See above.

Visit [newforestnpa.gov.uk/walkingfestival](http://newforestnpa.gov.uk/walkingfestival) for further details.

### NOVEMBER

#### New Forest Knowledge Conference 2019

Fri 1 November, 9.45am – 4.30pm

Lyndhurst Community Centre, Lyndhurst, SO43 7NY

Today's New Forest is largely woodland and heathland, yet integral to its special qualities and unique sense of place are the many buildings and structures.

This conference will focus on how buildings and structures have been shaped by the Forest. Speakers include researchers from the New Forest National Park Authority, New Forest District Council and University of Winchester.

Price £20pp. Book online at: [newforestheritage.org.uk](http://newforestheritage.org.uk) Parking charges apply (free for blue badge holders). Enquiries: [kath.walker@newforestcentre.org.uk](mailto:kath.walker@newforestcentre.org.uk)



#### New Forest Eats 'n' Treats

Sun 3 November, 10am – 4pm

Brockenhurst College, Lyndhurst Road, Brockenhurst SO42 7ZE

Try, buy and learn about local food, drink and craft. Come along to our unique event which will include a food and craft market, chef demos, live music and a pop-up food court. It's the perfect opportunity to buy high quality and unusual Christmas presents. The event is being organised in conjunction with Go New Forest as part of its Food and Drink Week 2019 ([gonewforest.com](http://gonewforest.com)) and also the New Forest Marque ([newforestmarque.co.uk](http://newforestmarque.co.uk)).

Free event. Suitable for all ages. No booking required. Parking is free. Enquiries: [events@brock.ac.uk](mailto:events@brock.ac.uk)

### DECEMBER

#### Burley Manor Christmas Gift Fair

Thur 5 December 5pm – 9pm

The Barn, Burley Manor, Ringwood Road, Burley, BH24 4BS

An annual Christmas gift evening in The Barn and Deer Park Barn with some of our favourite local florists, independent gift shops, crafts, hand-made confectioners and artisan drinks producers.

Free entry. No booking required. Enquiries: [burleymanor@newforesthotels.co.uk](mailto:burleymanor@newforesthotels.co.uk)

#### New Forest Christmas Fair

Sat 7 December 10am – 4pm

Exbury Gardens & Steam Railway, Summer Lane, Exbury, SO45 1AZ

The New Forest Christmas Fair is a traditional family day out, full of local produce and gifts and a festive atmosphere.

Adults £2.50, children are free. No booking required. Dogs welcome on leads. Parking is free. Enquiries to Forester Events: [forestersevents@outlook.com](mailto:forestersevents@outlook.com) or 07825 300214.

### JANUARY 2020

#### New Forest National Park Volunteer Fair

Sun 26 January, 10.30am – 4pm

Lyndhurst Community Centre, Car Park, Lyndhurst, SO43 7NY

There will be loads of volunteer opportunities to suit all tastes at this Volunteer Fair, which returns for its 10th anniversary year. Visitors will have the chance to join more than 40 organisations working in and around the National Park, helping them to inspire young people, record wildlife, restore landscapes and help communities. Don't forget all the benefits volunteering brings to the volunteer too — it's great fun, ideal for making new friends and proven to be good for you!

As well as display stands, there'll be talks from local groups.



Free event. Suitable for all ages. No booking required. Parking charges apply (free for blue badge holders). Enquiries: 01590 646600

### APRIL 2020

#### Spring Wild Play Day

Wed 8 April, drop in between 10am – 3pm

Hurst Spit, Milford-on-Sea, SO41 0PY

Discover fun ways to explore, play and get creative in the outdoors. Come and try crabbing, beach art, seashore scavenging and much more. Wear some old, warm clothes and don't forget your wellies!

Suggested donation £1/child. Parking charges apply. Suitable for all (children must be accompanied by an adult). No booking required. Enquiries: 01590 646600

#### New Forest PEDALL Inclusive Cycling

Starter sessions

10am – 11.30am on the following Saturdays:

12 October

9 November

7 December

29 February

4, 7, 9 and 15 April

PEDALL runs inclusive cycling sessions for people who need support so that they can enjoy cycling in the New Forest National Park. The starter sessions above are an introductory session and opportunity to try out the different cycles to find the right one for you; learn how to start, control the cycle and stop safely. These sessions take



place on the off-road cycle network which is made up of wide gravel tracks.

To come on one of our guided rides you will need to attend a starter session first.

Starter sessions are free of charge, but must be booked in advance at [pedall.org.uk](http://pedall.org.uk)



## New Forest organisations celebrate partnership working



Partnership Plan members see the improvements made to the National Trust's Foxbury plantation

**R**epresentatives from a wide range of organisations came together to review current and future management of the New Forest National Park.

The New Forest National Park Partnership Plan is the management framework which around 40 organisations are helping to put into practice. Produced jointly by the Forest's statutory organisations in 2015, the actions in it range from improving the National Park's habitats and encouraging more volunteers, to restoring

historic properties and helping more young people learn about the natural world.

The Plan is being reviewed over the coming months, so partners took the chance to visit some of the recent successes and begin to think what the partnership needs to do through its Plan for the five years from 2020.

The day included a walk to ancient barrow mounds in Franchises Lodge nature reserve, and visits to Foxbury educational centre and the site of an old airfield.

Holger Schiller, partnerships and community officer at

the New Forest National Park Authority said partners agree that the next Partnership Plan must deliver a much clearer and visibly more integrated strategy for improving nature conservation and managing recreation. The new draft Plan will be subject to full public consultation in early 2020. He added: 'With so many challenges, such as climate change, loss of biodiversity, and potential changes in farming after Brexit, it's crucial that organisations in the New Forest work together to set out the future direction of the National Park.'

## Thousands of volunteer hours help protect the New Forest

**1**00 dedicated volunteers in the New Forest have committed almost 32,000 hours to helping protect and enhance the National Park.

The volunteers have each clocked up well over 100 hours of activities such as unearthing ancient artefacts during archaeological digs, surveying unique species and recording fascinating historical documents.

**'It's fantastic to see so many volunteers giving their time to the wide range of projects'**

Volunteering is a great way to help local communities and the environment. The volunteers also benefit by making new friends, learning new skills, improving their mental and physical wellbeing, and even advancing their careers.

Brian Matthews from Lymington has contributed over 1,200 hours removing invasive non-native plants, creating wildlife corridors and improving Sites

of Importance for Nature Conservation.

He said: 'I was already a Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust volunteer when the Our Past, Our Future landscape partnership scheme was launched in 2015 and so have been involved from the outset. As well as addressing my environmental concerns, an additional personal benefit is that I have had tinnitus for many years and find that working outdoors is very therapeutic.'

Sylvia Crocker from Woodlands has dedicated over 800 hours volunteering in the Christopher Tower Reference Library within the New Forest Heritage Centre in Lyndhurst and updating the New Forest Knowledge website. She said: 'The library has a unique and fascinating collection of books, maps, photos and postcards relating to the New Forest, and it's a really interesting place to work. I've been scanning photos and cataloguing items that have been donated and helping people with their research and enquiries.'



Volunteer  
Brian Matthews

Volunteer, Training and Mentoring Co-ordinator Richard Austin, said: 'It's fantastic to see so many volunteers giving their time to the wide range of projects we're delivering alongside our partner organisations.'

'This scheme has enabled volunteers to see parts of the New Forest that they hadn't before, all while making new friends, learning about this historic landscape and becoming custodians of it. They can give as much or as little time as they like.'

Volunteering is fundamental to the success of the National Lottery Heritage Fund Our Past, Our Future landscape partnership to help protect the New Forest's unique heritage, landscape and wildlife for future generations.

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

You can find your own volunteer role in the New Forest at [newforestnpa.gov.uk/volunteering](http://newforestnpa.gov.uk/volunteering)

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