

**AM 580-21**

**NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

**AUTHORITY MEETING – 25 MARCH 2021**

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT**

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

**Summary:**

This report covers the period since the Authority meeting on 10 December 2020. 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 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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## **NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

### **AUTHORITY MEETING – 25 MARCH 2021**

#### **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT**

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

It's been a year since we have had some sort of Covid19 restrictions in place, and as lockdown measures are eased at the end of this month, we are working with other New Forest organisations and calling on people to 'care for the Forest, care for each other' through a joint action plan to help to manage the increased visitor numbers expected this year. The 'care for the Forest, care for each other' message conveys the spirit of how we want to work with each other and our visitors. The plan aims to ensure that the New Forest can play a positive and active role in helping people and businesses to recover from the toll taken by the lockdown, while also caring for this special place. The action plan has been developed jointly by New Forest National Park Authority, Forestry England, New Forest District Council, and Go New Forest with support from The Verderers, Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service, and Hampshire Constabulary – in consultation with Parish representatives.

Much was learned through the experience of last year's visitor numbers (and sadly pockets of anti-social behaviour and damage). Progress was made in several areas including: increasing the impact of patrols by pooling resources, gaining the support of over 50 local retailers to ban disposable BBQs, recruiting over 400 New Forest Ambassadors to help support the Forest, a co-ordinated campaign by local landowners in stickering cars to discourage verge parking and gateway blocking, and jointly communicating messages about caring for the Forest through the New Forest Code to over six million people. Our rangers continue patrols providing a visible presence across the New Forest National Park, helping to monitor sites, report and manage incidents in partnership with the Verderers and FE. They have shared key messages such as for ground nesting bird season, and helped to launch a Professional Dog Walkers' Charter, promoting best practice among dog walkers (45 businesses have signed up so far). I'm pleased to say that seasonal rangers have had their contracts extended and recruitment for a third seasonal ranger is under way. The RSPB has come on board as a partner for our ranger placement opportunities. At the end of this month, we're also re-launching our Ambassadors scheme, with outlets being restocked with litter picking kits.

This quarter we came to the end of the enormously successful Our Past, Our Future landscape partnership scheme – backed by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The five-year scheme incorporated 21 projects to restore lost habitats, develop Forest skills and inspire a new generation to champion and care for the New Forest. We led the £4.5 million scheme with 10 other partners, and it is a fantastic example of what can be achieved when working together. Just some of the highlights include 3,230 people attending 157 training courses; nearly 400 schools being engaged; 270,000 people learning about commoning; and 133,000 documents published on the New Forest Knowledge website.

We were also pleased that England's largest agri-environment scheme the Verderers of the New Forest Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) was extended for a further year in February supporting vital conservation projects and commoning in the New Forest and building on the £22 million package of projects delivered since 2010. The scheme is a partnership with NFNPA and FE and is a vital resource for protecting and enhancing the New Forest National Park's internationally-important wildlife and habitats and commoning way of life. We are working with land managers and farmers to prepare for the changes that will result from the Agriculture Act and have supported the Commons Test and Trial programme that is being led by the Foundation for Common Land, as well as the Wildlife Trusts Test and Trial of management plan templates for ELMS (Environmental Land Management Scheme). We are exploring how other sources of finance and trading schemes could be used to support nature recovery in National Parks and will consider a proposal to work with National Park Partnership to develop this work with a corporate partner later in this meeting.

We have been very pleased to be able to help secure funding from a range of sources for work in the National Park in the last quarter. At the end of the year, we were delighted to hear inclusive cycling charity PEDALL secured funding for a further three years from the Lottery Community Fund. This package, worth c£600k and leveraging in money from sport England will allow an expanded offer to different audiences, young and old with special needs, focus on post Covid19 recovery and open a second location. PEDALL will open again at Easter. Improvements at Franchises Lodge has secured £200,000 from National Grid's LEI grant for landscape management and improvements. The funding is for 75% of project costs to remove rhododendron, improvement of footpath surfaces and restoring Schedule Ancient Monuments, taking us a step closer to getting them removed from Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register. Our partnership application to the Defra Green Recovery Fund, led by the Youth Hostel Association and South Downs National Park Authority, was approved. For the NPA, this equates to £65,450 of funding for two apprentice rangers and a part-time Wild Spaces Youth Officer for 2021/22. Our strong links with PHE have enabled us to apply and secure a grant from Health Education England to develop volunteering over the coming year to be focused on helping people who have been most impacted by the Covid19 pandemic.

Planning Committee members endorsed the list of non-designated heritage assets and a 'Heritage Assets – Planning Briefing Note' for the National Park area in February. This list

represents the buildings and features of the built environment of the New Forest and the briefing will be shared with town and parish councils and made publicly available. In support of this work, we were recently informed that our joint bid for circa £70,000 (submitted alongside the Isle of Wight Council and Winchester City Council) to the Government's 'Local Heritage List Campaign Fund' in late 2020 has been successful. We have successfully appointed a Net Zero With Nature Programme Manager, to help us move towards our net zero target and to work with partners and communities across the New Forest National Park to support them in their ambitions. Messages about the climate and nature crises in the National Park reached an audience of 815,000 people thanks to the online New Forest Awakening Festival, which ran throughout February. This first festival of its kind in the New Forest and engaged with a range of organisations, businesses and charities holding 28 [virtual events](#) which were free to everyone to join throughout the month. The aim was to help share why the New Forest is so special, its role in the climate and nature emergencies, what people are already doing to protect it, and how everyone can help. We also launched a new series of online climate assemblies for schools, and a [small grants scheme](#) as part of our Sustainable Communities Fund for schools and community groups to apply for funding to kickstart their climate change and nature projects. Education has gone virtual, with the design and roll out of the climate and nature emergencies assemblies and 98 participants signing up to the 'virtual' John Muir award.

Our recent work with the Green Halo Partnership has helped initiate and gain support of for a framework for a "green recovery", in particular leading the development of a Greenprint for South Hampshire and the production of a Natural Capital baseline for the National Park. The Greenprint framework, widely supported by local councils, the Solent LEP, local Universities and businesses, was a key element in the successful bid for Freeport status for the Solent announced in the recent budget.

The planning, policy and tree team continue to receive a high level of applications – with a 25% increase in planning applications since the last reporting period. There are a number of live planning applications for new affordable housing in the National Park currently under construction, and we have engaged in pre-application discussions on a number of additional sites that may come forward as applications. Planning enforcement cases have steadily increased in the last 12 months, notably in relation to pop-up campsites, and outbuildings used as holiday lets. We successfully achieved a high court injunction to stop further tree removal on a site near Bartley, which was picked up widely by the media and social media – giving a clear message about our enforcement powers.

The policy team have been working on a number of recent consultations, both at national and local level – and fed into the combined National Parks England response on the Government's planning white paper. We are also working on updating waste and mineral plans, ensuring they are in line with our Local Plan. A public Snapshot Survey of the New Forest has fed into our updated Partnership Plan, and an advanced draft version of the plan will be presented at the Authority Meeting on 29 April.

We continue to support sustainable transport and are a key partner in the development of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan for the New Forest. The New Forest Tour will run and extended season from 29 May until 12 September – giving a wider window for people leave their cars at home and learn about the National Park and how to care for it through the commentary on board.

As we go into the spring and the summer we are determined to support staff, Members, partners and communities to continue this 'Team New Forest' effort despite the challenging context. By focusing on 'caring for the Forest and caring for each other' we can keep morale strong and be the best we can be.

## **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.**

*Nature Recovery - Net Zero with Nature*

In January we held interviews for a Net Zero With Nature Programme Manager, to help us move towards our net zero ambitions. We were pleased to attract a strong field and the successful candidate is due to join us in April.

We have continued to work with land managers and farmers to prepare for the changes that will result from the Agriculture Act. With the Forest Farming Group the NPA responded to the consultation on the Basic Payment Scheme in the New Forest and we are supporting a Commons Test and Trial programme that is being led by the Foundation for Common Land.

At the beginning of the year we started to work with National Parks Partnership on a project to explore how other sources of finance (beyond ELM) might be used to deliver nature recovery in National Parks. As reported elsewhere on the agenda we are now considering an application to the Natural Environment Investment Fund, launched in February, to develop this work further.

### *Green Halo Partnership*

The Green Halo Partnership ensures that the National Park is highlighted at the regional level. In recent weeks the foundation work done through the Green Halo is reflected in two key pieces of work: a Greenprint for our central south region and the production of a Natural Capital baseline for the National Park.

The Natural Capital Baseline is a key milestone as this will provide us with important evidence and data as we develop the nature recovery funding streams referred to above. We are grateful to a consortium of landowners and the Solent LEP for the funding to develop this work. The final report is currently being reviewed and will be available shortly.

The Greenprint for South Hampshire provides a framework for a “green recovery” based on five key principles: net zero with nature, a natural health service, world class blue/green environments, creating great places through quality in design and build; and the area as a centre for excellence in green skills and jobs. A project steering group from across the region, led by the NPA in partnership with Southern Policy Centre and Future South and supported by a post graduate secondment from Southampton University developed the framework which was adopted by the Partnership for South Hampshire in January. The Greenprint framework, and the wide support it has received was a key element in the successful bid for Freeport status for Southampton that was announced in the budget earlier this month.

### **Verderers of the New Forest Higher Level Stewardship Scheme**

England's largest agri-environment scheme has been extended for a further year supporting vital conservation projects and commoning in the New Forest.

The Verderers of the New Forest Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) scheme protects and enhances the New Forest National Park's internationally-important wildlife and habitats.

Launched in 2010 as a 10-year agreement with Natural England, it is managed by the Verderers in partnership with the New Forest National Park Authority and Forestry England and will have brought £22 million into the Forest.

The scheme helps the New Forest face the nature and climate crisis. Fragile habitats have been conserved and the commoning scheme has been supported on a large scale, meaning ponies and cattle can continue to roam the landscape and shape the unique habitats through their grazing.

The funding extension is welcome news as Britain moves out of the EU and leaves its agricultural programme.

## **Our Past, Our Future Landscape Partnership Scheme**

Having run for the last five years, the OPOF scheme officially draws to a close at the end of April. The scheme has been an incredible success over its lifetime, with a diverse range of partners and projects - all delivering amazing outcomes.

### Summary Report

We have produced a summary report which highlights some of the key OPOF achievements, gives you a snapshot of the breadth of work that has been completed and illustrates the power of effective partnership working. This is available on the OPOF website, Our Past, Our Future Newsletter 2021 ([newforestnpa.gov.uk](http://newforestnpa.gov.uk)), and all Members have been sent a copy in the post.

### Webinar

To celebrate and communicate the success of the scheme, we held the Webinar on 11 February. We were joined by 129 participants including partner organisations, our volunteers and the general public. If you were unable to join the live Webinar, you can watch it on our the NFNPA's YouTube channel. Webinar - Celebrating the success of Our Past, Our Future - YouTube. We ran three live polls as part of the webinar and these were won by Mike Gibson, Amelia Cavanna, and Caroline Mountain, who each received a New Forest Hamper.

### OPOF films

As part of the OPOF legacy, several short films have been produced covering the following topics:

- Summary of OPOF
- Success of volunteering
- Commoning project
- Collaboration at Holbury
- Heritage project (New Forest Knowledge)
- Commoning mentoring project
- New Forest Apprentice Ranger scheme
- Historic Routes

These can be viewed on the NFNPA YouTube channel. This playlist also includes all the other films that have been made through OPOF over the five years (51 in total.) The summary report, recording of the webinar and the films can all be accessed via links on the OPOF webpage: [www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/opof](http://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/opof)

## Volunteer Certificate

We have sent certificates out to thank all the volunteers who have given many hours of their time towards the projects. They were ranked platinum, gold, silver and bronze, depending on how many hours people had volunteered over the five years. It is hoped that we can continue to offer further opportunities for the volunteers after the end of the funded OPOF scheme.

Most of the projects are now fully complete, and some have a few final tasks to finish off before the end of March. Some areas of work have been affected by Covid19, for example, volunteering was able to start in December when two task days were held, only to be stopped again in January. Where the lockdown has prevented or delayed work taking place then these tasks will take place after the end of the Scheme wherever possible.

There are still several things to complete as follows:

- Final evaluation report which is due from Resources for Change end of March 2021.
- Final reporting which will include the following:
  - Summary of each project looking at key achievements.
  - Legacy document
  - Final finance claim
- Behaviour Change Toolkit.
- The final OPOF Board meeting was held on 17 March.
- Legacy partnership MoU on future partnership working.

### *National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative funding (LEI) - Franchises Lodge.*

The funding of just over £200,000 from National Grid's LEI grant for landscape management and improvements at Franchises Lodge, Hamptworth has cleared the final approval from OFGEM and the funds will be available this spring, hopefully in March. The funding is for 75% of project costs to remove rhododendron, improvement of footpath surfaces and restoring Schedule Ancient Monuments. The 25% match funding will come from RSPB.

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

### OPOF projects (x4)

The NFLAS nature conservation habitat enhancement projects, Nature's Stepping Stones, Better Boundaries and Working Woodlands, officially came to an end this quarter. NFLAS staff continue to support the landowners involved in these projects where possible and are working with the NPA ranger team and Volunteer Coordinator to find ways to continue with conservation work parties for the substantial volunteer network that has resulted from the four projects. The NPA funding group is continuing to identify opportunities to support our habitat restoration work.

### Defra Environmental Land Management Scheme Tests and Trials

NFLAS has been contributing to a Wildlife Trusts Test and Trial that was operating across 5 counties. The outcome of work with 5 farms (4 commoners, 1 farmer) was submitted at the end of January. This Test and Trial is one of hundreds being carried out across England as part of the co-design process for the new domestic agri-environment scheme.

As part of our work with the Forest Farming Group, NFLAS have been chosen as the convenor/facilitator for the New Forest part of Test and Trial exploring how ELMS can best work on commons. Run by the Foundation for Common Land this project covers several commons in England; we will be working on this contract during August and September.

### Water Environment Improvement Fund - Bartley Water Project

We have been working in partnership with the Freshwater Habitats Trust, with the Environment Agency, funding to deliver water quality improvements on the Bartley Water and its tributaries since the autumn using WEIF funding from the Environment Agency. This phase of funding ends at the end of March but we have applied for another tranche for 2021/22.

Following a walkover of the catchment by FHT the role of NFLAS has been to engage with landowners and land managers in areas where nitrate and phosphate levels are high and carry out field visits to identify any other issues impacting on nature and the environment. A range of land management advice has been given across the area and project funding has paid for a variety of practical measures to improve the environmental quality of the streams.

### Northern New Forest Fringe Landowner/Land Manager Network

We are currently working under contract from Natural England's Wiltshire National Nature Reserve Team on Phase 2 of our initiative to scope and develop a network of landowners.

and land managers in the area around Langley Wood National Nature Reserve and Franchises Lodge Nature Reserve. The aim is to create a farmer network which may develop into one or more farm clusters in the area, working towards environmental improvements on a landscape scale.

#### National Landscapes Advocacy Project

In England all National Parks and AONBs have formed a partnership to deliver a Defra contract communicating with farmers and landowners in the protected areas to ensure they are fully up to date with Agricultural Transition policy, emerging grant scheme design, application processes for the pilots as well as being encouraged to apply for the current scheme, Countryside Stewardship. NFLAS are delivering this work in the New Forest this quarter.

#### Engagement

We contributed to presentation about NFLAS and the work we do to the Awakening Festival and a presentation for the OPOF webinar, covering the Restoring Lost Landscapes theme of the scheme.

### **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 236 applications in the period 1 December to 1 March and in the same period determined 170 applications with an approval rate of 89%. The volume of cases received has increased by over 25% since the last reporting period.

During this same period 11 appeal decisions were received; 10 were dismissed and one was allowed. The Planning Inspectorate has begun to hold virtual appeal hearing proceedings. Two have been held and a further three are scheduled in April.

An application for the reconfiguration of Ipley Crossroads was approved on 8 February. It is understood that the works will now commence on 1 September due to the need for a more detailed ground survey of the southern section of the site due to unexploded ordnance and the need to avoid works taking place within the bird nesting season.

An application for the Lyndhurst Park Hotel site is currently under consideration for part demolition of the existing hotel and conversion of the retained element to C3 residential and erection of a mixed-use development comprising a total of 79 dwellings and three commercial units (Class E), with associated landscaping, access and parking.

An application has been received for nine residential units at the former Redmayne site in Brockenhurst on the part of the site which had previously been granted consent for commercial use.

The team was pleased to welcome Carly Cochrane back from maternity leave in January.

### *Trees*

With a continued high volume of work, the Tree Team have managed the numerous enquiries from the public, and successfully determined 173 tree work applications, 100% of which have been within eight weeks.

During the same period 63 Consultations have been provided on planning application and continued involvement with several major applications.

Three new Tree Preservation Order has been made to protect trees or woodlands of high amenity value that were otherwise under threat from new development or inappropriate works

Several unauthorised trees works are currently under investigation working with the Planning Enforcement Team and the Authority's Solicitor and Monitoring Officer.

### *Planning Enforcement*

There are currently 180 open planning enforcement related cases on the enforcement list, at various stages of investigation, action, appeal or prosecution. This number has steadily increased throughout the last 12 months of intermittent full lockdown and limited access, remote working and an increasingly less patient public at large. The team is largely reactive to complaints received from third parties and the investigation of these complaints has been more time consuming in the recent restrictive conditions. With more time spent at home, more people are undertaking works on their own land and properties and drawing more attention from neighbours.

Whilst some property owners seek to safeguard their livelihoods with further diversification there has been a rise in complaints regarding use of out-buildings for short term holiday lets, pop-up campsites and use of paddocks as allotments/gardens outside of the main lockdowns. The encouragement of staycations is placing pressure upon the Authority's policies of seeking to resist new tourism accommodation outside of the main villages.

The Authority was successful in achieving a full injunction and stopping works for removal of trees subject of preservation order on a site near Bartley.

Compliance with some enforcement notices has been slowed by the lockdown conditions both in an operational sense and potential prosecution for non-compliance where this can

be used as a plea to the Courts. There is a backlog build-up of enforcement-related planning appeals which again is delaying the speed of action. A further 11 potential enforcement notices are scheduled in the coming months if matters are not adequately resolved through other routes.

### *Policy*

The Policy team has responded to a number of recent consultations, both at a national and more local level. These include the consultation draft Dorset Council Local Plan; the draft Wiltshire Local Plan; the draft New Forest District Council Habitat Mitigation SPD; and Hampshire County Council's Local Transport Plan. The team has also fed into the combined National Parks England consultation response on the Government's proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which includes amendments to the national policy wording on National Parks, their setting and how the major development test is applied.

In terms of our own policy work, there is a separate report being considered at this meeting on the review of the adopted Hampshire Minerals & Waste Plan. We will be working in partnership with the other minerals and waste planning authorities (Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton and the South Downs) on this review. Our latest Annual Monitoring Report – which reports on the performance of our local planning policies and our engagement with neighbouring authorities – was considered at the March 2021 Planning Committee meeting. The report highlights that the adopted Local Plan (2019) policies have performed well and key indicators (such as the number of new dwellings completed) are in line with the assumptions made in the Local Plan.

The protection of the designated nature conservation sites within the National Park continues to be a focus for the team's work. Our annual Habitat Mitigation Steering Group meeting – which includes representatives of Natural England, the RSPB, the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and New Forest District Council – took place in January 2021 to review the mitigation measures implemented over the last year; and to agree priority projects for the next year. On a wider level, we are part of the project steering group overseeing the research into recreational visitors to the New Forest's Natura 2000 sites. The specialist consultants Footprint Ecology have now produced their completed reports and the project steering group will be taking the work onto the next stage.

Work continues to progress on a number of the Neighbourhood Plans under preparation in the New Forest area. Since the last full Authority meeting, the Ringwood Neighbourhood Area has been formally designated by the Authority for the part of the parish that lies within the National Park. We have also submitted consultation comments to Wellow Parish Council on their draft Character Appraisal that forms part of the evidence base for their emerging Neighbourhood Plan. Finally, the postponed referendum on the draft New Milton Neighbourhood Plan is due to take place in May 2021, when local residents will be asked if they support the draft Plan.

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

### *Archaeology*

Gareth Owen has now started in his new role as Archaeologist, joining Assistant Community Archaeologist Hilde van der Heul. Current work includes consultations on NFNPA planning applications along with those for NFDC. The number of planning applications has been consistently high, and over the past months we have seen a noticeable increase in larger developments from NFDC.

OPOF is just about to draw to a close. While all of the targets for the archaeological projects have been exceeded, some wrapping up is still required with the graveyard survey work to enable this to go fully public for online browsing.

Forestry England's Service Level Agreement (SLA) work and the Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) work has continued but Covid19 restrictions have prevented the completion of the Scheduled Monument Management Plan (SMMP) work. This will progress as soon as restrictions allow.

Covid19 restrictions have also prevented Hilde from progressing the volunteer pilot project, part of the Forestry England SLA, to clear vegetation from Scheduled Monuments highlighted during the abovementioned SMMP work.

However, we were able to assist with the RSPB's work to clear a significant amount of rhododendron on three Scheduled Bronze Age Barrows at Franchises Lodge, which is a big step towards getting them removed from Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register.

### *Building Design & Conservation*

At the February 2021 Planning Committee meeting members endorsed the list of non designated heritage assets – also referred to as the 'local list' – for the National Park area. This list represents the buildings and features of the built environment of the New Forest that contribute towards its local character and distinctiveness. Members also endorsed the 'Heritage Assets – Planning Briefing Note' for use in the delivery of our statutory planning functions. Both documents will be shared with town and parish councils and made publicly available.

Linked to this work, we were recently informed that our joint bid (submitted alongside the Isle of Wight Council and Winchester City Council) to the Government's 'Local Heritage List Campaign Fund' in late 2020 has been successful. The partnership of three local planning authorities will therefore receive circa £70,000 in total and the next stage in the process is to work up more detail on how the Authority will use this confirmed funding. This will build on the work undertaken on our list of non-designated heritage assets.

Work on the review of the adopted National Park Design Guide is progressing and a members' workshop was held in February 2021 to feed into the review. Consideration is also being given to ensuring the revised document reflects the Government's National Design Guide (2019) and their draft National Model Design Code (January 2021).

The caseload of applications and pre-applications enquiries regarding building design and conservation matters remains high. There are a number of significant proposals currently being considered, including the redevelopment of the former Lyndhurst Park Hotel site which has a number of building environment matters to be addressed.

## **2 Enjoy**

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

#### *Education & Youth*

This year our assembly programme has gone virtual and focused on the climate and nature emergency rather than specifically on litter. With the communications team we have produced and launched a 10 minute pre-recorded [you tube video](#), with education staff in the guise of news reporters. This is available to all schools, while local schools were contacted with this offer along with short virtual 'question and answer sessions' and a set of resources that pupils can follow up at home or in the classroom. We immediately had an enthusiastic response from teachers, and we have been bowled over by the insightful questions from pupils including:

- 'How does a tree make carbon into oxygen?'
- 'Why is nature important?'
- 'What starts a wildfire?'
- 'Can you grow moss at home?'
- 'How can a child make a difference to climate change?'

Educational visits have not been permitted while schools are closed and the advice remains the same since 8 March. Forestry England's policy on permitting educational groups on Crown Lands reflects this. We are watching the guidance to schools closely, awaiting updates. Unfortunately, this means there have been no further claims on our travel grant offer this financial year.

We have been able to conduct a small number of taught sessions (socially distanced) in school grounds to support topic work on local geography.

We were pleased to hear that the New Forest Higher Level Stewardship Scheme (HLS) has been extended beyond December 2021, supporting our work to enable primary and

secondary aged pupils to enjoy and understand the open forest.

Recruitment of a Wild Spaces Youth Officer is underway, with work to begin in April. This project is funded by the "[Generation Green](#)" coalition bid to the Heritage Lottery Green Recovery Fund. In parallel, we have been running workshops with staff and colleagues from partner organisations to identify strengths and opportunities for future youth work across the New Forest. We'll be looking for funding based on this expertise and strength of partnership working and will be asking members for their input next.

Finally, our Education and Youth Officer has produced a newsletter-based John Muir Award, focusing on signs of spring and inspired by the New Forest – with 28 families (98 participants) signed up. She has also presented virtual sessions with 22 secondary students from two schools that are in communities neighbouring the forest, with great feedback.

'Amy, Thank you so much for a great zoom meeting yesterday. As you could see all the students were highly engaged in the whole event. They are keen to get back into the forest (as are staff). Thanks for your ongoing support. We will be in touch soon and hopefully be able to meet up.' Anne Marie - Great Oaks School (teacher)

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

Rangers have continued week and weekend patrols, being a visible presence across the New Forest, helping to monitor sites, reporting incidents and recording hotspots, working alongside partner organisations such as the Verderers and Forestry England. They have continued engagement with Forest users when it felt safe to do so with positive responses and promotion of key messages.

The New Forest Professional Dog Walkers' Charter was officially launched in mid-January. Dawn filmed a couple of videos for social media explaining the benefits to both businesses and individual dog owners employing dog walker services. To date 40 businesses have signed up. NFDC staff have confirmed that the Green Way SLA that supports Dawn's role will be extended for at least one more year, which is excellent news.

Rangers provided content for the Awakening Festival. Dawn discussed the issue of dog waste in the Forest with a Facebook presentation and follow up questions & answers. Hayden and Erika coordinated a 'Ranger Instagram takeover' during the first and last weeks of February. Content focussed on seasonal messaging and promoting the special qualities of the National Park. All were very well received with 1000's of views and positive interactions including followers from a younger age group. One video in particular was spotted by Natural England's Thames Basin Heath team who have requested to turn

it into a cartoon to put on their social media. Claire was involved with the online launch of the Big Bee Rescue in the New Forest. It's the first community project organised by Conservation Connection New Forest South, a partnership of conservation volunteer groups in New Milton, Hordle, Bashley, Tiptoe and Milford.

Planning work has been ongoing with Forestry England for the upcoming ground nesting bird season campaign, which will be aided once again by NPA seasonal ranger support. With funding from the NPA's habitat mitigation scheme, FE and NFD OG, we have been pleased to extend the contracts of Erika and Jake until September, allowing continuity of staff and benefitting from their experience and knowledge for another summer. Recruitment will start shortly for the third seasonal ranger now that funding from Camping in the Forest has been confirmed.

Despite Covid19 restrictions, recruitment for the next cohort of New Forest Ranger Apprentices took place with two successful candidates being offered the positions from 135 applicants. Money from the Generation Green Project funded by the government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund provides a direct legacy of the successful OPOF Apprenticeship Scheme. We are pleased to welcome RSPB to the partnership increasing the placement opportunities to six with ranger teams across the New Forest.

As mentioned elsewhere, much work is being done to prepare for the easing of lockdown restrictions and rangers are preparing to assist with the management of the large numbers of people we will once again see in the New Forest.

### *Communications*

We launched an online 'New Forest Awakening Festival' looking at the climate and nature crisis in the National Park.

The festival saw 28 different [virtual 'events'](#) from NPA staff and partners ranging from a conversation on commoning, to soundscapes, a presentation about Franchises Lodge nature reserve, a live tour of a commoner's holding, woodland storytelling, a seed show and Instagram takeovers by rangers looking at the Forest's special qualities.

We supported organisations to 'go live' online for the first time and field questions from the public, so they are now able to interact better with online audiences going forwards. Many events requiring tickets were sold out, with 1,074 attending webinars and Facebook live sessions. A huge range of videos

Overall, our messages about the climate and nature emergencies were seen by over 815,000 people; nearly 70,000 people engaged with the online posts or events (attended webinars, viewed videos, commented, liked or shared posts). One of our aims was to target new and younger audiences on Instagram and we reached 72,000 people with our posts.

On the back of the Awakening Festival, we also launched a new series of online climate assemblies for schools and a microgrants scheme for schools and groups to apply for funding to kickstart their climate change and nature projects.

We hope to make this an annual festival and build on it next year.

Other activities this quarter include promoting the online Authority meetings, publicising a High Court injunction to stop tree felling, the launch of the Generation Green initiative to connect young people to nature and pulling together final reports for the 21 Our Past, Our Future scheme projects on the website and in a newsletter.

We also launched a new [charter for dog walking professionals](#) which has seen over 45 businesses sign up so far as a result of the publicity.

The NPA has also been supporting the New Forest Trust and Love the Forest scheme, publicising a virtual Valentines Challenge encouraging people to gain sponsorship for local lockdown walks, the Trust's Diamond Jubilee Award given to Jenni Tubbs, and grant awards to the New Forest Heritage Centre and to tackle non-native invasive plants.

We continue to support the New Forest Code campaigns, promoting the ground-nesting bird season and how people can help rare species survive, as well as measures to reduce animal accidents.

We have worked with Forestry England, Go New Forest, the emergency services and New Forest District Council on an action plan for the Forest as lockdown restrictions are lifted and written a communications plan to support this. The communications plan also ties in with Defra's launch of a new Countryside Code and a National Park UK-wide campaign about caring and respecting the outdoors.

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

### *Interpretation projects (including Historic Routes)*

We have worked with Fawley Parish Council to complete two interpretation panels at Holbury Manor Park and Woods telling the story of the site and helping people explore it.

We have been working with Bird Aware Solent and Natural England on interpretation for the England Coast Path; Calshot to Ashlett Creek section, developing signage which will help people understand what is special about the coast and how they can avoid disturbing wildlife along the section.

For the Historic Route project three historical stories have now been completed including the recording of audio versions. Two of four artistic reconstructions are now complete, the remaining two are currently on hold due to the artist contracting Covid19. This has

delayed the completion of the trail leaflets, but once the artwork is done the leaflets should be completed shortly afterwards.

### *Health and Wellbeing*

We have had a busy four months developing our health and wellbeing work, helped greatly by our placements from Public Health England, Lizzie Moore and from March 11, Hannah Taylor. They have been developing our New Forest Voices project to increase inclusion and diversity in our work, and by making contact with public health contacts and others across the region. Two stakeholder workshops will be held at the end of March to develop our approach. Links with PHE have enabled us to apply and secure a grant from Health Education England to develop volunteering over the coming year to be focused on helping people who have been most impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Nature Health Network (partnership between us and Bournemouth University and PHE) has met four times since the last Authority meeting with around 100 sign ups each month. We have heard from Dr William Bird on the importance of people, place and purpose to health, from Sweden on the Nordic approach to nature and health, and on urban nature initiatives from the London National Park City Foundation and Mersey Forest. Many connections and follow up work has resulted from the network, by putting together those from the environment sector and the health sector. Layne Hamerston from Bournemouth University spoke on behalf of the Nature Health Network at the recent All-Party Parliamentary Group on National Parks convened by National Parks England, on the topic of healing landscapes.

### *PEDALL*

PEDALL has secured funding for a further three years from the Lottery Community Fund. This funding needs to be matched and so far we have secured match funding from Sport England, NPA and fundraising through Friends of PEDALL charity.

The new project is a partnership project between NPA and Friends of PEDALL with support from specialist advisers. The new project runs from 2020-2024 and will focus on supporting young people with additional needs, people with mental health challenges, older people with dementia and Covid19 recovery. The PEDALL Project Board that oversees the project has been expanded to include specialist advisers to support the NPA who chair the Board and Friends of PEDALL. These advisers are: NHS (Mental health and Covid19 recovery), Colten Care (older people), SCARF (young people with additional needs) plus staff and volunteer representatives.

The new project will include a second location, ideally at Ashurst and it is hoped this will be on the Ashurst hospital site where there are direct links to permitted New Forest cycle routes. Ashurst will also provide sustainable access through rail and bus links and reduce travel times for people coming from Southampton, Portsmouth, Winchester and beyond.

Once the new base is established we plan to offer work experience and apprenticeships to young people with additional needs. We are therefore working to strengthen our volunteer base, through an enhanced training programme, to support both the new base and the new opportunities we plan to offer young people.

We are currently working on maintaining the fleet of bikes in readiness for running rides from Easter.

We have also been working more widely with other NPA staff to assist with improved access and delivering alternative wellbeing outcomes such as walks for people with additional needs.

### **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*

This work continues in a range of ways, including day-to-day work by rangers described elsewhere in this report, action planning for the next few months as lockdown restrictions are eased, making progress on longer term recreation management solutions and wider communication about all of these.

#### Long-term work

Members of the RMS Steering Group have jointly commissioned work to clarify which Traffic Regulation Orders could be used to resolve verge parking across the Open Forest. Forestry England has appointed consultants who are initially exploring all options before focussing on those that might be both feasible and effective. The Recreation Management Strategy Steering Group will discuss next steps at its meeting on 26 April.

The Recreation Management Strategy Advisory Group met in January. This included positive updates and presentations on the England Coast Path, Forestry England's review of their Habitats Regulations Assessments for their recreation permissions, and cycling (both the work on a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan and cycling on Crown Land).

We facilitated another partnership meeting (attended by eight organisations) about the use of appropriate and proportionate enforcement activities to deter illegal use of the Forest. This is progressing an important action within the Recreation Management Strategy (RMS) and will result in training for staff, much clearer understanding of enforcement powers where they exist and agreement on when they would be used – especially on Crown Land.

As travel restrictions are eased, Forestry England will be able to progress its work to map possible changes to the distribution of parking on Crown Land. This will inform the NPA-led work to assess the feasibility of using a Local Development Order to help satisfy Habitats Regulations and enable small scale changes without the need for multiple planning applications.

We also facilitated a meeting between Forestry England, NFDC, HCC and RSPB to ensure coordination and sharing of best practice on managing organised activities and larger events – another action in the RMS. Good communication helps spot and deal with potential impacts on the environment and on other people. The NPA's work to clarify where and how drones and metal detecting are allowed was well-received and will be helped through further collaboration.

### Lockdown easing

With partner organisations we have developed and are rolling out a detailed action plan to ensure we both care for the New Forest and for people as lockdown eases. We are expecting that large numbers of both residents and visitors will want to spend time in the New Forest. The countryside has an important role to play in people's recovery from the pandemic, but this should not be at the expense of the very thing they have come to enjoy.

The Action Plan is set out under five headings.

1. Commoning – the CDA, Verderers and commoners know that they are supported as much as possible, so that the working Forest can continue to operate with as little disruption as possible.
2. Community – residents feel safe to go out, confident that there is a joint plan to manage visitors and help local businesses recover – and enabled to play their part.
3. Capacity – strong, visible and coordinated approach to managing demand and distribution of visitors, especially car parking and camping.
4. New Forest Code – the nine most important topics are conveyed in consistent and clear ways by organisations, businesses, volunteers and individuals.
5. Cooperation – all local organisations are supporting each other, working collaboratively together and sharing resources to achieve the best outcomes for the Forest, residents, local businesses and visitors.

The plan has many facets including maximising deployment of rangers, other staff and volunteers on the ground, joint patrols with other organisations, increased signage, provision of information and activities for schools and campsites, prominent use of the NPA mobile unit, having as many car parks and toilets open as possible, renewed emphasis on 'no BBQs or fires' and days of action with the emergency services focused on recreation 'hotspots'.

We are relaunching the New Forest Ambassadors scheme to enable and encourage local people to play their part in welcoming people back to the Forest – and helping us keep on

top of issues, especially by picking up litter. We distributed 500 litter picking kits last year and are making a further 250 kits available via outlets spread across the National Park. We continue to liaise closely with the lead councillors for the four parish quadrants about this scheme – their local knowledge and advice has been most useful in recent months.

The New Forest Code is being widely promoted including by Go New Forest, local businesses and accommodation providers.

Key organisations are meeting weekly to review the previous weekend and plan for the next.

### *Educational campaigns*

Despite some well-publicised and tragic accidents in December, the total number of animals killed across the New Forest in 2020 fell to 50 (the lowest on record) and a further 21 were injured. Reduced traffic due to Covid19 travel restrictions was undoubtedly one of the reasons for this fall, but it also reflects a long-term downwards trend resulting from the wide-ranging communications about driving safely, increased use of reflective collars, improved signage etc. Full updated analyses of accident data are available on the [NPA website](#).

The work we instigated to address the risks of incidents between cattle and people and their dogs is being taken forward by Forestry England and Natural England, with an initial focus on improving risk assessments, based on national best practice.

The use of window stickers when vehicles are parked in gateways or on protected verges is being extended. HCC, National Trust and the RSPB all want to use them on their land; the stickers have been revised and operational protocols agreed.

The [Professional Dog Walkers' Charter](#) has attracted 40 sign-ups since its launch earlier this year. This is an excellent start. The Charter sets very high standards of operation including respect for the environment and consideration towards other Forest users, and businesses that sign up can promote this to potential customers.

As mentioned above, we'll be emphasising the importance not dropping litter as part of the spring and summer action plan. The Keep Britain Tidy spring clean runs from 28 May to 14 June, so we'll be highlighting the work of the [New Forest Ambassadors](#) and other community litter picking groups during this time.

The Dogs Forum met in January, with useful updates and discussions about the New Forest Dog Owners Group, Bird Aware Solent (which has recruited a new member of staff to focus on dog-related initiatives) and ground-nesting birds.

## *Access and Rights of Way*

We installed the first tranche of our new National Park signposts on the Lepe Loop circular walk, part of our promoted walk network. The fingers are designed to carry designation, destination and distance information in addition to carrying up to four waymarker discs. There is space on the posts for 'ownership' information such as a National Park logo or an Estate symbol or crest.

We have received all the necessary quotes from contractors regarding works to the Calshot to Gosport section of the England Coast Path and are looking forward to working with relevant landowners to prepare for the establishment of this section during April/May 2021.

## **3 Prosper**

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

#### *Sustainable Tourism / business*

We are working with local businesses to assist with their recovery post-pandemic by participating in the UK National Park 'Experience Collection', offering an opportunity to visit and undertake an authentic New Forest experience via car-free means.

Minstead Community Shop received its area map as part of the National Park Local Information Point scheme. A leaflet rack is also in the pipeline, which will enhance visitor provision and increase sales of local produce in the shop.

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

#### *Sustainable Transport*

We are a key partner in the development of a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan for the New Forest, which will be led by HCC with assistance from us, NFDC and Forestry England. We have been leading local stakeholder communication on behalf of the steering group and have given presentations and facilitated early discussions with the local parish and town council quadrants, Recreation Management Strategy Advisory Group and the New Forest Access Forum. A workshop for local organisation representatives took place on March 19 and work continues to help people engage with the development of the plan prior to its audit and first draft. A full consultation will happen on the draft plan in the autumn.

Breaking from the norm, the New Forest Tour will start on 29 May and continue until 12 September. This 60% increase in operational duration will be an enhancement to the visitor experience and economy, as well as reducing the volume of cars within the Forest and widening the reach of our messaging around the special qualities via audio commentary.

The 'Lepe extension' will continue to operate on Sundays. Yellow Buses will commence a new service from Christchurch to Ringwood, and the bus will display the 'animal safety' artwork which also appears on one of the New Forest Tour fleet.

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

#### *Affordable Housing*

There are a number of live planning applications for new affordable housing in the National Park currently under consideration. We are also engaged in pre-application discussions on a number of additional sites that may come forward as applications.

NPA officers work closely with NFDC and other partners to encourage more affordable homes in the right places and with the necessary community involvement. As a permanent member of the 'Hampshire Homes Hub' we keep updated about the latest developments and events in Hampshire and also on new national policies about affordable housing.

Negotiations have continued to secure the affordable housing site at Burley and the last remaining hurdle – agreeing the easement for services – is now close to being concluded. All being well, it is hoped that works on site will commence in the coming months.

All of our adopted Local Plan housing site allocations are either the subject to planning applications, or pre-application discussions with the landowners and potential developers. These housing site allocations will make a significant contribution towards affordable housing delivery of local people within the National Park.

#### *Sustainable Communities Fund*

Funds have been allocated to SpudWORKS to develop a new collaborative project engaging diverse communities in the landscape of the New Forest National Park and helping to protect and promote its special qualities. Investigative artist Simon Ryder will work with a cohort of people to collect and document their experiences of the New Forest. This will include the places and landscapes that people remember, and imagine, and connect with, whether this is through family heritage, work, hobby, special interest, or anything else. A series of visualisations and designs will explore what it means for people

to have a connection to the New Forest. The intention is for the artwork to bring together all views about the New Forest and to stimulate and enable further discussion.

Funds have also been allocated to Copythorne Preschool to transform the allotment area in the grounds of Copythorne Parish Hall into a wild play zone. This will be available for all children to use, not just those who attend the preschool. The area will be cleared of brambles and new planting will be introduced alongside sensory play equipment and activities for children to learn about nature. The community has been involved in plans to renovate the site, and the Parish Hall committee is also supportive.

## 4 **Achieving Excellence**

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

#### *Human Resources*

As at 10 March 2021 the total staff headcount was 80 or 69.69 full-time equivalents (FTEs).

	<b>Headcount</b>	Variation from previous report	<b>Full Time Equivalents</b>	Variation from previous report
Core funded	65*	+ 1	56.55	+ 0.41
Funded by external projects	15	- 2	13.14	- 1.29
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>- 1</b>	<b>69.69</b>	<b>- 0.88</b>

\*Of the core funded roles, one staff member (1 FTE) is working in shared services, 25 are part-time and four are on a fixed-term contract.

In the last few months we recruited to the following roles:

<b>Role</b>	<b>Contract type</b>	<b>How funded</b>
Finance and Sustainable Performance Officer	Permanent	Core funded

We said goodbye to:

<b>Role</b>	<b>Contract type</b>	<b>How role will be filled in future</b>
Restoring Lost Landscapes Project Officer	Fixed-term, project funded	N/A – end of project
Ranger	Permanent, core funded	Assessing vacancy

### *Staff wellbeing*

As part of our commitment under Nurture in our People Plan and to support staff through the pandemic, the Wellbeing group led by our HR and Training Officer have continued to support wellbeing focused initiatives in the last few months:

- Since December, the Wellbeing group has held three meetings where discussions for a Spring wellbeing programme have taken place. The Chief Executive joined for one meeting to hear feedback from the group and input into some of the new ideas.
- Using Microsoft Teams, we have created staff groups based on the areas where staff live – this is so staff can let others in their area know when they are going to the office in case items need to be dropped off or picked up. There are also opportunities to meet for socially distanced lunchtime walks to connect with colleagues.
- When restrictions permit, we will reinstate 'Wonderwalks' for our staff to have opportunities to connect with colleagues and with nature in different areas of the Forest. It highlights the importance of the outdoors and engagement with others as a way of supporting positive mental health and wellbeing.
- Our HR and Training Officer who leads on staff wellbeing has contributed to Health and Safety Forum meetings to ensure a collaborative approach.
- The dedicated Wellbeing area on our internal intranet continues to provide access to information to help staff maintain and enhance their mental health and wellbeing.
- We provided 11 other UK National Park Authorities with a demonstration of the wellbeing pages on our intranet to assist them in their wellbeing work. We have been identified as an exemplar organisation by several other organisations for our approach to staff wellbeing.

We appreciate the time and effort the Wellbeing group have put into supporting our staff and for the implementation of a variety of activities for staff to get involved in.

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

### *Team New Forest / Updating the Partnership Plan*

An update about the Partnership Plan review was provided to members at the last Authority meeting in December which included updates about the Task and Finish Group, the New Forest Snapshot survey and draft 'destination statements'. Since, all staff and key partners have been invited to input into a working draft of the new Partnership Plan. 'Dashboard style' indicators to convey the current state of play for each of the key themes / workstreams have also been drawn up with the help of staff. An advanced draft version of the new Partnership Plan will be presented at the Authority meeting on 29 April.

A final evaluation report of the 2015-20 Partnership Plan is in preparation and will be presented to staff, members and partners once input has been received from delivery partners about the final status of their respective actions.

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

#### *ICT Services*

In early January the ICT team attended a 3-day security workshop which was very useful and informative. At the end of the workshop a report was produced outlining our current security position which we are pleased to say came out as good. There were some recommendations which we are looking into further.

There have been a few issues with the ESET security, in particular with pushing out the continual updates whilst everyone is remote working, therefore as part of our annual Microsoft Licence renewal, we have amended the licences to include Microsoft Defender for Office 365 which will not only offer increased security but is easily updated remotely.

Towards the end of January we deployed a server to analyse all our systems over the following 4 week period to give some indications of costs should we move these systems to the cloud as part of our infrastructure replacement project. The results from this are due to be presented in early March. Roll out of SharePoint is critical to the infrastructure project to ensure no unnecessary additional costs are incurred due to teams still operating from the old drives. At the end of December we switched a number of drives to read only, with another 5 due to be switched over by the end of February. This leaves a couple of outstanding team drives to be switched over as soon as possible. Updating the infrastructure is now the team's main priority, as this is now critical and cannot be delayed any further.

Two replacement browser-based planning systems were demonstrated in early February, one by Agile Applications, the other by Idox. ICT will be working closely with the planning team to move to a new system by March 2022.

We have made some enhancements to streamline our ICT help desk, the changes will assist us with tracking communications about the call and enable resolved calls to be re-opened. With the addition of 'chat' boxes all correspondence can be done within the call making it easier to keep track of what has been said, which, should someone else need to pick up a call part way through, will let them see what has already been done.

## *Legal and Information management*

The team provides legal advice across the Authority. This includes both work specifically relating to the Authority's planning function, such as drafting legal agreements and assisting with enforcement matters, and advising on other matters that relate to the wider work of the NPA, for example governance, contractual matters, etc. Recent significant pieces of work include obtaining a High Court injunction preventing further unauthorised felling of trees protected by a woodland Tree Preservation Order.

The Project Assistant - Records Management has continued to work with officers across the NPA to facilitate our move to SharePoint. At the beginning of the year six of our network drives were set to read only, with another three set to follow by the end of March.

Following the UK's exit from the European Union, from 1 January 2021 we are now operating under the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) - which is currently substantially similar to the EU's GDPR. This is a developing area of law and we continue to work hard to ensure that we meet our obligations under the GDPR and are constantly reviewing and updating our website, documents and privacy notices to improve transparency and compliance, whilst responding to data protection queries as they arise.

Formal requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act and the Environmental Information Regulations remain well ahead of previous years, as of the 9 March 2021, we had received 71 requests compared to only 52 for the same period last year, an increase of 36%. Of the 21 received since the last update, half were related to our planning work and the rest covered a wide variety of subjects including our ICT and information storage arrangements, forest fires, bylaws regarding the flying of drones and reports of bigfoot/sasquatch sightings. All requests within the period were responded to within the statutory 20 working days.

Since the last update we have dealt with three formal complaints, all related to specific planning applications. In total the number of complaints received this financial year as of 9 March, is marginally ahead of last year (19 versus 17 last year).

## **5 Members**

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

- 15 December – Planning Committee
- 19 January – Planning Committee
- 1 February – Resources, Audit and Performance Committee
- 10 February – Members Day (Managing visitors as lockdown eases)
- 16 February – Planning Committee
- 1 March – Resources, Audit and Performance Committee
- 8 March – New Forest Access Forum

- 8 March – Standards Committee
- 16 March – Planning Committee

## **5.2 Forthcoming activities include:**

- 20 April – Planning Committee
- 29 April – Extra Authority Meeting
- 18 May – Planning Committee
- 3 June – Consultative Panel
- 7 June – New Forest Access Forum
- 7 June – Resources, Audit and Performance Committee
- 15 June – Planning Committee
- 16 June – Members Day (TBC)

## **5.3 Chief Executive's engagements - virtual meetings**

- 11 December – Green recovery meeting
- 11 December – Outreach, Access and Inclusivity meeting
- 15 December – meeting with Deputy Surveyor
- 15 December – Partnership Plan Steering Group
- 16 December – Solent Leaders Forum
- 16 December – meeting with Leader HCC
- 17 December – Green recovery meeting
- 18 December – Wildlife roundtable
- 21 December – Greenprint for South Hampshire meeting
- 22 December – meeting with Defra
- 4 January – Greenprint meeting
- 4 January – PfSH Chief Executives meeting
- 5 January – NPO Covid meeting
- 6 January – H&S discussion with NFDC
- 7 January – meeting with Chief Executive, CNP
- 7 January – meeting with HCC
- 8 January – Green recovery meeting
- 8 January – Freeports meeting with consultants
- 11 January – Hampshire 2050 Partnership meeting
- 11 January – Safer New Forest Strategy & Delivery Group meeting
- 13 January – Freeports meeting with Solent LEP
- 13 January – PfSH Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- 13 January – Interview for HCC green recovery work
- 14 January – ENPOG meeting
- 14 January – Greenprint meeting
- 14 January – Introductory meeting with new Consultative Panel Chairman
- 14 January – Solent Leaders Forum

- 15 January – Wildlife Roundtable
- 15 January – meeting with South Downs National Park Authority
- 15 January – pre APPG discussion
- 18 January – Totton & Waterside Conference
- 19 January – LI Landscape Management Forum
- 19 January – Vision for the Waterside members briefing
- 20 January – call with Chief Executive, South Downs National Park Authority
- 20 January – meeting with Solent LEP
- 21 January – meeting with New Forest Association
- 21 January – meeting with Chair, CDA
- 25 January – New Forest Leadership Group meeting
- 25 January – Conducted interviews for NFNPA role
- 26 January – National Trust meeting
- 27 January – Solent Leaders Forum
- 27 January – Conducted interview for NFNPA role
- 28 January – NPE Board meeting
- 28 January – Freeport briefing
- 29 January – HLS Board
- 29 January – Conducted interview for NFNPA role
- 1 February – Together campaign and natural heritage conference
- 1 February – Engagement and Inclusion meeting with Defra
- 2 February – Green Task Group meeting
- 3 February – meeting with HCC
- 3 February – NCR/Fawley Waterside Natural Capital Project Board meeting
- 4 February – H&W Steering Group meeting
- 5 February – HIOW CX meeting
- 8 February – ENPOG meeting
- 9 February – H&W catch up meeting
- 9 February – meeting with CX, NFDC
- 9 February – Greenprint meeting
- 9 February – Green recovery meeting
- 10 February – Members day - 'managing visitors as lockdown eases'
- 11 February – OPOF Celebration webinar
- 12 February – telephone call with CX, Business South
- 12 February – Partnership Plan Steering Group
- 12 February – Solent LEP P member meeting
- 15 February – LRF Recovery Group Environment and Infrastructure and Business & Economy meeting
- 17 February – Green Halo Steering Group
- 17 February – meeting with CX, CNP
- 17 February – Greenprint Steering Group meeting
- 24 February – Contact Group – NLS functions meeting
- 24 February – meeting with CX, NFDC

- 25 February – Green recovery meeting
- 26 February – Speaker at Recover in the Central South event
- 26 February – Greenprint discussion
- 26 February – Future Towns Innovation Hub meeting
- 26 February – pre APPG meeting
- 1 March – APPG pre meeting
- 1 March – NPO meeting with Defra
- 2 March – APPG for National Parks
- 3 March – Hampshire Story Ambassadors event
- 4 March – PfSH Chief Executives meeting
- 4 March – NPs management plans meeting
- 5 March – meeting with CX, NFDC
- 5 March – HIOW LGA meeting
- 5 March – call with CX, Exmoor National Park Authority
- 8 March – Landscapes Review contact group
- 8 March – ENPOG meeting
- 9 March – PfSH Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- 10 March – meeting with Palladium
- 10 March – Green Task Force meeting
- 11 March – Leadership Group meeting
- 11 March – Southampton City of Culture Bid event
- 11 March – Broadband connectivity meeting
- 16 March – Souther Water briefing
- 17 March – meeting with Natural England
- 18 March – meeting with Leader, NFDC
- 18 March – LI, College of Fellows meeting
- 18 March – Covid 19 Panel meeting
- 22 March – National Park City meeting with Southampton City Council
- 22 March – PfSH Joint Committee meeting
- 23 March – Green Halo Steering Group meeting
- 24 March – meeting with HCC
- 24 March – call with CX, Solent LEP

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

- 11 January – Hampshire 2050 meeting
- 14 January – meeting with Consultative Panel Chairman
- 15 January – meeting with CX and Chair, South Downs National Park Authority
- 18 January – Fawley Waterside meeting
- 20 January – Solent LEP meeting
- 21 January – New Forest Association meeting
- 25 January – PfSH meeting

- 27 January – Solent Leaders Forum
- 28 January – National Parks England meeting
- 28 January – Solent Freeports meeting
- 3 February – National Parks England meeting
- 5 February – All Landscapes Chairs meeting
- 5 February – PfSH meeting
- 10 February – Members Day - 'managing visitors as lockdown eases'
- 11 February – OPOF Celebration webinar
- 12 February – National Parks England meeting
- 12 February – Solent LEP members meeting
- 22 February – National Parks England meeting
- 25 February – meeting with CX, North York Moors National Park Authority
- 2 March – Solent Freeports meeting
- 2 March – APPG event
- 4 March – National Parks England meeting
- 10 March – National Parks England meeting
- 11 March – New Forest Broadband meeting
- 12 March – Solent LEP AGM
- 22 March – PfSH meeting

## **6 Recommendation**

**To note the report.**