

**AM 593/20**

## **NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

### **AUTHORITY MEETING – 23 JANUARY 2020**

#### **THE LANDSCAPES REVIEW AND UPDATING THE PARTNERSHIP PLAN**

**Report by:** Steve Avery, Executive Director

#### **Summary:**

At the Authority meeting last October, Members discussed the proposals set out in the Landscapes Review. There was strong member support for the direction set out in the Review and an appetite to work proactively with Government and partners to achieve its ambition. These sentiments were reflected in the Chairman's letter to Lord Gardiner of Kimble of 10 October 2019, making it clear that the Authority wanted to play its part in reversing the national decline in wildlife.

Whilst some of the proposals set out in the Review will require new legislation and funding, there is much that we can do now to take forward the Review's recommendations, particularly in regard to wildlife recovery and engaging people with nature.

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 In May 2018 the Government asked Julian Glover to lead an expert panel looking at how National Parks and AONBs could be renewed in response to the 25 Year Environment Plan. The aim was to ask what might be done better and what changes could assist.
- 1.2 The Landscapes Review was published in September 2019. It concluded that while there was much that was good about National Parks and AONBs, they fell short of what could be achieved and that there was a *"need to reignite the fire and vision which brought this system into being in 1949"*. The Review found that nature and our climate is in crisis, the relationship between people and the countryside has changed and collectively National Parks and AONBs should be offering much more in response. The Report sets out 27 proposals focused on five areas; (1) landscapes alive for nature and beauty, (2) landscapes for everyone, (3) living in landscapes, (4) more special places and (5) new ways of working. A summary of these proposals and areas of focus is attached as Annex 1.
- 1.3 This report sets out what we are already doing and the opportunity to do more through the current review and update of the Partnership Plan.

#### **2. Progressing the New Forest response to the Landscapes Review**

- 2.1 There is much that has already been achieved with our partners: 10 years of wetland restoration and heathland management, a wide range of volunteering opportunities with many highlighted in the annual Volunteer Fair, over 8000 children annually experiencing the National Park through school visits, building our own affordable

housing, delivery of the Our Past Our Future project and working beyond our boundaries through the Green Halo Partnership.

- 2.2 In the last 12 months we convened a Wildlife Roundtable to respond to concerns about the state of nature, worked with the Forest Farming Group to better understand the management of the New Forest's natural capital and continued to develop the Recreation Management Strategy.
- 2.3 We have also worked with Natural England, Forestry England and five neighbouring planning authorities to bring together a shared evidence base on the impacts of planned new housing development on the New Forest's Natura 2000 sites which in turn will help us to develop a more strategic, cross-boundary approach to habitat mitigation measures.
- 2.4 In May 2020 we are jointly hosting a conference with Public Health England that will aim to develop the opportunities for social prescribing in and around the New Forest. We are also looking at ways to develop a range of funding opportunities around nature recovery.
- 2.5 The six areas of focus in our Business Plan (2018 – 2021) - data and evidence, the future of land management, working beyond our boundaries, people and the National Park, developing partnerships and future generations - are aligned with much that is contained in the Landscapes Review.
- 2.6 Above all, the Authority has an opportunity to progress areas where no changes to legislation are needed through the current revision of the Partnership Plan, and through this process and working with partners, to seek to build a consensus for the legislative changes proposed in the Landscapes Review that would clearly benefit the New Forest National Park.

### **3. Updating the Partnership Plan**

- 3.1 Members considered a paper last March (NFNPA 570/19) setting out the review process and timetable. This made it clear that the new Partnership Plan would need to reflect the outcome of the Landscapes Review, which was reiterated in the publication of the subsequent 'primer' document last summer.
- 3.2 The Landscapes Review contains proposals to strengthen National Park Management Plans and for them to set clear priorities and actions for nature recovery (proposals 3 and 26). The Report recognises that their implementation must be backed up by stronger status in law and this is supported.
- 3.3 The Government's 25-year Environment Plan is underpinned by the natural capital approach and we are well placed to take forward the associated Landscapes Review recommendation that the state of nature and natural capital in our national landscapes should be regularly and robustly assessed (proposal 2). The recently published report on 'Understanding the New Forest's Natural Capital (Forest Farming Group, September 2019) provides an important input into the Partnership Plan review and reflects the Landscape Review recommendations under the theme of 'landscapes alive for nature and beauty'.

- 3.4 Work on the Partnership Plan review is already well underway. It is proposed to work with partners to convene a series of themed, member workshops over the coming months to scope out a new set of objectives and to consider how these might respond to the proposals and new priorities set out in the Landscapes Review, with a public consultation planned for later in the year (early Autumn).
- 3.5 Details of the workshop themes and emerging dates are set out in the table below (cross-referencing the relevant proposals in the Landscapes Review and the priorities in our Business Plan).

Workshop theme	Climate Change	Transport	Nature Recovery	Connecting People
Date	25 February	10 or 11 March (tbc)	April (tbc)	May (tbc)
Venue (tbc)	Lymington	Winchester	Lyndhurst	Brockenhurst
Landscapes Review	Proposals 1, 4, 20	Proposals 14, 15, 16, 19	Proposals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5	Proposals 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17
Business Plan Priorities	1.1.2 and 1.1.4	2.3.4	1.1.2 – 1.1.4	2.1.1 – 2.23

- 3.6 The Landscapes Review also advocated that every National Park should have a partnership group that works alongside the main board (proposal 26). In parallel with the Partnership Plan review, it is recommended that we explore options for establishing a clear mechanism for strategic oversight to monitor and implement the actions set out in the new Plan, the aim being to 'hardwire' joint responsibility for taking forward the new Partnership Plan.

## 4. Conclusion

- 4.1 Following the recent general election it is not yet clear how the new government will respond to the Landscapes Review. It may choose to use the forthcoming Environment and Agriculture Bills to bring in some of the proposals. In the meantime, we believe there are positive actions that the Authority can pursue now through the Partnership Plan review as per the recommendations below.

## Recommendations

- (i) **Working with partners, convene a series of member workshops over the coming months to scope out and agree a set of new Partnership Plan objectives that respond to the proposals and new priorities set out in the Landscapes Review; and**
- (ii) **In tandem with the Partnership Plan review, explore options for establishing a new partnership group with strategic oversight for the delivery of the new Partnership Plan**

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**Background Papers:** NFNPA 570/19

**Annex 1:** A summary of the 27 proposals and five areas of focus in the Landscapes Review